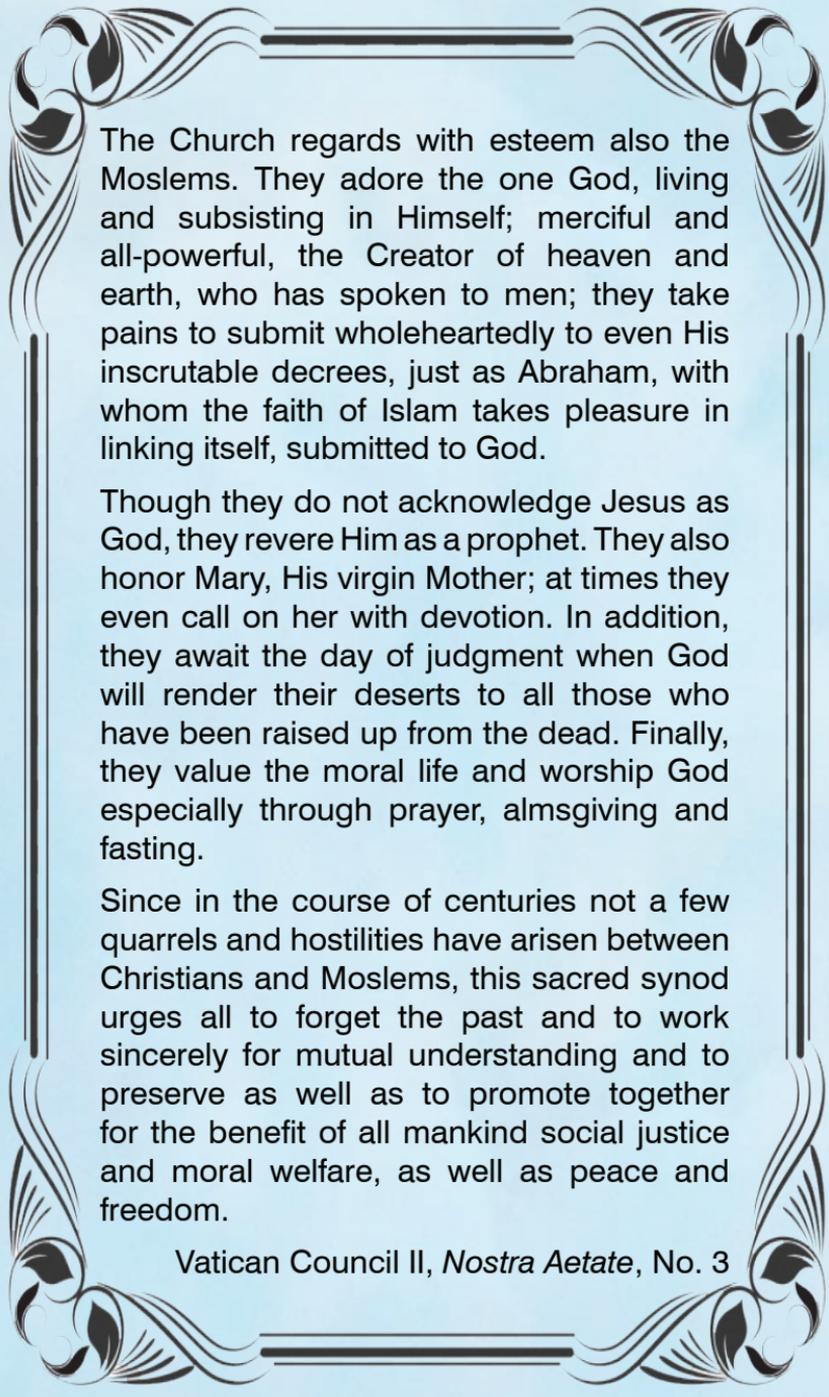


Paul Jackson, SJ
A Contemporary Christian Sufi



Testimonies compiled by
Victor Lobo, SJ
Joseph Victor Edwin, SJ



The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God.

Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.

Vatican Council II, *Nostra Aetate*, No. 3



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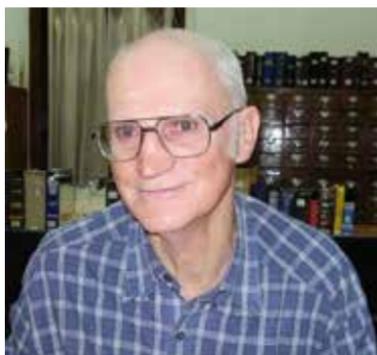


**“When ‘I’ and the ‘You’ have passed away,
God alone will remain.”**

Sharafuddin Maneri

Published by:
Prasaranga
St. Joseph’s College (Autonomous)
Bengaluru – 560 027

Paul Jackson, SJ



Born on June 11, 1937 in Brisbane
Died on July 5, 2020 in Patna (India)

Young Paul Jackson entered the Society of Jesus in the year 1956 and travelled to India in 1960. After studies in Theology (1965-69), he was ordained a priest. As a Jesuit priest, Father Jackson discerned his personal vocation to serve Muslims of Bihar, where he was missioned.

Following his dream, Father Jackson moved to Delhi to study History at the Jamia Millia Islamia. He studied Persian in Shiraz (1974-75) and wrote a thesis on the Sufi saint Sharafuddin Maneri, for which the Patna University awarded him with a PhD (1976-80). Over the years, Father Jackson translated and commented upon the spiritual letters of Sharafuddin Maneri.

He was single-hearted and single-minded in his mission of Christian-Muslim dialogue: his intellectual, emotional, spiritual and social life was focused on this single point, without any distraction or dissipation. For thirty-three years, five days a week, initially for about eight hours a day, and subsequently for about two hours a day, he sat at the Khuda Bakhsh Library reading and translating Persian manuscripts of Maneri and rendered them in English and thus introduced the Muslim saint of Bihar to the world.



**Fr. Paul Jackson, SJ with the members of
Islamic Studies Association**

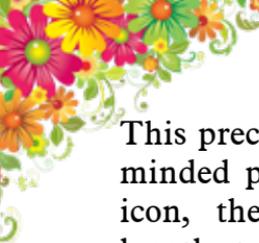


FOREWORD

Some people leave clear footprints in the sands of time. A few others leave fragrant memories in their wake. And still others leave behind hearts full of admiration, appreciation and affection. Fr Paul Jackson SJ, popularly known as the 'Muslim Father', did all this and more. That is why this little labour of love - **Paul Jackson, SJ: A Contemporary Christian Sufi** - by Frs. Joseph Victor Edwin, SJ and Victor Lobo, SJ is a jewel of a book consisting of fond memories and memorable impressions of the great Christian Sufi as remembered and recounted by those who had known him intimately, loved him dearly, admired him immensely and collaborated with him closely.

The figure of the rare Jesuit, a life-long Sufi and an accomplished scholar that comes out of these select few pages is that of a man of strong and sturdy faith; a faith nourished by prayer, patience and perseverance, which was the source of the serenity and stability which were evident in his dignified demeanour, warm conversation and even loud laughter. It was the same living faith that inspired his simplicity, sacrifice, surrender to God's will, his silent suffering and selfless service as a scholar, a Sufi and a Saint.

However, Paul Jackson was not a sad saint, sour faced and surly. On the contrary, here was a deeply spiritual man who was at the same time also deeply human, full of loud laughter and hilarious humour. As one of the contributors rightly puts it, his "discipline and austerity of lifestyle went together with the remarkable sense of humour". Unforgettable is the broad, loud, contagious laughter that easily filled a whole community refectory. And this, despite chronic ailments, failing health and even sleepless nights.



This precious little book clearly brings out the single-minded pursuit by Fr Paul Jackson of his celebrated icon, the Muslim Saint Sharafuddin Maneri, the lengths to which he went to master first Urdu and then Persian in order to be able to unearth the unsurpassed and unfathomed treasures of Maneri's writings. It also bears witness to the enthusiasm and one would even say, exuberance, with which Fr Paul Jackson spoke, wrote and lectured on Maneri in particular and Islam in general, freely sharing the spiritual depth he discovered in Maneri's life and writings, so much so, he came to be known as a deeply spiritual Christian Sufi. Rightly, therefore, this gem of a book, a tribute of love and gratitude by some of his admirers, friends, colleagues and disciples, bears the very same title: Paul Jackson, SJ: A Contemporary Christian Sufi.

Browsing through these precious pages has been a personal privilege of interiorly tasting and relishing the hidden treasure of interesting, informative and inspirational spiritual wealth of a chosen soul. One cannot do better, therefore, than to heartily recommend it to all, Jesuits and others, for a slow, savouring, sapiential, and one would even say, a reverential reading, reflecting and relishing experience.

To the enthusiastic authors of this beautiful bouquet of memories, impressions and expressions of appreciation, all of us owe a debt of gratitude. May the life and work of the Christian Sufi, Fr Paul Jackson SJ be a bridge of understanding, friendship and fraternity between Muslims and Christians.

Rev. Dr. Jerome Stanislaus D' Souza, SJ
President, Jesuit Conference of South Asia

4 October 2021
Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi



Letter To Paul Jackson, A Companion And Friend

By Christian W. Troll, SJ

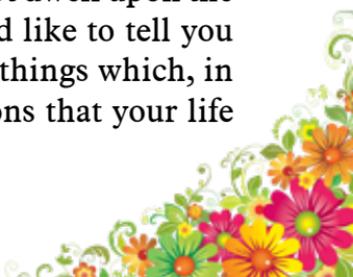
Dear Paul,

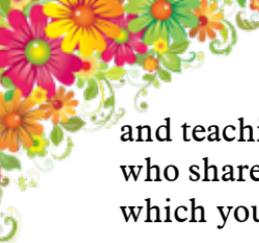
You went ahead of us to our Lord on the evening on Sunday, 5 July 2020 (the 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Yr A), when the Church proclaims the wonderful Gospel text, Matthew 11: 25-30, with Jesus' invitation: "*Come unto me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" For me, this was no mere coincidence.

I address you, Paul, in the form of a short letter because that is how we communicated often in the past, from the early 1970s onwards. From now on we shall be in spiritual correspondence; more intense than ever. I address you as my companion who has reached the goal that we all are trying to attain: full communion with our crucified and risen LORD. In and though HIM, you are closer to me than ever before, and I am deeply grateful for this.

Victor Edwin, who follows in your footsteps, sent me all the information about the exact dates of your remarkable life-journey, about your funeral and the reaction to your departure on the part of your Jesuit companions, the Church in India and beyond, your Muslim friends and admirers, and so many other people from all over the world.

In the few lines that follow I shall not dwell upon the stages of your journey. Instead, I should like to tell you and all who may read these lines those things which, in my view, are some of the essential lessons that your life



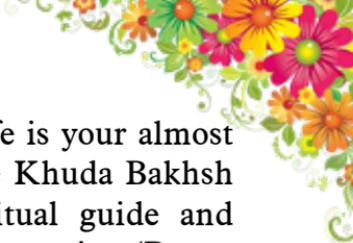


and teaching hold for us, especially for those amongst us who share, in one way or the other, the basic vocation to which you have tried so relentlessly to respond.

What are the crucial elements of your legacy? What are the challenges your truly remarkable life throws at us?

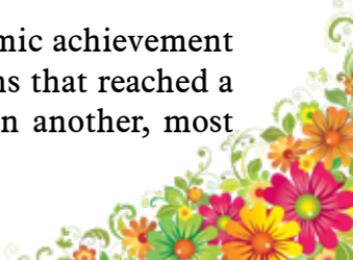
In the first place, there is your firm and unwavering faith. The Qur'an names such faith *yaqin* (certainty), and its fruit *itminan* (inner peace and stability). I remember Professor Hasan Askari, your revered friend and guide, telling me, when we spoke one day in Patna about you, how much he was impressed by your strength of faith. This quality of faith was also the fruit of your regular practice of liturgical and personal prayer and meditation. No one meeting you could remain unimpressed by the depth of your prayer life. No surprise that in your writings about Sharafuddin Maneri, and the Sufis in general, the depth of the prayer life of so many Muslims finds regular mention. However, the discipline and austerity of your lifestyle went together with your remarkable sense of humour. Unforgettable is your broad, loud, contagious laughter that easily filled a whole community refectory.

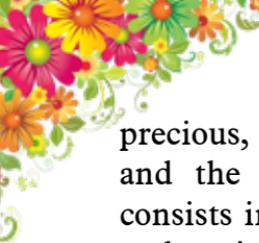
During all the years when we met regularly, I saw you suffering from asthma, and I know that this, with advancing years linked to heart disease, caused you many sleepless nights. The dusty summer months of northern India reinforced your suffering. You were always glad to return from dry, dusty places, like Aligarh and Delhi, to the relatively more humid climate of Patna. But, of course, the humid, hot months of the extended Patna summer have their own trying quality. You endured the labour and fatigue of the long years of your busy life in Patna patiently!



