

## **P. Xavier Sanjivi, C.Ss.R. (1948-2021)**

Xavier Sanjivi was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 1948 to Late Joseph Leo Sanjivi and Josephine Dassand ten days later on 13<sup>th</sup> of March, he was baptized at Sacred Heart Church, South Lallaguda. He was second in the family with three brothers Gerard, Michael and Felix Rajan and two sisters Mary Raj and Tresa Louis. Most of whom are here with us this evening.

Fr. Xavier hails from a good middle class catholic family, his late Father Mr. Joseph Leo Sanjivi worked as an officer in the Indian Railways, an upright man and of good standing in society and his mother a devoted homemaker. The family had a traditional upbringing in the faith and were faithful to their Christian duties and prayers. As the saying goes, Good vocations come from good families and a vocation was being nurtured in this God fearing family. His vocation story began when he was just 6 years old preparing for his first holy communion, the sister in charge, Sr. Eliza of St. Anne's of Providence asked her students what promise or vow would you make to Jesus as you receive Him for the very first time in your heart, Fr. Xavier responded by saying, "I make a vow to be a priest for Jesus." This pretty much summed up Fr. Xavier's life as someone who was faithful to his vows and rightly so, ten years later at the age of 16, on 17<sup>th</sup> of May 1964, Fr. Xavier writes a letter to the then vice-provincial of his long cherished desire of Joining the Redemptorist congregation and the very next month was accepted into our Juvenate at Sadupadesa on hennur Road, Bangalore.

Though there was pressure from the Jesuits and the diocese of Hyderabad to join them, but from his letter to the vice-provincial it was obvious that Fr. Xavier all along desired to join the Redemptorist, this was partly because of his own uncle late Fr. Cruice Sanjivi who was already a Redemptorist by now but also because of the presence of the Irish Redemptorists who frequented the homes of the confreres, in this case Fr. Cruice Sanjivi, and as a result Fr. Xavier got an opportunity to know and interact with the Redemptorists and their mission. This eventually attracted Fr. Xavier to the Redemptorist way of life. He made his first profession on August 2, 1966 and ordained a priest by Bp Arulappa at St. Mary's Church, Secunderabad on 7<sup>th</sup> May, 1972.

As a young seminarian returning for his home holidays from Bangalore, Fr. Xavier would get a first class ticket because his father who was an officer in the Indian Railways, because of the vow of poverty and simplicity of his lifestyle, he would forego his first class ticket and travel in the sleeper coach. This was narrated by late Fr. Clement Campos during the occasion of Fr. Xavier's golden jubilee of profession.

As a newly ordained priest, his first appointment was to Tenali community and parish, Fr. Martin Cushnan who was the then rector, welcomed him and told him right away to get ready to preach that weekend for all the masses in Telegu, Fr. Xavier who though studied telegu in school was not very fluent in the language, he just had a day to prepare and was nervous, He just plunged into it and there was no looking back. From there on, Fr. Xavier spent a great deal of his priestly ministry working in Andhra, in the mission parishes of Tenali and later pioneered in setting up a mission parish and community at Pedamanapuram. These were difficult days, with meager resources he started building up these mission places. He made sure that those in remote areas had regular opportunities for the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist, and received adequate catechetical instructions. He also ran special catechetical programmes for children and youth in these places. Most of them in these mission stations were economically poor and in order to empower them started social development projects in these villages.

During his 55 years as a religious and 49 years as a priest, Fr. Xavier assumed many responsibilities in the province. He was the Parish Priest and Rector of Tenali, Novice Master, One of his novices is Fr. Edward Joseph our present provincial superior. He was superior of the poor mission parish which he pioneered to set up in Peddamanapuram in the Archdiocese of Vishakhapatnam. He was the bursar, handling the finance of the Redemptorist Province and twice member of the Provincial council. He was Provincial superior for two trienniums from 1999 to 2005. He was director of Nava Spoorthi Kendra, Redemptorist Pastoral center, He was the first Rector of the joint Theologate of the three units of India at Mt. St. Alphonsus College, and the last office he held was the director of Pastoral Year Fathers. He was also a moderator for most of our Province Chapters. Apart from responsibilities in the congregation, he was also the current Senate member of the Archdiocese of Bangalore, National Chaplin of the Christian Family Movement, involved in Marriage Encounter programmes and faculty for marriage preparation courses at the Family Welfare center, Bangalore. He was involved in the CRI – Conference of Religious in India, He also showed great interest in Inter-religious dialogue and was promoter of Lay Collaboration in Ministries.

During the course of his long illustrious life as a Redemptorist there are many qualities of Fr. Xavier that stands out and experienced by so many of us, his fellow confreres, family and friends.

