

1.

REV. FATHER ROBERT FERNANDO O.M.I.  
PIONEER PARISH PRIEST OF ST. LAWRENCE'S  
CHURCH AND FIRST MANAGER OF ST.  
LAWRENCE'S SCHOOL, WELLAWATTE.

It is a strange coincidence that St. Lawrence's School was in existence since 1900, thirty-eight years before the parish of St. Lawrence was established in 1938 in Wellawatte, with the appointment of Rev. Fr. Robert Fernando as the first Parish Priest, an era that spanned 30 years from 1938 to 1968. It was Mrs. Jean Poulter a born teacher who took over a house called "Lawrence Villa" in 1900 and began to hold classes in its drawing room. It was not long, ~~that~~ before the Poulter christened their school "St. Lawrence's School". By another coincidence the Archdiocese of Colombo decided to dedicate the new parish of Wellawatte to St. Lawrence, Deacon and Martyr in 1938, and when in 1951 Miss Gladys Poulter decided to hand over St. Lawrence's School to the Archdiocese, even though she was a staunch Methodist, the name Lawrence would most certainly

have weighed much in her decision. And so it came to pass that Father Robert Fernando in 1951 was entrusted with the management of the school in its first one and a half years, to be followed by the Good Shepherd nuns who have administered this great school for the last half a century.

#### A BLESSING

Truly the existence of the Good Shepherd nuns in close proximity to St. Lawrence's Church has been a blessing to the progress of St. Lawrence's Parish from 1951. Indeed, St. Lawrence's parish without St. Lawrence's School would have lacked the character and poise that the school has given since its inception in 1951.

FR. ROBERT FERNANDO O.M.I. THE PIONEER

Born in Negombo, he had joined St. Aloysius Seminary, Borella, when in his early teens. All seminarians at that time had to attend St. Joseph's College, Colombo for their secondary education, and so Fr. Robert like many other seminarians of the time, came under the benign and scholarly influence of that great Catholic educationist Very Rev. Fr. Maurice J. LeGoc O.M.I.



## A MIGHTY ATOM

Very slightly built, Fr. Robert answered the call of the Archdiocese, displaying grit, determination and stamina of a high order. No microphone was required for his sermons in the little chapel at St. Lawrence Road, where the parish first took root. His stentorian voice rent the air Sunday after Sunday. A fine linguist, Fr. Robert was equally fluent in English, Sinhala and Tamil, and this stood him in good stead in leading his multi-lingual and literate flock to God. Parishioners of that era will remember his lucid exposition of Church Liturgy and his untiring efforts to make St. Lawrence, Patron of the parish and First Patron of the City of Colombo known to one and all. As a result the parishioners of Wellawatte were well founded in matters of Faith, under his able guidance.

## 30 LONG YEARS

The Archdiocese had made the right choice. No wonder then that Fr. Robert was destined to stay as Parish Priest for 30 long years, perhaps the longest stay by any Parish Priest in the Colombo region, in the history of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka. That Fr Robert was able to consolidate his leadership of his flock and win their confidence for thirty long years is in itself a great tribute to this man of God. It is a fact that he not only baptised many at St. Lawrence's but stayed long enough to marry them and in many instances bury them as well.

## A PERFECTIONIST

What parishioners of St. Lawrence's, past present and future will remember Fr. Robert by, will undoubtedly be the beautiful red church with its unique design, which stands today as one of the most impressive landmarks and architectural monuments of the metropolis and indeed the whole of Sri Lanka.

Every ounce of brick and mortar, every beam of steel or timber, had to pass his eagle eye. No technical skill did he spare to build soundly against the wear and tear of exposure.

## TRIBUTE TO SAINT LAWRENCE, MARTYR

Right through his stay at St. Lawrence's and particularly during the building of the church of St. Lawrence, Fr Robert was conscious of the fact that the church was to be dedicated to St. Lawrence, one of the greatest martyrs of the Catholic Church, the Patron of the parish of Wellawatte and above all, the First Patron of the City of Colombo. This church then had to be seen rising up to the stars, soaring into the clouds, almost challenging the sky in our adoration of God. In this context it seems a pity that Fr. Robert was unable to complete the tower-facade in front of the present church which still remains

Fr. Robert took great pains to emphasise to his flock that Catholicism was preached in Sri Lanka for the first time from the Church of St. Lawrence, at the foot of the South West breakwater of the Colombo harbour, as far back as 1505. From the purchase of the 1 3/4 acre block of land fronting Galle Road, exactly midway between the two bridges that guard the approaches to Wellawatte, to the building of this Romanesque styled edifice, so happily blending with Oriental architecture, it was Fr. Robert who led from up front. It was he who set the seal and laid a solid foundation for the future.

#### COLLABORATION OF PASTOR & PEOPLE

It would be apt to quote from a message of the late Thomas Cardinal Cooray, on the occasion of the Consecration of this beautiful church, a message of congratulation and sound advice, in March 1968: "Not to us then but to God's glory in Heaven, to His saving Presence in our midst, let this Church be a lasting monument. Let not its stateliness and adornment convey any suggestion of challenge. To all, its rising dome, its wide portals are an assurance of brotherliness in the footsteps of the Deacon Lawrence, glowing symbol of benefits and blessings nobly shared. Therein lies the greater achievement, of the fine, fruitful collaboration of the Pastor, Curates and People of the Parish. "Yes, Fr. Robert carried all before him. He was able to enthuse his parishioners into action for the glory of God. His one day's Pay schemes and as many as seven carnivals bear testimony to the full support he received from the entire parish. He was able to draw on all sources of generosity to make the House of God a delight to His children and so pleasing to the Eye of His Goodness.

#### UNITY-THE KEY TO HIS SUCCESS

Fr. Robert's parting tribute to his flock when he was transferred in 1968, bears repetition here, words which we hope will echo and re-echo through the years to come. He said: "I might mention one thing in particular for which this parish ought to be ever grateful to merciful God, owing to which steady work and progress were possible. The demon of party spirit didn't find a place within this Parish. That this blessing will ever remain is my earnest prayer. May St. Lawrence, the Heavenly Patron always watch over this Parish and help it to become holy, productive of more and more zealous lay apostles, and more vocations to the priestly and religious life."

5

## PIONEER WHO SHOWED THE WAY

There is no doubt that Father Robert has earned a permanent niche of affection in the hearts of the people whom he sought to serve so selflessly at Wellawatte. His name is synonymous with St. Lawrence's. The parish of Wellawatte was himself. For 30 years he was the leader, the shepherd of his flock. Everybody knew it and felt it. He was simple. He was saintly. He was to his parishioners a great pride and a shining example. His name and the things he did for the parish of St. Lawrence, its parishioners and indeed the whole of Wellawatte will never be forgotten. People may come and do better than that, people will come who will do much more than that, but Fr. Robert Fernando was the pioneer. Our children will see him only as a mythical figure. He is the pastor who showed the way.

So in this <sup>Centenary</sup> Golden Jubilee celebration let us remember Fr. Robert Fernando with gratitude, love and affection. He passed away to his eternal reward on 1st, October 1977, stricken with an illness bravely borne. Of his 51 year priesthood he had spent 30 years at St. Lawrence's. Let us pray for him and for the repose of his soul. Let us pay our profoundest respects and thanks to him for all the good things that came through him to the Parish of St. Lawrence, Wellawatte, and St. Lawrence's School.

---

Maurice Perera.

---





# REV. FATHER ROBERT FERNANDO O.M.I.

## 1938 - 1968

### THE PIONEER WHO BLAZED A TRAIL IN WELLAWATTE

50 years ago the Archdiocese of Colombo appointed a young priest of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Rev. Fr. Robert Fernando to start a new parish for the Catholics in Wellawatte. The year was 1938 and Fr. Robert had been a priest for twelve years. Born in Negombo, he had joined St. Aloysious Seminary, Borella, when in his early teens. All seminarians at that time had to attend St. Joseph's College, Colombo for their secondary education, and so Fr. Robert like many other seminarians of the time, came under the benign and scholarly influence of that great Catholic educationist Very Rev. Fr. Maurice J LeGoc O.M.I.

#### A MIGHTY ATOM

Very slightly built, Fr. Robert answered the call of the Archdiocese, displaying grit, determination and stamina of a high order. No microphone was required for his sermons in the little chapel at St. Lawrence Road, where the parish first took root. His stentorian voice rent the air Sunday after Sunday. A fine linguist, Fr. Robert was equally fluent in English, Sinhala and Tamil, and this stood him in good stead in leading his multi-lingual and literate flock to God. Parishioners of that era will remember his lucid exposition of Church Liturgy and his untiring efforts to make St. Lawrence, Patron of the parish and First Patron of the City of Colombo known to one and all. As a result the parishioners of Wellawatte were well founded in matters of Faith, under his able guidance.

#### 30 LONG YEARS

The Archdiocese had made the right choice. No wonder then that Fr. Robert was destined to stay as Parish Priest for 30 long years, perhaps the longest stay by any Parish Priest in the Colombo region, in the history of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka. That Fr Robert was able to consolidate his leadership of his flock and win their confidence for thirty long years is in itself a great tribute to this man of God. It is a fact that he not only baptised many at St. Lawrence's but stayed long enough to marry them and in many instances bury them as well.

