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Indian priest dies trying to save woman

by Catholic News Service

COCHIN, India -- A Syro-Malabar Catholic priest who had a role in the 2008 canonization of St. Alphonsa Muttathupandathu, India's first woman saint, was killed while trying to save a parish worker who had become entangled in a power line.

Father Mathew Thondamkuzhy, 72, of St. George Church in Lalam, Kerala state in the Syro-Malabar Palai Diocese, was electrocuted while trying to free the female staff member, said Father George Choorakkat, diocesan vicar general.

The worker, Achamma George, 63, became entangled in the high-voltage power line while working on the parish grounds, the diocesan spokesman said.

Father Thondamkuzhy reportedly rushed to save the woman after hearing her cries for help, said Father Choorakkat.

"He tried to use a plastic rod to save her, but was also electrocuted," he said.

Engineers found the bodies of the two victims when they went to switch off a transformer before doing maintenance work.

Father Thondamkuzhy served as an assistant vice postulator for the cause of St. Alphonsa, a Franciscan Clarist, the first canonized saint of the Syro-Malabar rite. In his role, he helped prepare documentation, collected artifacts and investigated reported miracles that were used to elevate the nun to sainthood.

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