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BISHOP

ABRAHAM ALANGIMATTATHIL, SDB., DD.

BISHOP OF KOHIMA DIOCESE (1933-1997)

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Rt. Rev. Abraham Alangimattathil SDB

"A Loving Service to God and Man"

(1933-1997)

Nearly 24 years of "loving service to God and Man" as Bishop filled the life of dear Bishop Abraham. The 30 diaries that he had kept describes day by day his untiring activities, journeys, meetings, and visits to the villages. The very fact that he never went to bed, however exhausted and late he might have been, without making his daily entries speaks volumes of his constancy, hard work and disciplined life. As one of the contributors to this write-up, Sr. Jessina SABS, says: "Bishop Abraham had strength of mind and spirit of perseverance. He was a person who lived and worked as if every day was the last day of his life. He never postponed anything that could be done today for tomorrow... " He lived each day to the full, totally committed to the mission the Lord entrusted him with.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF EARLY YEARS

Bishop Abraham was born in a traditionally fervent Catholic family on 11 July 1933 at Paika, Kerala, as the youngest of six children. His parents were Mathai and Eli Alangimattathil. His father passed away on 14 August 1973, and mother on 13 June 1989. His elder brothers, Mr. Ulahannan, and Mr. Joseph died on 31 May 1997 and 16 June 1989 respectively. His other brothers are Mr. Varkey who lives in Enthayar (Kerala) and Mr. Thomas, affectionately known as Pappachen, in Vadakkenchery (Kerala). He has a sister named Maammikutty, who is at present settled at Arivithura (Kerala). Bishop was very much attached to Mr. Matthachen, one of his nephews who lives in Kottayam and who used to accompany him whenever Bishop visited Kerala.

The family of Bishop Abraham belonged to Paika parish up to 1980. From 1980 to 1987 his brother Thomas and family along with the mother stayed in Neelur. From 1989 after the death of his mother, Thomas and family shifted their residence to Vadakkenchery.

Aspirantate in Sonada, near Darjeeling in the Himalayan foothills, Salesian novitiate in Yercaud, philosophical studies in Sonada again, Practical Training in Don Bosco, Shillong, theological studies in Mawlai, Kotagiri and then again in Mawlai, prepared him for his priestly ordination which took place during the International Eucharistic Congress in Bombay on 2 December 1964.

After his priestly ordination he served as Administrator of Don Bosco School, and later as Headmaster of St. Anthony's High School, Shillong. Fr. A. M. Abraham was appointed Rector of Don Bosco, Dibrugarh in 1968. He was the Vicar General of Bishop Robert Kerketta in Dibrugarh when he was nominated Bishop of Kohima-Imphal in 1973. His Episcopal Ordination took place in Kohima on 14 October 1973.

At the time of his nomination, Nagaland had about 10,000 Catholics and Manipur about 20,000. Nagaland had 6 parishes and Manipur 8. There were a total of 33 priests. Under his zealous and able leadership Catholic Centres and communities grew so much that in 1980 the diocese of Kohima-Imphal was bifurcated into the Diocese of Kohima comprising the State of Nagaland and the diocese of Imphal comprising the State of Manipur. Bishop Abraham continued as the Bishop of the diocese of Kohima and Bishop Joseph Mittathany of Tezpur was transferred to the newly erected diocese of Imphal.

MISSIONARY PRIORITIES

Right from the start of the new diocese Bishop Abraham's missionary priorities were clear. His resolve was to open two new centres each year. That was no easy task in the hills of Manipur and Nagaland, because each centre meant: finding the needed personnel, constructing priests' residence, school, boarding for boys, boarding for girls, sisters' quarters, and church building as well as procuring vehicle/s and getting enough money for recurring expenses. Anyone who has followed the growth of the Church both in Nagaland and Manipur would realize that all this meant a big strain on Bishop's time and energy. Hard-working as he was, he always found ways and means to go ahead with his evangelization plans and priorities. "He was always interested", writes Fr. Sebastian Karotemprel, "in evangelization work, in touring villages, meeting people and listening to them".

Bishop Abraham was far-sighted. He knew that authentic evangelization meant also promoting the cultures of people. Hence, observes Fr. Karotemprel again, "Bishop Abraham was interested in and wanted to promote studies on tribal cultures, inculturation of tribal art into Christian worship, sacred art, sacred architecture, etc." "The Cathedral of Kohima", writes Fr. Karotemprel, "is an expression of his interest in tribal culture and inculturation".