#### A PERFECTIONIST

What parishioners of St. Lawrence's, past present and future will remember Fr. Robert by, will undoubtedly be the beautiful red church with its unique design, which stands today as one of the most impressive landmarks and architectural monuments of the metropolis and indeed the whole of Sri Lanka.

There was a plan, an idea behind everything Fr. Robert did. How well he did it will always remain a memory. A text he often repeated in his sermons read, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10, 31). He found the time to supervise the building of this magnificent structure himself. He toiled hard and deep into the wee hours to ensure that perfection that epitomises the beauty of the church of St. Lawrence. One of his favourite quotations was, "Trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle".

Every ounce of brick and mortar, every beam of steel or timber, had to pass his eagle eye. No technical skill did he spare to build soundly against the wear and tear of exposure.

#### TRIBUTE TO SAINT LAWRENCE, MARTYR

Right through his stay at St. Lawrence's and particularly during the building of the church of St. Lawrence, Fr Robert was conscious of the fact that the church was to be dedicated to St. Lawrence, one of the greatest martyrs of the Catholic Church, the Patron of the parish of Wellawatte and above all, the First Patron of the City of Colombo. This church then had to be seen rising up to the stars, soaring into the clouds, almost challenging the sky in our adoration of God. In this context it seems a pity that Fr. Robert was unable to complete the tower-facade in front of the present church, which still remains as it were an unfinished symphony.

Fr. Robert took great pains to emphasise to his flock that Catholicism was preached in Sri Lanka for the first time from the Church of St. Lawrence, at the foot of the South



## ST. LAWRENCE'S SCHOOL

BY

S. J. K. CROWTHER

**S**aint Lawrence was a saint with an irrepressible sense of humour. He joked on the gridiron on which he was roasted because he would not renounce his faith. It was a joke, a deadly joke cracked at the expense of the Roman Governor, that brought him to the gridiron. The Governor had heard that the Church was rich in treasures. He sent for St. Lawrence and offered to spare his life on a condition: "Present me," said the Governor, "with the treasures of your church and your life will be spared." St. Lawrence readily agreed.

A day was appointed for the treasures to be presented. On due date St. Lawrence invited the Governor to come. He opened the doors of his church where the poorest of the poor were gathered. "These," said the Saint, "are the treasures of the church. If you wish you can have the whole lot of them."

The Governor in a fit of ungovernable rage ordered St. Lawrence to be roasted on a gridiron. It was while his flesh was sizzling that St. Lawrence made his most memorable joke. He told his executioners: "One side of my body is now well baked. Why not turn me over so that the other side is equally well roasted?"

St. Lawrence with his keen sense of humour must have smiled at "the set of curious chances"—to use a Gilbertian phrase—which brought about the establishment of St. Lawrence's School long before St. Lawrence's Church was established in Wellawatta.

In the spacious days of Queen Victoria there lived in Colombo South, a worthy citizen by name of Lawrence. History does not state who he was and what he was doing. But he did do one thing worthy of note and destined to hand down his name to posterity. He called his house Lawrence Villa.

Then came Mrs. Janet Poulter, a born teacher, who had started her teaching career at the Methodist High School, now Methodist College. Her one ambition was to have a school of her own. This ambition she realized when she took over the house called Lawrence Villa and started to hold classes in its drawing room.

This drawing-room-school prospered, as it was bound to prosper with one so devoted to teaching as Mrs. Poulter. It grew, numbers multiplied, and soon Mrs. Poulter found she had to have a proper school-room. Came the question of naming the school. She called it St. Lawrence's School.

Why did she call it by that name? Not merely because it began its existence in Lawrence Villa. There was something more to it than this. And it is here that we see the inspiration of St. Lawrence. Just at this critical juncture, at the psychological moment, we may say, Mrs. Poulter chanced on a life-sketch of St. Lawrence. She was greatly impressed by what she read of him: his pre-eminent love of God and man, his steadfastness in the faith and his cheerful and heroic martyrdom. Ordinarily, Methodists hold no truck with Catholic Saints. But Mrs. Poulter nobly rose above narrow prejudices. Already her school was connected with the name of Lawrence. Now she boldly christened it St. Lawrence's School.

Thus, long before the Church thought of building a church in Colombo South in honour of St. Lawrence, a good Protestant lady had founded a St. Lawrence's School, which was later to be attached to St. Lawrence's Church.

Running her school in those days was its own reward, the only reward, because it was not a grant-in-aid school. If the pupils paid fees, they could not have covered much more than the running expenses. I myself, who write this, attended a school, a grant-in-aid school, where one of the teachers was paid Rs. 10 a month and another Rs. 5, and the fees 50 cents to one rupee a month. If under these conditions people conducted schools, it was for the love of children and love of teaching.

"Poulter's School", as many called it, developed and more accommodation had to be found. A move was made to the first house on the left hand side in Lily Avenue. Even this did not suffice. Another move was necessitated, this time to the right hand side of the Lane, to the building which is now the Post Office.

(Continued on page 17)

An Exclusive Service in Cleaning and Dyeing is offered only by

**QUICK CLEANERS LIMITED**  
**COLPETTY.**

Its the best in the island.



## SUB-COMMITTEES.

### FINANCE :

**Chairman :** **Mr. H. A. S. Hamer, J.P.**  
Messrs. J. N. Gomez  
L. A. B. Pinto  
S. V. Selvanayagam  
A. E. P. Wijeye-  
goonewardane I.S.O.

### LAYOUT & PLANNING :

**Chairman :** **Mr. Bertram Pieries**  
Messrs. P. T. Capper  
T. A. de Neise  
D. S. D. Gunlath  
Shirley Kelaart  
Gate-Muhandiram S. V. Rodrigo

### LIGHTING & RADIO :

**Chairman :** **Mr. Maurice Roche**  
Messrs J. A. de Jong  
S. W. de Silva  
Walter Roche

### PUBLICITY :

**Chairman :** **Mr. Felix Perera**  
Messrs R. S. R. Candappa  
C. V. de Silva  
V. B. Ernst  
Miss Maureen Melhuisen  
Messrs D. Moldrich  
A. Page  
Rex vanBuuren  
Livy Wijemanne

### GATE, TRADE STALLS & ADVERTISEMENTS FOR HANDBOOK

**Chairman :** **Mr. J. R. Machado**  
Messrs. G. A. Machado  
L. A. Machado  
R. A. Machado  
HELPERS.

Messrs Quintus Fernando  
Roy Fernando  
Anton Jayasinghe  
J. N. Motha  
Sam Perera  
Geoffrey Silva  
John Silva

### LITERATURE :

*If in books you trust  
Then this stalls a 'must'.*

**Chairman :** **Mudaliyar M. Santhiapillai,**  
C. C. S. (Retired)

Mrs. F. P. Forbes  
Messrs. F. T. Moldrich  
B. E. R. Pieries  
Miss Rose Santhiapillai

### ARTS & CRAFTS :

*Not for mere highbrows but for all who prize  
Beauty in all its forms—feast for the eyes.*

**Chairman :** **Mrs. V. B. Phoebus**  
Mrs. D. S. L. P. Abeyesekere  
Miss G. Deckker  
Mrs K. Martinus  
Miss Myrtle Perera  
Mr. K. Schokman  
Miss M. Walles

*There's Always  
Something*

INTERESTING  
AND USEFUL

AT

**THE RUPEE**

125, MAIN STREET, COLOMBO  
AND  
334, GALLE ROAD, BAMBALAPITIYA.

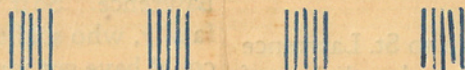


FOR *distinctive* CROCKERY WARE

The name is ● ● ● ●

**S. M. ASSENA MARIKAR & CO..**

Their reputation is backed by over 100 years experience



Crockery of every description, pattern and size always available from stock

*Why not try us sometime?*

**S. M. ASSENA MARIKAR & CO.,**

THE CROCKERY PEOPLE

Phone 4587

14, CHINA STREET, COLOMBO.

TRY US FOR THESE!

LEMON POWDER  
CAR POLISH SLIPCOLISE  
KHAKI HATS  
MILITARY SHOES  
FOOT-BALLS  
CRICKET BATS  
HAVERSACKS (School bag)  
PICK ME UP SAUCE  
MARMALADE  
BOILER SUITS  
KHAKI SHIRTS

GARDEN SHEARS  
MOSQUITO COILS  
BRUSHES (all kinds)  
GARDEN FORKS  
" " SHOVELS  
" " RAKES  
JOHNSON'S WAX POLISH  
"OLEY" (Moth Killer)  
WHITE SHIRTS  
" " SHORTS

**MABEL STORES**

NO. 146, DAM STREET  
COLOMBO



### ST. LAWRENCE'S SCHOOL (Cont. from page 9)

Mrs. Janet Poulier had presided over the School since its modest foundation in 1900. In 1936 she handed over the principalship of the school to her niece, Miss Gladys Poulier, while she remained as manageress. The school continued to prosper, but it was no easy task to conduct a private school under the new educational system of the Government. The Poulier family felt that in the best interests of the school it must be handed over to some agency competent to run it as a school with this one's honourable record of disinterested service should be run. To whom were they to entrust their sacred charge?