Another notable feature of your life is your almost obstinate attachment to one place (the Khuda Bakhsh Library), to one academic and spiritual guide and friend (Professor Hasan Askari), to one city (Patna, the ancient capital of Bihar), and, above all, to the one subject of your dedicated and single-minded study, the Muslim Saint, Sharafuddin Maneri, and the treasure of his writings. These were available exclusively in the form of manuscripts written in classical Persian. It immediately strikes the student of your writings how frequently you refer to this Library, to Hasan Askari and especially, to Sharafuddin Maneri (1263-1381) and his *Hundred Letters*. This collection of letters of spiritual guidance constitutes the first of the works of this Sufi, whose corpus of writings you translated into English. In your lectures and conversation, you referred frequently to this collection of letters simply as ‘the book’. For you, the writings of Sharafuddin became, as you put it once, the golden key that opened to you the door to understanding Muslims and their Islam. This, as you openly admitted, one-sided option from among many other aspects of Islam, resulted from the spiritual depth you had discovered in Maneri’s life and writings. You knew, of course, from your deep and wide-ranging study of Islam, other dimensions of this religion, its teachings and its practice. But for you, this particular author and his writings became simply the hermeneutic key to understanding the core and essence of Muslim faith. This particular access to Islam undergirded your unwavering commitment to making the quality of Muslim faith known to all in India and beyond.

Apart from your remarkable academic achievement and its fruits in the form of publications that reached a worldwide audience, I wish to mention another, most

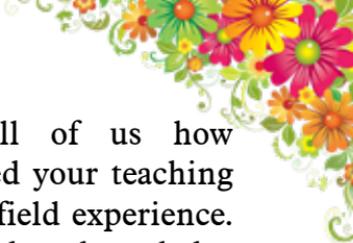




precious, original contribution of yours to the practice and the teaching of Christian-Muslim relations. It consists in the method of teaching that you developed and put into practice over many years. I cannot do better than quote your own succinct account of this in your autobiographical note:

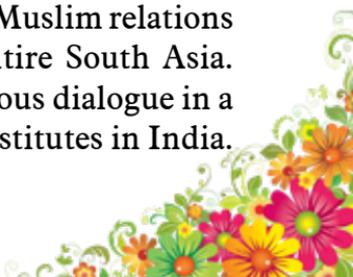
This was the era when [Jesuit] students [in Bihar] studied theology locally for two years before moving to a central institute for the rest of their studies. I was asked to conduct a two-week course on contextualized Islam, meaning the religion as it was actually lived, not as found in a book. There were about eight to ten students each year. I would go to various towns where there was a good number of Muslims and meet the principals of madrasas, Muslim seminaries, Sufi devotees at shrines, middle-class Muslims, usually through teachers and students of Christian English-medium schools, and poor Muslims, mainly with the help of sisters engaged in social work. I arranged for two students to go to each town. Back in Patna, the pairs were chosen and their destinations assigned. I gave them all a thorough preparation, in writing, and a list of possible questions to ask. They usually stayed in the parish but a few stayed in a madrasa or with a Muslim family.

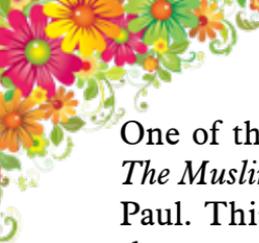
They would leave on a Monday and return on the Wednesday of the following week. On the following Thursday, Friday and Saturday they would recount their experiences together with their reflections and, in the time left over, we would examine some of the salient issues that had been raised. Both these programmes ran for twenty-five years. They show that, despite having a poorly functioning heart, I still managed to work, albeit not at full throttle.



This quote demonstrates to all of us how meticulously you planned and prepared your teaching of Muslim faith and practice through field experience. Only a person who, besides having a deep knowledge of Muslim religious life, was familiar with the social life of Bihar's Muslims and with the way their religious institutions function, and who, at the same time, knew each of his students well enough to place him or her in the right spot to receive the maximum benefit from this experience was able to teach successfully in this way! Your account also demonstrates how well you had learned, as a young educator and school teacher during your time as a scholastic in Hazaribagh Province, to put into practice the basic principles of sound Jesuit pedagogy. And indeed, how much good could be generated by all those Christians and Muslims who teach Islam to Christians, as well as by all those Muslims and Christians who teach Christianity to Muslims, in various parts of the world, if they would only follow your teaching, partly through your field-experience method.

A further element of your legacy, Paul, is the essential role you played in the foundation of the Islamic Studies Association (ISA), and, even more importantly, your relentless active support of all of its activities for more than four decades. The celebration of the fortieth birthday of ISA last year showed that this small but significant initiative of the Indian Church is very much alive. As you will remember well, ISA was founded in 1979 by a group of scholars and their friends in the framework of the Vidyajyoti College of Theology, Delhi. Since then, ISA has been at the service of Christian-Muslim relations in the Indian subcontinent and the entire South Asia. Its members teach Islam and interreligious dialogue in a number of universities and academic institutes in India.





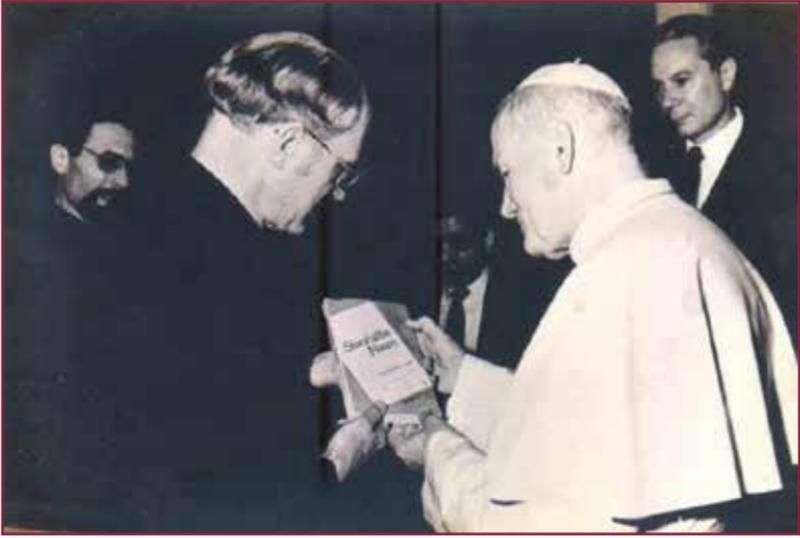
One of the major ISA publications was the handbook, *The Muslims of India: Beliefs and Practices*, edited by you, Paul. This book focused on Indian Muslims by giving the general Islamic background needed for others to understand them better.

I do not know of any initiative in the field of Christian-Muslim dialogue comparable to ISA, and I do not know of anyone who has contributed more effectively and ‘stubbornly’ to developing and sustaining the vision and activities of this small association through the ups and downs of its life. It is no exaggeration to state that you have displayed heroic courage to persevere in the arduous task of keeping the little boat afloat.

The quarterly journal *Salaam*, which developed from the duplicated *JAMI Notes*, is another important service that ISA has rendered to promote Christian-Muslim relations in the context of pluralist India for the last forty years without interruption. Anyone who wishes to see the contribution that you have made to ISA and to its annual conventions held each year together with local Muslims and Christians in various cities of the Subcontinent should consult the many volumes of *Salaam*. There the reader will find numerous contributions written by you and, last but not least, your carefully written minutes and reports of the ISA meetings and conventions.

In one of the newspaper articles about you from the Urdu press, published immediately after your departure (which Victor kindly sent me by e-mail), the author reports that among Muslims who knew you, you have been and will be known as a saintly Christian Sufi in the footsteps of Makhdum Sahib, Sharafuddin Maneri.

I cannot do better than associate with these Muslim believers. They have understood perfectly well what, throughout these years, has been the objective of your life and labours in HIS service. Thank you, once again, Paul, for your outstanding witness.



**Fr. Paul Jackson, SJ presenting a copy of his book to
Pope John Paul II**





Fr. Paul Jackson, SJ
Truly a Pioneer in Christian-Muslim
Relations in India

By Bishop Thomas Dabre

I am deeply grieved to know that Fr. Paul Jackson has left this earthly abode. He was one of those who have made a mark on the church's ministry, particularly in India, and indeed left an irreplaceable void, both in the church and in society.

His work on Islam and the relationship between Muslims and Christians by all means was an outstanding contribution and will occupy an unforgettable place in the annals of Islamic-Christian studies.

I have felt immense admiration for Fr. Paul. As is common knowledge, the church's work for Muslim-Christian relations in India needs to grow in a very significant way. We still have much ground to cover in our dialogue with Muslims.

Fr. Paul Jackson worked tirelessly, singlehandedly, and with an exemplary spirit of sacrifice. Here in India, we owe an immense debt of gratitude to his path-breaking outreach to our Muslim brothers and sisters.

I personally think his passing away is an invitation to all of us to resolve in our own simple ways to dedicate ourselves to the ministry of dialogue with Muslims, which really is a historic imperative in our present time

May his soul rest in peace.



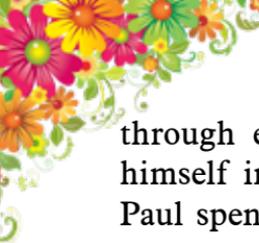
Some Lessons Fr. Paul Jackson Taught Me

By Sophie Ryan

My name is Sophie Ryan. I'm 23 years old, and later this year, I'll be graduating from a dual Arts/Law degree majoring in Peace and Conflict Studies and Studies in Religion. I've done a lot of living, but I hope most of it still lies ahead of me. What I aspire to in life is this: I want to work with those on the fringes; I want to use my voice to speak for those who lack one; I want to see a society that goes beyond an "us" and "them" rhetoric to embrace the richness that can be "our" diversity. Simple ideas, but not easy ones.

In this piece, I want to explore how the work of one person—Fr. Paul Jackson, SJ—has shaped these aspirations. 'Uncle Paul', as I knew him, was my great uncle on my dad's side. More than a relative however, he has been a mentor—and one of the greatest.

Uncle Paul, as the readers of this article will be well aware, dedicated his life to helping the Muslims of India. He used his voice to share that of another—Sheikh Sharafuddin Ahmed Maneri, one of the most famous Islamic saints and one of the greatest Sufi masters. Maneri hailed from Bihar, India, and is widely known both there and beyond for his Persian language collections of spiritual writings and in particular, his "100 letters" that present his spiritual teachings. By translating these letters from their original Persian and making them more accessible in today's world, Uncle Paul helped many to find their own voice by equipping them with Maneri's teachings. This work and many of his others testify to a life spent encountering God



through encounters with Islam. Through immersing himself in the study and experience of Islam, Uncle Paul spent his life working towards a society of inter-communal peace and harmony.

There are obvious parallels between what Uncle Paul achieved and what I hope to one day achieve. Our mediums and circumstances diverge, but I think our visions are largely the same: a world that celebrates its diversity, rather than dismantles it. Perhaps this has been Uncle Paul's greatest gift to me in life: a vision of peace and harmony. Equally important, I believe, have been the tools he passed to me throughout my life to help make that vision a reality. I know I still have much to learn (at a ripe 23 years of age, I am sure most of my learning is yet to come!), but as I graduate now from university and prepare to embark, or rather continue, on my journey in the 'real world', I find myself immensely grateful for the confidence that Uncle Paul's lessons have imbued in me that I can—that we all can—make a difference.

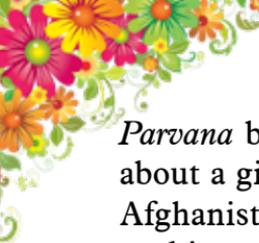
In this essay, I hope that by sharing some of those lessons I will be able to, at least in broad strokes, begin quantifying something that cannot be quantified: the ripple effect that Paul Jackson's work has had on the world. I wholeheartedly believe that his impact on me is just one small ripple of many. I can only begin to imagine how many others have been left with the same toolkit, the same vision, the same hope, for a world that embraces all its members. By expressing Uncle Paul's impact on me, I believe that I speak for a vast number of others, and that belief leaves me hopeful—hopeful in a world that many are quick to condemn as hopeless.

The Power of Stories

“What unites people? Armies? Gold? Flags? *Stories*. There’s nothing in the world more powerful than a good story”. This is a quote from the recent season finale of the show, *Game of Thrones*. At the apex of the television show, these words epitomise why the show itself has been so successful but also so much more. To me, these words articulate one of the greatest life lessons I’ve learnt from Uncle Paul: the power of stories. It’s tangential to much of Uncle Paul’s academic work, but I believe also fundamental to it, and so this is where I begin.

I spent a lot of time in hospitals growing up. I was born with quite severe *congenital bilateral talipes equinovarus* (more commonly known as ‘clubfoot’), so I required many surgeries. I sometimes struggled with what seemed to be a ceiling on my physical abilities. I got frustrated with how much harder it was for me to excel at sports than my siblings. I sometimes pitied myself. Uncle Paul’s advice to me in this time was at first puzzling: *read*. Specifically, he wanted me to start with Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations*. How would reading give me strong legs? I wondered. Our family had owned a bookshop when I was very young, so I’d always been around books and did enjoy reading, but any transformative power it might have in making me “whole”, as I thought at the time, was lost on me.

