

I am Claudio Sopena nephew of Father Sopena and I have the honor today of representing the Sopena family, a large Spanish Family. If we would gather together today as we did a few months ago we would be more than 270 direct members.

For us Father Sopena, Uncle Fede or Fede as we called him, was a reference, a light, a star very high, very bright, irradiating from India so far away and to Spain generosity, peace, serenity and tranquility. When something happened in the family he was aware of it and many of us came to him for his good advice and counsel when needed.

Father Sopena, Uncle Fede, encouraged us, inspired us to come to India and to know the day to day reality of his rich life. We remember in a special way and with much feeling those visits to the districts, the long hours spent in the car laughing and singing and listening to his many stories and thorough explanations of the culture and way of life of the communities we were visiting. Many of us came here, his mom, my grandmother, some of his brothers and sisters, many of my cousins, and recently the younger generations also, nephews and nieces.

The Sopena family wants you to know we will follow the legacy of our Uncle and we will continue to come for many more years.

One of us who has come and spent here long periods of time is Anna Barba. I will read you the letter received from her.

Dear Fede and dear all,

We want to thank Fede for the opportunity to introducing us to India, his beloved India. What made Fede love India was his people, all of you and the many ones that have not been able to come today but are here in spirit.

From a distant land, we have learnt, through Fede, about his Indian families, you, his Jesuits colleagues, about his beginnings in Kurseong, his life at Achanak Colony, the Holy Family Parish, his adventure at Raigad district, Vinayalaya and about the many friends and parishioners in all these places.

He was a clear example of how to live with the poorest and most deprived ones and we've learnt from him to love the adivasis.

The Sopena family wants to thank his very large Indian family for these great years with him.

It is only through Fede's action that we are able to understand better the real meaning of the word thanks.

We feel grateful that his latest dream came through - becoming an Indian citizen, just 8 months ago, and to die and being buried in Indian soil. What a great day, Republic Day, to have the dream fulfilled.

Danniyavad (gracias en Hindi) Fede and thanks to you all, his Indian family

Anna Barba,

Allow me to finish with the words that Father Sopena used to repeat many times.
Gracias a la vida que me ha dado tanto, tanto. thanks to life that it has given me so
much so much...