



St Patrick's College Jaffna OBA

Melbourne, Australia

Established 1992

P.O.Box 551, Rosanna, Vic 3084



Newsletter 24

Newsletter Circulation 140

February 2015

Our Objectives

Socialise and share the Patrician spirit with benevolence.

Support our Alma Mater in meaningful ways.

Three things are necessary for the salvation of man: to know what he ought to believe; to know what he ought to desire; and to know what he ought to do. The way which leads to God is Christ. It cannot be asserted that the incarnation was absolutely necessary, "since God in his omnipotent power could have repaired human nature in many other ways": but it was the most suitable way both for the purpose of instruction and of satisfaction. Quotations from **St Thomas Aquinas - Philosopher, Theologian & Doctor of the Church**

President's Message

Dear Fellow Patricians,

Welcome to the February 2015 edition of our newsletter. As I write this last message as President of the OBA, I feel proud to report that we have had a very successful Patrician year, with increasing number of Patricians attending the various events we organise. A record 247 Patricians, family members and friends attended the Patrician Nite and 48 attended the Family Day held on January 25, 2015, at which 16 Patricians contributed to the "SPC Cricket Fund". Our annual remittance of \$1,500 has also been sent to the College to sponsor its cricket activities.

In this edition, we present the connections between our College and the spread of Christianity in Northern Sri Lanka in the 16th - 20th centuries with a brief history of Our Lady of Madhu, the text of the Marian prayer at her shrine by Pope Francis on Thaippongall Day, an article on the great scholar, anthropologist and Patrician, Swami Gnanaprasagar and a tribute to a Patrician, Emmanuel Rajakulenthiran, who passed away last September.

Our next event will be the annual 'St Patrick's Day' festivities with the Holy Mass to be followed by the AGM and dinner. The trophies - from the Family Day held in January 2015 - for the cricket and rounds matches will also be presented at the AGM.

In 2017, we will celebrate our 25th anniversary. While it may feel like a long time away, "time waits for no man" as the saying goes and it will be upon us soon. I welcome any suggestions and ideas to commemorate the occasion in true Patrician style. One suggestion is the publication of the 'Silver Anniversary Souvenir'. Such a publication will be a great success if it includes articles by Patricians writing about their memories of the College days, photographs from the school days, anecdotes and similar contributions. Hope many Patricians can contribute to this proposed publication.

At the AGM on 21 March 2015, we will elect office bearers and committee members for the 2015/16 Patrician year. As I step down as President after serving a rewarding term of 2 years, I wish to thank all those who served as office bearers, committee members and panel members for the support and involvement by you over the years towards the success of our OBA. I also thank all Patricians who have consistently provided support and encouragement, made contributions in time and money, attended the various functions in increasing numbers, and supported the various causes and activities including the refurbishing and construction projects of the Chapel and College buildings in recent years. From very small beginnings, the OBA has come a long way and we can also be proud of the Patrician spirit with which we aid our Alma Mater dutifully.

Thank you and God bless you and your families.

Anandarajan James

St Patrick's Day celebrations: Holy Mass at 5.30 pm, followed by AGM and dinner – Saturday 21 March 2015

Nallur Swami Gnanapragasar OMI - Catholic Priest, Linguist & Patrician

This year marks the 140th Birthday and the 68th Death anniversary of an eminent Patrician and scholar, a Catholic priest, a great linguist and an etymologist, Rev Fr Gnanapragasar. This article is a tribute to this great Tamil, written by his grandnephew, Vincent Alfston Bonaventure .



Swami Gnanapragasar O.M.I was a great Tamil scholar who attained proficiency in 70 languages , an anthropologist and etymologist, who converted to Catholicism and was ordained a Catholic priest and who, single handedly embarked on the preparation of an Etymological Comparative Lexicon of the Tamil Language (Sol Pirappu Oppial Agarathi) that is writing a dictionary in each language and then compare the languages with each other. His Magnum Opus was the study of languages, which has proved that Tamil is the Mother Tongue of the World.