The Nagaland Catholic Calendar which he brought out year after year with excellent photos representing Naga culture and the Church making every effort to be inculturated was appreciated by his benefactors abroad and people in the North East and elsewhere in India. The publications he undertook in the different languages of the diocese and especially the preparation of the hymn book *All You Hills* by Fr. John Med show the Bishop's eagerness to give his flock an integral Christian formation.

Everyone will agree that a Church is made of people and not of stones. Bishop Abraham, therefore, took keen interest in promoting local vocations. The more than one seminary he established for this purpose will remain as a permanent proof of it.

"He had great ambition for Nagaland and the Christian community", writes Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil. "He pursued with singleness of purpose every goal he set before himself until it was attained. By the time he left us, he had changed the face of the region entrusted to his care".

OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTICS

The rich personality of Bishop Abraham has many wonderful missionary aspects. I shall mention some of them.

A Relentless Worker

Fr. Joseph Puthenpurakal SDB who had been Bishop Abraham's helper right from the start of the diocese in 1973 has the following to tell us about him: "When I think of the early years of the diocese with Bishop's House still in Holy Cross Parish in Dimapur (1973 to 1981) Bishop Abraham springs to my mind as one for whom there was very little difference between day and night. He rested little. He spared no pains to see that things were done well. He had a special gift for seeing to details. Everything received his attention". Fr. Hector D'Souza SJ says the same thing when he writes: "Bishop Abraham had 25 hours in his day. He had always time for others and he kept the 25th long hour to himself... He was an untiring worker and a great builder too".

Bishop Robert Kerketta who as a Brother was his teacher in Sonada and who later on had him as his Vicar General in Dibrugarh speaks of him as "a hard-working person", having "great stamina", and able to "work late into the night".

As Vicar General he was able to "supervise the construction work of several buildings and centres in Nagaland and Manipur and in the plains of Assam". Fr. Sebastian Karotemprel who knew Bishop Abraham from the time he was a student of philosophy evaluates him as "a fairly good student" who was "dedicated to his studies and other duties". He commends him for his "leadership qualities . . . initiative and innovative ways of doing things".

"With unfailing stamina and clear-sighted understanding of possibilities", observes Archbishop Menamparampil, " [Bishop Abraham] moved on and pressed others on to the impossible until every mountain peak was climbed and every mighty endeavour brought to a happy conclusion". "He had the imagination", he remarks, "and the commitment to bring into existence what ordinary people would have considered impossible".

Fr. M. M. Michael says, "He overworked himself so much and he did not give sufficient rest and relaxation to himself that his health came down very fast. Heavy work and lack of rest made great inroads into his health and that pulled down his spirit. But the worst was when he lost the power of sight in one of his eyes, he felt that God was not coming to the help of one who was sincerely working for the good of His Church".

Love for the Church

Bishop Abraham was essentially a man for the good of the Church. His love for the Church was not just a theory. It was something practical. Following the advice of St. John Bosco who inculcated in his spiritual sons and daughters "loyalty to the Pope and the Bishops of the Church", Bishop Abraham as a priest and especially as the Vicar General "was a staunch defender and supporter of the Bishop". Not only that, he was ever ready to "take upon himself the unpleasant task of meeting difficult situations on behalf of the Bishop".

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A Lover of his Flock

"When I think of Bishop Abraham", writes Fr. Hector D' Souza SJ, "the image that comes uppermost in my mind is the 'village community'; the gentle ways he went around meeting the people as their Pastor, spending a lot of time with them, even late into the night, listening to them, and making them happy by showing a film or sharing a cup red tea or a plate of rice with no pretensions at all. He could sit anywhere, eat anything, relate with anybody. He had no barriers; neither did he put blockades to prevent people from reaching him. He was a welcoming Bishop". "He loved his people", continues Fr. Hector, "nay at times to the extent of pampering them...." In this connection, Fr. John Med observes: "To them [the Naga Catholic communities] he gave all his love." Even when he felt that he was misunderstood, he continued to love them.

Special love for the Youth

The youth of the diocese had a special place in his heart. "He believed in their strength. He encouraged them, he supported their projects and he was with them in thick and thin". He enjoyed being with them, because he saw in them the future of the Church both in Nagaland and in Manipur. The Associations in which they were members received his fatherly care. He helped deserving youth in their studies right from the start of the diocese in 1973.

