

Report
on the Cause of
Fr. Joseph Vaz
in Ceylon.

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596

REPORT

ON THE CAUSE OF

FATHER JOSEPH VAZ

It was in the middle of June, 1937, that we here in Ceylon (at any rate, in the Diocese of Kandy) began working on the Cause of Fr. Vaz—though individually one or two enthusiasts here and there had been interesting themselves on the subject long years before.

A HITCH: ABSENCE OF TRADITION

From the very start we were faced with the painful consciousness of a total absence of tradition among our people, at least in the Kandyan provinces. I can give a personal illustration of what I mean. I am over 60 years of age—nearer 70 than 60. I come from the Pettah, of the old Colombo. I have myself had the good fortune to be born and bred in the bosom of a staunch Catholic family, with Catholic traditions steeped in their bones. And I have been living well-nigh half a century in these uplands. But I dare not with a safe conscience take an oath on the statement that I know of any concrete historical fact concerning Fr. Vaz's life by tradition, beyond the mere mention of his name—and perhaps also some hazy idea of his having led a Robert-Knox-like life, of tramping it through forests! Even the incident of the miracle of rain at his prayer I never heard of before I came to Kandy. I heard it from Mgr. Zaleski; and he got it from Rego. In our parents' time, or perhaps in their fathers' generation, all tradition had vanished.

Mgr. Zaleski himself had to confess it. Writing in 1895—in the Preface to his Life of "The Apostle of Ceylon"—he felt compelled to state that "in Europe, and even in India, few people hear him spoken of today; and in Ceylon, the scene of his apostolic labours, the old speak of him, but the younger generation scarcely know even his name!"

Within four months of our taking up the Cause—on the 25th October, 1937—a letter was sent by us to the Postulator-General at Rome, Mgr. Carlo Naldi, informing him of the state of things in no uncertain terms. "I am afraid that the Process cannot take place for some time, as all our efforts must be concentrated on reviving among our present generation of Catholics the memory of this holy, zealous, fearless Priest who did so much for revival of the Catholic Faith in Ceylon. The Process cannot be thought

of unless we succeed in making this dear Priest's name as popular and as widespread among our people now as it was in past generations."

That was how we put it to Mgr. Naldi; but I have lately realized that it was a wrong position to take up. For the Code says expressly that "it should be proved by witnesses that there is at present a tradition, and there has always been a tradition, among the larger proportion of the Faithful"—"*ut probetur fama spontanea, continua, in dies aucta, et vicens in praesenti apud majorem partem populi.*" (Can. 2050, § 2.) A recent Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites has now made this rule more explicit by insisting that "witnesses should not state anything that they had come to know of by mere reading; but they should confine their evidence to what they had learned by oral transmission"—that is, from generation to generation. (S. R. C. 4 Jan., 1939.) Frankly we have no tradition at all of that kind anywhere in the Kandy diocese.

THE "LIFE"

But we did not think so then. It was deemed necessary to plunge straightway into a serious study of documents and other material connected with the life and reputation for sanctity and miracles of our revered Apostle. Already by October, 1937, we were ready with a short "Life of Fr. Vaz", which would run into a fair-sized booklet (of some four-score pages), as well as an abridgement of it in the form of a pamphlet of 8 pages—the latter to serve as a foretaster and advertisement of the "Life".

The abridged sketch was published and circulated in December, followed by the larger "Life" in March, 1938. Versions of the abridged sketch in Sinhalese and Tamil were also printed, as well as several thousand copies of the "Prayer for Beatification" in English, Sinhalese and Tamil.

Four months of hectic toil were consumed in distribution of these to all parts. And the voluminous correspondence entailed in the process! It should suffice to state that in one single month over a hundred letters had to be written and despatched—not a few of them running to three pages! And all that without the aid of scribes and amanuenses—by one or two individuals who had their hands full with a score of other pre-occupations to boot!

I have deemed it necessary to state this as tending to show that we here in Kandy had not gone to sleep over the Cause.

PROBLEM OF THE GRAVE

That was not all. Investigation had to be made, not only with regard to fame of sanctity of the Servant of God, but also

with regard to several other important problems connected with him, and more particularly on the question of site of Fr. Vaz's burial-place.

