

TRIBUTES TO FR. STAN SWAMY

To many of us and the Human Rights organisations across nations who relentlessly protested against the illegal incarceration of the tribal rights defender, under the draconian seditious UAPA law and demanded his immediate release, the sad news of his death in custody came as a rude shock. He was being meted out with rough treatment by the jail authorities and we were aware about his precarious health conditions. Though numb



with this shock, the Goa Jesuits, the National Confederation of Human Rights Organisation, the Church based organisation, Council for Social Justice and Peace and other human rights defenders held a peaceful homage meeting to commemorate the life of the Tribal Rights Leader, Fr. Stan Swamy on 7th July 2021 at 4.30, opposite Margaon Municipal building. The speakers condemned the delay in administering justice to the old and ailing Fr. Stan and called his death in custody an institutional murder.

The Convener of the meeting, Mr. Ranjan Solomon said that Fr. Stan Swamy died of the UAPA poison. He said, 'if Fr. Stan Swamy's death is not to go in vain, all of us need to unite in a vibrant campaign for justice to all and especially to those who are oppressed and exploited by the rich and the powerful. He remarked that he has inspired generations of justice seekers and he will always be in our hearts and minds.

Albertina Almeida, a social activist said that Fr. Stan's death is going to give rise to lakhs of Stans who will fight against injustices and oppressions around. On behalf of the Goa Jesuit Province, Fr. Orville thanked everybody who showed concern for Fr. Stan Swamy and prayed for him ever since he was taken into custody by the National Investigating Agency (NIA). He observed that love, commitment and dedication for the cause of the poor and the marginalised were the remarkable traits that stood out in Fr. Stan's life. Quoting from the Gospel, "Greater love has no one than to lay down one's life for one's friends" Fr. Orville said that Fr. Stan lived out the Gospel values. He urged the gathering not to mourn but rather to celebrate life by challenging ourselves to get out of our comfort zones and side with the poor and the marginalised through the exercise of right to dissent.



Mr. Rupesh Velip, a tribal leader brought public attention to the fact that Fr. Stan Swamy sought rights for the tribals and the marginalised through the legal and constitutional framework, mentioning his fight for the implementation of the V Schedule and the PESA ACT 1996. Dr. Francisco Colaco, a renowned heart specialist, emphasised that Fr. Stan Swamy was a priest who left out of the walls of the Church and made his people his religion.

TRIBUTES TO FR. STAN SWAMY

The meeting was concluded with Fr. Savio Fernandes, the Director of Council for Justice and Peace, asserting that Fr. Stan Swamy became a martyr because he gave his life for the sake of others and the real tribute to him will be to take his work forward.

A peaceful homage to the deceased human rights defender, Fr. Stan Swamy was



organised by the tribal community from *Chotanagpur* in Goa at the Holy Spirit Church, Margaon on 11th July 2021. The Jesuits and their collaborators expressed their solidarity with the tribal community by participating in the event. The *Chotanagpur* brothers and sisters mainly from the south of Goa marched in solidarity towards the Holy Spirit Church at 4 pm, mourning the death of their beloved Messiah, holding placards, which read 'long live Fr. Stan' and 'your sacrifice will not go in vain' among the others.

Ms. Lalita welcomed the gathering and spelt out the objective of coming together. It was followed by lighting the candles and keeping a few moments of silence to invoke peace for the departed soul. The tribal leaders along with Fr. Simon Fernandes and Fr. Amandio Valadares, the Parish Priest of the Holy Spirit Church offered floral tributes to the image of Fr. Stan Swamy.

A song in Sadri language, composed by the tribal youth was then sung eulogizing Fr. Stan. This was followed by a brief life history of Fr. Stan by Mrs. Anima. While highlighting Fr. Stan's works and achievements in emancipating the tribals of the *Chotanagpur*, she made mention of the various movements Fr. Stan Swamy was associated with, standing steadfastly with the poor tribals, dalits, bonded labourers and the marginalised, fighting with them for their rights to have entitlement over, *jal*, *jungle* and *jameen* a close connect for the tribals as they live in harmony with nature, using the natural resources judiciously.



Fr. Simon Fernandes SJ shared his encounter with Fr. Stan and enlisted the dreams and values Fr. Stan lived and died for and urged the people to continue to stand by and follow these values in their lives. Borrowing from Fr. Stan Swamy words, "I am not a silent spectator" he encouraged the gathering to fight against injustices and oppressions around, raising their voices and be ready to pay the price as Fr. Stan did by laying down his life. He cautioned the people against the hypocrisy of paying only glorious tributes to Fr. Stan Swamy in words and urged them to take forward his legacy by fulfilling his dream of getting the entitlements to *jal*, *jungle* and *jameen* through the constitutional means and getting the thousands of tribal youth who are under-trials who are languishing in jails, released.

TRIBUTES TO FR. STAN SWAMY

This was followed by Sr. Monica of the Good Shepherd convent, sharing her personal encounter with Fr. Stan during her Journey from Mumbai to Rourkela in 2005 which gave new direction to her life. She recounted that during her conversation with him, he emphasized that awareness of social realities by the youth can bring changes in the society. His sharing of social realities in Jharkhand inspired her to be a person for others. She said that she feels fortunate to meet Fr. Stan at least once in her life time. She said with confidence that today the seed which was sown in the heart of the people



by Fr. Stan Swamy will bring to fruition the dream he dreamt of fighting for their rights and respecting the rights of others.

The programme concluded with the entire gathering singing aloud “Hum honge Kamyab” together in one chorus.