At Heart a "Catechist"

As Shepherd of his flock, the faith-formation of the Christian communities received due attention from him. He cared for the well-being of his catechists. He gave great importance to the Catechist Training Centre at Imphal. As chairman of

the Catechetical Commission of the Regional Bishops' Conference, Bishop Abraham organized the work of preparing and publishing Text Books with Teacher's Guide for each class up to Class IX. When the books were ready, the members of the team were sent by him to the various dioceses of the region to explain the method and to guide the teachers how to use those textbooks and guides. He encouraged regular teaching of Catechism in schools and boarding houses.

Courageous and Enterprising

Bishop Abraham was not timid. He was courageous. The words of his Master: "I am with you always..." must certainly have been the source of his strength. When he felt that something was for the good of the Church, nothing would stop him. Silently and tenaciously he worked his way up until the impossible became possible.

Endowed with a Strong Will-Power

Bishop Abraham surprised everyone with his strong will-power. He could stand against odds and carry out his plans. This aspect had both its plus and minus points. At times this appeared to be like forcing his opinion on others. In the words of Fr. Hector, it was "his Achilles' heel". More than once it stood in the way of friendly relationships with his own priests and others. Recalling his earlier years of formation Fr. T. V. Anthony, Bishop Abraham's novitiate companion, remembers moments of "moods" and days in which they "would not talk to each other". However, whenever Bishop Abraham realized that what he was going to accomplish was for the glory of the God and for the good of the Church, he reached the point of "seeming stubbornness". When means were lacking, he organized his resources so as to "create them". Sr. Aloshia FCC commenting on Bishop Abraham's undaunted courage says: "He never took no for an answer when he felt he was carrying out God's plan".

Attention to Details and Thoroughness

Bishop George Mamalassery writes: "...in my contacts with late Bishop Abraham Alangimattathil, the one thing that struck me most was the thoroughness with which he did all his works...". Fr. T.V. Anthony highlights his love for "cleanliness and orderliness ...regularity and punctuality in the performance of his duties." "I have always wondered", says Fr. Joseph Puthenpurakal, "how Bishop Abraham could find time and energy to see to every detail of every project and undertaking."

A Man of Prayer

Bishop Robert Kerketta who knew him for many years vouches for the spirit of prayer of Bishop Abraham. The same is attested to by Fr. Sebastian Karotemprel. Fr. Joseph Puthenpurakal who lived with him for 18 years remembers Bishop Abraham kneeling in prayer in the chapel close to his office before he retired to rest nearing midnight every day. Many others, except, perhaps, Fr. Sebastian

Ousepparambil, the present Administrator of St. John's Medical College, Bangalore, who with Fr. Puthenpurakal was closely associated with Bishop Abraham for many years, did not have the opportunity to see him there in that chapel. Fr. Sebastian Ousepparambil has the following to say about Bishop Abraham: "Bishop Abraham was saintly in a human way, a decision maker, a planner. He launched out with the same courage and vision of Don Bosco and undertook his mission as God's own. A grain of wheat fallen to the ground and died that the mission of the Divine Master may be carried forward - that to me was dear Bishop Abraham."

Care for the Sick

As in-charge of the sick both as a Brother and as a Priest, Bishop Abraham was known for his tender loving care of those in need. Fr. Joseph Puthenpurakal who happened to break three of his ribs from a fall in Sonada remembers with gratitude the way "Brother A.M. Abraham" nursed him back to good health. "As an infirmarian", writes Fr. T. V. Anthony, " Bro. Abraham was exceptionally good at caring for the sick..."

Ongoing Formation of Priests, Religious and Laity

Right from its inception the diocese of Kohima was known for the number of courses and seminars it organized for priests, religious and laity. Scholarships for deserving students were on the priority list of Bishop Abraham. He took special care to see that his priests and religious as well as his lay people were offered sufficient opportunities for their ongoing formation.

SOME OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS

Besides opening at least two new mission centres a year, expansion work in other sectors too continued. Barely seven years after the erection of the diocese of Kohima–Imphal, the diocese was ready to give birth to another diocese, the diocese of Imphal in 1980. Bishop Abraham continued to be the Shepherd of Kohima comprising the State of Nagaland. The hard work he put in was such that in matter of a few more years the diocese of Kohima was blessed with its own needed diocesan structures such as the Bishop's House, Seminaries, the Catholic Publication Centre, the Pastoral Centre, the Retreat House, the Holy Redeemer Health Centre, St. Joseph's College and above all the Cathedral Church at Kohima which today is a landmark for visitors to the State Capital and a symbol of the unity of the tribes of Nagaland. Beautifully situated on a hilltop overlooking the whole town of Kohima and having the War Cemetery close by, the Cathedral stands for Peace, Peace which only Christ can give.