Dedicated as Colombo had been to St. Lawrence since Portuguese times, after the demolition of Lorenzo de Almeida's Chapel, there had been no church to commemorate St. Lawrence. Then quite late in the day St. Lawrence's Church came up in Wellawatta. Mrs. Poulier, who had named her school after the Saint, doubtless noted the coincidence. When therefore it came to handing over her beloved institution to an educational agency, what was more natural or proper than to hand it over to those who were in charge of the Church of St. Lawrence?

The Catholic Church has an impressive list of Colleges and Schools to its credit all over the world. She felt—there is no doubt that St. Lawrence

secretly inspired her—that it is to the Catholic Church authorities she should entrust her school.

And so it came to pass that in 1951 the Poulier ladies transferred their 51 years old school to the Catholic authorities of Colombo, who in 1938 had opened a church and a parish at Wellawatta in honour of St. Lawrence without knowing in the least that cheek by jowl with their Church there had been in existence a St. Lawrence's School. In doing so the Poulies once more exemplified the ideal which had always guided them. They might have got a better price if their object was worldly gain. But the wealth of this world was least in the mind of St. Lawrence. So it was also in the mind of the Poulier family, who sold their school for much less than they could have got for it in the open market.

To Miss Gladys Poulier the school owes much more than can be described in a short article. No less a born teacher than her aunt, Miss Poulier had raised the school to a degree of efficiency rarely achieved in modern schools. When she recently retired from the school her work as well as the tone which she set for the school formed the subject of universal praise.

One connected with the school at present tells me that if the patrons of the "Silver Bells" Carnival emulate even in a slight degree the generosity of the Poulier family, the future of St. Lawrence's School is fully assured.

## ECCLESIASTICAL NEEDS

VESTMENT SATIN

RAYON TAFFETTA FOR COPEs & VESTMENTS

SILK BRAIDS & FRINGES

### IN AUTHENTIC COLOURS

Irish Linen, Embroidered Lace for Altar Surplices and altar Railings,

Cotton Linen for Cassocks for Altar Servers and Priests

AXMINSTER CARPETTING IN COLOURS OF MAROON, RUST, GREEN. &  
BLUE & CARPETS IN DIFFERENT SIZES

## J. L. CARWALLIO

144. Main Street  
COLOMBO.

*X Rs. 200,000/- was offered but Mrs. Poulier sold to the Cath. Church for Rs. 140,000/- as education was to be continued*  
*Robert J. H.*





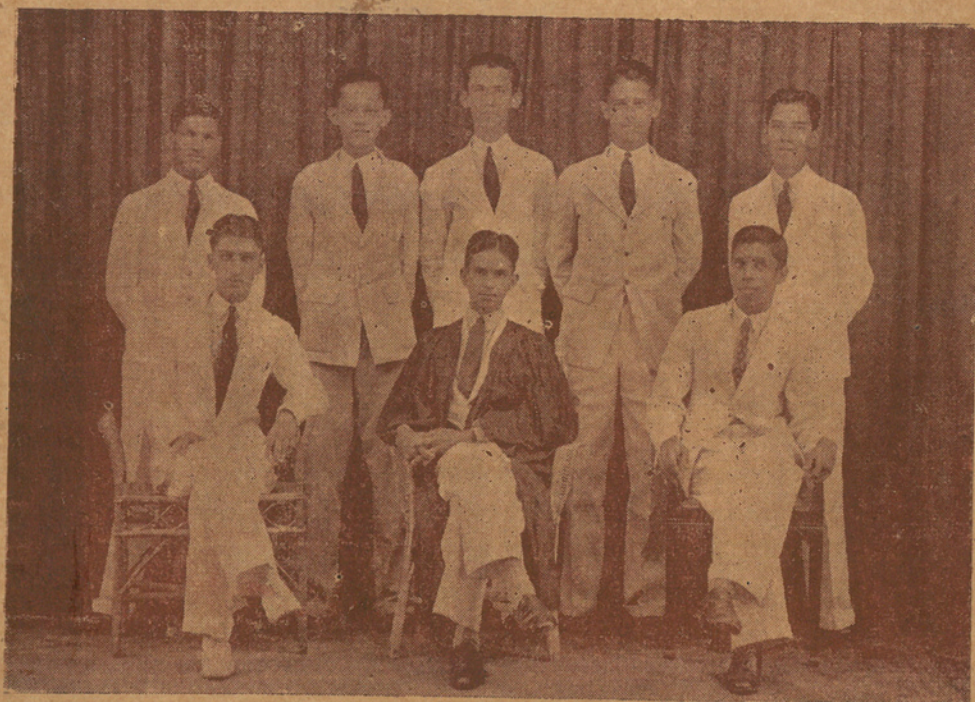
THE FOUNDER AND HER NIECE.





THE STAFF





MATRIC FORM 1937-38 AND FORM MASTER.



THE LAWRENTIAN - ITS HOME

---

It is no exaggeration indeed to state that only a very few people of the Island today, are aware of the existence of a little educational institution situated in the heart of one of the southern suburbs of Colombo. It is nevertheless too true that this unpretentious school - for a school it is in every sense of the word - has been functioning during the last 36 years, and is today recognised by the Education Department as an institute from which candidates are eligible for the London Matriculation examination. However unostentatiously situated, and although its good work and creditable results have not been announced by a fanfare of trumpets, the school is run on modern lines, in keeping with the requirements of the Educational Code, and more than satisfying the needs of a class of parent and pupil who would otherwise have been put to a great deal of inconvenience and expense. Standing on its own grounds, entirely self supporting, and staffed by a small band of loyal and efficient teachers, with a 'Head' who is really and truly a personification of devotion to duty, this school, in proportion to its size and numbers, is in no small way contributing its measure of usefulness to the educational needs of the Island. The founder of the school - may she long be spared - is yet at her desk by 10.30 a.m. every day; to her the school is part and parcel of her very existence. She began it as a labour of love and that benign virtue is most manifestly diffused by her not only over her work in particular, but on every single individual connected with it. The very embodiment of modesty, she is averse to anything like publicity, although many a Director of Education, many an eminent education-  
alist have commended her good work and recognised its merits. With the advancement of age it is but natural that she is not able to take a more active part in a day's work, but her interest and enthusiasm are as boundless as ever. She has handed over the reins of office as Principal, to her niece who is pre-eminently a worthy successor to her aunt. The destinies of the school could not be in safer hands, and the success of the school is ensured and the future is pregnant with great possibilities.

BETA



# ST. LAWRENCE'S SCHOOL

BY

S. J. K. CROWTHER

---

*Saint Lawrence* was a saint with an irrepressible sense of humour. He joked on the gridiron on which he was roasted because he would not renounce his faith. It was a joke, a deadly joke cracked at the expense of the Roman Governor, that brought him to the gridiron. The Governor had heard that the Church was rich in treasures. He sent for St. Lawrence and offered to spare his life on a condition: "Present me," said the Governor, "with the treasures of your church and your life will be spared." St. Lawrence readily agreed.

A day was appointed for the treasures to be presented. On due date St. Lawrence invited the Governor to come. He opened the doors of his church where the poorest of the poor were gathered. "These," said the Saint, "are the treasures of the church. If you wish you can have the whole lot of them."

The Governor in a fit of ungovernable rage ordered St. Lawrence to be roasted on a gridiron. It was while his flesh was sizzling that St. Lawrence made his most memorable joke. He told his executioners: "One side of my body is now well baked. Why not turn me over so that the other side is equally well roasted?"

St. Lawrence with his keen sense of humour must have smiled at "the set of curious chances" - to use a Gilbertian phrase - which brought about the establishment of St. Lawrence's School long before St. Lawrence's Church was established in Wellawatta.

In the spacious days of Queen Victoria there lived in Colombo South, a worthy citizen by name of Lawrence. History does not state who he was and what he was doing. But he did do one thing worthy of note and destined to hand down his name to posterity. He called his house Lawrence Villa.

Then came Mrs. Janet Poulier, a born teacher, who had started her teaching career at the Methodist High School, now Methodist College. Her one ambition was to have a school of her own. This ambition she realized when she took over the house called Lawrence Villa and started to hold classes in its drawing room.

This drawing-room-school prospered, as it was bound to prosper with one so devoted to teaching as Mrs. Poulier. It grew, numbers multiplied, and soon Mrs. Poulier found she had to have a proper school-room. Came the question of naming the school. She called it St. Lawrence's School.

Why did she call it by that name? Not merely because it began its existence in Lawrence Villa. There was something more to it than this. And



it is here that we see the inspiration of St. Lawrence. Just at this critical juncture, at the psychological moment, we may say, Mrs. Poulrier chanced on a life-sketch of St. Lawrence. She was greatly impressed by what she read of him: his pre-eminent love of God and man, his steadfastness in the faith and his cheerful and heroic martyrdom. Ordinarily, Methodists hold no truck with Catholic Saints. But Mrs. Poulrier nobly rose above narrow prejudices. Already her school was connected with the name of Lawrence. Now she boldly christened it St. Lawrence's School.

