

Asian Journal of Religious Studies

January 2015

60/1

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Asian Journal of Religious Studies

Asian Journal of Religious Studies (formerly known as *AUC*) is a pastoral journal for Christian leaders. It is a bimonthly published from the Papal Seminary, Pune 411014. Inspiring and brief articles beneficial for Christian leaders are welcome.

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Printed at: Kunal Offset, Pune
Typeset at: Papal Seminary Centenary
Computer Centre



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Editorial

Two Saints

Pope Francis on 23 November 2014 conferred sainthood on two Indians-Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Sister Euphrasia. The canonisation day was a red letter day for the Indian Church, which received wide publicity. All the TV channels aired live images from Vatican in the afternoon and also ran discussions on the divinity and social contributions of Kuriakose Chavara, popularly called Chavara Achan, and Euphrasia, who is known as Evuprasiamma. Both of them were born in the 19th century and went on to become the solace for tens of thousands of believers. Chavara Achan was born about 70 years before Evuprasiamma and died in 1871 at the age of 65. Evuprasiamma died in 1952 at the age of 75.

Father Chavara is the founder of both Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) and Congregation of the Mother of Carmel (CMC), to which Sister Euphrasia belonged. He is viewed not only as a Catholic priest, but also as a social reformer. He established a school with every church and offered free education with a view to help people from lower castes who had extremely limited

access to education those years. He had made it his mission to encourage people from lower castes, particularly Dalits, to study. He even set up a school for Sanskrit, when it was the language of the social elite. He is also credited with the first noon meal programme for school kids.

Sister Euphrasia was known as praying mother and saint among nuns. Colleagues, fellow nuns, and local people say she was indeed a living saint. The 83-year-old Sister Athanasia of Christ Raja Convent, Pavaratty, remembers Sister Euphrasia. “I used to watch Sister Euphrasia praying with a rosary in her hand in the chapel. Whenever we faced some problems either in school or at home, we used to ask Sister Euphrasia to pray for us. She was a living saint,” says Sister Athanasia.

“Spirituality knows no borders. And saints don’t limit themselves to anyone. I reiterated this once again as I joined the multitude celebrating the Mass in Vatican after the Pope had canonised Fr. Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Sr. Euphrasia,” wrote Dr KS Radhakrishnan, Chairman of Kerala Public Service Commission in *Malayalam Manorama*. Many of those who participated in TV discussions on the canonisation were non-Christians.

These two saints challenge the Indian Christians to lead lives of commitment to the Church and to the nation. May they inspire us to follow Jesus by serving the people of this land.

As we enter the diamond jubilee of our journal, we strive to remain faithful to the Church’s vision to build a new society. In keeping with this vision, we are introducing some changes. Your continued feedback is welcome.

The Editor