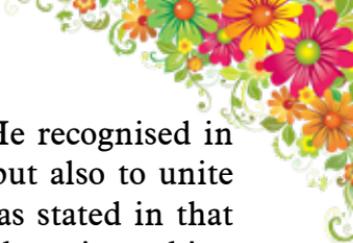
It was brilliant advice. Books became my escape. Dickens taught me much. I learnt that when we are lacking in strength or perspective, the stories and wisdom of others have much to share. I read widely, but always seemed to come back to those books about girls my age overcoming adversity. I remember reading



Parvana by Deborah Ellis, when I was maybe 10 or 11, about a girl of similar age living a very different life in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. My hardships were nothing compared to Parvana's. I read *Nujood: Age 10 and Divorced* and wondered what my life would be like if I were to be married before I finished primary school. A teacher lent me *When Broken Glass Floats: Growing Up Under the Khmer Rouge*, and I experienced surviving the "killing fields" of Cambodia through the eyes of Chanrithy Him. I imagined what my life might have been like if I was born as I was with clubbed feet somewhere else, to a different family. Why was I so lucky to live the life I did?

Books became my window into the lives of people who led lives very different from mine, yet lives that were also very much the same. These girls all experienced struggle like none I had ever known, yet they also had similar dreams, similar yearnings, similar hopes to mine. Their stories taught me that there was nothing inherently different between them and me. They taught me that despite our differences, we were the same. Today, I continue to look to books as my source of insight into the lives of those who are often forgotten by the society I live in. Their stories equip me with both knowledge and empathy—the two ingredients I consider essential to understanding.

Uncle Paul always loved a good story. He told stories with animation and passion like no one else I have ever met. He was also a voracious reader. I now believe, however, that much more than his love of a good story motivated his prescription of *reading* as a way to confront my personal limitations. I see now that his love of stories came from a far deeper place—he saw in them



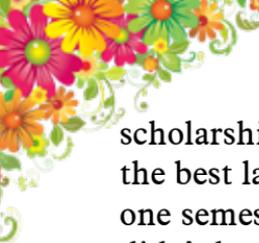
the capacity to spark emotion in us. He recognised in stories the potential to divide people but also to unite them in shared experience. He knew, as stated in that contemporary television show, that “there is nothing in the world more powerful than a good story”. Now, when I encounter young girls who find themselves confronting adversity or striving to create change in their communities, I too recommend books. Now, when I try to engage in dialogue with people of diverging beliefs, I begin with stories. Stories are how we unite.

The Need To See For Ourselves: Living The Story

Deeper than the understanding that we can derive from hearing another’s story is the understanding that we can experience by living it. Reading back on journal entries I made during my last visit to Uncle Paul, I reflected on this lesson often. One such instance was after a conversation one day with Uncle Paul about his method of teaching students of Islam: “To make a meaningful impact on these students, he says his first task has always been helping them to *see* their own bias by experiencing Islam”, I wrote. “Uncle Paul says that for Maneri, his greatest insights came from periods of profound experience followed by deep reflection. ‘This is the key’, he believes”.

I realise, reading back on this now, that I too have been a student of this method of Uncle Paul’s teaching.

I recently returned home from 18 months living in Singapore under the New Colombo Plan Scholarship. I received word in late 2016 that I had won the scholarship and initially intended to study in Singapore for six months, notwithstanding the scholarship’s ability to support me abroad for up to 18 months. I saw the

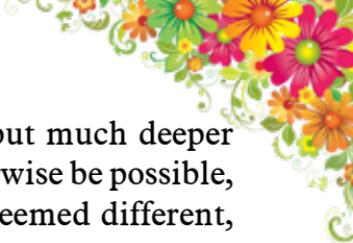


scholarship as an opportunity to spend a semester at the best law school in Asia, but staying any longer than one semester would set back my graduation date, and I didn't have time for that. After resolving on this course of action, I thought of Uncle Paul and the many times he had told me of the power of immersing oneself in community and how the lessons learnt in doing so take time. I don't think I asked Uncle Paul directly for his advice because I knew what he would say: that if I had the opportunity to stay for 18 months, I should. This was not only an opportunity to study at a great school, it was also a chance to truly experience a different society. Every moment was an opportunity to learn more, do more, be more—the more 'moments', therefore, the better.

I changed my plans and extended my stay by a year.

Uncle Paul's advice upon my arrival in Singapore was this: "Throw yourself into everyday life in Singapore and elsewhere, being your uninhibited self, but reflect on your behaviour and that of others...see what allows you to communicate with others and foster it, and try to modify any behaviour that seems to be a barrier between you and them".

I lived by this advice for the entirety of my stay in Singapore and see it now as a challenge for living every day, regardless of where I am. In December 2018, I left Singapore knowing I had there some of my very closest friends. I highly doubt that such relationships could have been built in a mere six months. Indeed, it took me six months to find my feet, six months to truly begin to understand what was important to Singaporeans, what mattered, who mattered. I threw myself into Singaporean

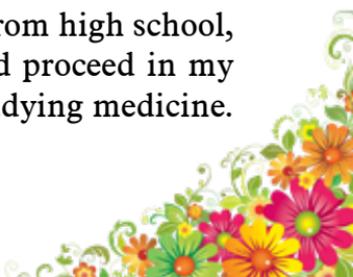


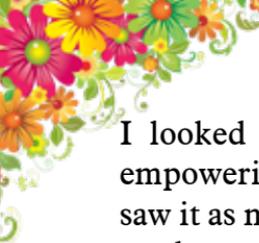
life and left with a far from complete but much deeper understanding than I think would otherwise be possible, of how life was lived in a society that seemed different, but at its core, much the same.

Initially, I arrived in Singapore slightly afraid of it. It was unfamiliar, different, new. I confess that as far as countries in Asia go, moving to Singapore as an Australian is like riding a bike with training wheels. As a truly global city, it is easy to live there as if living in Australia—you can socialise with Australians, eat Australian food and live as you would in Australia, maybe just at a higher price! At first, I gravitated towards this lifestyle because everything else was unfamiliar. It was hard to push myself into the unfamiliar, but as I did, I realised that that was where the growth happened. Just beyond ‘the familiar’ lay an abundance of new experiences, new loves, new learnings, new life. Tapping into this source of learning required practicing Uncle Paul’s advice—experiencing, reflecting and experiencing again. As I threw myself deeper into Singaporean life, I found that I had much to learn from Singaporeans. And as a country, Australia, I thought, had much to learn from Singapore. Now, I see the truth of Maneri’s wisdom: our greatest insights in life come from profound experience. We must learn by doing, understand by seeing. When we enter into dialogue in this way, we have the potential not only to tolerate difference, but also to understand, accept and learn from it.

Using Our Gifts and Having Faith In Doing So

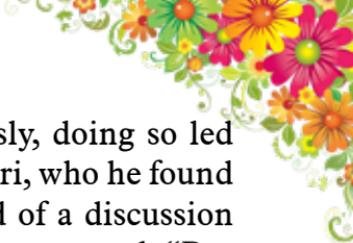
In 2013, as I prepared to graduate from high school, I found myself torn as to how I should proceed in my life. I had for a long time envisaged studying medicine.





I looked to the role my own doctors had played in empowering me and wanted to do the same for others. I saw it as my opportunity to affect change. I had done the work needed to follow this path—I had studied all the right courses, worked hard to excel in them, sat for the entrance exam...all that was left to be done was to choose where I would go to study. But after working tirelessly towards this goal for years and finding it finally within my grasp, I questioned it. Throughout my schooling, I had increasingly started gravitating towards community groups and outlets that allowed me to advocate for social change. I had started various advocacy groups in my school. After visiting Uncle Paul in Patna in 2011, I had become interested in the role of religion and culture in creating (and sometimes dismantling) social cohesion. I had started volunteering for the Multi-Faith Multicultural Centre to foster inter-communal dialogue, particularly between youth, in my community. I wanted to do more in the area, but felt I needed more tools to effectively do so.

My father and Uncle Paul, in particular, encouraged me to think beyond medicine, to think about how *my* gifts could best be used. “Talents are meant to be used, not hidden in the ground”, Uncle Paul told me. He shared with me his own struggles from when he was my age. Coincidentally, he too had contemplated studying medicine. Indeed, he had been offered a full scholarship to do so! He had also fallen in love. At my age, his life thus seemed mapped out before him. Yet, something was not right. There was a voice inside that told him his talents lay somewhere else; that a life of faith called for his gifts to be used elsewhere. He decided to apply for the Jesuits, resigning himself that thereafter, he would leave



it to God to decide his future. Curiously, doing so led him to a life in India and study of Maneri, who he found counselled this advice also—at the end of a discussion about a disputed point, Maneri often commented, “But God knows best!”

Amidst my internal tumult, Uncle Paul’s experience herein gave me some clarity: I would follow the path that allowed me to best use my gifts and have faith that it would lead me to where I was meant to go. I enrolled in my current programme—studying law, religion, peace and conflict—and opted to focus on being true to myself, to using my talents, and not trying to work out where that would take me.

A few years later, I watched online a speech given by Steve Jobs to students at a Stanford commencement ceremony and was struck by the similarities between Uncle Paul’s advice, Maneri’s advice, and that of this contemporary public figure. Jobs said: “You can’t connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. You have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future”. It was this trust, this faith, he believed, that gives us the courage and confidence to follow our hearts, even when doing so leads us off the well-worn path of others. “And that”, he said, “is what makes all the difference in life”.

I find myself ready now to embrace a life of seemingly disconnected dots knowing that they *are* connected by my faith, faith that walking in my own light and the light of my vision for the world I want to live in—even if it takes me down unexpected and foreign paths—will lead me to where I am meant to go. I credit much of that faith to the wisdom of Uncle Paul, and, through him, to the wisdom of Maneri, as I’m sure others do also.



Man of Many Talents

By Dr. Shibal Bharatia

Almost ten years ago, I had gone to visit Fr. Paul at the seminary in Digha. He was perhaps a little tired, and the asthma wasn't making it easier. We spoke for a very, very long time. Of hopes and fears, and what they hold. Of days gone by, and those yet to come. Of priorities, of forgiveness and the need to find joy in living. Of finding peace, of laying to rest ghosts and looking each morning in the eye. He also spoke of slowing down and cherishing what we have and yet asking for more: both for, and of, ourselves.

It was a conversation peppered with references to all our favorites: Friends and family, God and His Prophets (we were particularly fond of Jesus and Muhammad), and of course, Maneri. We laughed and ate some biscuits, and Aradhya, my son, then all of four years old, darted in and out of the room, chasing dragonflies and laughing the laugh children share with those they love the most.

“You’re wearing the same blue shirt again, it must be a thousand years old”, I teased Fr. Paul.

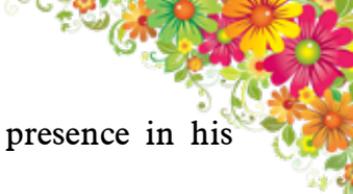
“It’s the same color as my eyes, someone once told me, and I am allowed some vanity”, he laughed. “I wear it every time I have visitors”.

And we both laughed some more.

Just as I was leaving, he picked up the most exquisitely carved wooden blotter off his table—a Madonna.

“What does she say to you, Shibal?” he asked.

He told me of how it was a gift from his beloved sister, now with God, and of how he had always had



it and found great comfort from her presence in his moments of doubt.

After what must be the longest, the most audible, silence in my lifetime, it came to me. “Serenity”, I said.

And he smiled. Perhaps I’d passed a test of sorts, for he smiled and cradled the statue lovingly in his hands. “She is yours”, he said. And I reached out to accept what can only be called grace.

“Not now”, Fr. Paul said, holding on to his Madonna. “I am putting it down in my will. I have very little to give, and I wanted to make sure you know what it means before I let you have it. You will have her when I die.”

“Can’t I have it now?” I said, “You’re not dying anytime soon!” I was distraught.

“No, you can’t have her now, I need her too,” said Fr. Paul. “And a Christian death is a celebration, Shibal, not to be mourned.”

A month later, his niece, Edwina came to visit me in Delhi.

“Paul has sent a gift for you”, she said and handed to me the Serenity Madonna.

I was dumbstruck. Later that night, I wrote to him to say “Thank you”, and he wrote back:

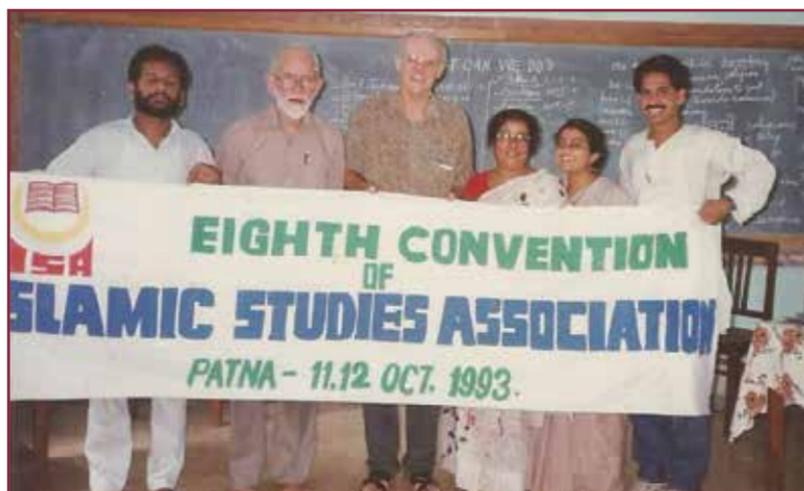
Strangely, I miss my Madonna. I had the habit of turning her towards the light when I sat in my easy chair and gazed at her for a short while, imbibing the incredible sense of serenity she bestowed on me. I miss her, but I know I have done the right thing, for the gift of serenity will lift you up and enable you to find joy in your life and bring joy into the lives of many others.

