

Message of Thanks

Brother Theiva Pillai
Saturday 23rd August 2014

A pleasant afternoon to you all!

I stand before this afternoon with great joy and gratitude in my heart. Thanking the Almighty God and the Presentation family for journeying with me to this wonderful day in my life! I am saying “gratitude is the memory of the heart”.

I come from a village called Valaipadu, located in the north of Sri Lanka. In my village almost all the people are Catholic Christians. This means I come from a well rooted, Catholic family background – it’s all I knew as a child.

As a child, at about the age 8 or 9, I said to God, “I give all my life to you”. Then after 6 years, one day, I prayed and asked God to show me the way I should follow because I couldn’t decide where God was leading me. I waited for the Lord’s Call for 28 years. At age 28, one day, at midnight in 2009 the good Lord called me through a religious person. The religious person’s name is Sr. Lumay – a Franciscan Missionary of Mary (FMM), who is present with us today. She called me that night like the angel Gabriel!

In response, I answered ‘yes’ with no hesitation! To this day I am unsure why I said ‘Yes’ without asking any questions. Here I am today a Presentation Brother – a Sri Lankan following in the footsteps of Blessed Edmund Rice. I saw my call to be similar to the Virgin Mary’s call - saying ‘yes’ to the Lord without hesitation.

Before then I had never heard of the Presentation Brothers congregation. The next day I shared with my family about the invitation to the Presentation Brothers, and my family told me “it is first time we heard about this group of men, but it seems that God is calling you to something new”. They said with no hesitation, “May the Lord bless you always and our support and prayer are with you at all times.” All my relatives - which is the whole village - have supported me too. I believe that their powerful words, prayers, and encouragement have helped me in my vocation. God has formed me through my family.

I want to thank God for His many blessings, graces, compassion and protection on my whole journey of life.

I want to thank my parents, relatives, and friends, especially Nathan-Dad and Amma, and my family relations who have travelled all the way from Canada to be here; for their prayers, encouragement, advice and support during all my life and during my years of novitiate formation.

I would like to thank our congregation Leader, Br. Martin Kenneally, for his support, prayers and empowerment which helped me greatly in the development of my life. I always felt welcomed in the Presentation Brothers by you regardless of how strange I look or talk – you affirm my vocation. Thank you so much.

I especially want to thank my formators, Br. Barry and Br. Richard, for your belief and trust in me for the past three years. You have given me support, and encouragement, during my formation. You are great Presentation Brothers!

Since that first call from Sr. Lumay, Br. Barry has been a true companion and brother to me. He introduced me to the Congregation and has walked the road with me, from Sri Lanka to Ireland. When I came to Ireland, my English was weak. At that time Br. Barry gave me a lot of time and support and encouragement. He is a man of great patience and gentleness. He would say “God doesn’t call only English speakers”. He is a good director and also a good friend. He is always available for advice and direction.

Br. Richard encouraged me every day during my formation time. He said “Theiva, look at the bigger picture and have a spring in your step and fire in the belly”. These words have helped me to think positively and have a positive mind-set. His love for the earth and environment has helped me to appreciate our connectedness to all of creation. So many thanks for your example and brotherhood.

Many thanks also to the Brothers in the Killarney community, Br. Terence and Br. Claver, who showed me support and welcome during my formation. Thank you for your kindness and prayers. I say thanks to my two colleagues from Sri Lanka, Douglas and Colins for responding to God’s call to be Brothers and for your friendship. I wish you well in your on-going formation.

Thanks to all the brothers here in Ireland I am happy to be part of this noble community of brothers and the Presentation Family. I am proud to be part of our Brotherhood.

I would like to say thanks to the African brothers who came to Killarney over the years for their formation. They offered me a lot of experience and learning and it was a new and enriching experience to be part of an international community.

I say thank you to my spiritual director, Sr. Fidelma, who helped me to develop my spiritual life. I want to say thanks to my English teacher, Eugene O' Shea, who has been very supportive and kind to me. He trusted in my ability to improve my English. I would like to thank the management and staff of Kerry Parents and Friends Association, who gave me an opportunity to develop and experience my ministry during my formation.

A big thank you to the FMM Sisters community in Dublin: Sr. Mary, Sr. Lumay, Sr. Helen, for all your prayerful support and hospitality. Your community is always a welcome stop when we visit Dublin! Thank you for collaborating with us in God's work.

I say a big "Thank You" to Ms. Bridget and Ms. Liza for taking good care of me and providing good food for us in Killarney! Thanks also for your friendly support. I want to say thanks to the people of Killarney parish who have travelled all the way from the Kingdom of Kerry to be here with me.

Finally, to all of you present here who have helped in any way to make this day possible and so wonderful. I say thank you again and may God bless you all.

Have a safe journey home.