Sadly, much of his researches was destroyed when the Jaffna Library - which housed over 97,000 books and irreplaceable ancient palm leaf manuscripts - was burnt down on the night of 1 June 1981. Fr. H.S. David - who was the disciple of Swami Gnanapragasar and who had continued Swami Gnanapragasar's research on languages - collapsed and died when he heard the news of the burning and the destruction of the library.

Due to his intense research on the origin of the Tamil language, Swami made known to the world its uniqueness, ancient beginnings, and sweet words that have lasted time immemorial. He mastered the Saiva Siddhantham (the Hindu Doctrine or Agamas) and wrote several books and articles based on the teachings of the 'Sithantham' both in English and Tamil. He was also a historian, a writer, a poet, an editor of magazines, journals and newspapers, a musician and very good speaker. He wrote several books on religious research, books relating to history, books on anthropology and on a variety of other subjects. Among his most important historical books are:

- Yarpanna Vaipava Vimarsanam (1928), The Kingdom of Jaffna,
- Kings of Jaffna during Portuguese Period (1916), History of Jaffna under Portuguese and Dutch Rule,
- Indus Valley Script & Civilization, India's Ancient Chronology and Civilization,
- Laws of Initial Consonants, Early History of the Tamils and their Religion (1932),
- Kings of Jaffna from 13th Century, Historical aspects of Christianity and Buddhism,
- History of the Catholic Church in Jaffna (1926), Catholicism in Ceylon 1502-1602
- Early History of the ancient Popes (1922), 25 years of Catholic progress in the diocese of Jaffna (1925),
- Philosophical Saivism and Saiva Siddhantha, Research on Pillaiyar,
- Research on Animal Sacrifice The Origin of Caste System among the Tamils (1920),
- Ancient settlers of Jaffna, Ancient Kings of Jaffna,
- Life from the excavations of Indus Valley, Origin and History of the Shrine Madhu.

He said "Tamil predates the literatures of other Indian languages by more than a thousand years and its universality qualifies Tamil to stand as one of the great classical traditions and literatures of the world. Thirukkural, one of the world's greatest works on ethics, Tholkappiyam, the Sangam Anthologies and Pattuppattu dates back to 200 BC. His books on the '**Origins of the Tamil Word, Dravidian Language and Dravidian in Sinhala**' are treasures he has contributed to Tamils. Besides these contributions, he has written more than one hundred books on other topics. He also left behind a number of manuscripts. One of them entitled, *The kings of Jaffna with sidelights on the history of the Tamils in Sri Lanka from the earliest era* was written towards the end of his life.

In the book '**Ceylon originally a land of Dravidians**', he maintains that at the earliest times, Sri Lanka was occupied, at least in the main, by a Tamil speaking people and that the successive waves of early immigrants of South India mingled one with another in the course of centuries and they were all of the same stock and spoke the same dialect of Tamil. The chapter 'The Tamils turn Sinhalese' theorises that the Sinhalese are Dravidians in origin. He maintains that the Tamils turned Sinhalese in the course of few centuries and that the new language created by the super-structure of the Indo-Aryan became settled in the course of time, the new words having been assimilated to the old Tamil dialect by giving them a twist comfortable to it. In the chapter 'Beginning of Tamil Rule in Sri Lanka' he traces the history of Tamil rule in Sri Lanka till year 1215. Swami Gnanapragasar has also contributed articles on the history of Jaffna to the Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register. He was made Head of

the Historical Manuscripts Commission by Governor Sir Andrew Caldecott (1937-1944) and was also appointed to the Senate of the University of Ceylon.