The organization of the laity and their participation in the various events of the Church go to the credit of their Pastor, Bishop Abraham, to a great extent. He had a special place for them in his heart. He encouraged lay Associations like the Catholic Union, Catholic Youth Association, Women's Association, and the Legion of Mary. The construction of the Laity Centre at Kohima speaks much about his vision for the laity.

Bishop Abraham understood the irreplaceable role of religious communities in the work of evangelization. He, therefore, invited several communities of

both men and women to share the responsibilities of proclaiming the Good News to the different tribes of Nagaland and Manipur. Being an efficient Administrator and far-sighted Pastor, Bishop Abraham helped the religious communities to have their own formation houses in the diocese itself. It helped them to have local vocations and to train them in *loco*. He always appreciated the contribution made by religious personnel. For the better organization of their work he helped to draw up proper agreements between the diocese and the respective religious groups.

The organization of the diocese with the setting up of the Diocesan Curia with the Vicar General, the Chancellor, the Finance Committee and the Financial Administrator, the Council of Priests and the College of Consultors and the Pastoral Council including Lay Faithful as well as Parish Councils wherever possible - all these point to the orderly and efficient manner in which the Bishop wanted to carry out the evangelization programme in the diocese.

However, the most important contribution of Bishop Abraham which remained hidden covered by the exterior of unabated activities was his golden missionary heart. He was a missionary to the core. He had no other goal than to spread the Gospel and to help the Church to grow. All his busy schedule of programmes, day in and day out, was meant for the good of the Church and nothing else. As we have mentioned elsewhere, his life was simple. A good and exemplary religious, he carried out his mission as Bishop to the best of his abilities. He took no holidays. The non-stop work schedule he followed naturally told on his health and on his functioning style.

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil who has known Bishop Abraham for 47 years describes him as "a good friend, a zealous apostle, an efficient worker, an energetic Salesian, an inspiring leader and an outstanding Church man". "He was a natural leader among us his companions in his young days", continues the Archbishop, "he remained an unsurpassed accomplisher of great tasks to the very end".

Within a few years after the erection of the new diocese of Kohima-Imphal (1973) Bishop Abraham succeeded in providing the diocese with the necessary infrastructures for its efficient functioning and vibrant growth. This vision continued even after the diocese was bifurcated in 1980. Today if Nagaland takes pride in having a Cathedral which has "drawn the attention of the international community", a Retreat House, Seminaries, Pastoral Centre, Publication Centre, Holy Redeemer Health Centre, Bishop's House, St. Joseph's College, and several parishes, schools, hostels, churches and chapels, establishment of religious congregations, founding of lay associations and movements like the Catholic Union, Catholic Youth Organisation, Catholic Women's Association, Legion of Mary, the organisation of the Diocesan Social

Service Society, trained personnel — both clerical and lay-, the credit certainly goes to the admirable leadership and untiring efforts of Bishop Abraham.

"As a great pastor", writes Archbishop Menamparampil, "[Bishop Abraham] reached the most inaccessible places and encouraged and supported his co-workers, the Catholic communities and all the communities around".

Archbishop Joseph Mittathany remembers Bishop Abraham "as a kind, gentle and hard-working pastor". "The Church in the North East and particularly the diocese of Kohima", he writes, "was indeed fortunate in having a competent, dynamic and deeply spiritual man [in Bishop Abraham] as its religious leader and shepherd".

Bishop Lumen Monteiro of Agartala recalls what Bishop Abraham whispered into his ears on the day of his Episcopal Ordination: "Always remember to be a good and loving pastor". These words sum up what Bishop Abraham endeavoured to be always. "His deep love for the Naga community and his keen interest to establish a local Church in Nagaland", observes Bishop Lumen, "also brought him much worry and struggle. But his dream for Nagaland was never shattered ... He was 'unstoppable' in letting his dream become a reality - and today we have sufficient proof of his indefatigable energy".

Sr. Ivy D'Souza FMA who knew Bishop Abraham from 1974 onward describes him as a "Touring Bishop" with the heart of a "pastor, the Good Shepherd". Fr. Joseph Nangachiveettil observes that Bishop Abraham's love and concern reached even the clerks and domestic servants who considered him as their father and well-wisher. Fr. John Kashiiprii in his turn writes, "Bishop Abraham's pastoral heart could not be doubted. He could sit and chat with ordinary people ... he cared for local vocations both to the priestly and religious life". "Bishop Abraham", shares Sr. Aloha FCC, "led a very simple life making himself one among the people. This was especially evident when he visited the villages. He loved his flock and he ate with them from the same dish even forgoing his health condition".