Thus, long before the Church thought of building a church in Colombo South in honour of St. Lawrence, a good Protestant lady had founded a St. Lawrence's School, which was later to be attached to St. Lawrence's Church.

Running her school in those days was its own reward, the only reward, because it was not a grant-in-aid school. If the pupils paid fees, they could not have covered much more than the running expenses. I myself, who write this, attended a school, a grant-in-aid school, where one of the teachers was paid Rs 10 a month and another Rs 5, and the fees 50 cents to one rupee a month. If under these conditions people conducted schools, it was for the love of children and love of teaching.

"Poulrier's School", as many called it, developed and more accommodation had to be found. A move was made to the first house on the left hand side in Lily Avenue. Even this did not suffice. Another move was necessitated, this time to the right hand side of the Lane, to the building which is now the Post Office.

Mrs. Janet Poulrier had presided over the School since its modest foundation in 1900. In 1936 she handed over the principalship of the school to her niece, Miss Gladys Poulrier, while she remained as manageress. The school continued to prosper, but it was no easy task to conduct a private school under the new educational system of the Government. The Poulrier family felt that in the best interests of the school it must be handed over to some agency competent to run it as a school with this one's honourable record of disinterested service should be run. To whom were they to entrust their sacred charge?



The Catholic Church has an impressive list of Colleges and Schools to its credit all over the world. She felt - there is no doubt that St. Lawrence secretly inspired her - that it is to the Catholic Church authorities she should entrust her school.

And so it came to pass that in 1951 the Poulier ladies transferred their 51 years old school to the Catholic authorities of Colombo, who in 1938 had opened a church and a parish at Wellawatte in honour of St. Lawrence without knowing in the least that cheek by jowl with their Church there had been in existence a St. Lawrence's School. In doing so the Poulriers once more exemplified the ideal which had always guided them. They might have got a better price if their object was worldly gain. But the wealth of this world was least in the mind of St. Lawrence. So it was also in the mind of the Poulier family, who sold their school for much less than they could have got for it in the open market.

To Miss Gladys Poulier the school owes much more than can be described in a short article. No less a born teacher than her aunt, Miss Poulier had raised the school to a degree of efficiency rarely achieved in modern schools. When she recently retired from the school her work as well as the tone which she set for the school formed the subject of universal praise.

One connected with the school at present tells me that if the patrons of the " Silver Bells " Carnival emulate even in a slight degree the generosity of the Poulier family, the future of St. Lawrence's School is fully assured.

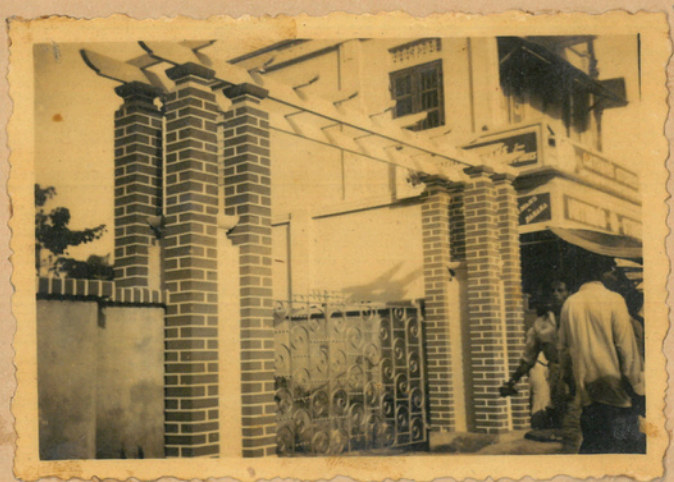
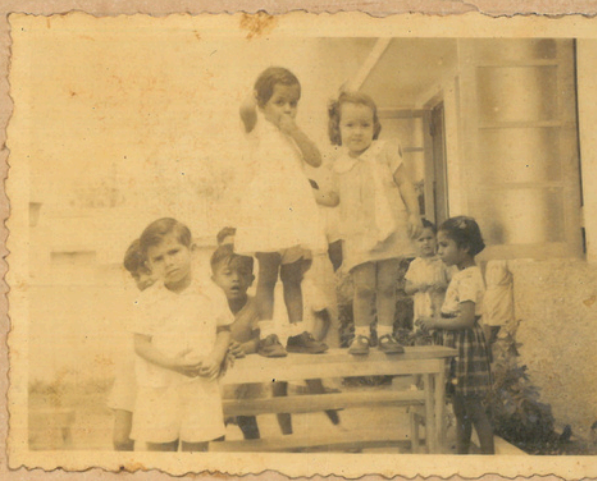
---



# ST. LAWRENCE'S SCHOOL

Montessori School

June 1953





# St. Lawrence's School

## under the Guidance of

### the Good Shepherd Nuns.

For one and a half years the Parish Priest of Wellawatte was in charge of the school, but all the time he had tried to find a Religious Teaching Order to conduct this Educational Institution. In January 1953 St. Lawrence's School was handed over to the Nuns of the Good Shepherd Congregation. On January 7th 1953 Mother Provincial (Mother Mary of the Immaculate Conception) Mother Mary of St. Canice, Mother Mary of St. Luigenia and Mother Mary of St. Finbarr arrived on the school premises at 8 a.m. for the reopening of school. Mother Mary of St. Gerard (Assistant General) Mother Mary of St. Eleanor and Mother Mary of St. Philomena from St. Bridget's came a little later. At 8.30 a.m. the pupils assembled in the school hall and Mother Mary of The Immaculate Conception addressed those present.

The school was a mixed one, the Secondary Section comprising mainly of boys - all teenagers in longs. One can imagine their apprehensions and misgivings when they realised they were under the guidance of Nuns. However, they proved themselves to be very docile and helpful and many of them are now very loyal 'Old Boys' of the school. The total on roll at the end of January 1953 was 352 - 207 Boys and 145 Girls.

In those early days the Kindergarten children were housed in a small dark building in front of the main hall and here and there throughout the grounds were little mud huts for the use of servants etc. There were no boundary walls hence trespassers took advantage of the situation to avail themselves of the school premises especially as the Nuns did not reside at Wellawatte. From January 1953 to July 1955 the Nuns travelled daily from Kotahena to school. This was a big handicap.

During the first term, work commenced in full earnest; the huts were demolished and an existing old building inside the main entrance to the school was renovated, extended, furnished and made into a Montessori School, which was blessed by Rev. Father Robert Fernando O.M.I., and opened for the first time on June 19th 1953.

The school continued mixed until the end of 1953 when the boys in the Secondary Section were discontinued except those who were to sit for the S.S.C. Exam: in December 1954 since these latter could not find accommodation elsewhere. Boys were admitted to the Primary Section until January 1954.



# ST LAWRENCE'S SCHOOL

## Kindergarten





# ST. LAWRENCE'S SCHOOL.

Enrollment of the Brownies. August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1954

Enrollment of the Guides. November 24<sup>th</sup> 1954





# Guide log book

KEENLY contested net-ball matches played last Saturday morning, opened a very happy week-end for Guides, brownies and cadets of the Colombo Division. Six teams competed in the preliminary matches, played at Ladies' College, for the Spoonetilleke Guide Challenge Shield.

These heats resulted in wins for 12th Colombo (St. Paul's Milagiriya), 20th Colombo (All Saints, Borella), and 11th Colombo (Visaka Vidyalaya). Mrs. Nora Pate umpired. There will be more matches played next week-end, this time on the grounds of St. Paul's, Milagiriya.

Saturday afternoon was reserved for the Brownies. Mrs. Jilla, Brownie Commissioner, had arranged a very interesting programme for them, and Colombo Commissioners and Brown Owls had nearly as exciting time as the Brownies in organising and judging the various competitions and events.

The tea interval provided a refreshing break, after which the finals in races and competitions were completed and the points gained tallied up. The 20th Colombo Pack (St. Bridget's), much to

their delight, won the Division Brownie Cup which was presented to them by the Chief Commissioner, Miss Edna Alvis.

Special mention must be made of the 'runners-up' the St. Lawrence School Pack.

very new, yet keen enough to come a very close second.

**Our Headquarters Cadets**, having helped with the Brownie Field Day, spent the remainder of their week-end camping at Headquarters. Their programme included work for the Astronomer's badge, a late supper, which was enlivened by a 'ghost', and birthday celebrations which developed into an unexpected luncheon party the next day—a delightful ending to a very happy indoor camp.

**ENROLEMENT:** Miss Iris Blacker, Division Commissioner for Colombo, enrolled twenty new recruits at an enrolment held recently by 16th Colombo (St. John's School, Nugegoda). After patrol corners had been visited and commented on the guides got busy with competitions and games. Country dancing and a sing-song followed. The meeting ended with "Taps".

SALLY ANNE.



The year 1954 proved to be a very successful one for St. Lawrence's. Early in the First Term the House System was introduced. The children were grouped in four houses - Lourdes, Loretto, Lisieux, Lima. The House Captains and members responded enthusiastically and much good was accomplished through their keen sense of Competition. At the beginning of the Second Term a New Kindergarten block begun in 1953 was completed and occupied by the children. A Guide Company and Brownie Pack were formed in the middle of the Term under the very efficient leadership of Mrs. Vivian Baptist then Vivian Perera who became a member of our staff in May 1954. On the second of August our first Brownies were enrolled by Miss E.M. Alwis the Island Commissioner who was very pleased with their training. Present for the Occasion were Mother Mary of St. Canice and many parents and friends. In St. Lawrence's the Medium of instruction had remained English until September, 1954 when the three Media were introduced.