Father Jackson will be remembered for his generosity of spirit and kindness and selflessness and scholarship. A man of many, many talents, perfected by decades of service and learning. And that really is what I should write about. But all I can remember are the twinkling blue eyes, and the vibrant laughter of my best friend, as the seventeen year-old me had tried to tell him I didn't really believe in God. "Good", he had guffawed, "As long as you are thinking about Him, you'll find your way."

Rest in Peace, Fr. Paul Jackson.

You were perhaps my best friend, definitely the singular stabilising force in life as I battled my often brittle faith and teenage angst. I ended up a believer, and your life and teachings have been my moral compass. And will continue to be so. Always.

I know you've found your way to your best friend, Paul. And yes, I know your passing is a celebration of a life well lived, in the service of man and God. And not to be mourned. Ever.



Fr. Paul Jackson, SJ with the Management Committee of the Islamic Studies Association at the Patna Convention

Father Paul Jackson SJ – A Sufi

By S. S. Mashadi

Fr. Jackson, servant of Jesus, is no more with us, but his affection remains. As a Sufi, he believed in service to human beings as the best prayer and expression of gratitude towards God. Words are inadequate to describe him fully.

This Christmas was a sad day for us, when we badly missed him and our visit to the Church to meet him. Every Christmas, I used to present him small gifts (with his permission, of course). He accepted a small diary every year, and was using this diary for almost two decades.

A great intellectual, Fr. Jackson promoted interfaith understanding and harmony. As President of the Islamic Studies Association, he inducted me and my wife Zakia as associate members. We actively participated in the deliberations of the Association and also attended the conferences in Patna, Bareilly, and Delhi.

Fr. Jackson had deep knowledge of Islam and Sufism and taught Islamic theology to young aspirants to priesthood. He was highly respected in the Muslim community and wholeheartedly participated in Muslim festivals and ceremonies. He was a great scholar and admirer of Hazrat Sharafuddin Maneri. Maneri and his Sufism so impressed him that he translated Maneri's writings into English. His doctorate earned critical acclamation from scholars. Fr. Jackson was a Sufi in the real sense of the word.

We still remember with joy the occasion when Fr. Jackson's niece Edwina came to Patna for her marriage and I had to act as her father in the ceremony held at St. Joseph's Convent, which was presided over by Fr. Jackson. We are still dad and mom to Edwina.

I am indebted to Fr. Jackson for his love and affection and feel honored that in his last published book 'In Quest for God' he acknowledges me also.

Fr. Jackson, you are now in a place which offers eternal peace and bliss. Your affection and your sublime ideas will always guide us.



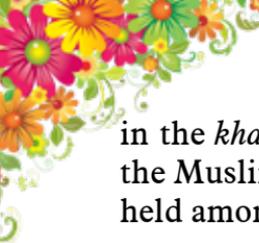
Fr. Paul Jackson, SJ with his friend S.S. Mashadi and family in Patna

A Christian Friend Among Muslim Brethren

By Donald Miranda, SJ

Fr. Paul Jackson, SJ was a dear and respectable confidant of the Muslim community, especially in Bihar. He had a lot of friends among them, and was an admirer and supporter of them in many ways. His scholarly work on the Sufi Saint Sharafuddin Maneri (*Makhdum Sahib*) no doubt had put him on a high pedestal among Muslim scholars. He spoke with great warmth, joy and delight of his experiences and encounters with Muslims. He was a regular at the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Library, in Patna, during his active years, when he resided at St. Xavier's, Patna. His long and trusting friendship with Askari Sahib began at Khuda Bakhsh library, as a young scholar, and continued till the end of his life.

His familiarity and closeness to the Muslim community became evident to me during the Islam exposure program at the Regional Theologate in Patna. Fr. Jackson introduced us to Islam through a week-long Urdu language programme and the Quran, before sending us off for the Islam-exposure program. A Jesuit companion and I were assigned to the Muslim *khanqah* in Munger, Bihar. The seminary there had 700 young boys of different ages, learning the Quran. At the entrance to the seminary all we had to tell the *Maulana Sahib* was that we were sent by Fr. Paul Jackson. We were treated with utmost kindness and hospitality during our entire stay there. The *Maulana Sahib* ensured that he was always present for meals with us, as a true sign of brotherhood. My Jesuit companion and I would sometimes walk to the Bihar School of Yoga, which was nearby. The inmates there would be surprised to know that we, as Christians, were residing at the *khanqah*. Our presence



in the *khanqah* was witness to Fr. Jackson's closeness to the Muslim community and the esteem in which he was held among them.

Once, in my earliest contacts with Fr. Jackson, I had made the mistake of asking him which part of the USA he belonged to. He had given me a stern look and said dismissively, "I am an Australian, not an American!" He reserved the same dismissive tone for anybody who spoke uncharitably about Muslims or Islam. He disliked generalisations and defended Islam as if it were his own faith. His fierce loyalty indicated that his learning was not merely academic but reflected a much deeper empathy with Islam and its basic tenets. He was always happy to share his insights on Islam and clarify misconceptions whenever needed. Hence, some Jesuits would introduce Fr. Jackson to visitors as "our Muslim brother among us".

Perhaps unknown to many, even Jesuits, Fr. Jackson was one among the first group of Jesuits who went to Afghanistan in order to study the possibilities of a Jesuit presence in that part of the world. Today, that initiative has grown to an active Jesuit presence in Afghanistan at four centres.

In the last year of his life he found it extremely difficult to keep up with the contacts he had cherished during his active years. Sitting at the computer became increasingly difficult. Finally, he needed wheel-chair assistance to move around the house. His end came during the lockdown due to the COVID 19 crises. This denied many of his well-wishers, friends and companions a final meeting with him. Nonetheless, his *Khuda hafiz* continues to live in hearts all those he endeared by his gentle and loving ways.

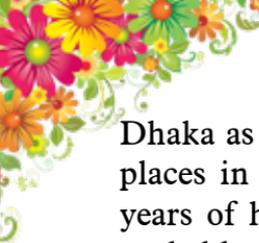
Remembering an Inspiring Man

By Bob McCahill

A wandering Australian came through Bangladesh and I met him by chance. John was his name. He had just been in India, where he got to know Paul Jackson in Patna. John gave me Paul's address. I sent Paul a letter, and he replied, inviting me to visit. We were both men of 1937, aged 40 at that time. Soon after that, I journeyed through India, stopping at Patna to meet Paul, a pukka scholar, deeply into his life's work on Sharafuddin Maneri along with his Persian scholar-brother Professor Askari. That Paul had dedicated himself to introducing Maneri to societies newly cognizant of the riches to be found in Islamic spirituality impressed me, for my lifestyle and apostolate were related to Paul's, but other. I had to appreciate the dedication and devotion to the scholarship that could bring Muslims and Christians closer together.

It was through Paul that I participated in a meeting of similarly Muslim-focused Christians in Agra. It was at that meeting that the Jesuit Apostolate to Muslims in India morphed into ISA, the Islamic Studies Association. Paul and Christian Troll (another 1937 man) made outstanding contributions.

Several times since then I have enjoyed participating in ISA conventions throughout India. One of the great joys of being at those events was always to share Paul with his peers, students, and admirers. His laughter was memorable, and still comes quickly to my mind whenever I think of the man. Paul and I corresponded sporadically. On one occasion, I invited Paul to visit



Dhaka as it would have been a joy for him to visit the places in Sonargaon where Sharafuddin Maneri spent years of his young life. That visit never materialized, probably because of Paul's dedication to the task of translating more and more of the prolific Sufi saint's works

Sharafuddin had a strong and early connection with Sonargaon, located in the present-day Dhaka district of Bangladesh. Perhaps no other follower of the saint knew his life's story and development better than Paul. We thought perhaps the Islamic Foundation in Dhaka would be open to the idea of publishing Paul's research and writings on Maneri. I approached the publisher with the idea, but he was non-committal. Finally, I simply asked if there were a chance of publishing something about Maneri's life and work. After a long pause he answered me with a question: "What is Paul Jackson's religion?" When I replied "Christian", his response was clear. Paul was, of course, disappointed by that news, but, typically for him, understanding of it. For, dialogue takes time to happen.

Years ago, Paul was trying to imagine new ways of furthering Christian-Muslim relations besides his already greatly appreciated scholarly work to bring the two together. He thought of living more closely with Muslim neighbours, that is, a Christian presence among Muslims in a non-academic setting. He left the convenience of his scholarly environment to live in a Muslim neighborhood while continuing his translation efforts and answering calls to give talks on the subject of dialogue with Muslims. It was an attempt that could not last long because of his numerous commitments and the need to look after his own health.

The government of India awarded citizenship to Paul for his great efforts through scholarship. International publication of the One Hundred Letters of Sharafuddin Maneri surely served the unifying purpose of bringing Muslims and others closer together. It made plain the fact that the spiritual advice of a Muslim saint of India is fitting for followers of other faiths and in other places as well. We all belong to God. Thank you, Paul!



‘Christians Among Muslims in Asia’ Meeting





Recalling 'Baba'

By Yoginder Singh Sikand

I can't recall if I ever met 'Baba', as I used to call Fr. Paul Jackson. I might have, once, in Delhi, many years ago, but I am not sure. Be that as it may, some common interests brought us in touch, which later blossomed into a friendship of sorts. I don't remember when and how, but we began exchanging emails every now and then. We became, you could say, e-friends, just as there were pen friends in the days when Baba and I were much younger. He was considerably older than me, and that's probably one reason why I decided to address him as 'Baba' in my mails to him.

Even though I cannot say that I knew Baba very well, and although our views and beliefs regarding some issues might have differed, there were several things about Baba that make him stand out as a very inspiring person for me. One of these was his passion which led him to leave the country of his birth and come all the way to India to live and serve. It might have been a deep commitment to what he might have regarded as his vocation that led him to immerse himself in cultures vastly different from the one he was brought up in. He travelled all the way to Iran to study Persian and then shifted to Patna, where he spent a long time working on translating writings of a medieval Sufi. In this, Baba was something of a role model for transcultural and inter-community communications. His interest in and commitment to interfaith understanding was remarkable. Surely, the world can do with many more people with similar passion, abilities and interests!

Baba's meticulous scholarship was another of his outstanding qualities. Over the years, I read some of the things he wrote. I hope that Baba's writings will continue to be made available, through reprints if necessary. Additionally, I hope arrangements are made to publish Baba's autobiography (he had very kindly sent me a soft copy), if it has not already appeared in print.

Baba and I would exchange emails fairly often. He would encourage me in my work and send me words of appreciation. If I remember correctly, he once mentioned that he used to pray for me. Thank you, Baba, for this kindness. Perhaps it was sometime last year when Baba's emails to me stopped. Baba was now perhaps too weak to work much on the computer. I requested my friend Victor Edwin, SJ to forward Baba a message from me. Here are some excerpts from the message:

Dear Baba,

I have not heard from you for a long time. Victor told me that you do not work on the computer these days [...] I suppose you must need to rest a lot.

I thank you for the help and encouragement you have given me [...]

You have been so actively engaged, through much of your inspiring life, in trying to promote better understanding and friendliness between people who follow, or claim to follow, different religions. You have done such great scholarly work. You have also been a kind supporter and well-wisher of so many people, including myself.

May God bless you forever.

The other day, Baba completed the spell of time that God had allotted to him on this planet for this lifetime of his. May the Lord bless him with what is best for him, now and forever.



Fr. Paul Jackson, SJ among his Jesuits colleagues in the Islamic Apostolate



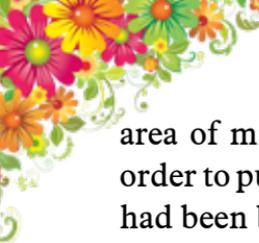
Remembering a Stalwart

By Pearl Drego

Fr. Paul Jackson was a stalwart, who will be remembered with admiration and affection for his life work of building lasting bridges between different groups, especially between Christians and Muslims. Fr. Paul was Australian in origin, but he made India his home and identified with India's history, heritage, peoples and cultures. He was a man of determination, whose intellectual genius was dedicated to the work of finding God in all things and finding the eternal in the scriptures of other religions.