Sr. Jessina SABS, among other things, makes "special mention of the efficient way [Bishop Abraham] organized the pastoral work in the diocese. The Diocesan Pastoral Council, the Parish Councils and the many Commissions and Committees are a proof of his pastoral vision..." "Bishop Abraham", continues Sr. Jessina, "was far ahead of his time in his vision for the Church in the North East..."

Fr. Mundathanathu Michael (who worked in Nagaland for about 30 years) feels "No one will deny that Bishop Abraham was a planner and hard worker. He had so many details to attend to in the execution of any plan, but he had an eye to everything. He saw to it that congregations were invited to work in the diocese, and drew out agreements with them all, so that there would be no unpleasantness later on.

Fr. Thomas Vattoth who knew Bishop Abraham from 1952 when the latter was a class X student in Sonada describes him as a boy on whom the superiors placed great trust. He recalls him as "bell-ringer" of the community. In those days when no student was allowed to wear a wrist watch, Bro. A. M. Abraham (then

known as "AMA" among his companions) was provided with an "alarm clock" to take around with him in the House to ring the bell on time. "He was punctual", remarks Fr. Vattoth, "in carrying out his assignment". His companions held him in high esteem. Briefly reviewing Bishop Abraham's rich and varied life, Fr. Vattoth shows that Bishop Abraham had many "firsts" to his credit: He was among the first four clerics to be chosen to do their B. T (Bachelor of Teaching) in Darjeeling during 1960-61. In 1964 during the third year of theology Bro. A. M. Abraham was selected to go to Bombay along with Bro. Anthony Sylvester to be ordained priest at the Eucharistic Congress by Pope Paul VI. He was one of the first Indian Salesians to be appointed, at a rather young age, as Rector of Don Bosco, Dibrugarh. Later on he became the first Bishop of the newly created diocese of Kohima–Imphal. He did not have a smooth sailing from the start since his appointment was not welcomed by some. But Bishop Abraham took everything in his stride, trusted in God and did his best to live out to the full his Episcopal motto: "A Loving Service to God and Man".

Fr. Vattoth who had the opportunity to accompany him in his missionary tours in the many villages of Nagaland and Manipur tells us that Bishop Abraham "had great enthusiasm and stamina in visiting the parishes and mission centres and the villages in the interior. He proved himself to be a good pastor. He was ready to be accommodated in any hut, eat what was given him. He carried with him during the village tours the Super 8 projector and films to attract the people and to instruct them in the faith. Bishop Abraham was generous in investing on audio-visual aids for the various parishes and mission centres. He provided them with a portable generator, a set of films and slides for the faith formation of the people. During his pastoral visits he would plan with the parish priests or priest in-charge future developments of each mission centre.

THE CLOSING DAYS

Poor eyesight and failing health gradually made it difficult for him to answer the many demands on his time and energy. At times he found it hard to keep up the necessary relationships. He developed severe diabetes. One of his eyes became weak. His health deteriorated. He decided to send in his resignation. He resigned on 11 July 1996. His Vicar General, Fr. Jose Mukala, was appointed the Administrator of the diocese.

After his resignation Bishop Abraham stayed for some time in Mount Tabor Retreat House, Kohima. He was in Shillong for a month and a half. He then went back to Kohima. From 1 October 1997 he was staying in Bishop's House Dimapur. He had a slight fall on 9 November. He was treated immediately. There was no fracture. However, since the pain on the thigh was increasing he was admitted in Holy Redeemer Health Centre, Chumukedima near Dimapur on 17 November. From the following day onward he developed acute chest pain. Since the medicines given were not helping him, he was taken for an ECG. The

ECG results showed that he had already suffered a massive heart attack. So the needed arrangements were made to take Bishop to Dibrugarh early morning of Wednesday 19 November.

When it was known that his condition was critical all the nearby institutions were informed about it. By 6.00 p.m. of Tuesday 18 November there was at his bedside Archbishop Joseph Mittathany of Imphal who was on his way to Tezpur, Fr. Jose Mukala, the Administrator of the Diocese, Fr. Varghese Palathingal, the Salesian Provincial of Dimapur, and several Priests, Sisters and Lay Leaders. Bishop Abraham remained conscious all through. When asked whether he should be administered the Anointing of the Sick, he readily agreed. Archbishop Mittathany administered the sacrament and gave him Holy Communion. All this while he repeated in Malayalam "Oh my Mother, Oh my Jesus", " I am going home".