In 1954 His Grace the Archbishop while making the Pastoral Visit in the Parish of Wellawatte came to St. Lawrence's and spent one whole morning in the school. He examined Catechism in the different classes and lectured the staff for forty five minutes. His Grace was very pleased and praised the staff for their cooperation and very good loyal spirit.

In late November the first five pupils from the school were presented for the Royal College Examination of music. The results were very satisfactory. Four passed with Merit and there was one ordinary pass. On November the 24th our first batch of Guides were enrolled. It was a very pleasant evening as the Guides old and young had prepared some very original items. Present for the occasion were Very Rev. Father Nereus Fernando then General Manager of Schools, Mother Mary of St. Canice, Dr. Arumugan, School Medical Officer and many parents and friends. A Certificate was dated December the 4th 1954 approving the School as a Senior Secondary School.

Rev. Father Peyton visited Ceylon early in 1955 in connection with the Family Rosary Crusade. Naturally his intense love for Our Lady inspired the sons and daughters of Lanka. St. Lawrence's too was inspired and consequently the first Inter-House Religious Knowledge Competition was organised. The theme of the Competition was "The Family Rosary Crusade". It consisted of two Sections (1) Drama and (2) a display of Exhibits. This competition proved a great success and became a greater success in the years which followed. Present for the Final Decision were Rev. Mother Provincial, Mother Mary of the I.C.; Mother Mary of St. Canice and St. Mary of the Nativity from Kotahena. The Judges were Rev. Father Claude Lawrence and Rev. Father Dominic Anandappa. Loretto House received the Cup for the Drama Section and Lisieux the Cup for the Exhibits.

On May 17th we had a Farewell party for Mrs. E.B. Cadman who had been responsible for the singing in the school since the time of Mrs. Poulier. Mrs. Cadman was going home to England after having given a life's service to the people of Ceylon. She was a great woman with a large magnanimous heart. We were sad to say "Farewell".

On July 1st 1955 the Nuns came to live in the bungalow adjoining the school. This facilitated school work. Rev. Father Serra celebrated the first Mass in the Convent Chapel at 6 a.m. on July 2nd.



On October 14th the Staff and pupils wished Mother Mary of St. Gerard for her Feast.

In November 1955 one music pupil Senior was presented for Trinity College and passed. Ten Candidates were entered for Royal College of music. Results - 1 Distinction; 2 Merits; 5 Passes; 2 Failures. Mrs. R.R. Navaratnam came for school inspection and to collect the Annual Returns on December 22nd. This was the first time the Annual Returns had been collected.

Early in the first term of 1956 the members of the four Houses became very busy and very enthusiastic about the Annual Inter house Religious Knowledge Competition. The theme was "The Propagation of the Faith". The following account was written by an onlooker -

#### ACCOUNT

" Our Annual Inter-House Religious Competition was held on March 23rd, the theme this year was " The Propagation of the Faith ", as last year the Competition was held in two parts - (1) A Poster and Propaganda Contest and (2) A Drama Contest.

The Poster and Propaganda Contest provided a very large Canvas for the Competition and every aspect of the Mission Field was touched upon by the Four Houses - Lourdes, Loretto, Lisieux and Lima. The Home - the value of example in the home, the need of encouragement and support for more devoted priests and nuns - distribution of Catholic literature - Charity and prayer to solve the many problems of the Church on Earth, were some of the many aspects touched upon. The small percentage of those within the Fold in proportion to the vast number who still lie in the Darkness and Shadow of death was specially emphasised by the pupils of Loretto House. Two Posters were specially impressive - One portrayed the anxiety and deep concern of Pope Pius XII at the millions who are still lost in the darkness of Paganism - " At the thought that Pagan Souls still number one thousand million our Spirit has no rest". Words of Pope Pius XII. The other emphasised the stability and firmness of the Catholic Church.

The Church was represented as a house built on a rock while men with long ropes representing the different heresies tried to pull it down. This House was the lucky Winner of the Cup for the " Poster and Propaganda Contest" had chosen a very striking but simple Background in Black and White while the Words " Going therefore teach ye all Nations that they all may be one " stood out in bold silver letters on a map of the world encircled with a multi coloured illuminated Mission rosary each colour representing a different Continent.

Many excellent posters were produced by Lourdes, Lisieux and Lima also - the pupils of Lourdes House being specially recommended for their display of colour.

The Drama Contest produced Plays of a very high Standard dealing with various work on the Mission Field and the spreading of the Gospel, while the value of the Lay Apostolate and the need for good enthusiastic parents who spontaneously and lovingly foster honour for Christ and His Work in the young souls of the children God has entrusted to their care was the topic chosen by one of the Houses. The pupils of Lisieux House who dramatized St. Francis Xavier



# The School Crest

## Explanation of

1. Background.
2. Motto.

### ST. LAWRENCE

- (1) Blood red of the Martyr
- (2) Palm of Martyrdom and Victory
- (3) Crown of Glory
- (4) Motto: Absolute generosity of the Saint is the virtue brought out into prominence in his Office and Mass, which gained for him so much fame in Rome and other parts of Christendom, and eternal Glory in Heaven.

### GOOD SHEPHERD CONGREGATION

- (1) The two hearts, which incidentally agree with the Motto " Corde Magno Ad Gloriam " large, magnanimous, generous heart, like that of Jesus and of Mary.
- (2) First part of the Motto is from a text of the Saintly Founder: " Corde Magno et Animo volenti "  
The second part " Animo volenti " was omitted for two reasons:
  - (a) It is virtually contained in the first part.
  - (b) The masculine fortitude was dropped, and the feminine love and generosity are emphasised in the single "Corde Magno" as being appropriate for a girls school.

### IRISH

The Celtic Cross.

Cont.



Taken on the Occasion of Mother Mary  
of St. Gerard's Golden Jubilee.

September 29<sup>th</sup> 1956





administering to the Dying and Sick in India some scenes being both impressive and touching were the winners of the Cup for the Drama Contest."

The Contests were judged by Our Very honoured Mother Provincial, Rev. Father Muthukumar Director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Ceylon and Rev. Father Claude Lawrence O.M.I.

The Exhibition of Posters was open to the Public for a few days and the Rev. Father Muthukumar was so impressed that he proposed to give the Competition wide publicity and exhibit the posters round the Island. He said he was convinced that St. Lawrence's College had given a good start in an effort to publicise the " Propagation of the Faith " all over the Island.

The Junior Praesidium of the Legion of Mary was inaugurated on June 7th 1956. The first meeting was held in the school hall - Rev. Father Robert Fernando O.M.I. parish priest and Spiritual Director together with the President and Secretary of the Legion presided.

The Praesidium of Our Lady of Purity, for such is the beautiful title of 'the St. Lawrence's Unit' functions very well and much good work has been accomplished for Our Mother Mary through its Inception.

Next day June 8th Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus the Catholics - Staff and pupils - assembled in the School Hall for the Solemn Consecration of the School to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The Catholics of St. Lawrence's have become very devoted to the Heart of Jesus since this Special Consecration. The members of the Houses - non-catholics as well as Catholics take a great pride in decorating the Altar on the first Friday of each month and the Litany of the Sacred Heart and Consecration are recited by the whole school in front of the decorated Altar at noon on First Fridays. We feel the Sacred Heart has a special protection for our school.

From August 30th to September 2nd, St. Lawrence's became a veritable Fairy land when the strains of "Smilin Thru" filled the air for miles around. The great "Fair and Fete 'Smilin Thru' " had begun in real earnest. This Fete which had been so well organised by the Staff, aided by some of the very good devoted parishioners of Wellawatte proved a great success and realised a sum of close on nine thousand Rupees for the school.

Late in September the Golden chimes ushered in the Golden Jubilee of Mother Mary of St. Gerard. The 29th of September was unique in the history of St. Lawrence's. From early morning until late evening the joyful bells rang out. The day commenced with High Mass in the School Hall celebrated by the very Rev. Father Serru O.M.I. assisted by Rev Father Robert Fernando O.M.I. as deacon and Rev. Father Herat O.M.I. as Sub deacon. Many of the Mothers and nuns, together with a good number of the Old Girls from St. Bridget's Convent were present for the Mass. At ten o'clock the school greeted Mother and performed some items of entertainment. In the evening all enjoyed themselves at the school social in honour of the great day.



# AT ST. LAWRENCE'S WELLAWATTE —School Exhibition on the Mass

I WAS covering their Annual Inter-House Competition for the Paper and called on the way home to get my story. St. Lawrence's is my parish. Yet I was visiting its school for the first time and, as I entered the wrought-iron gates, the spectacle of a nun in overalls tranquilly tending a flower bed made me feel I was leaving the incessant movement of the world outside for a realm where all was peaceful and subdued; where time itself, "quiet" as Wordsworth's nun, seemed sanctified and still.