Fr. Paul tells the interesting story of how he came to choose his path of interfaith dialogue and to work especially with Muslims. He left Melbourne by ship on 27 December 1960, together with Fr. Tom Keogh and Fr. Peter Jones, to join the Jesuit mission in Hazaribagh. His first assignment took him to Calcutta, and on a journey by train with Hindu and Muslim students in the midst of the anti-Muslim riots of that time, he was shocked to see dead bodies on the roads and witness the terrible dynamics of communal violence. He was also deeply moved to watch how his Hindu students travelling with him in the train carefully hid two of their Muslim fellow students and so saved their lives. These experiences led Fr. Paul to explore Islam intensively and brought him ultimately to focus on the Sufi tradition.

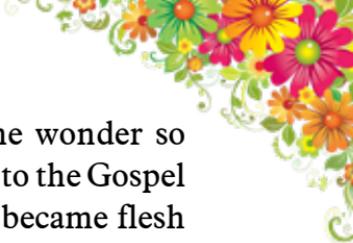
Once he discovered *The Hundred Letters* of the great saint and Sufi Master Sharafuddin Yahya Maneri, Fr. Paul decided to change direction and move into a new



area of ministry. Fr. Paul decided to move to Patna in order to pursue his research on Sharafuddin Maneri, who had been born in Maner, west of Patna, in 1263 and who had settled in Bihar Sharif, south of Patna. While going through original Persian manuscripts, he realised what an enormous task he had undertaken! Fr. Paul recalls that he was shocked to discover that when he opened the best manuscript copy of *The Hundred Letters*, which was about 450 years old, he found it difficult to read, let alone understand what Maneri had written. He realised that skimming through the writings would not be enough and that the laborious task of putting it into English was necessary. When he reached the stage of keeping a daily routine of eight hours, five days a week, in the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, with Professor Syed Hasan Askari, his guide, helping him to read the manuscript of Maneri in Persian, he began to see the road ahead more clearly and with ardent hope.

As Fr. Paul eloquently put it, he was continually impressed by Maneri's depth of spirituality and the beauty of its expression. "I realised also that there was a whole process of interiorization going on as I met God as He dwelt in the heart of Sharafuddin Maneri," he states openly and honestly. He became aware of God's presence sinking new roots within himself and realised that while continuing to accept the formulations of Christian doctrine that were dear to him, he realised their limitations in expressing the ineffable majesty of God's being.

To get a glimpse of Fr. Paul's experience of God and Jesus, I quote a paragraph selected from a Christmas email he sent to our community in December 2012:



Christmas is a time we celebrate the wonder so succinctly expressed in the Prologue to the Gospel according to John – “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” He had begun his Prologue by saying: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Logically you cannot both ‘be’ and “be with” at the same time. The words are an attempt to express the inexpressible, but this only serves to highlight the unfathomable mystery we attempt to sum up in the word ‘God’. For me, the above quotations herald the incredible news of God’s “reaching out” to us human beings in the person of Jesus. This is mind-boggling, and the faintest sense of it is a veritable source of joy. This is what we celebrate, and our instinct to celebrate with our near and dear ones is itself a tangible expression of the divine “reaching out” mirrored in the very depths of our own beings.

While immersed in his study and encounters, Fr. Paul preserved his relationship with fellow Jesuits. He once wrote to us stating, “I am very proud of the variety of areas in which Jesuits have excelled!” He felt that it was a spiritual attitude that made a difference between work as career and work as mission.

Fr. Paul was one of the founders of the Islamic Studies Association and wrote regularly for its publications. His regular section titled *Rays of Light* had beautiful inspiring quotes and commentaries on Sufi texts. He also gave regular reports of Christian-Muslim dialogue events. Through his dedicated heartfelt mission, he led Christians from:



Separatism in religion to interreligious encounter

Indifference to Muslims to valuing their spiritual lights

Ignoring Muslims to collaboration with them

*Ignorance of Islam to appreciating the spiritual insights
in the Islamic tradition*

*Treating Muslims with prejudice to honouring their
charisms*

*Marginalising Muslim students to relating to them with
love*

Sidelining the Quran to relating it with Biblical themes

*Berating Muslim festivals to welcoming their Divine
depth*

Rejecting Muslim worship to using their heartfelt prayers.

We remember Fr. Paul Jackson with loving gratitude for his regular communications, his concern for people's projects and programmes, his care for all Christian-Muslim dialogue activities, his inspiration to many to engage in interreligious dialogue, his promotion of an integrated theology and his humanity in understanding the trials of those in spiritual distress. May he continue to send his friends and associates many blessings from above.

A Man With An Enchanting Smile

By Pushpa Anbu, SVD

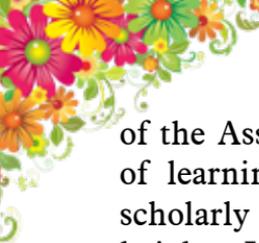
“Lovely to hear from you, Anbu! I’m glad you are fully engaged in fruitful activity. I live a quiet life. My health is not so good but, with the grace of God, I manage. Keep up the good work! Paul.”

When I received this email from Fr. Paul Jackson SJ on March 11, 2020, little did I know that it would be my last contact with him. I am saddened by the sudden demise of my beloved mentor. May he continue to enjoy and engage in fruitful dialogue with our brothers and sisters in eternal bliss!

Let me share my personal witness and journey with Fr. Paul.

I knew Fr. Paul personally for more than two decades. He was a source of encouragement, who sparked the interest in Christian-Muslim dialogue in me. In the year 1990, when I got permission from my Provincial Superior to do post-graduation in Islamic Studies, he was the first one whom I contacted. He then put me in touch with Fr. Desiderio Pinto SJ, another Islamic scholar, who guided me to seek admission at Aligarh Muslim University. Both of these men have now left for eternal reward.

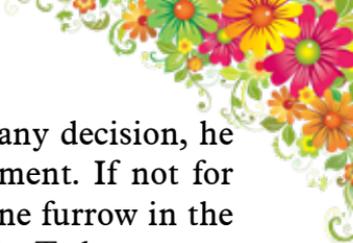
As I pen these few lines, fond memories of my interaction with Fr. Paul remain fresh in my mind. For several years, he had been the President of the Islamic Studies Association (ISA), a group with which he was closely associated from its inception, in 1979. I had the opportunity of working with him, as the Secretary



of the Association, and I consider those years as years of learning for me. With his personal interest and scholarly engagements, he took the Association to new heights. He was a man of discipline and known for his meticulous planning. Time was precious to him, and the responsible use of finances was part of his way of life. He came well prepared for meetings, seminars and conventions. His was a stickler for punctuality. His enchanting smile would keep all of us lively, active and dynamic throughout the engagements.

I was always fascinated by his indomitable spirit. His course on Christian-Muslim Dialogue for seminarians was one of the best, for he combined theory and practical aspects of Islamic faith and Muslim life. Be it summer or winter, he would take pains to travel to remote villages in Bihar to make the necessary arrangements for seminarians to stay at Muslim centres or close to them, during the course on Islam. He applied the pedagogy of praxis—action-reflection-action—in understanding our Muslim brethren. Many seminarians remember him fondly for his innovative and creative method of teaching the subject. Fr. Paul did everything out of his determination and conviction—be it his studies, scholarly engagements, classes or meetings. Once he was convinced of something, he would go out of his way to do it.

As an academician, he has contributed much to the study of Islam and Islamic spirituality. His insight into to the life and work of a well-known Sufi, Sharafuddin Maneri, was marvelous and gained global appreciation. I can firmly say that he had not just studied about Sufism but, rather, that he lived Sufism, making him a spiritually enlightened person. I have seen him spending time in



silence and reflection. Before we took any decision, he insisted on prayer and proper discernment. If not for prayer, he wouldn't have ploughed a lone furrow in the pursuit of this ministry despite all odds. To have come from Australia and to have worked and integrated with unknown people in remote villages of North India with its extreme climate, to have mastered foreign languages and to have made known a Sufi master to the world—all these needed courage and conviction, based on a sound spirituality.

As an altruist, he had special concern for those who were interested in the ministry in which he was engaged. His encouraging words and personal witness empowered many to cultivate keen interest this ministry. Due to his friendly nature, conviction and passion, he won the hearts of many Muslims, which we witnessed when we had a convention many years ago in Patna. He was an open book, willing to share his knowledge with everyone. Throughout his life, he proved himself through his hard work, untiring effort and commitment. He continued to keep himself busy till the fag end of his life. Although his physical health began to gradually decline, it did not deter him from keeping himself mentally strong and from being in touch with many of us.

The death of Fr. Paul is a personal loss for me and has created vacuum in the ministry of Christian-Muslim dialogue. The best tribute that I can pay to him is to continue my commitment to Christian-Muslim dialogue and keep the flame burning with zeal and enthusiasm. May the spirit of Fr. Paul continue to inspire us, and may God grant him eternal peace and reward.



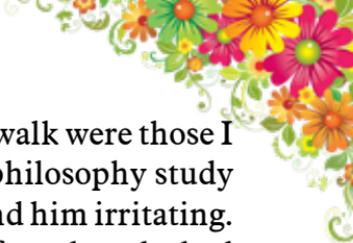
Some Memories

By Andrew Hamilton, SJ

After Paul Jackson left Australia for India late in 1960, I saw him very rarely. My memories are of him as a youth, and not in his maturity. They are also unreliable. But since our early years as Jesuits are always significant, my account of Paul may be of interest to his friends.

When I entered the noviceship, Paul was one of the first Jesuits I met. He was a second year novice, appointed as 'angelus' during first probation, to initiate three of us newcomers into the mysteries of the noviceship. My most vivid memory is of my first villa day, the weekly walk into the countryside. Paul led the three of us into the nearby river valley, where we were to have lunch with the other angels and their groups of probationers. Our destination was a picnic spot. Paul, who preferred longer walks on villa day, was not familiar with the river valley and lost his way. By this time, rain had set in for the day, blurring Paul's vision. As a result, we spent the day walking along various trails, soaked to the skin.

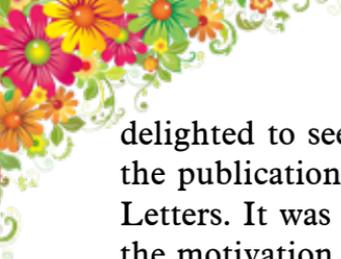
For me, the day was a memorable introduction to Jesuit life and to Paul who represented it. I remember vividly his unavailing care for us, his exuberance, his earnestness on any religious topic and his enthusiasm. He had a complete disregard for the conditions and firm resolution that we should walk until we found our destination. I was impressed with all this, in retrospect reassured that getting soaked, losing your way, pushing through blindly, and coming home like tramps were all an acceptable part of Jesuit life.



The qualities Paul displayed on the walk were those I saw in him during the noviceship and philosophy study that followed it. I both admired and found him irritating. He gave himself completely to Jesuit life and study, had firm convictions and enthusiasms, spoke of them with unmeasured enthusiasm and nervous energy, gesturing hugely with his long arms, laughing loudly, and always personally generous and interested. But the more Paul was himself, the more different we became. The points of difference were annoying. Paul was an extrovert; I an introvert. When talking on any topic, Paul saw straight lines; I looked for angles and subtleties. Paul gave himself to the philosophy we studied; I believed it must be true but secretly wondered if anyone but us could take it seriously. When we talked, we fought like cats and dogs, Paul with a huge bone, and I trying to scratch pieces from it. On the occasions when Paul returned to India, I was delighted to meet him again. Again we squabbled, and again I later reproached myself.

When Paul was sent to India, he was delighted, filled with the missionary zeal expressed in the rhetoric of that time. The ceremony at which Paul, Tom Keogh and Peter Jones, clothed in their white missionary robes and in the presence of proud and grieving family members, were presented with missionary crosses to the singing of stirring anthems caught perfectly that missionary vision. Paul accepted wholeheartedly the mission to preach the Gospel to the far parts of the world and never to return. At the time, I imagined that his Jesuit life would be one spent in sacramental ministry and supporting Catholic communities with great generosity and energy.

I was a little surprised some years later to hear that Paul was undertaking studies in Islamic theology and



delighted to see many years the fruit of his labours in the publication of Sharafuddin Maneri: The Hundred Letters. It was only through reading Paul's account of the motivation and the cost of that commitment that I saw how the mature Paul had changed from his younger self. He showed the same enthusiasm for a cause and an intellectual ideal and the same stubbornness in pursuing it, but the force driving him was not an abstract ideal but, first, solidarity, and then, friendship, with Muslim people. That fed the energy that led him to study Urdu, become proficient in Persian, surrender himself to the work of Sharafuddin Maneri, live a scholar's life, and commend the depths of Islam to Catholic audiences.

Paul's study took him on a route as roundabout as the walk on which he led us over sixty years ago. It took him from his own centre to its margins: from Hazaribagh region to Patna, from pastoral ministry to scholarship, from Christian theology to Islamic. And yet that path led him not to the world's end but to the Sufi tradition that may form a bridge between Christianity and Islam.



Thank You, Fr. Paul

Sr. Gerardette Philips, RSCJ

The first time I saw Fr. Paul Jackson was at the funeral of an RSCJ sister of mine who was an Islamic scholar. Fr. Paul celebrated the Eucharist. In his homily, he shared that Sr. Arati Snow was a Sufi friend to him from whom he learned a great deal. He spoke about how he hoped that there would be someone who would follow her. I entered the Society of the Sacred Heart with what one would consider 'a vocation within a vocation', and that vocation was to encounter God in the hearts of my Muslim sisters and brothers. This meant that I needed to know and experience more about Islam and Muslims.

