



PRESIDENT

OF THE FEDERATION OF ASIAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCES

Archbishop's House

289 Theinbyu Road

Botataung P.O. 11161

Yangon, MYANMAR

Tel: 95-1-392517 / 392667 / 245467

Email: mcharlesbo@gmail.com; secygn@gmail.com

Mourning the Martyr of the Marginalized: A tribute to Fr. Stanislaus

Lourduswamy SJ

Charles Cardinal Maung Bo, Archbishop of Yangon, Myanmar

President, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC)

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With deep anguish and sorrow, we mourn the death of the martyr of the marginalized people, Fr. Stan Swamy SJ. His last month in custody on a hospital bed till the last moments is the most heart wrenching tragedy of an innocent man persecuted for doing good. The custodial hospitalization restrained his movements, but in his death, his legacy is set free now, inspiring thousands in every part of India and the globe. His mission will continue and will never succumb to evil.

India has a glorious history, as the cradle of many world religions, but she also nurses a wounded history. Even the great Mahatma Gandhi, the saint who lived for the poor, was arrested and incarcerated under sedition laws by British officials. The same Gandhi is the pivot of Indian history today. We take solace in the thought that Fr. Stan Swamy, too, followed Gandhi's nonviolent path, with a great love for those in the margins. He is the latest saint of the modern India's poor.

Fr. Stan Swamy redefined his priesthood, extending his altar to the streets and hills of those obnoxious corners of injustice, breaking the bread of good news of human dignity and justice especially among the indigenous

(tribal-Adivasi) people. For too long, the innocent tribals trudged a merciless way of the Cross inflicted on them by corporate greed and unjust laws. His tireless struggle to liberate these marginalized communities brought him to the peak of Calvary, of incarceration, deprivation and ultimate death. He died as a true disciple of Christ.

In his death, he has shone a damning light on the injustice that becoming a norm in the world: *Tribals and indigenous people are expendable to corporate interests and their political enablers*. Even in Asia, starting from the South China Seas to the central parts of India, a vast stretch of land of millions of acres was inhabited by the indigenous tribes. For thousands of years, they have protected the “lungs of Asia”. Now an ecological COVID of greed, has waged a war against these lands and the people. Fr Stan Swamy, died while accompanying the powerless tribals in their struggle and dream.

In mourning him, we also commit ourselves to his dream of a new world of justice and peace.

Rest in peace, Great Warrior, you have run a great race and finished it with all glory.

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Cardinal Charles Bo, SDB

Archbishop of Yangon, Myanmar

President, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)