I introduced myself to the Superior, Reverend Mother Finbar, and she obligingly showed me round the Exhibition. The Inter-House Competition had taken the form of a Drama and Exhibition, the theme of which

*By a "Messenger" reporter*

was the Mass, and though the Drama was over, the exhibits were yet there, shorn somewhat of their freshness, but attractive still and of absorbing interest. The Exhibition had been opened to the public and it must have warmed the hearts of parents to see the intelligence and skill and labour and love lavished by their children on the thousand and one things that went to make this inspiring spectacle.

Here were altars erected by little hands, the altars looking so real, the priest so life-like and the whole action of the Consecration so skilfully arrested, that for a moment I thought the great drama of the Mass was actually taking place. This particular exhibit was by Lo-

ment Fathers, and Very Rev. Fr. Nereus Fernando. Loretto House had even erected a crimson reredos for their altar, with a painting of the Last Supper neatly superimposed. Framing the painting were the words "This is my body" and "This is my blood," and on the altar cloth, in large gilt lettering, "Do this in commemoration of me."

Loretto House had also a startling poster on "The First Blood Transfusion." It began somewhat like this: "The First Blood Transfusion took place nineteen hundred years ago. The First Blood Donor was Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ..." Lima House, which came second, had a whole series of illustrated explanatory pos-



Prize-winning exhibit by Loretto House

retto House, which had been adjudged the best and had consequently been awarded the prize. The judges had been the Very Rev. Fr. Serru, Vicar General, Rev. Fr. Fitzgerald, Superior of the Blessed Sacra-

ment Fathers, and Very Rev. Fr. Nereus Fernando. Loretto House had even erected a crimson reredos for their altar, with a painting of the Last Supper neatly superimposed. Framing the painting were the words "This is my body" and "This is my blood," and on the altar cloth, in large gilt lettering, "Do this in commemoration of me."





#### Another section of the Exhibition

Life of Our Lord, depicting themes like the miracle of the loaves and fishes, the miracle at Cana, the Last Supper and the Crucifixion. Lisieux House, though last, had a giant illuminated chalice. Yet another gilt one, surmounted by a host, revolved on an electrically-operated turn-table. They had also executed some very original paintings and etchings and an elaborate triptych on the Last Supper, Crucifixion and the Mass.

There were two sets of miniature sacerdotal vestments — amice, alb, girdle, maniple, stole, chasuble — one by Loretto House, the other by Lima House and the latter had some exquisite vignettes on the whole sequence of the Mass. The walls were covered with carefully done liturgical diagrams and symbolic drawings and with numerous posters on subjects related to the Mass. One was on Faith and the Eucharist, another on Immolation, another on the Crib and the Tabernacle, another on the Eucharist and Creation, another on Blessed Julian Eyward — the Founder of the Order of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers. There was one poster on the Holy Eucharist and the

Family and another spoke of "Family Union through Family Communion." One, invited you to join the Daily Mass League and one had inscribed in it the Greek Chi-Ro and Mary offering the Infant Saviour over a chalice. Below it were these two little stanzas, entitled "The Priest's Prayer:"

*The Magi came to Bethlehem,  
The House of Bread and, following them,  
As they the Star, I too am led  
To Christ, the living House of Bread.*

*And here, O mystery of Love!  
Behold, from highest heaven above,  
Through me, the Son of God again  
A victim for the sons of men.*

I am sure all the little ones and big, who got this Exhibition up, and all the good lay teachers and nuns who helped them do it, must have their minds and their thoughts shot through and through with all the wonder and the beauty and the sublimity of the Mass, and their lives for ever coloured with the meaning of it all — the Holy Mass, pleroma of the Cross, *Mysterium Fidei*, that most tremendous thing on earth, . . . the only thing that matters.



# ST. LAWRENCE'S SCHOOL

## Inter House Religious Knowledge Competition

14<sup>th</sup> June 1957



The Vice Captain of Loretto House is awarded the prize for the Best Performer.



Scene from the Play enacted by the pupils of Lisieux House.



# ST. LAWRENCE'S SCHOOL

Inter House Religious Knowledge Competition.

14<sup>th</sup> June 1957



The Captain of Loretto House receives the Cup for the Poster Competition



The Captain of Lourdes House receives the Cup for the Drama Competition



# 'SMILIN THRU' FAIR & FÊTE

August 30<sup>th</sup> - - - September 2<sup>nd</sup>

1956



The Mayor of Colombo, Mr. V. A. Sugathadasa cuts the ribbon to open "Smilin Thru" the fair and fete organised

by St. Lawrence College, Wellawatte. Also in the picture is the Rev. Mother Superior. The carnival will run till Sunday.





# ST. LAWRENCE'S SCHOOL CELEBRATIONS. Aug. 11<sup>th</sup> 195

1. The March Past.
2. Rev. Father Fernando blesses the School
3. Rev. Father Fernando
4. All stand while the school Anthem is being sung.
5. Drill Display.



1.



2.



→ 3.

4.



5.





# St. Lawrence's School

## Anthem

Unfurl the banner Red and Gold  
Set it aloft for all to see,  
Red for the toil, tears, trials untold  
Gold for the crown of victory.

True to our Motto we'll ev'r be  
For glory we shall solely seek  
By noble deeds done cheerfully  
With hearts magnanimous and meek.

Martyr blest the Crown and Palm  
Thro' fiery torment thou didst win  
Preserve thy children from every harm  
Safe from the scorching flames of sin.

Pure Heart of Mary, neath thy care  
Keep us forever pure like thee.  
Sweet heart of Jesus, hear our prayer  
May Thy Heart be our Sanctuary.

School of our girlhood years - to thee  
We pledge our love and loyalty  
O Red and Gold! thro' triumph, thro' strife  
Blazon our trail to endless life.

Unfurl the banner Red and Gold  
Set it aloft for all to see  
Red for toil, tears, trials untold  
Gold for the crown of victory.

\*\*\*\*\*



Our music results this year were very satisfactory. Of the twelve candidates who entered for the Royal College Exams, in November there were two merits and nine passes. The two pupils presented for the theory exam in March passed.

The Cross overshadowed St. Lawrence's on the 28th January 1957. One of our lovely devoted young teachers Mrs. B.M.A. Balarajah was called very suddenly to her Eternal Home. Mrs. Balarajah was in school, hale and hearty, the previous Thursday - hence the shock was great when a telegram announced her death early on Monday morning. The Assembly bell rang as usual not however for the ordinary routine school work, but in deep mourning for the loved one passed away. Mrs. B.M.A. Balarajah was laid to rest in Mannar on January 29th 1957. May her precious Soul rest in peace.

Since the first term was comparatively short the Inter-House Religious Knowledge Competition was postponed to the second term. The theme was "Mass and the Holy Eucharist". The school hall was an impressive sight on June 14th the day of the Competition. The Judges were Very Rev. Father Serru O.M.I. Rev. Father Patrick Fitzgerald Superior of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers, St. Philip Neri's church Pettah, Very Rev. Father Nereus Fernando Parish priest Kotahena. The Competition was a great success. Loretto House was placed first in the Poster Competition while Lourdes House won the Drama Cup. The Cups were Awarded by Very Rev. Father Serru. On the same evening Lima House was awarded the Conduct Cup, Lourdes House was awarded the Games Cup.

August 9th was a red-letter day for the school. The Feast of St. Lawrence was being celebrated as our school Feast for the first time. For months previous Rev. Father Fernando had been working on the School Crest. Father J. Herat is entirely responsible for the plan and composition of the Crest, while the words of the school Anthem were composed by one of the Poor Clare Collettines Tewatte Ceylon. At nine o'clock celebrations for the feast began with the March Past followed by the hoisting of the School Flag. After the unfurling of the "Red and Gold" the school Anthem was sung. A drill Display and some items followed. Present for the Occasion were Rev. Father Fernando O.M.I. and many parents and well wishers.

The year 1957 closed with a very successful Fair organised by the Guides and Brownies.

In March 1958 the children of the Montessori School presented 'The Merchant of Venice' in Sinhalese. People marvelled that children of five and six could enter so well into the Dramatization of a Shakespearean Play.

Due to the declaration of the 'State of Emergency' all Competitions for 1958 had to be deferred. On August 11th we had our School Celebrations for the feast of St. Lawrence. We had Holy Mass in the School Hall at 7 a.m. celebrated by Rev. Father Robert Fernando O.M.I. Parish Priest. At 9.30 a.m. we had the March Past followed by the hoisting of the School Flag. A very successful Sports meet followed. One of the very exciting events was the 'Staff Race'. Present for the occasion were Mother Provincial, Mother Mary of the Good Counsel, Mother Mary of St. Canice and Mother Mary of St. Columba Assistant Nayakakanda. The Prizes were awarded by Mother Provincial.

\*\*\*\*\*



21 - 1 - 52

Dear Noelle,

You may start  
teaching at St. Lawrence  
School from the first  
of next month

Yours sincerely  
Robert ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ 8  
any.

I accepted this offer, and  
started my teaching career  
on 1.02.1952.

I retired in September 1990  
and left St. Lawrence's.

