

**FR. IRUDAYASAMY PITCHAIMUTHU SJ**  
**(02.10.1913 - 23.08.1999)**

Great men leave behind their foot prints for the poor mortals like us to follow. And Fr. Irudayasamy was a holy man. I have lived with him for 19 years in Madurai St. Mary's, and a next door neighbour for 15 years. And yet I feel diffident to write a decent account of his beautiful life. Yet, I shall try my best.

In my search to know something about his childhood. I approached his younger sister, a religious in the CIC, Grace by name. She says, "I do not know the full life history of my brother. He joined the Society when I was in the 5th Std. My mother died when I was in the 4th Std. had 3 sons and 3 daughters. The eldest brother and sister of my priest brother, died. You can get enough information from Fr. Peter Rayappan."

And Fr. Peter Rayappan says, " we were companions. Fr. Irudayasamy was born on 2nd, Oct, 1913, to Pitchaimuthu of Kitheriammal in Malayadipatty, Trichy diocese. There were 3 boys and 3 girls. Malaiadipatty was an ancient parish, noted for devotion and simplicity. His family was fairly well to-do; had extensive agricultural lands. He was sent to St. Joseph's College boarding, Trichy, for first form (now VI std). He spent 10 years there. He wanted to join the Society after his intermediate but his father told him to continue his studies and he could join after his B.A. What was his motive? Perhaps, he wanted to offer to God the first graduate of the village or perhaps he thought that his son might change his mind; but his son was faithful to his vocation till his last breath".

I must say a word about Fr. Irudayasamy's detachment from his family. "He who loves father, mother... more than me...." He took the saying of Christ literally. He never spoke of his family. He did not even want to go for the burial of his brother, but we persuaded him to go and he returned immediately after the burial. All along he had very little to do with his kith and kin. His detachment was total. But he had life-long and deep friendship with Frs. Mariadoss and Peter Rayappan. When Fr. Mariadoss died, he wept and was really sad for some days. However, with a good religious spirit, he regained his usual poise soon.

Talking of friendship must mention two persons with whom he had life-long correspondence. When he was transferred to Loyola College in 1961, he came in contact with the family of Emmanuel Raja of Chennai. Mrs. Hilda Raja wrote to him in 1996: "you are one of those few Jesuits whom we cherish with great love. That we are not able to visit you is one nagging worry I have. This letter brings you our love and fond wishes and prayers that God bless you as he has done and give you restful years and

abundant joy". When she heard of his death she wrote to the Rector of Madurai, St. Mary's: strange it is that on Aug 24, I told my husband that we should pay Fr. Irudayasamy a visit in Dindigul. We know Fr. Irudayasamy from the early 60s. He was a successful warden here in Loyola. He succeeded where persons with modern views and better input to guide Youth, had failed. The student respected him and admired him for his deep sense of duty, his genuine concern, credibility and his prayerful life. I remember many students saying, "We dare not give him trouble because he is a good priest". Even later when we met old students they voiced the same view. Ultimately what youth looks for is those qualities that mark a man of God. He had those qualities in abundance. We both will miss him. In his death we have lost a genuine Jesuit friend who accepted us as we are. We have been enriched by our friendship with him and shall be ever grateful to the Almighty for blessing us with friends like him. He achieved his greatness by his humility. A good role-model for all. We shall always remember him with affections".

The other person is Sr. Martha of St. Joseph's hospital, Dindigul. He was in Dindigul St. Mary's for two years as socius and 6 years in Beschi three years as pre-novitiate director and three as Rector. There developed a deep sense of friendship. Fr. had 5 operations for hernia and the maternal care of the Sister put courage and endurance in him. He always spoke very highly of her and wrote to her regularly for her feast and never missed to visit her when he went to Dindigul. He took the trouble of going to Dindigul to attend her golden jubilee. She was so much touched by his presence that she wrote to him on 13th, May 93. "I very much appreciated the trouble you took to come and join me in thanking the Lord for his loving presence, unflinching support of intimate companionship during my long journey of the past 50 years as an ICM Sister. With renewed sentiments of gratitude for what you have been and are to me in my life's journey". Fr. M.D. John S.J. writes in 86 "Everybody saw that you loved your work of forming boys from early years to be candidates to the Society or to the seminary. You gave your best for the boys. I pray that you continue the work of discerning and helping vocations even if it be not in an official capacity. This unofficial work may be needed more these days". Fr. Irudayasamy is identical with fostering vocations. But how did he get his vocation?

