



ARCHDIOCESE OF BANGALORE

Archbishop's House
75 Miller's Road
Benson Town Post, Bengaluru - 560 046
Karnataka, INDIA

☎ +91 +080-2333 0438

Fax : +91 +080-2353 1600

E-mail : archbishop@bangalorearchdiocese.com

Website : www.bangalorearchdiocese.com

13th November, 2020

Most Rev. Peter Machado

Archbishop of Bangalore

Ref. No.: AB/KRD 16/1712/20

Most Rev. Gerald Isaac Lobo
Bishop of Udupi
Bishop's House
Udupi Post 576 101
Udupi Dist.

Your Excellency,

Sub: Proposing Rev. Fr. Alfred Roche, OFM Cap of Udupi Diocese for the cause of beatification and canonization.

With reference to your letter dated 28th February 2020 about the above subject, Bishop Peter Paul Saldanha of Mangalore Diocese and Bishop Derek Fernandes of Belgaum Diocese were requested to inquire and report to the Karnataka Regional Catholic Bishops' Conference.

Accordingly their recommendation was discussed at the Karnataka Regional Catholic Bishops' Conference on 11th November 2020 at KROSS, Bangalore. The Bishops accepted their recommendation and it was unanimously decided to allow you to proceed with your documents to the Holy See for the promotion of Rev. Fr. Alfred Roche, OFM Cap to be declared as Servant of God and beyond.

I am enclosing the brief report prepared by the above two referred Bishops.

May God be praised and blessed in all your efforts to promote the Cause of Holy Men and Women in your Diocese.

With kind and respectful regards,

Yours fraternally,

+Peter Machado
Archbishop of Bangalore

Encl.: as mentioned above.

A Brief Report

Presented to the Karnataka Regional Catholic Bishops' Council
concerning the Opinion Sought by the Bishop of Udupi
to Initiate the Cause of Beatification and Canonization
FR ALFRED ROCHE OFM CAP

Background: Most Rev. Gerald Isaac Lobo, the Bishop of Udupi, having received the written request (*supplex libellus*) from the Postulator and the Petitioner to initiate the Cause of Beatification and Canonization of Fr Alfred Roche OFM Cap, and taking into consideration the requirement of art. 41 of the Instruction *Sanctorum Mater* of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, wrote to the President of the Karnataka Regional Catholic Bishops' Council (KRCBC) seeking the opinion of the Council as to whether it is advisable to initiate the said cause. At the meeting of the KRCBC held on 3 March 2020, Archbishop Peter Machado, the President, placed before Council the letter of Most Rev. Gerald Isaac Lobo, the Bishop of Udupi.

The Archbishop of Bangalore, Most Rev. Peter Machado through his letter dated 12.03.2020 (Ref. No. AB/ADO 33/RF 31/1351/20), appointed Most Rev. Peter Paul Saldanha, Bishop of Mangalore and Most Rev. Derek Fernandes, Bishop of Belgaum to study the profile, historical background, heroic virtues of Fr Alfred Roche and popular devotion promoted by the clergy, the Catholics and non-Catholics. He asked them to submit a report to KRCBC based on the material submitted by the Capuchin Fathers of the Holy Trinity Province pertaining to the sanctity of life and service of Fr Alfred Roche OFM Cap. Now, having completed our study and the task assigned to us, we present our findings and recommendation.

Life and Ministry of Fr Alfred Roche: Fr Alfred Roche, with baptismal name, Peter John, was born on 3 April 1924, s/o Isaac Roche and Carmine Monteiro, at Moodahadu Kudru, baptized on 12 April 1924, at St Peter's Church, Barkur, then diocese of Mangalore, now falls within the jurisdiction of Udupi diocese. After his primary studies at Pandeshwar (Moodhadu), Higher Primary at Sastan and High School at Milagres, Kallianpur, he joined the Capuchin Order. He took Alfred as his religious name on 3 February 1944. He became a Capuchin Friar and was ordained a priest on 11 April 1951, with the motto, "In giving we receive", words from the prayer of St Francis of Assisi.