I was away from St. Lawrence's  
from July 1957 to May 1963  
During this period I was  
attached to Our Lady of Victories  
Convent, Moratuwa, where I was  
registered and made a  
peripatetic teacher. *W. Jayamaha*  
1-9-00



# SST. LAWRENCE'S SCHOOL.

## First Communicants.







(4) HISTORY  
ST. LAWRENCE'S  
SCHOOL - 26th Colombo  
Enrollment of the Brownies - 2nd  
August 1954 - Enrolled  
by Miss. E.M. Alwis  
Enrollment of the  
Guides - 24th  
November 1954



Guide Captain -  
Mrs. Vivian Baptist  
(then Vivian Perera)  
Addressing the  
guides.

The Chief Guest  
Mrs. Sita Rajasinghe  
Mrs. Jayamaha

Golden Book



## A MIGHTY ATOM

Very slightly built, Fr. Robert answered the call of the Archdiocese, displaying grit, determination and stamina of a high order. No microphone was required for his sermons in the little chapel at St. Lawrence Road, where the parish first took root. His stentorian voice rent the air Sunday after Sunday. A fine linguist, Fr. Robert was equally fluent in English, Sinhala and Tamil, and this stood him in good stead in leading his multi-lingual and literate flock to God. Parishioners of that era will remember his lucid exposition of Church Liturgy and his untiring efforts to make St. Lawrence, Patron of the parish and First Patron of the City of Colombo known to one and all. As a result the parishioners of Wellawatte were well founded in matters of Faith, under his able guidance.

## 30 LONG YEARS

The Archdiocese had made the right choice. No wonder then that Fr. Robert was destined to stay as Parish Priest for 30 long years, perhaps the longest stay by any Parish Priest in the Colombo region, in the history of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka. That Fr Robert was able to consolidate his leadership of his flock, and win their confidence for thirty long years is in itself a great tribute to this man of God. It is a fact that he not only baptised many at St. Lawrence's but stayed long enough to marry them and in many instances bury them as well.

## A PERFECTIONIST

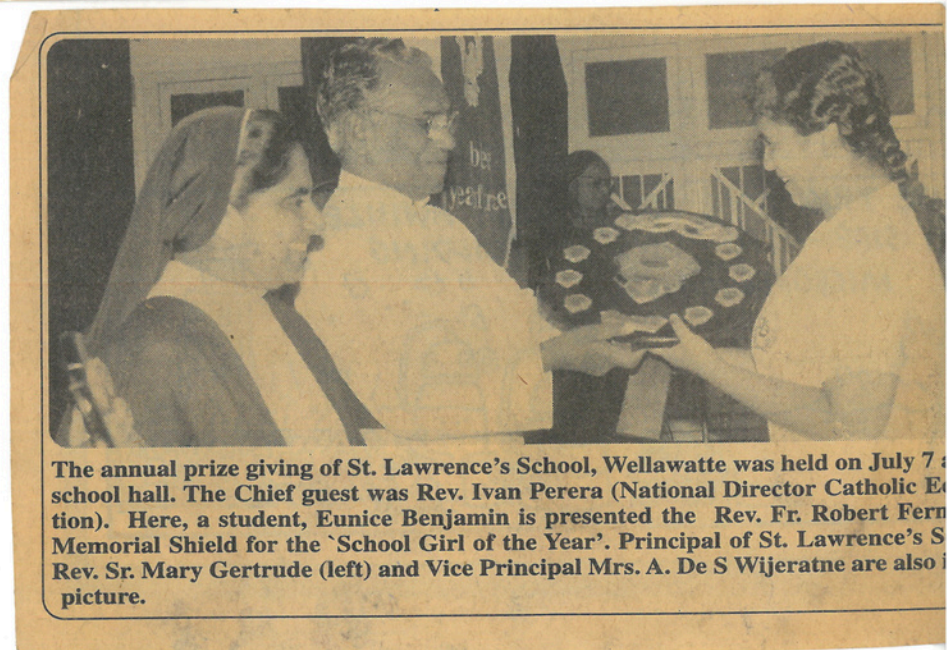
What parishioners of St. Lawrence's, past present and future will remember Fr. Robert by, will undoubtedly be the beautiful red church with its unique design, which stands today as one of the most impressive landmarks and architectural monuments of the metropolis and indeed the whole of Sri Lanka.

Every ounce of brick and mortar, every beam of steel or timber, had to pass his eagle eye. No technical skill did he spare to build soundly against the wear and tear of exposure.

## TRIBUTE TO SAINT LAWRENCE, MARTYR

Right through his stay at St. Lawrence's and particularly during the building of the church of St. Lawrence, Fr Robert was conscious of the fact that the church was to be dedicated to St. Lawrence, one of the greatest martyrs of the Catholic Church, the Patron of the parish of Wellawatte and above all, the First Patron of the City of Colombo. This church then had to be seen rising up to the stars, soaring into the clouds, almost challenging the sky in our adoration of God. In this context it seems a pity that Fr. Robert was unable to complete the tower-facade in front of the present church which still remains









The annual prize-giving of St. Lawrence's School, Wellawatte, was held on July 7th, 1988, with Prof. Willie Mendis as Chief Guest. Prof. Mendis and Mrs. Mendis were welcomed by the Principal, Rev. Sister Nivard Senarath and Rev. Sister Benedicti.





.....200.....  
30. 05. 2001.

## *St. Lawrence's School*

### THE SCHOOL CREST

Motte : "Corde Magnoad Gloriam"

'Victory and glory here, and hereafter are achieved by the practice of a magnanimous and generous heart, particularly so by the women.

Red : "Red" the basic colour of the Crest.

- a) A generous heart swells with red blood.
- b) Red reminds of the sufferings and sorrows of the Martyr Patron - calls for hear, sustained work and toil from the students and staff.

"Palm of Victory" : The palm tree soars alott nobly.

Crown : "Crown" of Glory

"Gold Colour" is in higher level in the Crest symbolic of the Glory that was the outcome of the supporting blood - shedding red Gold is outer in the flag as the bright effulgence of the blood red.

"Heart" : Invite imitation of the virtues of Jesus and Mary.

"Cross" : In this sign you shall conquer and such victory will surely lead you to true Glory.



FROM DRAWING-ROOM SCHOOL  
TO FULL - FLEDGED CONVENT

# ST. LAWRENCE'S SCHOOL

It's Early Beginnings . . .

—by—  
S. J. K. CROWTHER

**S**T. LAWRENCE was a saint with an irrepressible sense of humour. He joked on the gridiron on which he was roasted because he would not renounce his faith. It was a joke, a deadly joke cracked at the expense of the Roman Governor, that brought him to the gridiron. The Governor had heard that the Church was rich in treasures. He sent for St. Lawrence and offered to spare his life on a condition: "Present me, said the Governor, with the treasures of your Church and your life will be spared." St. Lawrence readily agreed.

A day was appointed for the treasures to be presented. On due date, St. Lawrence invited the Governor to come. He opened the doors of his church where the poorest of the poor were gathered. "These, said the saint, are the treasures of the Church. If you wish you can have the whole lot of them."

The Governor in a fit of ungovernable rage ordered St. Lawrence to be roasted on a gridiron. It was while his flesh was sizzling that St. Lawrence made his most memorable joke. He told his executioners: "One side of my body is now well baked. Why not turn me over so that the other side is equally well roasted."

## HUMOUR

St. Lawrence with his keen sense of humour must have smiled at "the set of curious chances" — to use a Gilbertian phrase — which brought about the establishment of St. Lawrence's School long before St. Lawrence's Church was established in Wellawatta.

In the spacious days of Queen Victoria there lived in Colombo South, a worthy citizen by the name of Lawrence. History does not state who he was and what he was doing. But he did one thing worthy of note and destined to hand down his name to posterity. He called his house Lawrence Villa.

Then came Mrs. Jenet Poulier, a born teacher, who had started her teaching career at the Methodist High School, now Methodist College. Her one ambition was to have a school of her own. This ambition she realised when she took over the house called Lawrence Villa and started to hold classes in its drawing room.

## DRAWING ROOM

This drawing-room-school prospered, as it was bound to prosper with one so devoted to teaching as Mrs. Poulier. It grew,



numbers multiplied and soon Mrs. Poulier found she had to have a proper school room. Came the question of naming the school. She called it St. Lawrence's School.

Why did she call it by that name? Not merely because it began its existence in Lawrence Villa. There was something more to it than this. And it is here that we see the inspiration of St. Lawrence. Just at this critical juncture, at the psychological moment, we may say, Mrs. Poulier chances on a life-sketch of St. Lawrence. She was greatly impressed by what she read of him: his pre-eminent love of God and man, his steadfastness in the faith and his cheerful heroic martyrdom. Ordinarily, Methodists hold no truck with Catholic saints. But Mrs. Poulier nobly rose above narrow prejudices. Already her school was connected with the name of Lawrence. Now she boldly christened it St. Lawrence's School.

#### "POULIER SCHOOL"

Thus, long before the Church thought of building a church in Colombo South in honour of St. Lawrence, a good Protestant lady had founded a St. Lawrence's School, which was later to be attached to St. Lawrence's Church.

"Poulier School" as many called it, developed and more accommodation had to be found. A move was made to the first house on the left hand side in Lily Avenue. Even this did not suffice. Another move was necessitated, this time to the right side of the Lane, to a building which is now the Post Office.