Fr.D. Francis Xavier, SJ. has a piece of interesting information about Fr. Irudayasamy's vocation. "The memorable 1st Oct, 1936, is not only memorable for you but also for your colleagues and co-novices. Still more memorable is the day when, in answer to the fervent prayers of two novices, Brs. K.A. Susai and Ignatius Ambalam, you miraculously recovered from a fatal sickness in Malayadipatty and vowed to become a Jesuit in gratitude for the divine favour".

Shembag - a sweet smelling word for the older generation. Shembag brings really volumes of memories. You must have lived there to understand this. Fr. A.J. Thambi, SJ. wrote:” Even though I have the time to write - writing is not enough as Thottungal says we must get together and talk about our formation days - Novitiate, Juniorate, philosophy, Shembag days, regency, get-together at St. Mary's and the two days picnic etc.

Well, Fr. Inudayasamy went up to Shembag for his 7 years of training, non stop and not coming down. We can come down only if our parents die. This is beyond the understanding of the young generation - to stay in one place without ever moving out.

Fr. Irudayasamy loved the hills and never missed a chance to go there in later days. He liked the compulsory walks in the novitiate, and later long walks on Villa and villa Domi days. He loved games and vigorous games. He was an excellent player of badminton. His left hand cuts were famous. Fr.A. Sebastian of the Sivagangai diocese remembers that Fr. was a first class sportsman. This sportsmanship remained with him till death with all its vigour.

T.V. came to St. Mary's Madurai in Jan, 1986, but before that he never missed the cricket commentary. I have seen him fully glued to the T.V. when games were going on. It is interesting to see him gesticulating with his left hand and shouting "அடி".

Now let us listen to what others say of him. A. Casimir Camillus of Calcutta , writes, “My memories are strongest of the years in the ap. school during 53 - 56. As I recall those 3 years I think of your vivacity, playing with us volleyball, and just being with us most of the day. I have been deeply influenced by two things by you. Your simplicity, which did not stop at communicating all the joys and sorrows and difficulties to us boys, particularly during “points” and secondly the contents of the points themselves. These two things I have tried to follow”.

Fr. K.M. Sengole of the Sivagangai diocese confirms this when he says that Father was a very kind and simple person Simplicity brings joy as is testified by Mr. Peter Manickavasagam of Tenkasi: "He always used to wear a smiling face which made us be free with him”. Paradoxically a simple heart is large. Fr. Singarayan, SJ. an apostolic himself says: “Especially your winning heart, a large heart, which your student always appreciated in you”. A simple heart goes out to others Fr. James Rodrigues, eloquent in season and out of season, has this beautiful idea about him. “I am writing this letter(1985) to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for your long and

dedicated service as Ap School director, through which you successfully fostered vocations and formed them after the mind and heart of Christ. It was your first love. The number of good priests and religious that have passed through the ap. school owes much to you not only for their first initiation into the vocation of priestly and religious life, but also for your continuous interest in them all through their formation years and after. You took personal interest in each one and never failed to visit their homes whenever the opportunity came your way. I believe that personal contact does much more in promoting a vocation than all the advertisement and exhibitions. This is a contribution you can still make for this cause".

A simple heart has a charism of taking up responsibility of hard work. Fr.M. Gnanasandanam, P.P. of Ayyampalayam is a grateful admirer of Fr. Irudayasamy. Whenever I met him or he wrote to me he always had a word about his Ap. director." He took special classes for the apostolics and taught us English grammar for so many days. It was a regular and systematic teaching. He corrected our essays and summaries. - big questions and answers and thus prepared us for the exams. Hence the apostolics, as a rule, were taking the first ranks.