After his ordination, Fr Alfred Roche served as the Vice Novice Master at Monte Mariano, Farangipet, and then as Parish Priest of Holy Family Church at Brahmavar, for 16 years. Here he completed the church building and got a bell from Italy. Then he was sent to St Ann's Parish at Binaga, in Karwar, for three years; after that, the Superiors appointed him as the Parish Priest at St Joseph's Parish at Lower Kasarkod, Honnavar, where he built a new church and belfry. He served there for 12 years. After completing his service at Lower Kasarkod, he was transferred to the novitiate community as the Guardian and Animator for six years. Once again he was sent to Lower Kasarkod as Parish Priest and Superior of the community for six years. In 1994 he was

transferred to Holy Family Friary, Brahmavar, as the Vicar of the fraternity and to help out in the parish. He died on 31 December 1996 at Fr Muller's hospital, and his mortal remains were interred at the parish cemetery of Holy Family Church, Brahmavar on 1 January 1997.

The First Steps Taken to Recognize the Sanctity of Life: During the Provincial Chapter, held in April 2010, a resolution was passed to request to initiate the Cause of the Beatification of Fr Alfred Roche. The then Provincial Minister, Fr Vincent G. Furtado placed this request before the Minister General, through a letter dated on 15 March 2013. A committee was formed to collect the data regarding Fr Alfred Roche. The members of the committee were: Fr Desmond Rebello, as chairperson, Fr Santa Lopes and Fr Dominic Veigas as members and Fr Patrick Crasta as the coordinator. A biographical sketch was sent to the Minister General, with the title *A Man of God: Fr Alfred Roche*. A prayer of petition was composed and approved by the Bishop of Mangalore, Bishop Aloysius Paul D'Souza (date not indicated). People acclaimed Fr Roche for his pastoral zeal and profound spirituality. They considered him as a man of God and a messenger of God's grace. Bishop Aloysius Paul D'Souza of Mangalore, Bishop Derek Fernandes of Karwar and Bishop Gerald Isaac Lobo of Udupi advised the Capuchin Friars to make the *person and mission* of Fr Alfred Roche widely known to the public (cf. *A Man of God. Fr Alfred Roche*, p. 2, unpublished; also see, Fr Patrick Crasta, *Fr Alfred Roche, a Messenger of Peace and Communion*, Second Edition, Assisi Press, Mangalore, 2016, 8-9).

Consequently, the committee initiated to collect the necessary data and make the saintly personality and dedicated service of Fr Alfred Roche known far and wide by way of writing and using modern media. Fr Santa Lopes published a booklet titled *Fr Alfred Roche: A Capuchin after the Heart of Jesus* (First Print 2011, printed at Assisi Press, Mangalore). Thereafter, Fr John Crasta published for private circulation a book titled *Fr Alfred Roche: A Fatherly Figure* (first print 2012, printed at Assisi Press, Mangalore, in Konkani), explaining the historical setting, person, spirituality, social service and pastoral concern of Fr Roche. Fr Patrick Crasta based on these and other experiences published *Fr Alfred Roche, a Messenger of Peace and Communion* (First Edition 2012 and second edition 2016, for private circulation, printed at Assisi Press, Mangalore). In this book, Fr Patrick Crasta highlights the witness value of Fr Roche's prayer-centred life, his self-sacrificing apostolate, and nurturing of priestly vocations.

After the initial request, the Postulator General, Br Carlo Calloni OFM Cap, sent a letter on 10 September 2013 to the Provincial Ministers, to the Ministers of General Viceprovinces and the Petitioners for Causes of Beatification and Canonization (Prot. N. 0073/13). He asked them to send the names of Vice Postulators wherever the Causes were to begin. He also sought information regarding the funds needed for economic support. After a lapse of three years, through a letter dated 5 March 2016, the Postulator General asked the Provincial Minister, Fr Joseph Dolphy Pais OFM Cap (Prot. N. 040/16), to take up the process of the Cause of Beatification of Fr Roche. In this letter, the Postulator General also indicated that the Vice-Postulator could initiate to gather the names of the witnesses and other documentation. On 16 December 2016, the Provincial Minister wrote to the Postulator General (Prot. N. 001/16), informing about the name of the Vice-postulator,

as Br Robin Minin Lopez. He also communicated that the fund already created would be used as the financial support together with the donations from generous donors.

