

Adieu to

Prof. Dr. Fr. Lorenzo Fernando

Fr. Lorenzo Fernando was born in 1946 in Periyathazhai in the diocese of Tuticorin. He studied his philosophy and theology at the Pontifical Athenaeum of St. Francis Xavier also known by the Indian name Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth (JDV), Pune. He obtained his licentiate in Philosophy and Master's degree in Theology from the Pontifical Athenaeum, Pune. He also obtained a Master's degree in sociology from the Savitribai Phule University of Pune. While he was student of Theology, he was recruited to be on the teaching staff of Theology in the Pontifical Athenaeum and to be a formator in the Papal Seminary.

After his ordination to priesthood in 1975, he served in the diocese only for a year as the Pontifical Athenaeum in Pune needed his teaching service. In order to qualify him to be a full-fledged faculty member, he pursued his doctorate in Theology with specialization in Catechetics at the Pontifical Salesian University in Rome. On his completion of his doctorate, he returned to India in 1983 and joined the Papal Seminary community as a formator and began teaching in the Pontifical Athenaeum. Known for his erudite knowledge in Theology, he was raised to the rank of the Professor of Theology in 1994 by the Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome. He has taught in the Pontifical Athenaeum for 28 years until his age of retirement (65 years) in 2011.

When his home diocese needed him, he willingly served the diocese as the Vicar General for one year. His relentless commitment to teaching ministry brought him back to the Papal Seminary

He has a long standing connection to the Papal Seminary and its Athenaeum for many years. He has occupied many important positions in the Seminary and its Athenaeum. Notable among them is his service to the Athenaeum as the Dean of Theology for two full terms. In fact when he retired at the age of 65, he was the Dean of Theology. He is known for his organizational skills especially for organizing liturgical events. He is meticulous in planning liturgy as we have witnessed it during the Centenary of the Papal Seminary in 1993. He was also the master of ceremony of the release of the Stamp by the Government of Indian Union to mark the centenary celebration presided over by Saint Mother Teresa.

He is also a renowned Theologian and his expertise was sought in many institutions of Theology in India. He

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is the author of the book entitled ***Anthropological Method and Attitudinal Change*** and also of the book entitled ***Word in the World***. He is the co-editor of the book entitled ***Quest for an Indian Church***. He has published many articles in theological journals and he has presented research papers in national and international conferences. When he breathed his last and left for his eternal abode, he was the Rector of the MMI College of Theology and Philosophy, Palanchur, Chennai.

Many bishops of India know him personally; some of them are his classmates, others colleagues and a few of

them are his own students including Rt. Rev. Christu Das, the present auxiliary bishop of Trivandrum. Most Rev. Thomas Dabre, Bishop of Poona (Pune) and Most Rev. Lourdes Daniel, Bishop of Nasik were his colleagues in the Papal Seminary as staff members for many years. To pay homage to Fr. Lorenzo and his unbroken connection to the Papal Seminary, on 29 June 2017, the Papal Seminary community had a special requiem Mass presided over by Bishop Thomas Dabre.

Fr. Lorenzo has always been human and humane. Students felt comfortable in his presence. He led a very simple life that is a source of inspiration for many of us in campus. He was deeply committed to pastoral ministry. Most Rev. Valerian D'Souza, bishop emeritus of Poona once fondly recalled the commitment Fr. Lorenzo showed as a seminarian in pastoral ministry. Bishop Valerian was the then Parish Priest of Cathedral and Fr. Lorenzo as a young seminarian did his weekend pastoral ministry in Cathedral. The young seminarian Lorenzo realized that from the neighbouring slum, the Tamil speaking faithful hesitated to attend Mass in the Cathedral as they felt a sense of inferiority before the English speaking parishioners. The young seminarian pleaded their case to have a regular Tamil Mass in the slum itself and got permission from the parish priest of Cathedral and arranged priests for regular Sunday Tamil Mass. And today that slum has grown into a little town Wanworie and thanks to his initiative there is regular Mass even today. This is just one example to show how humane he was even as a seminarian.

