

EULOGY FOR FR. IVO FERNANDES, C.Ss.R
(30TH NOVEMBER, 1930 – 06TH JUNE, 2021)

Fr. Antonius Ivo Bernardus Fernandes, fondly known among the Redemptorists as Ivo Fernandes was born on 30th November, 1930 to Late Joachim Bernard Fernandes and Late Mary Augusta Palmira Fernandes in Bukoba, Tanganyika territory of British East Africa and spent his childhood in Mwanza. He was the youngest of five siblings, his other siblings are Sarah Rebeiro, Joseph Fernandes, Vasco Fernandes and Aida Francis all of whom have gone to their heavenly home. He was baptised on the 7th of December, 1930 in the Church of the Holy Family, Bukoba, Tanganyika. He joined the novitiate of the Redemptorist congregation at Sancta Maria, Kandy, Srilanka, professed on 2nd August, 1949 and ordained a priest on 8th June, 1955.

Soon after his ordination, Fr. Ivo was sent for his studies in Moral Theology to Rome at the Accademia Alfonsiana, where he got the opportunity to study under the great minds like Dr. Bernard Häring, C.Ss.R. After completing his studies in Rome, Fr. Ivo taught theology at Mt. St. Alphonsus for some years before committing himself totally for missions and missionary work in the province.

In 1972, the then provincial Rev. Bernard Pereira, made a request to take up a new responsibility in the province, to replace Fr. Roddy as the superior of Porvorim House, in Goa. In his request letter, this is what Fr. Bernard writes, “The extraordinary council has chosen you as the Rector of our house in Porvorim, Goa. We all felt that we need a man of your zeal and dynamism to spread the Redemptorist apostolate in Goa where 40% of the people are Catholics.” At this time Fr. Ivo was preaching a retreat to the clergy of Kandy, Ceylon. As Fr. Ivo mentions in his letter, “The retreat here for the Kandy Clergy went off very well – it is the first time that they have had a Redemptorist for their retreat and I hope it won’t be the last. I did my best to keep the door open!” To the request of the Provincial, Fr. Ivo replies, **“I shall always be glad to help where there is a call to do our Redemptorist Work, I therefore accept the work for which I have been chosen.”** This response of Fr. Ivo pretty much sums up his entire life and mission as a Redemptorist. Always willing to go gladly wherever sent to do the work of the Redemptorists. This only manifests his sense of belonging and deep love for the congregation and for the mission of the Redemptorists.

If there is a word that described Fr. Ivo, it was **Passion**. He was passionate about everything he did, whether it was preaching, teaching or being a missionary, he did them all with great passion. Apart from being the rector of Porvorim house, he was also made the vocation promoter of the province which also included Sri Lanka or Ceylon as it was known at that time. In his letter to Fr. Ivo, Fr. Bernard the then provincial writes thanking him for willingly and generously accepting the office as many confreres felt that Fr. Ivo was the right man for the job. One of the reasons many felt Fr. Ivo was right for the job is because of the extent of the mission work he was involved in ranging from different parts of Bangladesh to Ceylon conducting retreats and seminars for priests, religious and laity.

Fr. Ivo was briefly appointed to Lucknow community where he was involved in conducting retreats and seminars for students, parents and teachers in Lucknow and Kanpur. He was appointed next to Ambala house, which again as Fr. Bernard, the then provincial mentions in his appointment letter thus, “...in your characteristic way you accepted the office most generously... I am sure you will be kept very busy in the Ambala region as most of it is virgin soil for you. All the best Ivo. You are truly great.” He truly did explore this virgin area, first

by learning the Hindi language and then reaching out to people of all faith as Fr. Ivo mentions in his reply to Fr. Bernard, **“my heart’s desire is to work on missions and retreats and especially for non-Christians.”** It is here while working in Ambala, that Fr. Ivo developed a passion to reach out to **people of other faith** (children, parents & staff) who were the majority with whom he worked with in Schools and colleges as he designed a module called **“The Life Guidance Seminars”**. Here was Fr. Ivo pioneering inter-religious dialogue way back in the 1970’s long before it could become one of the apostolic priorities of our province and that of Asia-Oceania region of our congregation. He saw his work with those of other faith as **very urgent and necessary Redemptorist work.**

While appointing Fr. Ivo for a second term in Ambala community, this is what the then provincial Fr. Peter D’souza had to say in 1984, “I guess this letter finds you busy as usual **preaching the good news to hungry souls.** The Lord has blessed you with tremendous faith and zeal and a willingness to sacrifice yourself for others in generous service – all praise and glory to the giver of all gifts!!”. This is truly a glowing tribute to a man who gave his all to do the work of the congregation.

