



Fr. Raja Rao Thelagathoti to be consecrated Bishop on 2nd February 2016

VIJAYAWADA, India – In this Year of Mercy, the Montfortian family rejoiced when Pope Francis appointed Most Rev. Thelagathoti Joseph Raja Rao, S.M.M. to become the shepherd of the flock in Vijayawada.

Msgr. Thelagathoti Joseph Raja Rao was born on 8th March 1952 at Pedda Avutapalli to late Sri Prabhudas and late Smt. Kamamma, both teachers and devout Catholics. His father was a catechist and was deeply involved in bringing the Gospel through street plays.

Msgr. Thelagathoti is the first born of the 7 children: 2 boys-3 girls-2 boys. He had his collegiate education with the Jesuits where he did his B.A. at Andhra Loyola College, Vijayawada, and then proceeded to join the seminary of his diocese, St. Ambrose Minor Seminary at Nuzvid.

Pulled by the conviction that Jesus was calling him to join a congregation he entered the Montfort Missionaries in 1975 after his philosophy at St. Peter's Pontifical Seminary, Bengaluru and began his Montfortian journey. He did his theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome.

He made his first profession in 1976, Solemn Profession on 31st Jan, 1980 and was ordained a Priest on 7th June 1980.

For years, he had involved in the formation process as a formator, Vocation Promotor, Professor of theology and Scripture and in leadership as Major Superior. He had been very active in preaching, and giving retreats.

He holds a Licentiate in Biblical Theology from Dharmaram Vidyakshetram, Bengaluru and a Doctorate in Spiritual Theology from Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome on Montfort's Mystical Experience. His theses was published by the University and was inserted in the series of Gregorian Thesis and was also translated into Italian and French and some parts into Thai.

He served as Rector of the SMM Minor Seminary, Mysuru (1980-1984) and of Theologate, Montfortano Maria Bhavan, Bengaluru (1984-1990). He was Director of the new foundation of Hospitaler of Mercy, Rome (1997-2004) and was Director of Anugraha Institute for Poor Children (2004-2008) and of Montfort Marian Centre, Bengaluru (2006-2011). He also served as the Vice-President of the National CRI (1993-1997) and Attorney General & Postulator of the Congregation of PP. Montfort in Rome (2011-2015). Apart from serving as Provincial Councillor (1984-1990 and 2008-2011), he headed the Montfort Fathers in India as Provincial Superior (1990-1997) and was serving again as Provincial when he was elected as the Bishop of Vijayawada.

In this Year of Mercy Msgr. Thelagathoti has been called to journey together with the people of God in the diocese of Vijayawada as Bishop. It is indeed both a grace and a challenge. By choosing 'Totus Tuus' as his motto, he entrusts his ministry and his diocese to the protection and guidance of the Blessed Mother.

His Episcopal Ordination and Solemn Installation as the sixth Bishop of Vijayawada will be on 2nd February, at 4p.m., at Gunadala, Vijayawada.

The SMM has not lost a Montfortian but the Diocese of Vijayawada has received a gift during this year of Mercy. His parents are no more but are rejoicing in heaven and all of us are also rejoicing in this great favour God has shown to him and to his diocese.

Let us pray that Msgr. Thelagathoti may humbly serve the people and be a joyful witness among the people.