According to the information, so far they have collected the names of 94 witnesses. The St Peter's Association from Mumbai gathered more than 40 witnesses in the Souvenir *Amcho Padryaab. A proud son of Barkur, on his way to sainthood*. They are now waiting for the green signal of the Local Ordinary to initiate the Cause of Beatification and Canonization at the diocesan level. Already, there is the odour of sanctity as people ask for his intercession and there are testimonies that bear witness to the healing power of the priest, Fr Alfred Roche.

Pastoral Qualities: Fr Alfred Roche is known for strengthening the faith of the people, catechizing them, attending to the needy and sick, even when the situation was difficult, educating boys and girls, promoting ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, and giving relentless pastoral care. People belonging to other denominations appreciated his approach, and many even came to embrace Catholicism. He preached heart-touching homilies, prepared with a lot of prayer and meditation, explaining the fundamental truths of our faith and basic prayers. He instructed people on Sundays on Creed, Commandments and other doctrines of the Church. People desired to listen to his sermons, full of wisdom and insight. Fr Roche fostered Eucharistic devotion, Marian devotion, like Rosary, and inspired many towards the sacrament of reconciliation. He taught the parishioners liturgical hymns, trained a choir group and formed a youth band. He started a team called "Shanthi Dal" ("Army of Peace"). And through its help, he reconciled many families and also cared for their wellbeing. People who knew him personally testify to his simple lifestyle and mission of giving himself totally to God and his people.

Humility and Humane nature: A very humble man that he was, having a soft corner for the poor, he had won the hearts of people wherever he went. He filled in the hearts of both young and old a sense of dignity, and he appreciated everything that they could do for the progress of the people. He was known for his humane character, his simplicity, and his helping nature, without any distinction. People lovingly called "*Amcho Padryaab*", "our father" because he showed immense paternal concern towards the people under his care. He did it to such an extent, many times he went on foot to meet the sick and spending hours with them to console them. He was both fatherly and motherly towards others and used to call the youngsters, "Putta" (child) and thus endeared to them. Love was his guiding principle in all he did. He used to advise: "If you keep silence, keep silence out of love, if you correct, correct out of love, if you forgive, forgive out of love." He always gave credit to the work of his parishioners even though he was the principal actor. During the inauguration of the Church at Lower Kasarkod, dedicated to St Joseph, the Worker, he spoke the first sentence: "My dear people, you all say that I built the church. But my dear people, I say loudly, it is not I who built the church, it is you who built it" (Santa Lopes, "Fr Alfred Roche: A Capuchin after the Heart of Jesus," in *Amcho Padryaab*, 45). He embraced the people with tenderness and love. He expressed his fatherly concern by being very authoritative and demanding. At the same time, he also showed his mothering character by being gentle, kind, compassionate, caring and tender (cf. *Ibid.*, 50).

Poverty: His life was austere, and he was satisfied with the bare minimum comforts. He practised the evangelical counsels like poverty by choosing to live in a simple room with minimum furniture, which was both office and bedroom. It was also a shared dormitory for him and 3-4 boys who were staying with him. Living with him, they were either schooling or working. But all of them were assisting him in different ways in the parish. He used the services of youngsters to take him by bicycle when he had to go to distant places visiting the sick and aged. Not only did he live a simple life, but also he befriended those who were poor. He understood their plight, and came to their help, especially by helping them to build houses, get jobs by establishing a "Job Bureau" and find partners for life for them through "Marriage Bureau". He accompanied the sick to hospitals and helped them to find the right doctors and helped them pay the bills; he promoted the education of young boys and girls. He rejoiced and rang the church bell when the high school got a hundred percent result. Fr Roche left no stone unturned to help youngsters to pursue their studies and to find jobs. He helped the young girls to settle in marriage.