Fr. Ivo also worked in our Calcutta house for a triennium from 1991-1993, while being there he offered his services to the archdiocese and was appointed by the archbishop of Calcutta as the chairman and chaplain of the Charismatic Zonal Service Team. He also worked with the Worldwide Marriage Encounter and went on an outreach program with lay people to Bangladesh. After his term in Calcutta, He served the province as Asst. Bursar for six years only to return once again as Rector of Ambala house from 1999-2002.

From 2002 Fr. Ivo was appointed to Mt. St. Alphonsus community. While being in this community, his services were required in Sri Lanka where he worked for eight months. This is what Fr. Vimal Tirimanna, the then regional superior of Colombo had to say, “on behalf of the entire Region of Colombo, your presence among us was really a welcome event, not only with regard to the personnel and work, but also with regard to giving our youngsters some good examples with zeal for apostolic work and prayer, both of which you did extremely well. It is in that sense that I decided to write this letter to tell you how grateful we in the Region of Colombo are to you...”

Fr. Ivo’s last official assignment came from the then Superior General, Fr. Joe Tobin who invited him for an office at the General Government, to serve as Assistant in the General Historical Archives of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer from 2009-2012. An office he carried out with great zeal and passion. This is what the then superior General and now Cardinal Joe Tobin had to say, “Father Fernandes has become a valuable collaborator in the Archives and the General Secretariat as well as an appreciated member of the community.”

When returning to India after his services in the General Historical Archives, Fr. Michael Brehl, our present Superior General had this to say of Fr. Ivo, “I would like to express our appreciation and gratitude for all that you have been and one in the service of the congregation and the *comunita Sant’Alfonso* here in Rome. Not only have you accepted with grace the specific tasks required of you, but you have always sought out ways of contributing – through your reading, your stories, your services in the church... Your interest in our history, your abilities in many languages, and your willingness to work were a great benefit not only to the Archives and the General Secretariat, but also to your ministry in the Church at Masses and Novenas, in the confessional and in those particular pastoral situations where you sought out the sick and the homebound or where you listened to those who needed to talk to someone. As a conscientious

religious living out the Redemptorist vocation with zeal, you have been a healthy influence on the younger members of the community, and an inspiration to others as they also follow the Redeemer in the footsteps of St. Alphonsus.”

Fr. Ivo’s last appointment was to St. Gerard’s community from 2014, where he continued to render his services to the province through his availability as spiritual director and confessor for our seminarians and religious, to convents for daily mass and especially taking communion to those who were sick in the neighbourhood. All along, Fr. Ivo never ceased to learn, he was a voracious reader, one would often find him in the corridor with a book reading and underlining all that he thought was innovative and thought provoking. And if one ever happened to pass by, he was sure to get a gist of the book. He was up to date with the latest teachings of the church, Apostolic exhortations and encyclicals. He had great admiration for Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and his writings and termed them classic. He never missed out on any materials that were sent from the Generalate in Rome, the comunicandas, province circulars or Newsletters, he always kept himself abreast with all the happenings in the congregation and the province.

My earliest memories of Fr. Ivo were when he taught us Sacred Eloquence in the orientation year. He taught us to proclaim the Word of God with great zeal, fervour and reverence. This had a strong influence on me in the proclamation of God’s Word. Fr. Ivo had such deep love and passion for God’s Word, that when he proclaimed, he made the WORD come Alive!!! Quiet literally incarnating the WORD OF GOD in the minds and hearts of the listeners. One of Fr. Ivo’s best contributions to the Redemptorists and to the church at large is undoubtedly his book: **“Put Your Best Voice Forward – The Spirituality of Sacred Eloquence”**. This book is a summary of his lifetime work in the proclamation of God’s Word. This book is being used today as a textbook in sacred eloquence in training young seminarians and priests in many seminaries across India. A book that focused on ‘correct speech’, ‘the art of reading in the sacred liturgy’ and ‘speaking and preaching in public’ – with proper formation of the vowels, clear articulation of the consonants, with correct pronunciation, modulation of the voice and intelligent interpretation. As Director of Redemptorist Publications back then, I would often get calls from seminaries and religious institutions requesting for more copies of this book.