Though he was away from Tamilnadu for many years, he was never alienated from Tamil culture and People. He was the Animator of St. Mary's Tamil Academy in the Papal Seminary for many years. He was an effective preacher

both in Tamil and English. He is well-known among people in all the parishes in Pune, especially the Tamil parishes. His interest in literature was a source of inspiration for many students of the Papal Seminary, thanks to which we witness a good collection of Tamil books in our Academy library here. No doubt he lived a saintly life with a compassionate heart for the poor. Looking back in time, I can say that his life is a model for Christian discipleship. Thank you Fr. Lorenzo for all that you have been to us and with heart

full of gratitude we say to you, “Adieu!” (*Nishant A. Irudayadason*, Papal Seminary, Pune)

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Fr. Lorenzo: The Person

Fr. Lorenzo is known to his companions and students as a simple person. In his introduction to the funeral Mass, the Bishop of Palayankottai, Bishop Irudhayaraj observed that Fr. Lorenzo always felt positive about life and ministry. Even if someone said something to tease him, Fr. Lorenzo would not be offended but take it positively and went about doing his work unaffected.

In Papal seminary, his former students remember him for simplicity, his warm smile, readiness to render his help to those who approached him. He was a kind and sympathetic person. With pride and joy he taught his students how to celebrate sacred liturgy. Besides teaching sacred theology

in JDV, he was also a visiting professor to various seminaries in India. Besides, Fr. Lorenzo was involved in preaching retreat to religious sisters regularly.

He himself would be fully involved in arranging novenas and liturgical celebration during annual Vailankanni feast that were held in Papal seminary in his time. Comparing Fr. Lorenzo to the young generation of priests and seminarians who continued to celebrate the same feast at Papal Seminary chapel, which in his days was a special pride of the Papal seminary and the Tamil Academy, **Fr. Paul Parathazham**, a longtime companion of Fr. Lorenzo and a professor in JDV, observed: “During the days of novenas and feast, Fr. Lorenzo would be not just busy, but turn into be an another ‘being’, vibrant and full of life, radiating a sense of joy and fulfillment”. Fr. Lorenzo took pride in celebrating the liturgies in a proper manner and taught students how to celebrate devotedly.

Fr. Cedric Pieris, a priest of Tuticorin diocese who delivered eulogy during the funeral mass of Fr. Lorenzo observed that human qualities of Fr. Lorenzo reminded him of what St. Paul wrote in his letters to Colossians 3: 2. He also added that the quality of the life of priests and seminarians whom Fr. Lorenzo formed bears witness to his personality.

Fr. Lorenzo: A Priest

Fr. Lorenzo, according to his companions in his diocese of Tuticorin was a happy priest, deeply committed to his priestly ministry, and joyously served his parishioners with a great sense of duty and devotion. He served as priest in **Koothankuzhi** parish, and later on he served as Vicar General in the diocese of Tuticorin. He was also the Rector of Little Flower Minor Seminary in the diocese. His major part of his priestly ministry was spent, almost 28 years as

professor in Papal Seminary Pune. Towards the end of his life, he was the Rector of MMI Seminary, Chennai. Out of 42 years of his priestly life, most part was spent in teaching and forming young seminarians.

His Last Days

Fr. Lorenzo was suffering from high diabetics and he collapsed suddenly. In spite of medical care, his health was deteriorating. Finally on he breathed his last on June 26, 2017.

His funeral was arranged in the small chapel in the Bishop's house of Tuticorin, and well attended by priests from the diocese of Tuticorin and neighboring dioceses. Also present were his close relatives, his past students and seminarians from MMI seminary where he was Rector and professor till a few weeks before his death. We believe the Good Lord has welcomed you to his heavenly glory

Good Bye dear Fr. Fr. Lorenzo Fernando. (*Joe Francis*, Papal Seminary, Pune 411014)

*We are sad to announce the demise of **Rev Fr Noel Sheth S.J.** Former Rector, Papal Seminary, on July 7, 2017. Obituary will appear in the next issue of AJRS.*