From the latter end of 1937 we have been at pains to go into this subject (of the burial-place) more closely. But here too we were handicapped by the total absence of any tradition that might help us in fixing the precise site of Fr. Vaz's Church, and consequently also of the place where his grave had been. We had perforce to rely on past records only, and to try to fix upon probable sites by doing what we could to visualize the Kandy (or Senkadagala) of Fr. Vaz's time. This was not an easy thing to do when we remember that this town had been repeatedly sacked, wholly or in part, by the Kandyans themselves as well as by invading forces—as in 1765 by the Dutch under Van Eck ; in 1803 and 1815 by the Kandyans themselves when they fled before the advance of British forces.

A summary of the lines on which our investigation proceeded has been embodied in an article—"The Problem of Fr. Vaz's Grave"—which appeared in print. (See "Antonian" of 1937 ; also "Ven. Fr. Vaz", March, 1938.)

NEGATIVE RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION

From the very start letters had been addressed to all the Priests of the Diocese, as well as to the various Bishops of the Island, asking for their assistance and co-operation in the Cause. But all along, as a result of our enquiries and efforts, the painful fact was making itself manifest to us with greater and greater insistence that there was no tradition to be found among the present generation in the whole diocese, not even at Wahacotte. Even the very name of Fr. Vaz seems to have been blotted out of memory !

We therefore felt it our duty to write to Canon Joao Paulo de Sousa, who is Assistant Judge in the Tribunal for the Cause of Beatification of Fr. Vaz at Goa, in a letter dated 7th Jany., 1938. In his reply thereto Canon de Sousa stated that His Excellency the Patriarch received the information "with much surprise and grief". His Excellency gave proof of his keenness on the subject by sending us another message—this time through the Editor of "Ven. Fr. Vaz"—giving it as his opinion "that 5 or 6 witnesses who could say something on Fr. Vaz's heroic life and virtues would be enough for the purpose of organizing the Process". (Letter of 3 March, 1939.)

I could not rest satisfied with this suggestion put forward by the Patriarch. On 12th March, 1938, I wrote directly to His Excellency, giving my reasons why I felt that it was impossible to start a Process forthwith. I exposed to him our difficulty,

how we were faced with practically a total absence of any tradition on specific concrete facts connected with the life of Fr. Vaz. I drew His Excellency's attention to the Canon—2050 § 2—which I have already referred to, and which requires that "evidence should be brought forward to show that there has been a continuous tradition, a tradition which has spread more and more, day by day, and is still current among the majority of the Catholic population".

On the 20th March, and again on the 11th April, 1938, a Circular Letter was sent by His Lordship the Bishop to all the Priests of our diocese, expressing the "hope that the Informative Canonical Process would soon be inaugurated in this Curia, that all would co-operate in this noble Cause, and that the annexed Prayer be recited every day in all churches of the diocese after Mass". Copies of the Letter in English, Sinhalese and Tamil were sent for circulation and promulgation among the laity.

In January, 1939, a fresh appeal to the Bishops was made by us, reminding them that "the time had come for a more strenuous campaign to be launched on behalf of Fr. Vaz's Cause, since it was one that concerned all dioceses of this Island—for he was the Apostle of all Ceylon, Vicario da Vara of the whole island, the man to whom (by God's grace) we owed the preservation of our holy Faith in this land." A request was made "for appointment of Priests who would speak to the people about the Servant of God, for collection of evidence concerning his reputation for sanctity and miracles, and for the spreading of literature concerning his life and merits, and his claim to our regard and veneration."

In the middle of 1938 I had requested to be relieved of my position of Vice-Postulator of the Cause here, because I felt that I was putting the Cause into a sad handicap, since I was not able to cope with the work owing to many frailties of body and mind; and the time seemed to be at hand when more active measures should be taken—which required the services of a younger and more energetic Vice-Postulator than I could ever hope to be. On the 24th June of the same year, therefore, the Revd. Fr. D. P. Paolucci received his commission to be Vice-Postulator in my stead. None the less I carried on with whatever services lay within my power towards the Cause, so far as my broken-down state of health would permit me.

