



Fr Joseph Rathnaraj: 40-year priesthood journey not unlike Moses in the desert

In a Christian context, a 40 year journey would always refer to the great journey of the people of Israel, led by Moses through the Sinai Desert and the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea as described in the Book of Deuteronomy.

The journey I refer to now is my own journey, having completed 40 years since receiving the gift of priesthood in 1970. The good God has led me in His mysterious ways in the journey of my priesthood. I gratefully and joyfully remember the day of my ordination on 18 December 1970. It happened in the small coastal town of Tuticorin in South India. Having

been born on 19 September 1945 in a family of six children to devoted parents, I was a young man of 25 when I received the grace of priesthood.

Previously, upon completion of my high school studies, I spent a year in pre-university class and later, after two years of Latin studies, I spent seven years of study in philosophy and theology at St Peter's Pontifical College in Bangalore which was run by the Paris Foreign Missionaries (MEP). I graduated with a Bachelor of Theology in March 1971 as a newly ordained priest. From April 1971, I started my priestly ministry as an assistant in three parishes and later as parish priest in nine different parishes until 1985. Throughout the years, the loving hands of God led me through.

Later, obtaining a Diploma in Communications, I undertook a Communications Ministry at our Diocesan Pastoral Centre and later in the Diocesan Laity Centre for formation of laity. On completion of that ministry, I had the privilege of travelling to Rome, to other European countries and the Americas, opening up for me many other opportunities.

A dream of having a mission experience in a different milieu was fulfilled thanks to Archbishop Barry Hickey as the then-Bishop of Geraldton. After about five years in the Pilbara region, I returned to my diocese in India where I continued my Communications ministry. I had the privilege of administering the Diocese of Tuticorin for a year in 2004 in the absence of a Bishop in the Diocese. Later, in 2006, I arrived again in Australia to the Archdiocese of Perth where I spent six months in Moora, a beautiful wheatbelt town. In January 2007, I arrived in Kalgoorlie-Boulder parish to serve the Goldfields Catholic Community in all the various towns of the Goldfields. In 2012 January I left Kalgoorlie on transfer.

After completing 5 years of Parish ministry in the Goldfields of Kalgoorlie-Boulder I again returned to the Parish of Moora and enjoyed the Faith of the Farmers around for 2 years up to January 2014. Later in February 2014 I was moved to Embleton Holy Trinity Parish in the City and was there till January 2019. Meanwhile, from September 2018 to December 2018, with the generous support of the Diocese I had the privilege of living and studying in the Holy City of Jerusalem on Sabbatical, which almost prepared me for a change and challenging ministry in the Parish of St. Francis of Assisi Maida Vale in the foothill area of Perth Hills, where I arrived in mid-January 2019. And so I am here for the Parishioners of this great parish where I hope, I am guided by the Spirit to serve the people of the area. It is great to live among and minister to the various communities of faithful and I am very grateful to the people for their hearty welcome, generous support of prayer and cooperation.

Looking forward to continue what God has started in me..... Bless the Lord my soul.

Fr Joseph Rathnaraj