



**Fr. Joseph S Dorairaj, S.J.
(1937-2019. In Zambia 1985 – 2011)**

14 July 2019

Joseph Sanjeevi Dorairaj was born of Michael Sanjeevi and Gregory Pushane at Palayankottai, Tamil Nadu in the south of India, on 17 March 1937. He attended St Xavier's High School and College, in Palayankottai. He did his novitiate at Dindigul (1955-1957) and followed the normal course of studies for in the Madurai Province with juniorate and philosophate at Thembaganor (1958-1960). Before he went for theology, he took a teacher's degree (BEd), so confirming the main apostolate he would serve in. Towards the end of his theology in Poona (1965-1969) he was ordained at Palayankottai in 1968 and then spent three years as head of department in St Mary's, Darotgul.

His missionary desire soon found an outlet, for he was sent to Mauritius, an island well off the coast of south east India. Initially he looked after a youth centre (1973 – 1976) while learning French. He then spent eight years as parish priest in St Clare's Church in Goodlands.

He then joined a small band of Madurai scholastics going to Canisius Secondary School in Chikuni, Zambia, for their regency. He was part of a team that included Maria Joseph and later Sax, Patrick and Dhana. He settled down to his life's commitment in the education of youth.

For many years he taught English at Canisius (1985-1994) while being chaplain to the Catholic community at the nearby Seventh Day Adventist school in Rusangu. He then spent seven years as teacher and chaplain in St Edmund's with the Christian Brothers in Mazabuka. Finally he came back to Chikuni, teaching in the Girls' Secondary School and doing chaplaincy work in the adjacent hospital.

As Fr Dhana writes: "His heart always beat for the pupils of Canisius and Chikuni Girls. As a teacher of English, he would be there to give them more exercises in writing, structure, or comprehension, and he would be spending all his time marking their books and giving them comments personally. Fr Dorairaj had a never say 'No' to any request from a pupil. He was always available for them. In addition to this, if he found any pupils finding it difficult to pay the school fee, he would find a way to get some resources to support the pupils. ...He was not an expert in the Tonga language. But he had a strong desire to be with the suffering people, listening to the people and talking to them with his broken Tonga, at the hospital as the chaplain at Chikuni Mission Hospital."

Fr Dhana recounts meeting a headmaster whose handwriting was remarkable. He had studied at Canisius and Fr Dorairaj taught him how to perfect his writing for which he was immensely grateful. Fr Dorairaj is gone but he lives in the hearts of many teachers. He was an example of availability and when approached for any work or any request, you could be sure there would be a positive response.

In 2011 he requested to return to his home province where he continued using his skills in teaching. Initially he taught in the pre-novitiate in Vilanjodi (2011-2013) and then in Tindivanam as chaplain at the Franciscan Sister's novitiate (2013-2016) and finally as chaplain in the boys' hostel at Loyola Technical Institute.

The Madurai Provincial in welcoming Fr Dorairaj back wrote: "I extend a warm welcome to you as you return to your Mother Province for good after having spent most of your priestly life (nearly 36 years as a missionary). You have served in Mauritius as a pastor catering to the needs of the Francophone parish communities for more than 12 years and as a school teacher in Zambia for more than 20 years. As a person you are warm, friendly, approachable and cheerful. You exhibited your creativity, artistic sense and commitment in all that you did in the missions."