But this change was short-lived. For in April, 1939, the Revd. Fr. D. D. Barsenbach was appointed Vice-Postulator in place of Fr. Paolucci, owing to the latter's sudden resignation. Was it due to the Revd. Father's feeling—as I did—that he was up against a blank wall, with regard to popular tradition on the heroic life and labours of Fr. Vaz? Or was it that he weighed himself in the scale, and felt himself unequal to the task of raking

up the memory of our erstwhile revered Apostle from the ashes of neglect beneath which it lay smouldering? Perhaps yes; or equally perhaps not.

Shortly after his appointment was officially received here a personal letter was addressed by the new Vice-Postulator to all our Missionaries. At the same time another Circular Letter was sent by our Bishop to all of them asking for information as to the existence of tradition on Fr. Vaz in their respective parishes. Emphasis had to be laid on the rule insisted on by the recent Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites—that the evidence of witnesses should be confined to what they had learnt by family tradition only, and not from anything read by them. (S. R. C., 4th Jany., 1939.)

In the light of what I have already stated at the beginning, it will cause no surprise to learn that the result of enquiry was a foregone conclusion, a result easily foreseen and quite taken for granted—the total absence of tradition on Fr. Vaz in this diocese. As one Priest expressed it: “There isn’t a single thing found here connected in any way whatsoever with Fr. Vaz, for the simple reason that in those days these parishes were all jungle.”

CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO LOSS OF TRADITION

This is but too true. We have to remember that in Fr. Vaz’s own time the only places mentioned as containing Catholic congregations in all the hill country were Kandy, Matale, Wahacotte, Tumpana, Wevudda, Hinguranketa and Kundasala. With the sole exception of Wahacotte, all the indigenous population of the other places lapsed to Buddhism after the expulsion of the Oratorian Fathers from Kandyan territory in 1745; and they have obstinately remained so ever since. It is as notoriously difficult a feat to convert a Kandyan Buddhist to Christianity as it is to make Catholic of a Mohammedan! The Catholic families found in our diocese now are those who had come over from the low-country long after the British occupation of the Kandyan provinces.

All around and between these places was virgin forest, “hills covered with woods and great rocks, so that it was scarcely possible to get up anywhere, except in the paths only.” (Knox, pt. 1 ch. 1). We know that it was so, not only in Knox’s and Fr. Vaz’s time, but for more than a century after that. We know for a fact that Kandy was encompassed with a belt of thick forests all round, right on to the British occupation of the Kandyan kingdom. D’Oyly speaks of wild elephants being found in herds around the Hill Capital coming right up to the river enclosing the town, and of their being coaxed even into the Esplanade in front of the King’s palace! “Tame female elephants are taken across the

river; and by their means a herd associates with them, and are brought up to Kandy." "Wild elephants are driven to Kandy in the midst of tame ones to the neighbourhood of the Maluwa (the present Esplanade), while the King sat looking on from the Patrippuwa (the Octagon)." (D'Oyly, "Diary", 21 and 23 Oct., 1810.) Fifty years later Tennent speaks of "a leopard (cheetah) from the forest above coming down nightly to drink at the fountain in the parterre (of the Pavilion grounds)." (Tennent, vol. 2 p. 203).

If we keep these facts in mind we can realize that a hundred years ago the vast bulk of our present diocese of Kandy was but a series of jungle stretches, with paths running across them; that what is now an endless vista of tea plantations dotted with townlets and partitioned off into Missions, was then mostly an unknown country, "consisting principally of steep rocks and mountains, covered in many places with impenetrable forest." It is necessary to remember all this as furnishing one explanation for the absence of tradition among the present Catholic congregations which are found in these Missions—inasmuch as they are all newcomers from the coast-land who had settled in these lands (not to mention the hundred thousands of Tamil coolies imported from India).

Another Priest replied to the effect that "the only knowledge of Fr. Vaz possessed by his parishioners was gathered from recently published pamphlets."

Still another explained that his was "quite a new Mission, and the people were more of the adventitious crowd; and no permanent old Catholic families. The name of Fr. Vaz is quite unknown in any original setting."

And so on, and so on. All round it was the same tale. And it was to be expected; for after the Oratorian Fathers were expelled from the Kandyan kingdom, stern measures were taken to keep them off the kingdom, "with a rigour far greater than that of their exclusion from Dutch territory", as Fr. S. G. Perera puts it. ("Historical Sketches," No. 12 p. 221). The practice of the Catholic Religion was forcibly stamped out in the Hill Country, with the sole exception of Wahacotte. In the latter the Faith has survived, but all tradition on these heroes has vanished.