The separate coinage in North Ceylon under the Singai Ariya Chakravartis of Jaffna is described in the book 'The forgotten coinage of the Kings of Jaffna.' *The Kailaaya Maalai, Vaiyapaatal, Pararajasekaran Ula* and *Raja Murai* are described in his article 'Sources of the *Yalppaana Vaipava Maalai*.' 'Some ruins in Jaffna' is another book by him which gives particulars of a few ancient objects found in the Thenmaradchi division of Jaffna in Chavakachcheri, Verakkadu, Talavalai and Sankiliya Thidal.

Nallur Swami's Early Life

Swami Gnanapragas (Vaithilingam) was born in Manipay to Hindu parents on 30th August 1875. He was a descendant of King Pararajasekaran V1 (1478 – 1519). His father died when he was 5 years old. His mother, Thangamuthu was left a widow and young Vaithilingam (as he was called in his early years) was fatherless in Manipay, Jaffna. The assistance and influence of Vaithilingam's prosperous, Grandfather Gardiner Chitampalam (Grandfather of Sir Gardiner) gave a new lease of life to his eldest daughter Thangamuttu.



When his mother re-married a Catholic, Poet Thambimuttu of Atchuvely (son of Udaiyar Santhiapillai), Vaithilingam was also brought into Catholic Faith. After baptism Vaithilingam was named Gnanapragas by his parents. Mr. Thambimuttu, it should be noted, was the grandfather of poet Meary James Thambimuttu, Publisher of Poetry London and later Poetry London - New York. (1938 - 1983) (source - encyclopedia Britannica 1984) whose father's mother was Gnanapragas's mother. It should also be noted that this exemplary family history was taught in Tamil Secondary Schools curriculum throughout Sri Lanka in the 50s and 60s. Mr. Thambimuttu was a renowned Tamil scholar who owned a printing press in Atchuvely, edited, printed and published many books and also edited, printed and distributed a paper called the *Sanmarka Pothini*, a fortnightly Catholic journal to all over northern province for 40 years without any cost to the people. Gnanapragas's stepfather was a catholic and an editor of many books & novels, devotional and doctrinal literature and many books on drama and these factors completely revolutionized and shaped a new life of young Vaithilingam.

Vaithilingam came under the influence and guidance of Mr. Thambimuttu from his tender age and developed his inborn talents to the full and became very proficient in Tamil and music, at a very young age. As the stepfather was anxious that his son Gnanapragas should learn Sanskrit, an ancient language in which a lot of Hindu texts as well as dramas were written, he sent him to a famous scholar of that time, Sabapathy Kurukkal. In addition Gnanapragas learned to play the "mattalam", a traditional drum and the violin at an early age. Young Gnanapragas had his primary education at Atchuvely and later at the Manipay Memorial English School. Then he entered St. Patrick's College Jaffna in 1890. After the completion of his education at St. Patrick's College, he passed the General Clerical Examination in 1893 with distinction and was posted to Railway Head Office in Colombo. However, he remained in the service only for three years. He resigned from service in 1895 and entered St. Martin's Seminary in Jaffna to study for the priesthood. On 1 December 1901 he was ordained a priest.

As a priest, he flung himself fully into his priestly duties and became a forceful missionary. He converted many thousands of people to Christianity in the midst of great opposition and hostile environment, built as many as 37 churches and 30 primary schools which no others had done before or since in the North or East or West or South. Most of his churches were built in the remote and low caste areas of the north. Gnanapragas has determined that it was his vocation to free the socially downtrodden people, especially suffering under the yoke of the caste system. The people, both Catholics and non-Catholics, found in him a 'saviour' and he could bravely say in 1940 that Catholicism alone had the key to solving this problem. Fr. C.H. Lytton and Gnanapragas spearheaded the agitation for the Northern Railways, the church advocated the need for water and drainage system for the city of Jaffna and colonizing the Wannai region with the view of extending cultivation, had been some of the moves undertaken with a prophetic vision and such endeavour have borne much fruit for northern society.