First of all Fr Xavier was an able administrator, as an able administrator exhibited tremendous leadership quality of patience and listening. You could knock on Fr. Xavier's door at any time and he will put aside everything and would give you undivided attention and patient listening. I always admired Fr. Xavier for his patient listening, I remember the times when late Fr. Alvino would spend hours every day in Fr. Xavier's room and in spite of his busy schedule would make time for him, it was not just with Fr. Alvino but with so many of us. Many of us felt, that, here was a leader who made time for us and listened to us patiently.

Second Fr. Xavier was pastorally available for people. He simply could not say no to people. He was up for the challenge and always said, I will do it, be it being in mission stations, assuming responsibilities in the province as superior or other offices given to him, He gave more than 100% and did them with great passion and zeal. He was meticulous in the way he carried out his responsibilities and documented all correspondence and meetings in a systematic way. To talk about his availability for people, once Fr. Xavier called up an elderly nun who had fractured her leg to enquire how she was doing, she said, I am missing the daily Eucharistic celebration as I am not able to go to the parish for my daily mass. Fr. Xavier immediately offered to come to the convent to celebrate mass for her every week until she recovered. He went out of his way to help people till the very end, He was a confessor and mentor to so many convents and for many of our students. When ministries were not happening due to the pandemic, Fr. Xavier made himself available for online ministries through Redemptorist Media Center, conducting online Bible classes which had over hundred participants, many got to know Fr. Xavier through Who's Who in the Bible, reflections on the biblical characters. His last episode on Cyrus of Persia was aired a day before he died.

Fr. Xavier was a wonderful preacher, He worked really hard to prepare inspiring homilies that were much appreciated by so many. He put to good use the refresher courses in theology that he did in Ateneo in Manila Philippines and at the Jesuit college in Toronto, Canada. He was most Sought after retreat preacher, for many religious congregations of both priests and nuns, preached retreats to priests of different diocese in India. His last inspiring homily was preached for us Redemptorists on 08<sup>th</sup> December,

on the occasion of the Final profession of 6 of our Redemptorist students. Where he said to the young Redemptorists: “Like today you will make your vows to the Lord, and all is not over with that. Rather it is only the **beginning of another journey** in which the Lord will lead you, a journey in which he will put you through a number of tests, sometimes it will be a test of loyalty, loneliness and faith, only to make you **a seasoned missionary**.” Truly Fr. Xavier was a seasoned Missioner.

Fr. Xavier loved the poor, it was seen not just in his work for the poor in the mission stations of then Andhra Pradesh. All through his life, he cared for the domestic staff working in our houses, as Rector of Mt. Alphonsus he organized an annual day of celebration for our domestic staff where he personally took the trouble of buying gifts for them. After his Mother’s death he received patrimony from his family which he requested the provincial superior to be used for the poor.

Fr. Xavier was much loved by the people, be it those in the Christian family movement or those who attended his bible classes or those in our parish at Holy Ghost Church. He was a person of integrity, discipline, commitment and prayer, He never missed his daily office of the church, I often saw him in the corridor praying the office of the church.

About 8 years ago, Fr. Xavier developed pulmonary Fibrosis where lung tissues become damaged and scarred, through best of treatment the disease was contained, but his recent bout of Pneumonia around first week of December worsened it further resulting in his death on 6th Jan, at 3.42 PM. What a coincidence, it was on this same day, two years ago his uncle priest Fr. Cruice Sanjivi passed away.

To the Family, the brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews of Fr. Xavier, thank you for your generosity. Thank you for giving your brother to us Redemptorists. He has been very close to each one of you and your presence with him during the last few days have been moments of comfort, joy and blessing to Fr. Xavier. It is a great loss to the family, may the Lord comfort each one of you and fill you with his peace.

Fr. Xavier always had a kind word of appreciation and was always grateful. He would go out of his way to encourage, support and express his appreciation for the work done. I remember him writing to me a long letter of appreciation for the wonderful online Lenten missions that was preached through our media center during the period of lockdown. And till the end to everyone who came to meet him in the ICU, in spite of the pain and suffering he was undergoing, he always had a smile on his face, as he said, “thank you, thank you for coming and praying for me.”

Today dear Fr. Xavier, as we bid you farewell, we thank you for being a brother and friend to so many of us. We thank you for your relentless service to the church in the Redemptorist congregation; for your love for the province, we thank you for your joyful spirit and the witness of life that you were to us. We pray that the Lord will welcome you into his Kingdom of eternal peace and happiness and say to you the words the Lord spoke to the faithful steward in the gospel, “*Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.*’ (Mt. 25/23)

Goodbye Fr. Xavier. Your brothers in the Congregation wish you goodbye. Till we meet again in Gods eternal home of Peace and happiness. Thank you.

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



Fr. Xavier Sanjivi, 6th Jan  
2021, 3.45 pm RIP

