APOSTLE OF KANARA

The Vicariate of Kanara was the first field of the missionary work of Blessed Joseph Vaz. The Vicariate was in a critical condition and for our young Vicar it was probably a difficult task to undertake in the far flung areas, torn between two jurisdictional rivalries, both claiming authority over the Catholics lying in these areas. The simple faithful did not know who their legitimate Superiors were. Blessed Joseph Vaz passed on foot from Goa to Kanara, visiting on the way the flocks without shepherds. He realized the utter spiritual abandonment of these Catholics. Stopping a few days at each village through which he passed, he gathered the Catholics and ministered to their needs.

Fr. Sebastiao de Rego described the apostolate in Kanara in his "Life" as well as in his "Chronology": Catholics were living in small hamlets amidst the non-Christians. Some of them were very poor, so Blessed Joseph Vaz spent everything he had brought with him in helping them. Then he turned to the belongings of his nephew, Joseph Carvalho, who was accompanying him for some time, until they were left with their bare clothes on. And thus having nothing with them, he still had something to give to the needy from the alms that the Christians of the place used to share with him. He was in Kanara for 4 years, within that time he gave shape to the Church of Mangalore. It had been a barrack covered with grass before him. He gave it the shape of a temple worthy of God. He repaired the Church at Barcelore and erected a new one at Gangalym (Ganguly), where there were more Christians, and consecrated both of them to Our Lady. He built chapels in some villages and instituted annual feasts of the respective patron in each of them. He would start the day by morning meditation and divine office. He would then gather the children of the village where he was, and teach them Catechism; and those capable of studying were taught to read and write. He would baptize those who had grown up without the sacrament, hear confessions, and preach, regularize marriages celebrated without a priest, offer Mass, administer Holy Communion and the other sacraments to those who approached him or asked for them and in the end send the people away in peace.

Then he would give himself to more fervent prayer. In the evenings he would visit the sick of the village, wash and squeeze their wounds with his own hands and bandage them. He also spent a lot from what he got from the faithful to ransom those children who had been sold into slavery by their parents to the non-Christians. He thus ransomed a good number of children, men and women from the slavery of the body as well as of the soul.

He opened a small school in some of the villages, appointed a Catechist and made provision by establishing confraternities (Irmandades) for the maintenance of the catechist, the school and the Church with the people's cooperation as best as he could; and then he moved on to the next village and did the same. BL. Joseph Vaz showed exquisite and rare charity in his efforts to bring to the kingdom of God an apostate in Kanara. An apostate who was living as a non-Christian refused to accept his condition. He drove out the priest several times. By prayer and fasting, Bl. Joseph Vaz made several attempts to win him over and even exposed his own life to danger of death by bearing patiently the injuries and insults of the apostate. Finally, the

apostate gave way and made a good Confession. Then he and his family were reconciled to God. To save some Christians in Ullal who were living badly he exposed himself to great ill-treatment by them. They came at night on pretext of an urgent confession and made an attempt on his life by taking him to a forest. They beat him very cruelly.

Joining a great austerity of life with prudence, Bl. Joseph Vaz fought for the Church as such, with humility and with a spirit of service of souls, Thus showing how much free and detached his soul was from the worldly vanities.

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