He operated his mission from St Francis Xavier's Church, Nallur which he built. The last church he built was Anthoniar Kovil in Manipay, his birthplace. Gnanapragas was not a mere teacher of doctrines, but above all a father who was concerned for his mission. He dedicated himself fully to the welfare of his flock., sacrificed time and energy to instruct, guide and help his flock and made a mark not only in Sri Lanka but also in India and other countries as linguist and etymologist. Germany issued a stamp in recognition of his outstanding scholarship in 1945. Sri Lanka issued a stamp in his honour on 22 May 1981. India honoured him and presented him with awards. Fr. Heras who was engaged in deciphering the Indus Valley Script came all the way from India and visited him in his residence at Nallur, Jaffna to clarify some of the matters relating to the script of the Indus Valley, which had puzzled him.



Swami Gnanapragas died on 22 January 1947 at the age of 72 at the Green Memorial Hospital in Manipay, his birthplace. A very Large gathering of people from all walks of life and of all religions were present at the funeral to pay their last respect to the great missionary. Swami Gnanapragas was a scholar whose scholarship and erudition, one could observe, had not been made use of fully either by the country or even by the Tamil-speaking people. The foreign missionaries could not have done what Gnanapragas was able to do, such as mastering the Tamil Language and using the instrument of dialogue sermons in preaching. Here he could be reckoned to be a missionary who paved the way to make it possible to live and experience the God of the Bible in our own language and culture.

His Holiness the Pope Francis visited the shrine of Our Lady of Madhu on Thaippungal Day 2015. We publish below a brief history of the origins of the shrine, its connections to our College and the address by His Holiness to the faithful gathered at the shrine.



Christianity was brought to the kingdom of Jaffna by the Portuguese missionaries from India. During this time the Catholics formed a church in Mantai installing a statue of Our Lady of Good Health in a shrine. The Dutch invasion and the persecution of the Catholic Church by the King of Jaffna in 1670 led to 20 Catholic families fleeing from Mantai, along with the statue of Mary. About the same time another 700 Catholics migrated from the Jaffna peninsula into the Vanni forests. When these two communities met in the hamlet of Maruthamadhu, they installed a new shrine with the statue. With the revival of Catholic faith by missionaries such as **Joseph Vaz** (now Saint), Oratorian priests expanded the small shrine in the late 17th century. With the arrival of the British to the island in 1796, the persecution ceased, but the number of Catholics remained small with just 50,000 members.

With such a small community, the shrine at Madhu started to attract pilgrims from all over the country.

The building of the current church at Madhu was initiated by Bishop Bonjean, the Bishop of Jaffna in 1872. (Dr Bonjean became the 1st Archbishop of Colombo in 1883 and who it was, in 1880, amalgamated the preparatory ecclesiastical seminary of Jaffna and the Jaffna Boys' seminary under the title of St. Patrick's College and applied to the Department of Public Instruction for registration of our College as a complete High school). In 1920 Bishop Brault, who was very devoted to Our Lady of Madhu, obtained the Pope's sanction for the historic solemn Canonical Coronation of the Statue of Our Lady of Madhu. In 1924 it was officially crowned by the Papal Legate who came in the name of Pope Pius XI. Bishop Guyomar (Rector of St Patrick's between 1921 to 1924) consecrated the altar and the Church on June 25 1944. The relics of the martyrs, Fabian, Sebastian, Agnes and Gratian were enclosed in a small silver casket and officially sealed and deposited in a cavity carved inside the altar.

The full text of the Pope's Marian Prayer at the Madhu Shrine on January 14, 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are in our Mother's house. Here she welcomes us into her home. At this shrine of Our Lady of Madhu, every pilgrim can feel at home, for here Mary brings us into the presence of her Son Jesus. Here Sri Lankans, Tamil and Sinhalese alike, come as members of one family. To Mary they commend their joys and sorrows, their hopes and needs. Here, in her home, they feel safe. They know that God is very near; they feel his love; they know his tender mercy. There are families here today which suffered greatly in the long conflict which tore open the heart of Sri Lanka. Many people, from north and south alike, were killed in the terrible violence and bloodshed of those years. No Sri Lankan can forget the tragic events associated with this very place, or the sad day when the venerable statue of Mary, dating to the arrival of the earliest Christians in Sri Lanka, was taken away from her shrine.

