



ANDREW ON WEDNESDAY

The Village Priest - His prayer was the people he engaged with

A couple of days ago this lovely gentleman who happens to be the uncle of my wife (from her father's side) passed away. It is now an accepted fact that when people pass on we go on a tirade of celebrating a person's life.

Probably this is how it should be. Nevertheless, I choose to share with you the story of Fr Ninu not only out of this (good) habit but because he is indeed a man for all seasons, a good soul, a dad to none but a Father to many - and there is so much to learn about this man's life. He is a man who chose to do it the hard way.

Fr Ninu, as he was affectionately called, was a Jesuit by devotion, passion and out of choice, who lived in India for decades on end. He had chosen to go there and spend his priest-hood running schools, farming, gardening and raising animals and unceasingly connected with the community. This simple, fragile looking man of small stature but decisive and resolute hailed from Haż-Zebbuġ.

This is Fr Ninu:

First, he never complained: Even when his cancer was affecting him so badly, he was poorly and sick but he would never go in 'the pity-me mode' come what may, even if he had a right to. The reverse actually happened. As we Skyped or spoke on Messenger he would be more interested about our lives, our jobs and how our children were doing than talking about his predicament. He had this deep-seated altruism which is difficult to describe.

To illustrate his generosity, I will share with you just one example.

Only a couple of months ago, even though knowing in his heart of hearts that there wasn't much to do about his cancer he still made the arduous trip to Malta from India, his final one at that. He must have travelled for three or four



Fr Anthony Gatt sj

20.01.1939 - 21.03.2017

days, with endless train, plane and car trips, just to bid farewell. He knew well enough that this was the last time he would step on his country of origin. Whilst he was here he acted normally, spoke frankly, was humble and gentle as always. Not only that, even though he was very sick he still engaged in pastoral work, visited family, friends and his Society companions.

Secondly, he was a man of community: Fr Ninu loved being with people. He had this ability to recall what he knew about someone and throw it back into the conversation, connect the dots, ask inquisitively but al-

ways and exclusively out of genuine interest. He wanted to know and share the pains and tribulations, the passions and elations. What a lovely man he was. He had this sense of community. He wanted to be with people all the time. His prayer was the people he engaged with. He knew that he could only find the Jesus he was so ardently in love with amongst the people. He was not a bigot and even if the age gap would be significant he would laugh his heart out when his nephews and nieces and their children would share a mischievous adventure - because he knew well enough that life is not about the 'do not's' but

about living it. He strongly believed that what is right and good for self and others is of God.

Thirdly, he was a man that stood up to what he believed in. Fr Ninu had a passion for his work. He loved India like his own. He enjoyed teaching, farming, administering sacraments - he had this great zeal to work because he knew that sharing suffering is what brings you close to people. All he knew he put into action. Whether its planting trees or teaching, administering sacraments or giving advice, Fr Ninu did it with happiness, contentment and cheerfulness. He spoke a myriad of languages but always respected the culture (except for that one time when he had a close shave with the police because he was about to slaughter a cow!)

Fourthly, Fr Ninu was a Jesuit: Now those who have crossed paths with the Jesuits know that this Order is extremely grounded in the community and guided by the principle of social justice. Jesuits would never go half-way and Fr Ninu was no exception. They believe that change comes from the 'base communities' and what is important is not fitting people into moulds but by sharing lives. Fr Ninu knew that being Jesuit is being human, nothing more nothing less. He loved his Order like his own family and went out of his way several times to serve obediently. In not so many words, Fr Ninu had this thing about him that felt like Jesus

Ghandi ngħid
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29 March 1971

~~Calley~~ ~~guilty of~~ ~~My Lai~~ ~~massacre~~

Lieutenant William Calley has been found guilty of murder at a court martial for his part in the My Lai massacre which claimed the lives of 500 South Vietnamese civilians.

The 27-year-old commander could receive the death penalty or life imprisonment after the massacre which saw US soldiers open fire on civilians in My Lai and neighbouring villages in central Vietnam in March 1968.

Lieutenant Calley was in charge of Charlie Company, a unit of the American Division's 11th Infantry Brigade, who were on a mission to root out the communist 48th Viet Cong Battalion fighters.

Brutal killings

The Viet Cong were not in the village and instead more than 500 unarmed civilians

were brutally killed in an unprovoked attack by US troops.

Lieutenant Calley will be sentenced in the next few days after the verdict was announced at Fort Benning, Georgia today. The jury of six army officers spent 13 days weighing up evidence from a four-month trial.

They rejected his claim he was merely following orders in a military chain of command instilled in him since joining the army.

Lieutenant Calley faced four charges:

- the murder of at least 30 "oriental human beings" at a junction of two trails
- killing 70 others in a ditch
- shooting a man who approached him with his hands raised begging for mercy

killing a child running from the ditch where the 70 died.

He was found guilty on the first three charges, although the number of the first was slashed from 30 to one because of conflicting evidence, and the death toll in the second charge was reduced to 20.

The final charge was reduced to assault with intent to kill a child of which he was found guilty.

Three of Lieutenant Calley's senior officers will be tried on charges arising from the massacre, two men junior to him have already been tried and acquitted and charges against 19 others have been dropped.

Charges came after the army commissioned an investigation into the cover-up of the massacre which became known as the Peers inquiry.