A simple heart accepts and sustains others. Fr. George Thottungal, SJ. wrote in 96 from Africa:" My hearty congrats and thanks for the support and quiet inspiration given me during our formation years and after". Fr. Thottungal is famous for side-lights. In that letter he writes:" I am transferred here (Jesuit Novitiate, Tanzania) because of various problems of formation in our society of to-day. Rightly or wrongly it is assumed that the presence of an elderly priest (77) will help influence and elevate the lives of our novices who are drawn, most often, from social background hardly congenial to religious life".

A simple heart impresses others, without itself being aware of it. Mr. Meenachisundaram of Amber writes: I am an old student of your class, (S.S.L.C - 1961) I will never forget you till my death".

A simple heart has no need to beat the drum to make its presence felt. But its qualities are recognised and acknowledged beyond the seas. V. Rev Fr. Peter - Hans Kovlvenback writes in 86: " you have placed yourself unreservedly at the disposal of the Society of its superiors. It is no wonder then that they have been able to use your services in a variety of ministries: Teacher, Principal (H.M.) Rector, Procurator, in different institutions of the Province; Director of the Apostolic School and Pre-novitiate; and vice superior and teaching in the Juniorate

No matter what the mission entrusted to you, you always accomplished it with alacrity, dedication and conscientiousness, that is characteristic of you, always manifesting a deep earnestness to do the Lord's work. In a word yours is a life that has been spent entirely in the service of God and your fellow men”.

A simple heart is humble, offends no one as Fr.T. Mariadass, SJ, says, “He was a very gentle and soft-spoken person; wished to offend nobody by word or deed”.

A simple heart engenders gratitude without expecting it. Fr. A. Joseph, now Rector of St. Joseph's, wrote in 97. “I am very grateful to you. If I am a priest to-day it is because of you. I received God's call through you. When I was struggling in studies you helped me and encouraged me to study well. I will never forget this in my life. Your piety and dedication touched me a lot. You have a special place in my heart”.

A simple heart has a fund of sympathy. To quote Fr.D. Francis Xavier, SJ. once again: “The Lord has gifted you with a rare fund of sympathy and the trouble you take to understand people, and console and encourage them. I am one of those who have benefited by such a kind and gracious nature. These qualities eminently fitted to be the Rector, thrice (once in Beschi, of twice in St. Mary's, Mdu); to be the procurator and H.M. of St. Mary's, Madurai, and to be a successful director of the School for umpteen years... Your love for youth is great. You have helped a notable number of students to become priests. Your tact of adaptability and accommodating habits of generosity have led very many to the altar. You have endeared yourself to countless young men by your simplicity, straightforwardness and kindness. You are not secretive. We can read your thoughts of sentiments mostly in your face as in a mirror”.

A simple heart bears trials of tribulations: Fr. R. Doraisamy, SJ. his senior in the novitiate, writes in 86: you have been an exemplary Jesuit leading a life of sacrifice. You have guided so many youngmen in their divine vocation and helped them to become saintly priests. This has been your silent and hidden work. There are so many all over our land who owe their priestly life to your devoted care and concern for them”.

One last tribute by Fr. Peter Rayappan, SJ, “You have become the second Turlan of the ap. school.”

Already at the time of the silver jubilee at the Ap. school in 1943. It could count 30 diocesan priests, one Jesuit, 19 scholastics of the Society and two S.H.J brothers. In 1968 it counted 59 diocesan priests, 15 seminarians, 33 Jesuit priests, 33 Scholastics,

seven Jesuit Brs. two Carmalites, two Rosarians, two S.H.J Brothers, two Capuchins, two Redemptorists, three SVDs and 13 in early formation.

To sum up, he is a silent holy man, dedicated to his work.

- **Fr.M.S. Savariraj, S.J.**