But Our Lady remained always with you. She is the mother of every home, of every wounded family, of all who are seeking to return to a peaceful existence. Today we thank her for protecting the people of Sri Lanka from so many dangers, past and present. Mary never forgot her children on this resplendent island. Just as she never left the side of her Son on the Cross, so she never left the side of her suffering Sri Lankan children.

Today we want to thank Our Lady for that presence. In the wake of so much hatred, violence and destruction, we want to thank her for continuing to bring us Jesus, who alone has the power to heal open wounds and to restore peace to broken hearts. But we also want to ask her to implore for us the grace of God's mercy. We ask also for the grace to make reparation for our sins and for all the evil which this land has known.

It is not easy to do this. Yet only when we come to understand, in the light of the Cross, the evil we are capable of, and have even been a part of, can we experience true remorse and true repentance. Only then can we receive the grace to approach one another in true contrition, offering and seeking true forgiveness. In this difficult effort to forgive and find peace, Mary is always here to encourage us, to guide us, to lead us. Just as she forgave her Son's killers at the foot of his Cross, then held his lifeless body in her hands, so now she wants to guide Sri Lankans to greater reconciliation, so that the balm of God's pardon and mercy may bring true healing to all.

Finally, we want to ask Mother Mary to accompany with her prayers the efforts of Sri Lankans from both Tamil and Sinhalese speaking communities to rebuild the unity which was lost. Just as her statue came back to her shrine of Madhu after the war, so we pray that all her Sri Lankan sons and daughters may come home to God in a renewed spirit of reconciliation and fellowship. Dear brothers and sisters, I am happy to be with you in Mary's house. Let us pray for one another. Above all, let us ask that this shrine may always be a house of prayer and a haven of peace. Through the intercession of Our Lady of Madhu, may all people find here inspiration and strength to build a future of reconciliation of justice and peace for all the children of this beloved land. Amen.

Postscript: The Catholic Messenger reports that the Pope commented to journalists on his way to Manila after the visit to Sri Lanka "Yesterday, I saw something at the Shrine of the Madonna that I never thought I will see - it wasn't just Catholics. They were not even the majority. There were Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus. They all go there and pray and say that they receive graces. There is something there that unites them."

Vale – Emmanuel Brito Boylon Rajakulenthiran LLB, F.T.I.A, DipTax



Prominent Melbourne Barrister & Solicitor, Emmanuel Rajakulenthiran passed away peacefully on September 5th 2014, surrounded by his loving family.

Born in Vavuniya, Sri Lanka, Rajakulenthiran attended the prestigious St Patrick's College where he excelled academically. His colleagues at St Patrick's remember him as a gifted scholar who excelled in Chemistry and the arts. He won numerous accolades during his school career including 'The Guyomor Shield' and was elected Head Prefect of St Patrick's.

Rajakulenthiran obtained his Bachelor of Laws (LLB) from Colombo University and was admitted to the Bar as an Attorney-at-Law shortly thereafter. His interest in Chemistry also saw him hold a scientific analyst research position at the Ceylon Institute of Scientific Research (CISIR) during the early 80's.

It was at University that Rajakulenthiran met his wife, "Terrisita Sharmini Patrick" – also a lawyer (Daughter Of Late John Patrick Magistrate Rural courts and Beatrice Patrick), who he called 'his soul-mate'. They were married in 1976. They have two beautiful daughters Mariolyn & Christolyn.

Emigrating to Melbourne in the 80's, Rajakulenthiran was admitted to the Bar in Australia & embarked on a successful career as a Barrister & Solicitor & Tax consultant. His innovative thinking & passion for justice, made him one of the most respected legal figures in Melbourne.

