

## **The Last of the Pioneers**

Mathew Kunnakkattu (97) passed away in Montreal on March 2, 2022. Irene Thayil, his beloved wife, had predeceased him in 1991. James, his only son and Mikey, his grand son live in Montreal. Josephine Pathyil (Mississauga) and Cecily Kannan (Jaipur) are his surviving siblings. In addition, his numerous nephews and nieces mourn his passing as do his friends and well-wishers everywhere.

Bro. John of God recruited him and a few others from Travancore in the late thirties. A juniorate was started in Coonoor under the supervision of Bro. Michael who had to leave Thailand at the beginning of World War II. Thus started a flow of recruits from Kerala to the Brotherhood. Mathew completed his high school in 1944. He, along with Bro. Antony Francesco ( later to be Provincial, General assistant, Vicar etc.) , Bro. Rudolph Neduchira ( an uncle of Bro. John Bosco) and a few others entered the newly set up Novitiate in Coonoor. After his first profession in 1946, he studied Teachers Training Course in Coonoor, and was posted to St. Joseph's High School, Ooty. In 1948 Bro. Paccocco was sent to Loyola for higher education along with half a dozen Brothers. After four years in Loyola, he was posted to several schools, including as the only Indian contribution to the school in Kilinochi, Sri Lanka, that was managed by the Canadian province. Thus he was a pioneer in several categories. After postings in several places, he decided to quit Brotherhood in 1964.

Mathew taught in Jaipur for a few years, and he joined us in Montreal in 1969, and was a teacher in Montreal Catholic Commission till his retirement. In the last few years Mathai Chettan (as he was fondly known to all in Canada) was in an old age home in Montreal.

The end was peaceful. Mathai Chettan leaves behind a grieving family. But we also celebrate a long life.

Thus passes the last of the first pioneers from Kerala. May the Good Lord receive him to His Heavenly Abode.