The same complaint was received from the diocese of Galle. The Bishop of Galle as well as his Vicar-General replied to the effect that "there are no ancient Catholic communities, and consequently no traditions to record. There are places in the diocese visited by Fr. Vaz, such as Kandagamuwa, Saffragam and Galle; but the Catholic communities in these places have little connection with the communities of the time of Fr. Vaz or the Oratorians.

His Lordship the Bishop of Trincomalie had displayed keen interest in the Cause of Fr. Vaz by appointing "four Priests,

among whom the whole Diocese was divided for the purpose of the campaign "on behalf of Fr. Vaz. He now wrote to say that he had "sent a reminder to the Priests whom he had appointed two years ago to promote the Cause so dear to all of us. If I receive any particulars about Fr. Vaz and his glorification, I shall inform you."

His Grace the Archbishop of Colombo had given ample proof of his interest in the Cause by offering to do all that lay in his power towards furthering the Cause. It was he who sponsored the publication of the "Life" and of the "Short Sketch" which were issued by us—of the English and Sinhalese versions—while the Bishop of Trincomalie published the Tamil version of it. But with regard to tradition among the present generation of Catholics in the Archdiocese, there does not appear to be any ground of hope.

REMNANTS OF TRADITION STILL EXTANT

In the diocese of Jaffna the Revd. Fr. S. Gnana Prakasar, of Nallur, assures us of the existence of a strong tradition at Sillale—the "Little Rome" of Fr. Vaz's time, referred to in Rego's Life. (Bk 2 ch. 7). This detail given by him is worthy of note—that "in his early days the people were still in the habit of getting Masses said in honour of their Angelic Priest" (Sammanasu Swamy)! Missionaries from Mantota and from the villages around have informed us that the people speak in glowing terms of their Sammanasu Swami.

The most consoling news comes from the diocese of Chilaw, where the newly consecrated Bishop, Mgr. Edmund Peiris, is an enthusiast in the Cause. Shortly after publication of the cable announcing his appointment a letter received by us contained these words: "All good wishes! It is an augury of good luck that the news of the appointment of Mgr. Peiris was known in Rome on the 16th January, the anniversary of Fr. Vaz's death. He will act, and God be praised! All traditions about Fr. Vaz emanate from the Archdiocese, especially from that part that is now Chilaw. So we are in luck's way."

Scarcely a week had elapsed after the new Bishop's consecration (April 25th) when a letter was received from him informing us about "an old man of 81 years who was able to relate quite a lot of facts about Fr. Vaz that he had learnt by family tradition."

POSITION CLEARLY STATED TO GOAN TRIBUNAL

On the 13th November, 1939, letters were sent by us to His Excellency the Patriarch and to Canon Joao Paulo de Sousa (Asst. Judge in the Tribunal), giving them a detailed exposition

of all the facts as herein stated. We felt obliged to inform them plainly that, "in the light of the detailed exposition as made by us, there would be no point in having a Tribunal of Investigation here—an informative Process—since there was nothing to investigate in this Diocese, no tradition that we could lay before the Tribunal, no inspection or examination of the remains of the Servant of God, for the simple reason that we had no clue even to the whereabouts of Fr. Vaz's grave, nor even the precise site whereon his church stood !!!" But a consoling clause was added—that "tradition was still existing along the western coast of the Colombo Archdiocese, at Jaffna and Sillale and Mantota and elsewhere of the Jaffna diocese, perhaps also at Kottiyar and some other places of the diocese of Trincomalie.

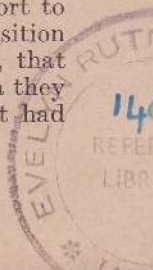
This letter was indeed nothing short of a bomb-shell to our confreres of Goa. "On the 1st December the several Committees of the Cause met together, and exchanged views about the matter as exposed by us. It was decided that one or two persons from there should be delegated to Ceylon in order to work with us, to solve the difficulties which stood in the way." (Letter of 27 Dec., 1939.)

In response to this a letter was despatched to Goa by me, requesting them to hold on until they had read the exposition of the whole situation as it would be placed before them.