In his later years, he dedicated much of his time to doing 'pro-bono' work for numerous individuals and organisations throughout Melbourne. To his colleagues, Rajakulenthiran was a tenacious and talented lawyer and a true gentleman in the courtroom. His charisma, wit & charm were some of his endearing qualities.

Rajakulenthiran's great passions in life were his family, especially his two daughters Mariolyn & Christolyn whom he treasured. He was often heard saying that he never needed to worry about his health, because his two daughters who are surgeons, would 'always look after him'. Rajakulenthiran loved spending time at home with his wife, enjoyed gardening and travelling.

Rajakulenthiran's passing has led to an outpouring of grief and condolences from all corners of the globe, from his many friends who loved and respected him. Rajakulenthiran will be sadly missed by his loving wife and daughters, his parents, sisters and brother, in-laws and all his relatives, colleagues and friends.

"May he rest in Peace"

Tribute written by Miss Patrick

Awards from Melbourne OBA's Annual Family Day held on 25 January 2015

Cricket Match

Winners - Bonjean House (Captain - Gnanasooriyar Canisius)

Runners up - Dunne House (Captain - Nimal Augustine)

Best Batsman - Ashwin Packiarajah

Best Bowler - Isidore Manoraj

Player of the Match - Raj Nirubhan

Rounders

Winners - Bonjean House (Captain - Suhee Canisius)

Trophies will be presented at the St Patrick's Day celebrations & AGM 2015 to be held on Saturday 21 March 2015.

Primary Building nearing Completion



From Fr Rector

The Primary Building Project is nearing completion. We are deeply grateful to those Patricians who are contributing to this great need. In January 2015 we started using the ground floor for Grade One Classes.

Dear Patricians!

May I appeal to you again for your generous donations for this specific project of the construction of a new primary Block. You would have noticed that we have completed half the work. We gratefully acknowledge all those who have already contributed and helped us for this Construction.

We thank our Alumni Association UK for launching the fundraising project.

Fr. Rector

Your contact is: **Anandarajan James**

If anyone would like to contribute, Please contact Anandan on

secretary@spcaustralia.com



Username and Password, please

Notice Board

The Annual General Meeting of St Patrick’s College Jaffna OBA, Melbourne, will be held on Saturday, 21 March 2015 at St Paschal’s Church Hall, **100 Albion Road, Box Hill.**

The AGM will be preceded by

- **Holy Mass at 5.30 pm.**

celebrated by Rev Fr Anthony Gnanapragasam (Tamil Community Chaplain for Victoria) and Rev Fr Joseph Amalan (St Gerard’s Church, Dandenong).

As usual, the AGM will be followed by dinner - traditional Stringhopper with curry, etc.

Donation of \$10 per family will be appreciated to cover the cost of hall hire.

The following members have volunteered to serve in the Management Committee for the year 2015/16:

Chrys Gunanayagam as President

Rukshan Theophilus as Secretary

Noel Rajiv as Treasurer

Philip Ravindraraj as Asst. Treasurer

Anandarajan James as Social & Events Secretary

Jeyandra Antonipillai as Sports Secretary

Angelo Fernando, William Nimalraj, James Joseph, Patrick Rajaratnam, Pillai Mariasekeram & Dr Sanjeev Alfred to serve as Committee members.

Alfred Reynald, Anton Newton, Dr. Anton Mariampillai, Antony Gratian, Edward Arulnesathasan, Isidore Manoraj, Gunaratnam Arulanantham, James Premanandarajah, Jeevaranjan Fernando, Jerard Jogaratnam, Joseph Vijayaratnam, Reg Cherubim, Parthipan Vivehanandan, Vincent Pius and William Rajendram to serve as members of the Advisory & Support Panel.



SPC Jaffna OBA—Melbourne

Current Paying Members:..... 26

No. of Patricians in Vic : 145

Annual Membership Fee: \$20.00

WEBSITE: www.spcaustralia.com

EMAIL: secretary@spcaustralia.com