

Interview with the New Graduate in Christology for the Vice-Province of India

ROME - *Father Prem KUMAR, an Indian, after finishing his specialization in Christology and Trinity at the Pontificia Università Gregoriana (PUG) in Rome, is preparing to return to his Entity of origin. We interviewed him about his studies and his future mission.*

What did this training consist of?

This was a two-year licentiate course in Dogmatic Theology with a specialization in Christology and Trinity. Indeed, it was a blessing to study my licentiate here in PUG as it is well known for Dogmatic Theology in particular. In this two-year programme, I had to study 26 subjects which consists of three seminars, one research work and the rest of the subjects were in the field of Christology, Trinity, Anthropology, Soteriology, Sacraments, Eschatology and Pneumatology. Among these, I had taken Christology and Trinity as my specialized subjects. I had regular lectures at the university and had a lot of home work to read such as the materials that are provided or the reference that were made during the lessons. The seminars were the most interesting of all because of the special attention that was given to each student and also consisted of few students in a group. A lot of time was also given to us for discussion to share our views on the subject, sometimes based on the reading. We had exams at the end of the semester, both oral and written. At the end of this two-year course, there was a comprehensive exam and one research paper through which the student is declared that he has completed the course. Taking up Christology, the issues that were discussed were very relevant for the church today because of the diversity of the nature of the church. The subject takes one into a deeper relationship with Christ and gives an opportunity to understand the Historical Jesus and Christ of faith.



What aspects have you worked on particularly?

During this two-year course, my main attention was towards reading a lot of books on the subjects that were taught in the university especially on Wisdom Christology. Some of the courses drew my attention like the dogmas, the councils, heresies and main theological views of the theologians from the past to present. The theology of the sport was one of the subjects which was very interesting and I thought that it could help the young people to understand the value of theology. I thought that it would be useful for the formation of the young people in the seminaries as the young people are more interested in the sports. In these two years, I worked on my knowledge about the stand of the church on the issues which are leading the people away from the faith and especially those who are losing faith in the Catholic Church. Here, I understood clearly about the diversity of the churches and their stands on the Christian faith because in India, we have a situation which is different from here. My thesis on "The Wisdom Christology on Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort" gave me an opportunity to look at the writings of Montfort, the Love of Eternal Wisdom in the Christological perspective. During these days, I had the opportunity to read all the Montfort writings, biographies and works on the spirituality of Father de Montfort. It was a blessing for me as I had no chance to read all of these materials earlier. It deepened my spiritual life and drew me closer to understand Montfort better. Also, I read the other theologians who

spoke about Wisdom Christology and drawing from their understanding of Wisdom Christology, I tried to interpret the writing of Montfort, the Love of Eternal Wisdom. It was wonderful to read my founder's writings who spoke about the Wisdom before many other theologians.

How do you evaluate these two years spent in Rome?

There is a hymn which goes: *coming home coming home never more to roam* and this became a reality for me, reaching back to Rome after a gap of eight years from 2012-2019, because I had the opportunity to study in Rome during Father Santino BREMBILLA's time on formation. However, that did not happen due to some reasons and when I returned, I felt happy to have international exposure, living with other confreres and witnessing their faith differently. The first few months of the class at the university were unforgettable because I came across with many nationalities of students and whose thoughts were very different from mine. The discussions, the exchange of ideas, the cultural background and the sharing itself was a learning experience.

My community itself was a great example of witnessing the internationality where I experienced different mindsets of people marching towards the same goal of the founder. I had very good atmosphere of sharing, caring and acceptance from the other members of the community. I learnt to do my work perfectly and respect the others and their works. I experienced unity in diversity and found to be exemplary with space for learning and freedom. There was a positive vibration in the community which made me feel at ease with the study and the situation. I had difficulty with the communication but it was not an issue with the community. Everyone understood the difficulty and encouraged me to build confidence in myself and move forward. The experience had been very rich and I carry with me those experiences to the places I go.

What specific contribution will you be able to make in your Entity from these studies?

The main purpose of my study is to become specialized for the work at the Marian Center or in the Formation which has become a big challenge for the entity right now. The study has enriched me to inspire the young people in the formation because of the experience that I have in the mission especially with the Jesuits in mission. I had the opportunity to live with the Jesuits and here, I have studied in the Jesuits institution which has opened up my thinking towards the formation of the young for the mission. Being a Montfort missionary, I experienced practically the Montfortian religious life. Therefore, I strongly feel that we, as entity, need the formators who train the young for the mission. Secondly, I would like to teach in the institution for contributing towards self-sufficiency in the entity.

What will your next destination be?

This is a hard question to answer specifically at this moment because of the change of administration in the entity but I will be placed either in the formation or at the Marian Center in India. I hope to give my best for the growth of the province.

In conclusion, I would like to thank my congregation, my Superior General and the Councilors for giving me an opportunity to study and the Provincial superior of India and his council and all the members of the Generalate community here in Rome for their accompaniment in this journey. I am blessed with the presence of the other student priests who accompanied me in these two years. Each one of them is a gift to the congregation. May Jesus bless us all, may Mary journey along with us and may Montfort inspire us more. Thank you to one and all.