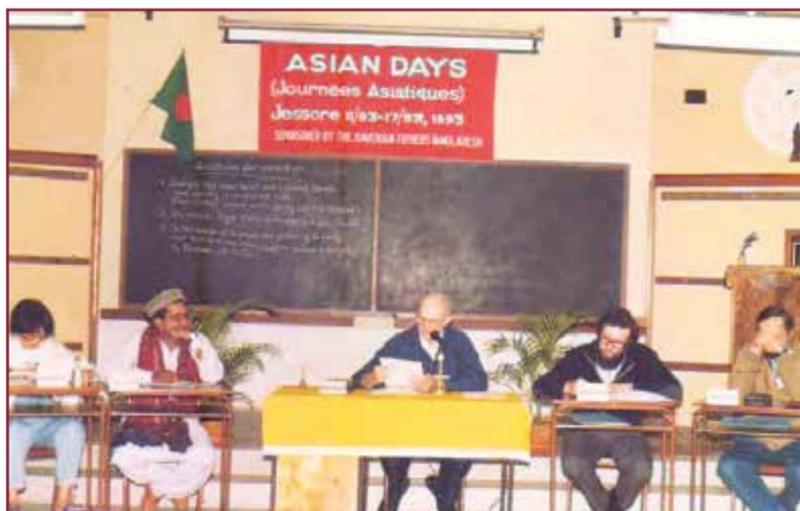
The next time I met Fr. Paul was at the annual Islamic Studies Association meeting in Patna. He was glad to meet me, and I know he took a special interest in me because of his appreciation of Sr. Aarti. In a few hours, he introduced me to several of his Muslim friends. After this, a correspondence via post began, and every letter that I received was one of support, encouragement and joy that there was a woman, a religious sister, who shared the path that was important for him as a Jesuit missionary in the Church in India.

A few years later, I was missioned to Patna. A day after our arrival, our visitor ready to say mass was Fr. Paul. He offered to come to our community to celebrate the Eucharist every Friday. Every week, he brought recipes from his sister Mary for our RSCJ sister who cooked delicious meals, a novel for another RSCJ sister who loved to read, and some of his articles on 'Meeting Muslims' for me.

Fr. Paul rejoiced with me and prayed for me as I moved on from stage to stage in my religious life and pursued my studies in Islam. He was always ready with names of people who could help. With great ease, he offered me books for further reading. The main book he recommended was, of course, Sharafuddin Maneri's Hundred Letters that he had from Persian.

Fr. Paul's laughter was contagious, and so was his love for Islam and the Lord. He gave all three to me in more ways than one. The last time I met him was in 2018. He said to me, 'To know that you are in Indonesia with the world's largest Muslim population is a consolation for me. Continue to share with others the beauty of Islam.' We prayed and blessed each other as he said, 'We will say *Khuda Hafiz* for now till we meet again.'

Fr. Paul lives on in the hearts of many, including my own, and in his passion to cross frontiers that still remains an important need for our world today. May we learn from him!



Asian Meeting on Christian-Muslim Relations

A Man of Patience, Perseverance and Prayer

By Joseph Victor Edwin, SJ

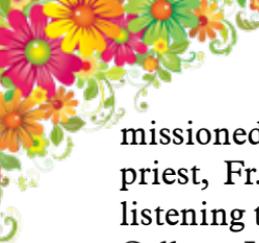
Jesuit Father Paul Frederick Joseph Jackson, a well-known scholar of Sufism, passed away at Kurji Holy Family Hospital, Patna, on 5th July, 2020. He was hospitalized in the same hospital for over three weeks. Fr. Jackson had turned four score and three years on 6th June, a few days before he had a fall in his room that led to his hospitalisation.

Fr. Jackson served as President of the Islamic Studies Association (ISA) and the editor of *Salaam* for several years.

On hearing of Fr. Jackson's passing away, Prof. Akhtarul Wasey, former Head of the Department of Islamic Studies at New Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia (who knew Father Jackson well), expressed his feeling with an Islamic expression: *Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un* ('Verily we belong to God, and verily to Him do we return'), a phrase that is mentioned in the Qur'an (Q. 2:156). Later, in his column in a widely-circulated Urdu language daily newspaper, which Muslims read in large numbers, Prof. Wasey described Father Jackson as a 'Catholic Sufi'.

Is it possible to be both Christian and Sufi? Father Paul Jackson was a beautiful model as a Christian Sufi. One might remember that the Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner (d. 1984) famously said that the Christian of the future "will be a mystic or will not exist".

Young Paul Jackson entered the Society of Jesus in the year 1956 and travelled to India in 1960. After studies in theology (1965-69), he was ordained a priest and was

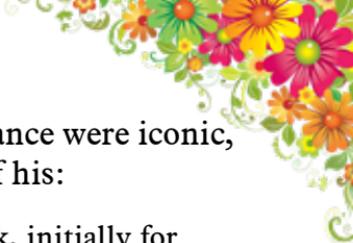


missioned to teach in Jesuit high schools. As a Jesuit priest, Fr. Jackson discerned his personal vocation on listening to a lecture of Fr. Joseph Putz SJ at St. Xavier's College. Jackson wrote later:

It was there that I heard Fr. Putz, a theological expert at Vatican II, say that Pope John XXIII had said that the Church, after the Council of Trent, was like a fortress on a hilltop defending itself. He said the Church should open all its doors and windows and reach out to all groups of people. I reflected that no one in Hazaribag was reaching out to Muslims as such and said to myself: "Let me try to do something."

Fr. Jackson resolved to do something for Muslims in the course of the months that followed. Recognising one's personal vocation is not discovering what one wants to do, but, rather, discovering the very essence of one's being, what is unique and unrepeatably about oneself. Fr. Jackson recognised 'doing something for Muslims' as his personal vocation.

Following his dream, Fr. Jackson moved to Delhi to study History at the Jamia Millia Islamia. While he was a student there, he happened to attend an international conference on the Sufi saint Baba Farid. He concluded in his heart that Sufis bring people together and thus he would study a Sufi as a way of entering into the lives of the Muslims of Bihar. He studied Persian in Shiraz (1974-75) and wrote a thesis on the Sufi saint Sharafuddin Maneri, for which the Patna University awarded him with a Ph.D. (1976-80). Over the years, Fr. Jackson translated and commented upon the spiritual letters of Sharafuddin Maneri.



Fr. Jackson's patience and perseverance were iconic, as can be discerned from these words of his:

For thirty-three years, five days a week, initially for about eight hours a day, and subsequently for about two hours a day, any of the mainly Muslim readers in the reading room of the [Khuda Baksh] library would see me seated with a Persian manuscript on a stand, with a copy of Steingass's Persian-English dictionary propped up beside it, and a notebook on the table in front of me in which to write my translation. They could not miss me, as I was normally the only foreigner sitting in the reading room.

For a dozen years or so, they would have seen Askari Saheb seated beside me, and would have noticed that we occasionally spoke to each other. Curiosity made them want to find out who I was, and what I was doing, but politeness dictated that they enquire from someone else and not disturb me...As long as Askari Saheb was still alive we had an almost daily interaction. I treasured these moments. A deep bond of respect and affection grew up between us. Many knew that he was my guide and friend, and were happy to see this relationship.

What a life! What a legacy! Fr. Paul Jackson continues to inspire both Christians and Muslims to carry forward the work of Christian-Muslim dialogue in South Asia and beyond.

A Dedicated Priest, a Great Friend and Supporter

By Sr. Leelamma Varkey

From the time I got involved in Christian-Muslim dialogue Fr. Paul Jackson was a great support and always encouraged me. When I became a member of the Islamic Studies Association (ISA), he was very happy to share and discuss various issues pertaining to Islam and Muslim lifestyles, especially about the Sufi Sharafuddin Maneri. We attended many meetings, and travelled together too. Wherever we went, he was very attentive and loving and took care of me. His loud laughter echoes still!

I learnt from him to be more faithful to my religious vocation as well as to my ministry—working among rejected Muslim women. He appreciated my work, took interest in what I did and was ready to help in whichever way he could. We miss a great missionary in the Muslim Apostolate and a great friend and lover of Muslim brothers and sisters.

May his soul rest in peace.



Thank You, Fr. Paul

By Timothy Wright

One of the things that Fr. Paul Jackson, SJ is best remembered for is his translation into English of the works of the Sufi Sharafuddin Maneri (1290-1381 CE). They were of great importance for me when researching my Ph.D. thesis, which was on the relationship between the spirituality of the Rule of Benedict and the spirituality of Islam (This was later published as *No Peace Without Prayer, Encouraging Muslims and Christians to Pray Together, A Benedictine Approach*). It was while doing my research that I was introduced to Fr. Paul Jackson's translation of Maneri's work and hence my deep gratitude to him, for which this testimony is but a small indication.

The work of Fr. Paul has been of huge importance to people seeking to go deeper into the spirituality of Islam. His work on Sharafuddin Maneri has enabled many Christians to appreciate the similarity and difference in the respective similarities of Muslims and Christians. This creates the possibility of a bridge on which a fruitful dialogue of spirituality can take place. The contemplative, whether Christian or Muslim, is encouraged by Maneri's writings, in which there are so many positive echoes, one of the other.

I congratulate Fr. Paul on this achievement, I pray that his scholarly work continues to spread and that it helps to bring a depth of mutual understanding between the believers in Christianity and Islam that creates friendship, mutual cooperation and build appreciation

of one of the other so that differences can be explained and accepted in a way that promotes respect and erodes any possibility of violence.

I pray that the One God, who Created us, who offers us guidance, who forgives us when we repent and offers a life after death, is able to lead us to an ever closer union in Him.



**Fr. Paul Jackson, SJ with the members of
Islamic Studies Association, Delhi**



Yes, He Lives... Lives... Lives...

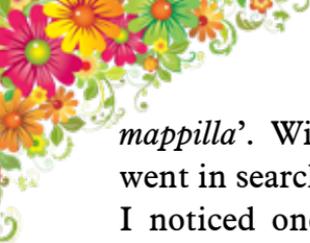
By Victor Lobo, SJ

I was born and bred in a puritan Catholic Christian environment, where the nearest Hindu locality was at quite a distance and Muslims seemed a distant species altogether. Our language, culture, customs and traditions were wholly different from those of the Hindus and Muslims. We hardly interacted with non-Christians. Our Church school, administered by Catholic nuns, had only Catholic teachers, not even Christians from other groups. Protestants were called *mishinanche*, meaning 'missionaries'. Although the school had non-Christian students, our interaction with them was limited. We were proud of our faith and thought that ours was 'superior'. With this background and upbringing I entered the Society of Jesus for the 'service of faith'.

I was just out of the Juniorate when the Superior called me one day and said, "Fr. Provincial wants you to go to Bijapur and learn Urdu for your college studies." Perplexed, I told him, "I don't even know proper Hindi, and I am not at all confident to study Urdu, a totally new language for me! How can I start learning from the alphabet and come up to the college level in less than three months!"

The Superior replied, "You can. Even if you don't do well in the beginning, no problem. You go, and start learning Urdu."

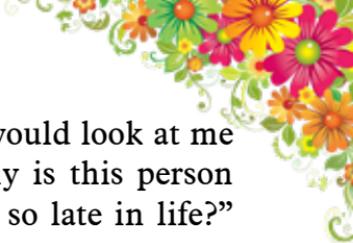
Personally, at that time, I didn't like Muslims. Moreover, back home it's derogatory to be called a *maplynacho pora*, which literally means 'child of a



mappilla'. With utter helplessness and heavy steps, I went in search of a *madrassa* in Mangalore's Bandar area. I noticed one attached to a mosque called "Kachchi Masjid." My mind filled with fear and angst, as if in a state of delirium, I stood numb and still at the entrance. It was the first time in my life that I was about to enter a mosque. After taking a few deep breaths, I mustered some courage and stepped inside. I was met by the *imam*, who, learning about my intention and desire, welcomed me with a broad smile. Further, he promised me that he would bring me up to the college level in Urdu within three months.

With this assurance, I started learning Urdu, beginning with the alphabet. Everything sounded Greek and Latin and felt as some tongue spoken on an alien planet. Moreover, the writing style too was unusually contradistinctive—from right to left. I could imagine myself writing to my Superior, "Father, if it is your will, please take this cup away from me"!

With some sort of initial training in Urdu, I landed up in Bijapur. I was admitted to the Anjuman College, where Urdu was the norm of the day, being used as a medium across disciplines. The initial lectures in Urdu went in all possible directions except through my mind. And so, after the regular classes in the college, every day I used to go to a *madrassa* and learn Urdu, sitting with little children under the guidance of an *imam*. A number of *imams* taught me, but not one of them accepted any fee from me! They tutored me for, free saying that it was a 'pious deed'.