Towards the last phase of his life, Fr. Ivo was not keeping too well. Over the last two weeks, he had recurrent high fever and was on medication. Since the fever was not coming down, on 1st June, he was admitted to St. Philomena's Hospital, Bangalore. Upon examination, he was diagnosed to be COVID positive and had Meningitis. Apart from these the doctors informed to say that he already suffered a minor heart attack and there were complications in his lungs and kidneys. Since his creatine levels were high, on 4th evening, he underwent dialysis. Thereafter his conditions appeared to be stable. But on 6th morning on the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ at around 10 am he suffered a heart attack and breathed his last at 10.24 am.

To the Family, nieces and nephews of Fr. Ivo, it is unfortunate due to the circumstances we could not have your presence in our midst today. Thank you for giving us your uncle. We the Redemptorists are grateful to the Fernandes family for giving us a passionate missionary. He often had each one of you close to his heart and I am sure he is now interceding for each one of you from above. Accept our deepest condolence to the family.

And finally, to you dear Fr. Ivo, we thank you for everything you have been to each one of us. Your love for the congregation, your availability for missions and the willingness to go

wherever sent, your constant desire to learn, to read and equip for missions and your passion to proclaim God's Word to hungry souls is truly inspirational.

May the Lord and our blessed Mother, whom you loved so very much in your life with St. Alphonsus our founder, St. Clement Hofbauer, St. Gerard Majella, St. John Neumann and all our blessed Redemptorists and martyrs welcome you into the eternal kingdom of peace and happiness. Farewell good and faithful servant, you have fought a good fight, you have finished the race and you have kept the faith. A crown of righteousness awaits you.

Adios dear Padre Ivo, until we meet again in God's heavenly home. Thank you.

Your brother in the Redeemer,
Fr. Joseph Royan, C.Ss.R



Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer
The Vice Province of Majella
The Redemptorists

6th June 2021

Dear Fr Edward,

Please accept my deepest sympathy and that of each confrere of the V. Province of Majella on the sad passing away of our dear confrere Fr. Ivo Fernandes, C.Ss.R.

Fr Ivo will always be remembered for his passion and zest for the mission of the Congregation. He was the pioneer in preparing "Put Your Best Voice Forward" which became the text book for all of us from our Pre-novitiate in preparing for the art of communication. The Proclamation of the Word was at the centre of his life as it should be for every true Redemptorist. His love for reading and study with all matters pertaining to theology at the service of the mission, the history of Mission preaching, the history of the Congregation, his openness to welcoming the younger confreres and guide them into the tradition has always inspired me. His readiness to go wherever he was asked to go in availability for the mission is something that each of us can take to heart in this time of being available for the mission.

His warmth and sense of humour, which was very unique to him, endeared me to him as he always visited my parents and grandmother to cheer them up, this is something I will never forget and my family always were so fond of him This spirit of warmth is what made him connect with so many families of our confreres.

As so many thoughts flood my mind about a confreres so much loved, the images I will carry with me are two: Fr. Ivo with broom in hand cheerfully sweeping the pathway of St. Gerard's and Fr Ivo with book in hand and a cigar between his lips walking in the garden in Rome or for that matter the corridor at Mt. St. Alphonsus reading away and digesting a new thought.

May the Lord be merciful to our dear Fr Ivo and grant him rest. May he take his place with all our Redemptorist Saints, Blessed and Martyrs for living and persevering in our Congregation.

Be assured of my own personal prayers and those of all the confreres of the V. Province as we are one with you and our confreres of the Bangalore Province in this sad time but rejoice with you as well in the amazing life well lived of a Redemptorist Confrere we all admired and respected.

Your brother in the Risen Lord,

Joseph Ivel Mendanha, C.Ss.R.
V. Provincial Superior
V. Province of Majella