The *Chotanagpur* tribals from North Goa organised yet another memorial event at St. Alex Church, Calangute on 18th July 2021.

Fr. Polly Lobo, the Parish Priest, Frs. Joseph Nazareth, SJ, Simon Fernandes, SJ, Sr. Sushmita, ICM joined the gathering of the mourning tribal fraternity in lighting the candles and paying homage to the deceased tribal rights activist, Fr. Stan Swamy, SJ. Along with the tribal leaders who expressed their anguish against the illegal incarceration and custodial death of Fr. Stan Swamy, Sr. Sushmita, Frs. Joseph and Simon addressed the gathering by making references to the life and the mission of Fr. Stan Swamy and impressed on the participants to carry forward his legacy. Fr. Simon Fernandes asserted that Fr. Stan Swamy worked within the framework of the Constitution and the law. He cited the demand made by Fr. Stan for the implementation of the V schedule and the PESA ACT 1996. The meeting ended with the memorial (Mass) service presided over by Fr. Anil Turkey, CSSR.



pay homage to the diseased Jesuit.

Across the border in Belgaum about hundred people gathered for a memorial service organised in honour of Fr. Stan Swamy in St. Anthony’s Church on July 13, 2021. The Eucharistic celebration was presided over by Fr. Ronald D’Souza, the Rector of St. Paul’s Jesuit Community. Jesuits, Religious and many Diocesan priests were concelebrants. The Eucharistic celebration was followed by a meeting to

TRIBUTES TO FR. STAN SWAMY

Our social stalwart Fr. Joseph Chenakala shared his personal experiences with Fr. Stan Swamy. While speaking on the life and mission of Fr. Stan Swamy, he spoke of his commitment and dedication to the cause of the tribal empowerment by taking cudgels on behalf of the poor and the marginalised and fighting for their rights. He recounted the struggles Fr. Stan had to go through fighting against the mighty corporate and the successive governments. In his short but pointed message, Rt. Rev. Bishop Derek Fernandes, condemned the illegal detention of Fr. Stan Swamy and the inhuman treatment meted out to him despite he being old and sick person and urged the gathering to take forward his legacy.



Fr Stan hailed at National Justice Day meets across State

Archbishop Filipe Neri Ferrao and a number of priests, nuns and people gathered at the Panaji Church on Wednesday evening to observe the nationwide National Justice Day, to pay respects to the human rights activist late Fr Stan Swamy S.J. and to carry forward his legacy.



Archbishop Ferrao, Jesuit Provincial Fr Roland Coelho, Superior Fr Simon Fernandes, Panaji Parish Priest Fr Walter de Sa and citizens held placards

which expressed the collective need for justice and the honouring of human rights. They entered the Church in procession to light candles and participate in the Memorial Service (Holy Mass) chosen for Peace and Justice.

In his short homily, Fr Simon Fernandes said that mute spectatorship of citizenry that does not speak up and does not act, gives impetus to injustice, marginalisation, wrongdoing and the tearing of our country's secular and democratic fabric. He noted that amid growing inequalities, atrocities, violence, discrimination and exclusion, Fr Stan Swamy had left a message for people 'not to be a silent spectator'. An excerpt from Fr Stan Swamy's letter from Taloja jail was shared with the congregation before the final blessing.



Besides Panaji the National Justice Day was marked in Old Goa, Calangute, Margao, Rachol and other parts of the State on July 28, as priests, nuns and laity came together to honour the deceased human rights activist Fr Stan Swamy.

At Old Goa, a prayer service was led by Fr Patricio Fernandes SJ, Rector of the Basilica of Bom Jesus and the Jesuit Community, with people recommitting themselves to the mission of truth and justice.

TRIBUTES TO FR. STAN SWAMY



At Calangute, Parish Priest Fr Polly Lobo welcomed the gathering holding placards and posters on truth and justice at the St Alex Church. He appealed to people gathered to remember the great sacrifice of Fr Stan Swamy to secure the rights of tribals in Chotanagpur region.

Religious from various congregations led by a Canossian nun, Sr. Grace Rodrigues, conducted the meeting, while Fr Malcolm Barreto, SJ specified the objective of the programme and appealed to people to take cudgels on behalf of the poor and the marginalised and take forward the work of Fr Stan Swamy.

The Jesuit Community of Pedro Arrupe Institute at Raia conducted a solidarity meet in collaboration with two parishes of Holy Spirit Church (Margao) and Our Lady of Snows (Rachol). The National Justice Day was celebrated in the Holy Spirit Church Hall, with Parish Priest Fr Amandio Valadares reminded the gathering that Justice is not a one-day event, but people need to work tirelessly like Fr Stan Swamy to bring out justice in our society.



Fr Orville de Silva SJ highlighted the key issues that Fr Stan had been working on with the Adivasis in Jharkhand, while a youth from the parish highlighted the environmental issues concerning Goa and the need to work for justice while protecting Goa's fragile ecosystem.

Mrs. Ezilda Gracias, a member of the Ignatian laity drew a parallel between the life of



Jesus who sided with the poor and the outcast and the work of Fr. Stan Swamy with the *Adivasis* and the marginalised. She called him a martyre, a saint and an inspiration for all of us to work for justice. Fr Franky, the assistant parish priest appealed to the audience to carry forward the work of Fr Stan Swamy. At the Rachol Church, the event was integrated with the Holy Eucharist celebrated by Fr

Pedro Rodrigues SJ, followed by a candlelit procession. In his homily, Fr Rodrigues spoke on Fr Stan's work with the poor and the oppressed in Jharkhand.

Jesuit and religious communities also conducted prayer services at their respective communities in the State.