Perhaps the question would be put: Why did I place this veto in the way of their decision to come over to assist us? The answer is simple and short. It was not a veto in the least; but I wanted them to realize our exact position—the total absence of any mention of the very name of Fr. Vaz among our Catholic families—lest they might think afterwards that they had been made to come over on a wild-goose quest for no purpose whatever.

Accordingly, on the 4th January, 1940, I wrote again to the Patriarch, to Canon Joaquim Ferreira and to Canon Joao Paulo de Souza. I sent to each of these a typed copy of my promised Article on "The Cause of Fr. Vaz in the Diocese of Kandy", giving a summary of our work as detailed herein, and the conclusion we had been compelled to come to—that there was a total absence of any tradition on concrete events connected with the life of our Apostle, or of any clue that would help us to locate the site of his burial-place. This Article was published in Goa in the "Ven. Fr. Vaz", Jany., 1940, pp. 101-105.

This Article was followed by another one, which was published there in February. I deemed it necessary to make an effort to show the Catholics of Goa that Ceylon was not in the same position as Goa with regard to this matter (of religious traditions), that there was a vast difference between the two places. At Goa they had had the good fortune to live in a part of India that had



always remained Catholic from the time of Fr. Vaz himself—nay, from two centuries before that—and consequently a constant tradition with regard to Fr. Vaz had persisted likewise among their Catholic families. But it was all quite different here, in the central uplands. The Kandyan kingdom was always a pagan land, and remained so. Even during the few occasions when it fell under Portuguese influence the vast bulk of the people—save for a negligible fraction of them—remained obstinately Buddhist, and unrelenting in their hostility to the Catholic Faith. Fr. Vaz came here, worked for 24 years, and succeeded in bringing numbers of them to our holy Faith. But 34 years after his death the King's protecting influence was forcibly withdrawn from them by a terrorist gang of Buddhist revivalists, who gained the ascendancy, the Oratorians were expelled from the kingdom, and the Catholic Religion was ruthlessly suppressed—without any possibility of ministrations of Priests for nearly a hundred years. With what result we now behold. All Kandyan Catholics, deprived of ministrations of priests, reverted to Buddhism; the Catholic Religion was killed in these parts—killed, wiped out, as completely and as effectively as if it had never existed.

This was what I tried to carry home to our friends at Goa in my second Article. I dwelt on the sad results of all this more in detail in a third Article, which I sent to them in May, and which was published there in June.

REPLY OF THE TRIBUNAL

But already—after my first two Articles on this subject—they had begun to realize the hopelessness of our position, at least in this diocese. On the 4th April, 1940, we received a letter from His Excellency the Patriarch stating that our letter as well as the Article on the present stage of the Cause of Fr. Vaz had been duly placed before the Tribunal of the Cause there for their decision thereon. A joint letter from the Tribunal was also enclosed in the Patriarch's letter, signed by the officials of the Tribunal—Mgr. d'Aquino Barreto, Can. Joao Paulo de Sousa, Can. Castilho de Noronha and the Vice-Postulator Can. Joaquim Ferreira.

The joint letter of the Tribunal began by declaring that "they never suspected that tradition about the Apostle of Ceylon would be obliterated to such an extent in the Diocese of Kandy, where he had worked so hard during so many years and died such a holy death. In these special circumstances they understood that the case should be briefly but clearly exposed to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, in order to know by which Diocese of Ceylon the case should be taken up, or how we were to proceed." (Lett. of the Goan Tribunal, 1 Apr. 1940).

They also favoured us with a form of the letter which was to be sent to the Sacred Congregation, giving a summary of the life and labours and heroicity of virtues of Fr. Vaz, the religious history of the succeeding period, and the negative results of investigation made by us.

