

MOUNT CARMEL PROVINCE, BHOPAL
THE FRAGRANCE OF THE INDIA CHURCH

Those who make their lives meaningful with their noble deeds live beyond their times. Saints are those ideal men and women who made practical the values of the Gospel in their personal lives and merited perfection. The Indian Church is enthralled with elation and delight as the Holy Catholic Church is all set to proclaim Bl. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, the founder of the C.M. I. and C.M.C. congregations and Bl. Euphrasia, a member of the C.M.C. congregation to sainthood on 23rd November 2014. The fragrance of their saintly lives enrich the Indian Church. Here I would like to present a short biographical sketch of these great Indian saints.

St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara was born on 10th February 1805, to Kuriakose Chavara and Mariam at Kainakary village in Kerala. After his schooling under a local teacher at the age of 11 he understood his call to priesthood and entered the melpanite according to the old custom of Syro-Malabar Church. He was ordained a priest on 29th November 1829. St. Chavara along with Rev. Fr. Thomas Palackal, and Rev. Fr. Thomas Porukara began the C.M.I. congregation in 1831. He was a great social reformer who established the first printing press of the Indian Catholic Church in 1844 and the first Catholic school of Kerala for educating the people of the lower ranks of the Indian society in 1846 at Mannanam. St. Chavara founded the first 'Charitable institution' in Kerala in 1869 for caring for the weak, the disabled, the sick and the aged members of the society. In order to enable women religious to come forward as the catalytic agents for social reformation and for the integral development of women and children he founded the C.M.C. congregation in 1866. Finally he was called to eternal rest on 3rd January 1871. History has recorded St. Chavara, as a man of God,

a prophet of his time; a man of firm faith and sublime vision. St. Chavara offered his services for God and His people in the spiritual, social and cultural fields. He acted with extraordinary courage to meet the challenges of his time. The basic vision of St. Chavara for brightening the society was to impart literacy to the people. He firmly believed that a society could make progress only through knowledge and wisdom. For him education aimed at the integral development and transformation of the human person; a transformation from the bonds of poverty, ignorance, exploitation etc., making one mature, responsible, intellectually well-trained, morally upright, socially committed and spiritually inspired.

St. Euphrasia is a rare beauty, mystic who sprung up in the fertile garden of Carmel, under the shadow of the mantle of the heavenly Mother. St. Euphrasia was not cut out for mighty works for the Lord like some of the great saints in the Church, but to perform small acts of loving kindness unknown to others and known only to God. She is a humble nun who has personalized the prayer heritage of Carmel and lived according to divine inspirations and rose to the heights of sanctity. St. Euphrasia was born on 17 October 1877, in the aristocratic Cherpukaran Eluvathingal family in Kattoor village, Thrissur, Kerala. She entered the boarding house of the Carmelite Sisters at Koonammavu in 1888 and received the religious habit in 1898 taking the name 'Sr. Euphrasia of the Sacred Heart of Jesus'. On 24 May 1900 she made the profession of religious vows. According to her own testimony in her letters, she had mystical experiences and visions. She made remarkable progress in prayer and meditation, in an all-absorbing love for Lord Jesus and underwent great trials and tribulations, which she made salvific by joining with the passion of Jesus Christ. St. Euphrasia is an epitome of perfect humanness, compassion, mercy, generosity and love that is typical to the heart of Jesus. Her austere prayerful life granted her several appellations like the 'Praying Mother', 'Smiling Mother', 'The Mobile

tabernacle' etc. At the age of 75, on 29 August 1952 she was called for her eternal reward.

May these great Carmelite saints inspire us to lead a life of holiness blended with charity and compassion.