Though conscious, his eyes remained closed for nearly two and half-hours as he was nearing his end. Bishop Abraham breathed his last without any undue struggle at 9.15 p.m. on Tuesday 18 November 1997.

THE LAST RITES

Next morning (Wednesday 19 November) the mortal remains of Bishop Abraham were taken first to the Bishop's House Chapel and after brief prayers was removed to Holy Cross Church, Dimapur. The Holy Mass celebrated there for

the repose of his soul was attended by a large gathering. The body was then placed in the hall of the Pastoral Centre, since extension work was still going on in the parish Church. The body remained there the whole of 19 November for people to come and pray, and pay their last respects.

The funeral cortege from Dimapur started at 7.00 a.m. (20 November) to bring the body to Kohima. On the way to Kohima the cortege made brief stops along the main road at 4th Mile, Tenyphe Village, on the main road close to Newman Bible College, Chumukedima, Kukidolong, Medziphema, Zubza and at an Orphanage near Kohima before it reached the Cemetery Chapel at Kohima. Very touching indeed was the reception given to Bishop's mortal remains by the Catholics at the above-mentioned stops all along the way by showering flowers and by praying for the repose of his soul. Of particular mention were the one at Zubza were the Salesian aspirants paid their respects and the other at the Orphanage run by a non-Catholic in which the majority of children were Catholics. Bishop Abraham used to stop at the orphanage every now and then on his way to or from Kohima to give the children sweets.

The different groups of Catholic Associations kept the vigil and prayed for their Bishop. The funeral service started at 11.00 a.m. on Friday 21 November with the funeral procession from the cemetery chapel to the Cathedral Church. Present at the funeral Mass in the Cathedral were all the bishops of the North East (except Archbishop Tarcisius Resto who had come the previous night to offer Mass, but had to come away because of some engagements and Bishop Orestes Marengo due to his advanced age), some 240 priests among whom were Fr. Dominic Jala, the Salesian provincial, of Guwahati. Representing Bishop Abraham's relations were his nephew Mr. Matthachen from Kerala along with two other relatives and Sr. Gracy FMA, superior of the FMA community at Maligaon. The Salesian Province of Calcutta was represented by Bro. V. D. Varkey. Though a most sad moment, it was a joy to see the big Cathedral Church built by Bishop Abraham filled to capacity.

Archbishop Joseph Mittathany of Imphal presided at the Eucharist and at the Funeral Services. Fr. Varghese Palathingal, the Salesian Provincial of Dimapur, preached the homily. Before the body was placed in the tomb which was prepared at the side of the main altar several people spoke wishing dear Bishop Abraham "Adieu". Among those who spoke were Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil on behalf of the Bishops of North East India, representatives of the Government, of diocesan priests, of religious, of various Catholic Associations, etc. Fr. Joaquim D'Souza SDB, Regional Councillor of Australasia, who reached from Pune towards the end of the Mass and as the funeral rites were beginning, read the Message of the Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco and spoke a few words. Wreathes from parishes and institutions and individuals were many. I would like to end this brief write-up on dear Bishop Abraham in the words of late Bishop Orestes Marengo: "In no other diocese have so many new mission centres with big schools and boarding houses for boys, and convents with boarding houses for girls have

sprung up within such a short time as in the diocese of Kohima under Bishop Abraham's zealous and skillful administration and the hard work of his dynamic Fathers, Sisters and the Laity." The same Bishop Marengo used to tell Fr. Joseph Puthenpurakal whenever he met him (as Vicar General of Bishop Abraham): "You have a wonderful Bishop. He works so hard. God bless him." May Our Blessed Mother, Mary Help of Christians, who is the Patroness of the Diocese of Kohima, reward dear Bishop Abraham for all the work he has done for the spread the Good News of Her Divine Son in North East India, and especially in Nagaland and Manipur.

Fr. Varghese Palathingal SDB
Provincial

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NAGALAND, INDIA

For the Necrology :

Born	:	**11 July, 1933**
Professed	:	**24 May, 1954**
Priestly Ordination	:	**2 December, 1964**
Episcopal Ordination	:	**14 October, 1973**
Died	:	**18 November, 1997**
Place	:	**Dimapur, India**
Age	:	**64 Years**