Some time was spent in seeking opportunities for discussion on this important letter, among those of us who had most concern in the Cause here at Kandy. Perhaps I should have stated that His Lordship the Bishop had been repeatedly discussing with us matters connected with the Cause. His Lordship had even been on the point of appointing a Tribunal for the Cause here, probably on an idea such as that put forward by His Excellency the Patriarch—"that 5 or 6 witnesses who could say something on Fr. Vaz's heroic life and virtues would be enough for the purpose"—as has been stated at the beginning of this Report. (See *supr.*, p. 3.) It was I who, rightly or wrongly, dissuaded His Lordship from this course. I told him frankly, though with much sorrow of heart, that there was no point in nominating a Tribunal of investigation of evidence for the Informative Process, when there was nothing absolutely that could be laid before the Tribunal to investigate. So far we had found nothing in the shape of a tradition on virtues or holiness of life—nothing save the memory of his name, and his connection with Bogambara—which is quite a different thing from tradition of the kind required by the Code to establish sanctity and "*heroicitas vite*". The very site of the grave where his body had been laid to rest remains still a mystery to us, though we know as a positive fact that the locality was then generally known as "Bogambara", as we learn from the "Diary" of the Dutch Ambassador, Richard Van Minnen, who had come to Kandy at the very time of the burning down of Fr. Vaz's church. (See Van Minnen, "Diary," Friday, 25th March 1746, who speaks of Fr. Vaz's church as "the church at Bogambara".)

When it was finally decided that nothing further could be done by us, but that the matter should be referred to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, as suggested by the Patriarch, it was then too late to communicate with Rome, owing to the entry of Italy into the war.

THE OLD PROCESS OF 1738

However, we still carried on with our enquiries and with study of various questions connected with the Cause of Fr. Vaz. There loomed up one problem in particular that seemed to demand a response—the problem on the last Process of 1738. It was a very pertinent question, as to what became of the process which had been initiated in 1738, with Fr. Antonio Ribeiro as "Procurator General and Special of the Process" (as stated by

Rego, bk. 2, ch. 16, par. 6). The Canons of the Code are very explicit about this matter. Hitherto it had been the practice to accept Fr. Barreto Mirando's statement, in his note appended to the 2nd edition of Rego's life, that the Process "was annulled by Pope Benedict XIV. for having been organised without pontifical permission". But this statement appears to be contradicted by internal as well as external documentary evidence—by passages to be found in Rego's Life itself, as well as by passages occurring in other contemporary documents, such as we have in the pages of the "Oratorian Mission in Ceylon."

We had been at some pains to study the subject, and we had come to the conclusion that the Process was never brought to a close. The reasons for this conclusion were set forth in an Article—"The So-Called Process of 1737"—which first appeared in the "Antonian", and was later augmented and sent to Goa, where it was published in two instalments in the "Ven. Fr. Vaz." (Apr., Aug. and Sept., 1940.)

Perhaps it is quite pertinent to this Report to state that the Revd. Fr. S. G. Perera himself is in hearty agreement with our conclusions regarding the last Process. This is from a letter received from him:—

"I was extremely interested in your Article, which shows that you have studied the point very carefully. I am specially pleased with it because you have come, independently of me, to the same conclusion at which I had arrived."

In another letter the Revd. Father says: "I have evidence to show that they were busy with taking of evidence in 1753 and 1754."

There is even more than this. In the State Archives of Goa, among the MSS. treasured up there, there has been discovered "a will dated 20th September, 1770, of one Antonio de Noronha". The testator bequeaths "a fifth part of his estate to the Convent of the Holy Cross of Miracles (the mother-house of the Oratorians of Goa), to use this money for the canonization of the said Father (Joseph Vaz) or for any of his chapels". (See "Ven. Fr. Vaz," Nov., 1936, pp. 76 sq.) A footnote inserted on the same page hails this document as a proof that the Process had been still held in suspense for lack of funds!

We have gone out of our way to include these details in our Report because they are of grave importance, and bear very pertinently on the success of the Cause. If the Cause be taken up anew in this Diocese—as I daily hope and pray that it will—some explanation will have to be offered as to the reason why the Process fell through. (See Canon 2049, also Can. 2039, § 2.)

But all this meant weeks and months of steady reading and re-reading, of cross-reading and comparing and annotating, of

painful groping to arrive at a conclusion. For all this one must be free, while we had our hands full of a hundred things requiring our attention, and we were far from having a galaxy of spare priests to dispose of. Just the reverse—a score and half of priests all told, in a diocese of 5,500 square miles. None the less we did our best, and are still doing our best for the Cause.

In November of last year a short Report on the Cause was circulated among the Bishops of the Island on the occasion of their annual meeting.

ADVICE FROM THE DELEGATE APOSTOLIC

During this year we decided to ask advice from His Excellency the Delegate Apostolic. Accordingly, on the 5th February a letter was sent to His Excellency in the form suggested to us by the late Patriarch, together with a summary of the whole position of the Cause in Ceylon.