The other students in the college would look at me with awe and surprise, thinking, “Why is this person learning a new language, and that too so late in life?” But I received abounding support and encouragement from the lecturers in general, and the Urdu teachers in particular, who went out of their way to buy books for me out of their own pocket. When I approached them to pay for their additional services, they quietly turned down my request. And so, I went to the Principal, who retorted thus: “We are very happy that you are learning Urdu. And we don’t want anything else from you.”

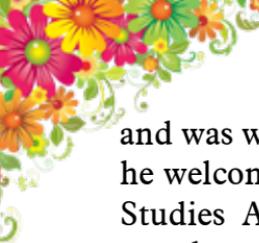
Because of the teachers’ encouragement, I also picked up a little Persian.

After graduation, I was sent to Pune for Philosophy. I wanted to study Arabic, and so I went to a *madrassa*. The *imam* willingly accepted to teach me. However, when he came to know that I was a Christian, he told me: “To learn Arabic, one needs to be clean.” I replied to him that I did *wazu* (the ablutions Muslims perform before prayer). He said, “That’s not enough. You must be a Muslim.”

I then went to another *imam* who, on learning that I was a Christian, flatly refused my request.

I finally found a third *imam*, who most willingly accepted me. He not only taught me Arabic but also introduced me to the inner life of Muslims, thus making me an insider to the Islamic world.

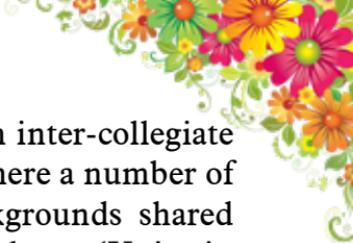
It was when I was doing my theology in Delhi I had my first sight of Fr. Paul Jackson. I had heard a lot about this Australian-born world famous Islamic-cum-Persian scholar. When he confirmed that I had studied Urdu



and was working in the field of inter-religious dialogue, he welcomed me with a warm heart to the ISA (Islamic Studies Association). Ever since then, I have been a member of this association.

From then onwards, Fr. Paul and I used to meet quite often. We spent a sizable amount of time planning and deliberating on dialogue with Muslims. During one such meeting, I discussed with him my dream of starting inter-religious harmony associations in our institutions wherein we could train young people in an inter-religious way of life. Knowing this to be a need of the hour, Fr. Paul told me, “It’s a very good idea. Go ahead.”

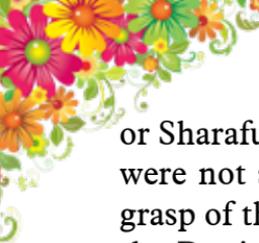
As a young priest, I was at St Aloysius College, Harihar, where I started an inter-religious harmony association. We planned a plethora of activities throughout the academic year, such as inter-religious prayer services for all programmes, inter-class competitions, talks, visiting places of worship during festivals and celebrations and inter-religious pilgrimage (with the aim not only of seeing different places of worship but also taking part in their distinct rituals and unique ways of worship, thus gaining an insider’s spiritual experience). When I mentioned to Fr Paul Jackson about this association, he evinced his desire to be a part of its programmes. He expressed his interest not just in words but in deed, too. One fine day, travelling in a second class compartment of a train, he landed in Harihar! As per his wish and desire, we organized an inter-religious pilgrimage in and around Harihar. At each religious place, the religious heads warmly welcomed us and made all of us feel at home. It was for the first time in their life that some of us were entering others’ places of worship, and they were glad!



The following day, we organized an inter-collegiate seminar on inter-religious harmony, where a number of scholars from different religious backgrounds shared the stage and spoke in unison on the theme 'Unity in a Diverse Universe'. The speakers, though interesting, overshot the time. When it was time for his address, Fr. Paul Jackson rose from his presidential chair and made the whole congregation rise along with him. Then, shaking his body, he conducted a few gymnastic exercises, including tiptoeing a couple of dance steps, which shooed away the boredom at once, thus enthusing and reenergizing the audience for the address that followed.

Fr. Paul's presidential address was of great interest. It started off in English, and then shifted to Urdu. Fr. Paul recited couplets in Arabic and Persian too. The whole assembly was spellbound at his words of wisdom that gushed forth from the depth of his heart as pearls from a mine. He inspired and motivated one and all as he spoke on harmony, co-existence, peace and fraternity.

Fr. Paul and I spent a considerable amount of time sharing about our life and mission. During one such sharing, he revealed to me one of the essential objectives of his life and mission in India, for which he came from Australia, leaving everything for good. That objective was 'Harmony with Islam and dialogue with Muslims'. I wondered at this man's audacity and determination, leaving the country where he was born and brought up to come so far and opting to walk an unknown, unfamiliar, unexplored path. Accordingly, he pursued Islamic Studies. When it was time for him to do his Ph.D., he was offered two choices, to study one of two Sufis—Gisu Daraz (whose tomb is in Gulbarga),



or Sharafuddin Maneri. Since the writings of the former were not substantial, he opted for the latter. To have a grasp of the author's original writings, he specialized in the Persian language, a language in which a great deal of Sufi literature existed. He told me that during his research he was blessed to have two gurus—firstly, the disciple of God or spiritual guru on whom he was doing his research, i.e. Sharafuddin Maneri, and, secondly, his research guide, whom he considered his father figure and who loved him deeply and whom he too loved. It was a triangular relationship between the three—the Sufi *peer* or spiritual guru, the research guru or guide and the *murid* or research scholar, a relationship that Fr. Paul cherished and preserved till the sunset of his life.

Fr. Paul's research did not stop with his Ph.D.. Rather, it continued long after. Every day, from 8.00 am to 5.00 pm, eight hours a day (with a break of one hour), for 33 years he spent time in Khuda Bakhsh Library in Patna, translating the works of Sharafuddin Maneri from the original Persian to English. In this way, he made these spiritual treasures accessible to the wider world. And even when age caught up with him, he continued doing so, using a magnifying glasses. Such was his passion for the mission of dialogue with Islam and Muslims. He was rooted and grounded in the Islamic apostolate in general and Sharafuddin Maneri in particular. He had imbibed and integrated the Firdausi Sufi spirituality into himself so much that some Jesuits even called him 'Maneri'!

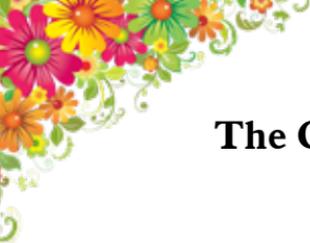
Fr. Paul Jackson was known to teach lessons for life. He delivered lectures on Islam and Sufism across the globe. Whenever he engaged in long sessions, as the topic was introduced he would cull out responses

from each participant to elicit their views on Islam and Muslims. The participants' responses would at times indicate more negatives than positives, especially in the case of those who had little experience of Muslim ways of life. Following the introductory session, Fr. Paul would send all the participants for a live-in experience in Muslim homes for a considerable period—from between a fortnight to a month. Once back, he would encourage them to draw lessons for life from their experience, for, he believed, experience is the best teacher and it teaches lessons for life. This process transformed a number of people, especially some pessimistic ones. It changed their outlook on Islam and Muslims for the better.

Fr. Paul Jackson was a multifarious personality. He was simple, down to earth and ever approachable. As a scholar, he was an inspiration to many of his disciples across cultures and religions. He was a motivating figure to everyone in the Islamic Studies Association. He constantly encouraged those who came to him and was a pillar of support in times of need. His dedication and commitment to the study of Islam and to the field of inter-religious dialogue was phenomenal.

Yes, he lives... lives... lives... *As long as you have 'self' you see everything as added ... When 'self' passes away, you will see everything as One* (Sufi Saint Sharafuddin Maneri).





The Catholic Sufi and His Student

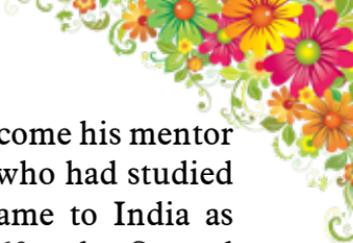
By Marian Brehmer

“You need to meet this man.” When she heard that I was doing research on Sufi culture in South Asia, a friend in Delhi handed me a piece of paper with a name written on it. The name didn’t sound Muslim at all, it didn’t even sound particularly Indian to me: “Victor Edwin.”

A few days later, I found myself somewhere in the north of the Indian capital, standing at the door of a seminary for Jesuit priests. The “Vidyajyoti College of Theology” was located in a rather functional building. It had the austerity one would expect from a Catholic learning institution. But the welcome I was given was warm. Father Victor Edwin, a middle-aged Jesuit priest, had a shiny face and greeted me with a wide smile.

We sat down for tea in his office, where he told me everything about his passion for studying Islam and spending time among Muslims. Edwin even maintained that getting to know Islam had made him a better Christian. All this seemed quite unusual for a Christian theologian, and when Edwin told me he knew how to read and write Urdu, I was even more surprised.

Edwin grew up in a little village in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Having attended a Jesuit-run college in his youth, he was inspired by the Jesuits’ commitment to serve God and fellow human beings through education. At 22, Edwin heard the calling to become a Jesuit priest. He went to study English and Hindi in Patna. There, he met an elderly Jesuit man who would change the course of his life.

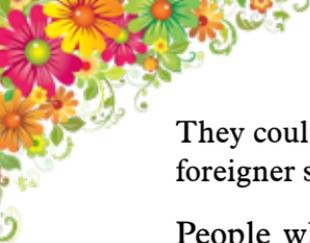


The name of the man who was to become his mentor was Paul Jackson, an Australian priest who had studied philosophy in Melbourne and then came to India as a missionary in 1961. During the 1960s, the Second Vatican Council issued a call for Catholics to “open the doors and windows” of their tradition and reach out to other faith groups. Inspired by the Vatican’s appeal, Jackson felt he wanted to reach out to Muslims and learn more about Islam.

Ordained as a priest in 1968, Jackson went on to study history at Jamia Millia Islamia, a university in New Delhi. During his student years there, Jackson attended a conference on the Sufi saint Baba Farid. He was instantly touched by the teachings of Sufism and concluded that studying Islamic mysticism would enable him to enter into the lives of Bihari Muslims.

To deepen his studies of Sufism, Jackson moved to Shiraz, Iran, to study the Persian language—a prerequisite for the Ph.D project which he was going to take on. For his doctoral thesis, Jackson spent years translating and commenting on *The Hundred Letters*, one of India’s greatest “manuals” of Sufism by Sharafuddin Maneri, a famous Bihari mystic of the 13th/14th century. Jackson recalls in his book *A Jesuit Among Sufis*:

For 33 years, five days a week, initially for about eight hours a day, and subsequently for about two hours a day, any of the mainly Muslim readers in the reading room of the [Khuda Baksh] library would see me seated with a Persian manuscript on a stand, with a copy of Steingass’s Persian-English dictionary propped up beside it, and a notebook on the table in front of me in which to write my translation.



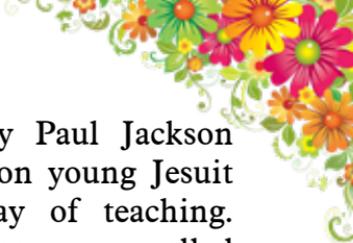
They could not miss me, as I was normally the only foreigner sitting in the reading room.

People who knew Jackson say that his eyes would glow whenever he was asked to speak about Sufism. He was a man rooted in deep faith and meditation, as one of his close companions, the German theologian Dr. Christian Troll, remembers in an obituary: “No-one meeting you could remain unimpressed by the depth of your prayer life. No surprise that in your writings about Sharafuddin Maneri and the Sufis in general, the depth of the prayer life of so many Muslims finds regular mention.”

The letters of Maneri, a work of outstanding depth and insight, became Jackson’s key for opening the doors of Islamic mysticism. Working with this 800-year-old text helped him understand the sensibilities of a Muslim’s spiritual life. Here is a short quote from Maneri’s first letter, entitled “Belief in the Unity of God”, as translated by Jackson:

When ‘I’ and the ‘You’ have passed away, God alone will remain!

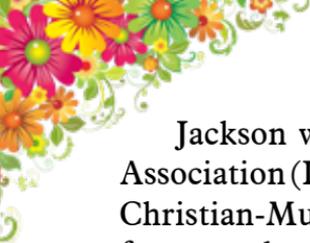
When you look into a mirror you do not see the mirror for the simple reason that your attention has become riveted on your own handsome reflection. You would not, however, go on to say that the mirror has ceased to exist, or that it has become beautiful, or that beauty has become a mirror. In a similar fashion, one can contemplate at God’s almighty power in the whole gamut of creation, without any distinction. Sufis describe this state that of being entirely lost to oneself in contemplating of the Unique Being!