Chastity: Fr Roche wrote a book on the virtue of chastity, *Niskolpon*, in Konkani, third reprint published in 1985, with a preface from Bishop Basil D'Souza (Assisi Press, Mangalore, fourth reprint 2017). In the first part, the author describes the greatness of the virtue of chastity, and in the second, he writes about the ways to attain it. Fr Roche substantiates the virtue with the Word of God and with the anecdotes from the lives of saints. The writer also uses the quotations from the Fathers of the Church. He chooses the examples of those who accompanied and lead their flock on this spiritual journey laying a particular emphasis on the virtues of purity, chastity, and celibacy. In addition to this, there is a beautiful instruction given by the Popes on these virtues to different categories of people, children, youth, and married couples, priests and religious. Even in personal life, he was cautious in dealing with women and religious sisters so as not to give any cause for doubt in his behaviour. In his book, he uses the examples of Jesus, Mary and the saints to pursue this ideal (cf. Patrick Crasta, "Fr Alfred Roche: A Spiritual Companion," in *Amcho Padryaab*, 33-34).

Obedience: Fr Roche was an obedient religious person. Whenever his superiors wanted him to go as parish priest or as formator, he willingly did so. When his Superior transferred him to Binaga, the Lay Faithful insisted that Fr Roche should stay at Brahmavar. However, he consoled them, saying that he should abide by the will of the Superiors. Prayer was his *forte*, and he sought God's guidance in all his endeavours.

Faith: Fr Roche is a man of great faith. His fervent prayer life serves as a great example of his faith life. He always prayed for the sick and poor is a well-known fact. Several people testify that many got healed faster and many found their problems resolved quickly because of the prayers of Fr Roche. His insistence on the faith formation itself is the testimony of his deep faith. The well-prepared homilies and instruction regarding the matters connected with faith is a sure sign he relied on the power of faith. He would invite children to pray before the Blessed Sacrament for different intentions, especially to build the new church. Before building the church, he built the faith of the people, by sowing the seeds of faith.

Hope: Fr Roche would find out the needs of the people by getting to know them personally, and he trusted in God's providence, and help would come. He always hoped that God works through people. And Fr Roche did not hesitate to ask the help of his friends and acquaintances when he wanted to build the church or educate the children or pay the bills of the patients. Trusting in God, he would go ahead, and things turned out to be positive even when he had to face to opposition or criticism.

Charity: There are plenty of examples of the life of charity of Fr Roche, and many testimonies give ample evidence of his large-heartedness. People remember him with gratitude for the timely help he gave them. They rejoiced when the Superiors appointed him for a second time to St Joseph Church, Lower Kasarkod. People of other faiths, as well as the members of other Christian denominations, also appreciated his charitable behaviour towards all.

Conclusion: Reading the material given for the perusal, we consider that Fr Alfred Roche is a man of God and a prudent servant of the Lord Jesus. He walked in the footsteps of St Francis of Assisi as he served the People of God. He was just in his dealings with all types of people. There appears adequate indication at this point of time, Fr Roche practised the theological and the cardinal virtues in all vicissitudes of life in a heroic manner. Already, the believers in Christ sense the odour of sanctity. Therefore, we hereby recommend to the KRCBC to give a favourable opinion to Bishop of Udupi, Most Rev. Gerald Isaac Lobo, regarding the initiation of the Cause of Beatification and Canonization of Fr Alfred Roche OFM Cap. We also suggest that the Bishop of Udupi, by taking into account art. 45 of *Sanctorum Mater*, seeks *nihil obstat* from the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Date: 11.11.2020



✠ Peter Paul Saldanha
Bishop of Mangalore



✠ Derek Fernandes
Bishop of Belgaum