A reply thereto was duly sent to us (dated 22nd Feby.), wherein these passages occur:—

“From Canon Law one gathers the impression that there is to be one Ordinary Process only, to be undertaken by one of the Ordinaries mentioned in Can. 2039.

“In virtue of Can. 2039, § 2, in this case the Ordinary Process is the one still pending in Goa. For investigations in other dioceses auxiliary tribunals are to be set up (Can. 1570, § 2, 1770, §§ 2 and 3). These tribunals should send their findings, not to Rome direct, but to Goa, as part of the Ordinary Process conducted there.

“Hence, such auxiliary tribunals could be set up by means of the Goan tribunal in Chilaw and Jaffna, and wherever documentary or oral evidence may be available.

“If evidence is nowhere available according to requirements of Can. 2020, § 6, and Can. 2050, § 2, that fact would have to be stated. But the explanations given of such an absence would likely induce Rome to some relaxation of the rules in this case, especially as in a general way the memory of Fr. Vaz has certainly come down to us with the renown of sanctity.”

This letter of His Excellency was discussed among us. Finally it was decided that, instead of sending a copy of it to the Bishops of Ceylon, the best course was to forward it to Goa itself, so that the ecclesiastical authority there might take action thereon. This was accordingly done in April.

During the same month of April a series of four further Articles were sent from here to Goa on the “Necessity of further Investigation into Documentary Evidence on Fr. Vaz”, parti-

cularly by a more diligent search among manuscripts preserved in the libraries of Lisbon—the Torre do Tombo, the Bibliotheca Nacional, and such like—on the lines adopted by Fr. S. G. Perera with such conspicuous success. The first Article of the series has appeared in the May issue of “Ven. Fr. Vaz.”

On the last day of June a letter was written to His Excellency the Delegate Apostolic informing him of the position in which the Cause stands at present.

SUMMARY OF PRESENT POSITION OF THE CAUSE

It may perhaps be asked : Does this imply that the Cause of Fr. Vaz is “dead and buried” in Kandy, as some may be tempted to put it on reading this Report ? By no means. Very far from it.

It is necessary perhaps to state here that there is no question whatever of Fr. Vaz’s outstanding holiness of life. “For us two points suffice—the unhesitating testimony of those who had been his confessors, as well as the tribute of deep reverential regard that was paid to him personally, and with which he was spoken of, not only by the mass of lay folk, Catholic and non-Catholic, but even by his own band of Religious and fellow-Missionaries here in Ceylon, to whom his life was an open book, and who became his most ardent, devoted and enthusiastic admirers. These are quite enough (for us) to place the matter beyond the shadow of a doubt.”

But his sanctity has to be made clear before tribunals appointed by Holy Church, and in accordance with rules of procedure laid down in detail. Circumstances permitted by God Himself have brought about the stoppage of further action on our part—for the present.

We say for the present, and of set deliberate purpose. God’s thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways our ways. He disposes all things sweetly, but He attains His end unfailingly—in spite of men’s wickedness. There is a passage in His Excellency’s letter that is full of consolation, and falls pat with our own earnest wishes !

“If evidence is not available, that fact would have to be stated. But the explanation given of such an absence would likely induce Rome to some relaxation of the rules in this case, especially as in a general way the memory of Fr. Vaz has certainly come down to us with the renown of sanctity !” That is what His Excellency said. That too is what a former Delegate Apostolic, Cardinal Agliardi, said :—

“If the great distance of time that has intervened since the period in which he lived, and obstacles in the way of getting at

authentic documents concerning all that had been done by him should prove a bar to our venerating him on our altars as a Saint, what is actually known and set on record in this Life is certainly more than sufficient to proclaim him as a great Servant of God, worthy of our admiration and of being copied by us." (Preface to 2nd Italian Version of Rego's Life, pp. 18 and 19.)

That too is what we feel ; and more than that. That sooner or later, perhaps after the death of some among us, the Cause of Fr. Vaz will be taken up anew in this diocese, the site of his grave located, and God's seal of approbation set on him by raising him up on our altars. Meanwhile we keep on praying for this longed-for end night and day.

D. PHILIP CASPERSZ, O.S.B.