Maybe the most enduring legacy Paul Jackson left behind was the impact he made on young Jesuit seminarians through his unique way of teaching. He devised a special educational programme called “Exposure to Islam”, in the frame of which, once a year for 25 years, he would send eight to ten Jesuit students to live in a Muslim community for ten days, giving them an opportunity to experience Muslim daily life first-hand:

I would go to various towns where there was a good number of Muslims and meet the principals of madrasas, Muslim seminaries, Sufi devotees at shrines, middle-class Muslims, usually through teachers and students of Christian English-medium schools, and poor Muslims, mainly with the help of sisters engaged in social work. I arranged for two students to go to each town. Back in Patna, the pairs were chosen and their destinations assigned. I gave them all a thorough preparation, in writing, and a list of possible questions to ask. They usually stayed in the parish but a few stayed in a madrasa or with a Muslim family. They would leave on a Monday and return on the Wednesday of the following week. On the following Thursday, Friday and Saturday they would recount their experiences together with their reflections and, in the time left over, we would examine some of the salient issues that had been raised.

“Father Paul Jackson taught me that relationship is at the heart of dialogue. I learnt that the process of initiating dialogue with Muslims requires deep Christian faith, for it is more directly focused on receiving than on giving,” Edwin says. “Moreover, I learnt that in dialogue we must strive to be open and present to the person we are engaging with.”



Jackson was also co-founder of the Islamic Studies Association (ISA), a unique group which has spearheaded Christian-Muslim dialogue in the Indian subcontinent for more than four decades.

Today, ISA members teach Islam and interreligious dialogue in various universities and colleges in India. Father Victor Edwin now continues the association's quarterly journal, *Salaam*.

“Paul inspired me to dedicate my life for Christian-Muslim relations,” Edwin says. “He told me that working for the mission of dialogue with Muslims, in the present context, was like sailing against the wind. But he encouraged me to follow this call from above.”

“Throughout my years of teaching, something in the Christian students has begun to shift from an abstract image of ‘the Muslim’ to knowing the faces of Ahmad or Abdullah,” Edwin says. “This work is the work God has given me. It is what makes my heart content. Before his passing away, in one of his mails, Father Paul Jackson mentioned that my work is a consolation for him. I felt moved to tears.”

No doubt, the example of Father Jackson will serve as a guiding star for Edwin's mission in today's India. By going to the depth of his own faith—as so many Sufis had done throughout the ages—Jackson expanded so widely that he could take in different expressions of experience with the Divine and, through his way of being, spread the message of unity in diversity. It's thus not surprising that an important Urdu-language newspaper remembered Jackson as a “Catholic Sufi”.

Andrew Hamilton, SJ is an Australian Jesuit and was a friend of Fr. Paul Jackson.

Bishop Thomas Dabre is the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Poona.

Fr. Pushpa Anbu, SVD is a former Secretary of the Islamic Studies Association. He teaches Islamic Studies in a number of Christian formation centres.

Bob McCahill is a Maryknoll missionary serving in Bangladesh. He was one of the founders of the Islamic Studies Association along with Paul Jackson.

Christian W Troll, SJ is one of the founding fathers of the Islamic Studies Association and was a colleague of Fr. Paul Jackson.

Donald Miranda, SJ is the provincial of Patna Jesuit Province and was a student of Fr. Paul Jackson SJ.

Joseph Victor Edwin, SJ was a student of Fr. Paul Jackson and is presently Secretary of the Islamic Studies Association.

Leelamma Varkey is a religious sister and was the first secretary of the Islamic Studies Association.

Marian Brehmer is a researcher and a friend of the Islamic Studies Association.

Pearl Drago is an admirer of Fr. Paul Jackson.

Shibal Bharatia is an ophthalmologist and received spiritual guidance from Fr. Paul Jackson.

Syed Shafiuzzaman Mashhadi is a close friend of Fr. Paul Jackson.

Timothy Wright was a Benedictine monk and was engaged in dialogue with Muslims. Author of “No Peace without Prayer”, he was a good friend of Fr. Paul Jackson.

Victor Lobo, SJ is the Principal of St. Joseph’s College, Bangalore, and is involved in dialogue with people of different faiths. He was a student of Fr. Paul Jackson.

Yoginder Singh Sikand is a freelance writer, interested, among other things, in ‘transfaith’ issues.

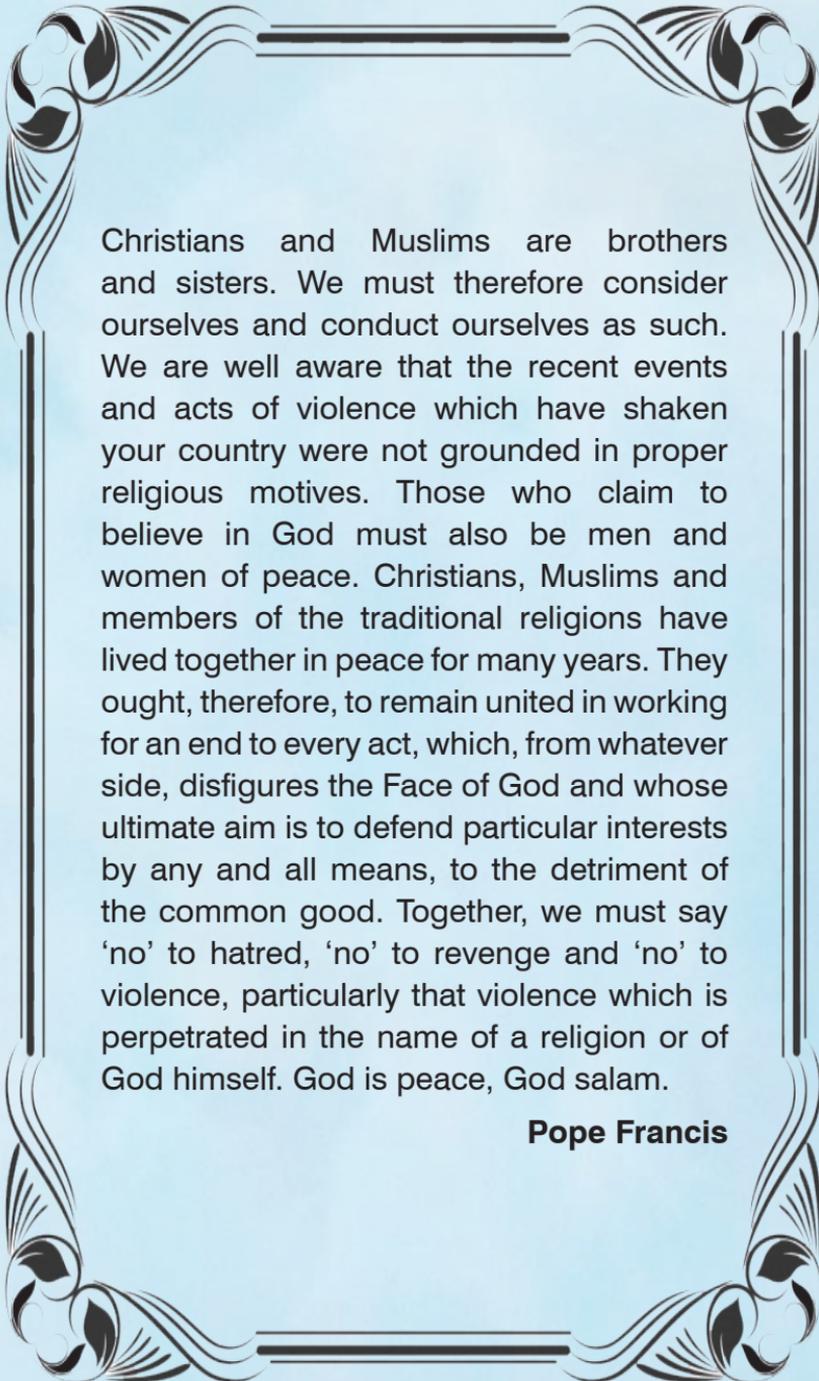


*The Tenth Group of
Australian Jesuit Missionaries.
Departed for India, 27th. December, 1960.*



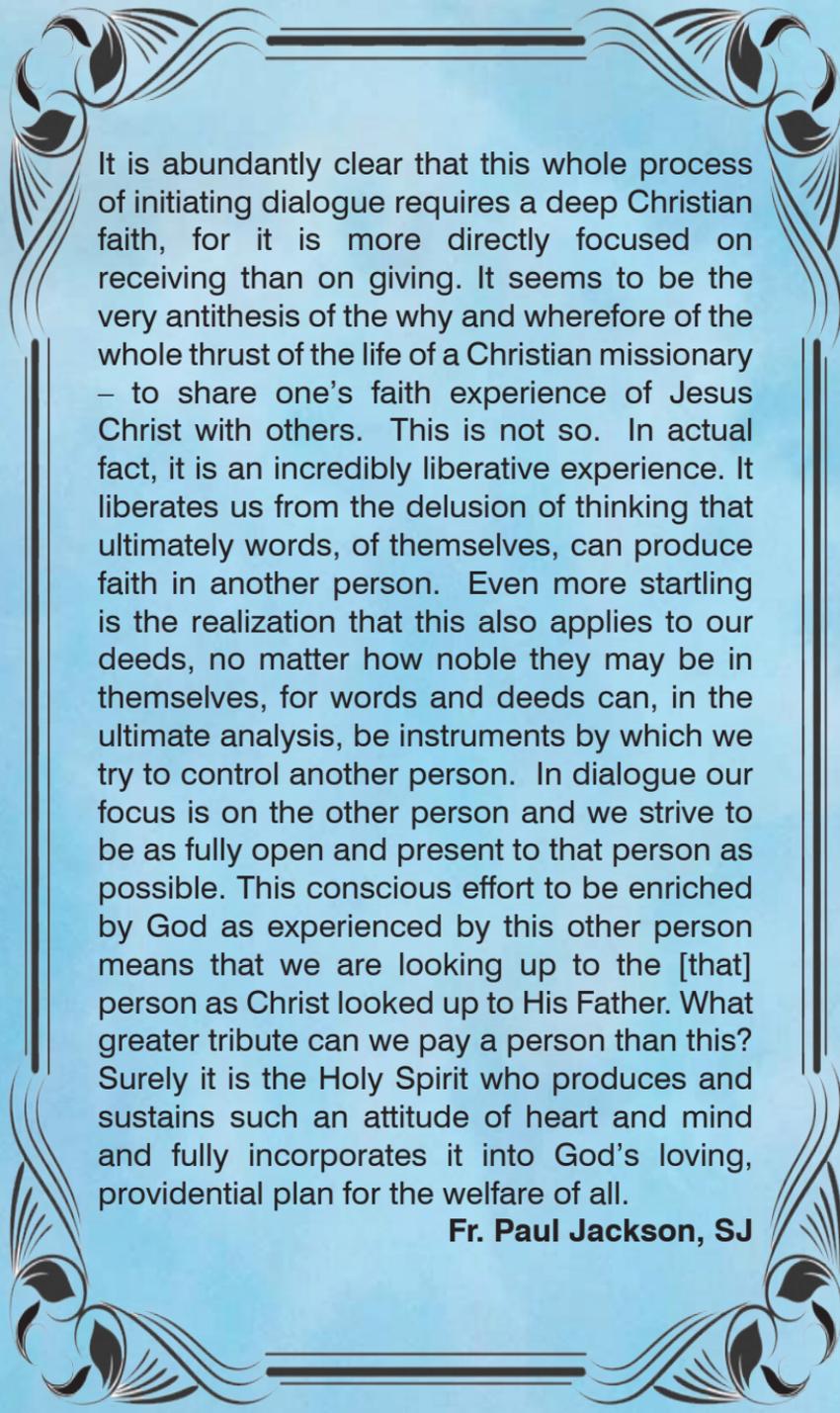
FROM LEFT. Rev. Paul Jackson, S.J., Rev. Thomas Neogh, S.J., Rev. Peter Jones, S.J.





Christians and Muslims are brothers and sisters. We must therefore consider ourselves and conduct ourselves as such. We are well aware that the recent events and acts of violence which have shaken your country were not grounded in proper religious motives. Those who claim to believe in God must also be men and women of peace. Christians, Muslims and members of the traditional religions have lived together in peace for many years. They ought, therefore, to remain united in working for an end to every act, which, from whatever side, disfigures the Face of God and whose ultimate aim is to defend particular interests by any and all means, to the detriment of the common good. Together, we must say 'no' to hatred, 'no' to revenge and 'no' to violence, particularly that violence which is perpetrated in the name of a religion or of God himself. God is peace, God salam.

Pope Francis



It is abundantly clear that this whole process of initiating dialogue requires a deep Christian faith, for it is more directly focused on receiving than on giving. It seems to be the very antithesis of the why and wherefore of the whole thrust of the life of a Christian missionary – to share one's faith experience of Jesus Christ with others. This is not so. In actual fact, it is an incredibly liberative experience. It liberates us from the delusion of thinking that ultimately words, of themselves, can produce faith in another person. Even more startling is the realization that this also applies to our deeds, no matter how noble they may be in themselves, for words and deeds can, in the ultimate analysis, be instruments by which we try to control another person. In dialogue our focus is on the other person and we strive to be as fully open and present to that person as possible. This conscious effort to be enriched by God as experienced by this other person means that we are looking up to the [that] person as Christ looked up to His Father. What greater tribute can we pay a person than this? Surely it is the Holy Spirit who produces and sustains such an attitude of heart and mind and fully incorporates it into God's loving, providential plan for the welfare of all.

Fr. Paul Jackson, SJ