Mrs. Jenet Poulier had presided over the school since its modest foundation in 1900. In 1936, she handed over the principalship to her niece, Miss Gladys Poulier, while she remained as manageress. The school continued to prosper, but it was no easy task to conduct a school, private school, under the new educational system of the Government.

The Poulier family felt that in the best interests of the school it must be handed over to some agency competent to run it as a school, with this one's honourable record of disinterested service, should be run. To whom were they to entrust their sacred charge?

#### HANDED OVER

Dedicated as Colombo had been to St. Lawrence since Portuguese times, after the demolition of Lorenzo de Almeida's Chapel, there had been no church to commemorate St. Lawrence! Then quite late in the day St. Lawrence's Church came up in Wellawatta. Mrs. Poulier, who had named her school after the Saint, doubtless noted the coincidence. When therefore it came to handing over her beloved institution to an educational agency, what was more natural or proper than to hand it over to those who were in charge of the Church of St. Lawrence?

*The Catholic Church has an impressive list of Colleges and Schools to its credit all over the world. She felt — there is no doubt that St. Lawrence secretly inspired her — that it is to the Catholic Church authorities she should entrust her school.*

#### IDEAL

And so it came to pass that in 1951, the Poulier ladies transferred their 51 year old school to the Catholic authorities of Colombo, who in 1938, had opened a church and a parish at Wellawatta, in honour of St. Lawrence without knowing in the least that cheek by jowl with their Church there had been in existence a St. Lawrence's School. In doing so the Poulriers once more exemplified the ideal which had always guided them. They might have got a better price if their object was worldly gain. But the wealth of this world was least in the mind of St. Lawrence. So it was also in the mind of the Poulier family, who sold their school for much less than



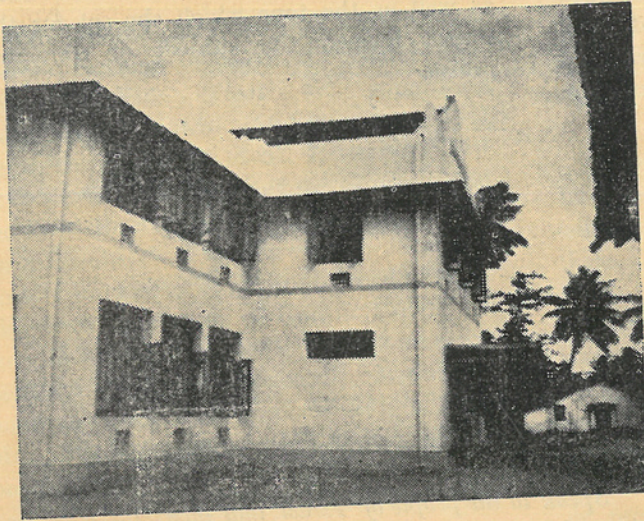
they could have got for it in the open market.

To Miss Gladys Poulier the school owes much more than can be described in a short article. No less a born teacher than her aunt, Miss Poulier had raised the

school to a degree of efficiency rarely achieved in modern schools. When she recently retired from the school her work as well as the tone which she set for the school formed the subject of universal praise.

*The Lord said to Moses, "Speak to the people of Israel, that they may take for me an offering; from every man whose heart makes him willing, you shall receive the offering for me. And this is the offering which you shall receive from them: gold, silver and bronze, blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen, goats' hair, tanned rams' skins, goatskins, acacia wood, oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, onyx stones, and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breast piece. And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. According to all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it. (Exodus 25, 1 - 9.)*





## A WINDOW on St. Lawrence's School

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This story is another  
milestone in the history  
of the school. It begins  
where the Poulter family  
left off . . . .

As it stands to-day, this modest spiritual, educational and cultural oasis, off the noisy, crowded and commercial Galle Road route in Wellawatta, owes its existence to the humility and importunity of our

Parish Priest, Rev. Father Robert Fernando, O.M.I., and the zeal and generosity of Mother Mary Immaculate Conception, R.I.P., former Provincial of the Good Shepherd nuns in Ceylon; who could not see her way clear to take St. Lawrence's under her wing, the first time Father Robert asked her to do so but who, touched by his perseverance, when, after trying all over the Island, without success, to find religious willing or able to undertake the work, he made a second appeal to her



generosity. Owing to her zeal for souls she could not refuse him and she took the first step, the most important one in such an enterprise and sent two Sisters from Kotahena to start the work. Thus began the 'New Testament' in the story of St. Lawrence's School, in January, 1953. By July 1st, 1955, a permanent Community was formed, and the Sisters took up residence at 42, High Street.

The story of the 'Old Testament' is well known to our Parishioners and the names of the Poulier family will live forever in the school archives. The foundations of St. Lawrence's were laid on the solid rock of virtue, portrayed in the lives of the gallant men and women who went before us and set their seal upon the School. The nuns of the present day, only six in number, are doing their utmost to maintain the high standard of education and at the same time to move with the times, all for the glory of God and the good of youth.

### MONTESSORI

We shall begin at the school gate on Galle Road and take our readers on a tour of the Institution as it is to-day. The Montessori House of Children ushers us in, and 120 youngsters, in age from 2½ years to five, bid us welcome with the customary Montessori hand shake and lead us through their class-rooms and hall where little tots are busily and quietly at work, according to the methods of Dr. Marie Montessori. We marvel at the skill with which they use their apparatus and listen to them explain the methods in their own way. Then they recite and sing for us and finally treat us to a Percussion Band Concert. They play with great gusto and enjoy what they are doing. They look very smart, too, in their gold and maroon Band costumes. Here each child receives individual attention.

We leave these little ones with reluctance to continue our way along the games field Pavilion. The netball teams are on the courts getting in trim for the Inter-school

matches. As we pass the lower grades, we notice children hard at work in some classes while others are at Singing in the Hall or engaged in Drill or Eurhythmics. Not wishing to disturb the teachers, we continue along the way to pay a visit to "Noirmoutier" the Transition Hostel — an absolute 'New Testament' feature, which owes its origin to our present Mother Provincial, Mother Mary Good Counsel, who wishes us to undertake something by way of Social Service. "Noirmoutier" houses working girls from various parts of the Island. Most of the girls are out working. We are received by a few girls who are off duty during the morning. They show us the dormitories and loggia upstairs, and the kitchen, dining-room, sitting-room and offices down stairs. We notice some of the students having music and theory lessons in the hall and some Girl Guides at work in the garden, getting their "Agriculture programme" under way. Sugar cane is growing beautifully in one corner of the garden and we notice fruit trees and odds and ends of vegetables as well as pretty plants and shrubs. The Hostellers do a good bit of gardening in their free moments.

We return by way of the main school building where the Concert Hall and business offices are also located. This is a veritable hive of activity. Besides classes working at academic subjects, certain sections of Seniors are doing a play soon to be produced; others are engaged in Needlework and Handwork projects. Delicious aromas waft from the Home Economics Lab, where a class of juniors experimenting in the art of cooking bid us welcome. The Commercial class is deep in Shorthand but we don't stop there. As we pass through the main office where typewriters are clicking and the gestetner machine is rolling off copies of songs and poems for the inter-house competitions, we notice a few members of the Past Pupils' Association trying to persuade the typists



to do some work for their Annual Meeting ; just on the horizon are the office bearers of the Youth Club who happen to come in at the moment and invite them to listen to the debate they are going to have with the leaders of the Tabernacle Youth Club early in March.

As we cross through the Hall we are quite taken up with some of the posters and friezes from the Art Department. In a remote corner of the Hall a group of Legionaries are thrashing out a programme for the Assembly next morning. All seem full of zeal.

### POINSETTIA

On our way over to the Convent we pass the Tuck Shop where a group of teachers, during a free period, are enjoying a "Tea Break." Along the way, we notice how every available bit of garden space is cultivated in one way or another.

The Poinsettia, in full bloom is gorgeous. Our attention is drawn to a neighbouring

property which good Father Robert hoped to use for school expansion. The nuns are hoping for a Convent and Chapel there but alas! This is a hope not likely to be realized in our life time.

### LITTLE FRIENDS

Now, we enter the small Convent on the right and after paying a visit to the Blessed Sacrament we partake of some refreshments and then leave by way of the Convent garden where some "Little Friends" former "Brownies" are weeding the flower plots and picking up the bus tickets, blown in from High Street when the buses stop near the gate instead of at the Bus stand. The "Little Friends" consider this chore a "good deed" for the day.

As we pass through the gate we find it difficult to realize that six nuns, fifty five lay teachers, twenty seven Hostellers, 921 students, and four devoted men helpers, all work together in unison, in such a small space, all for the greater glory of God and the good of St. Lawrence's School.

### IN REMEMBRANCE OF PAST WORSHIPPERS

*In our day of thanksgiving one psalm let us offer  
For the Saints who before us have found their reward ;  
When the shadow of death fell upon them, we sorrowed,  
But we now rejoice that they rest in the Lord.*

*Sing praise, then, for all who here sought and here found Him  
Whose journey is ended, whose perils are past ;  
They believed in the Light ; and its glory is round them  
Where the clouds of earth's sorrow are lifted at last.*