

Interview with Fr. Lourdu Raju Madanu

I found much joy with conversing with Fr. Lourdu recently. We had a chance encounter the other day when I was at St. Therese of Lisieux Parish in Phillips. We were able to set-up a time for an interview to enable the women in the Diocese of Superior to learn more about Fr. Lourdu.

Fr. Lourdu started the interview out by telling me some interesting information. I was intrigued by his first couple of comments. He told me he had 2 birthdates and then he told me how he acquired his name. Fr. Lourdu was born in India – Kethepally, State of Telangana on Feb. 12th. When his father enrolled him in school, his father gave the school officials the wrong date of May 18th as the date of his birth. According to Fr. almost all Indian priests have two birthdays. So, Fr. Lourdu has 2 birthdates to celebrate one on Feb. 12th and the other on May 18th!

February is a month for celebrations for Fr. Lourdu. It all started with his birth! Fr. Lourdu was born Feb. 12th, the day after the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes on Feb. 11th. At that time in India, it was customary for the priest to name the child being baptized. The priest selected the name Lourdu in honor of Our Lady of Lourdes Feast Day which was so close to his birth. The priest announced the arrival of Lourdu Raju Madanu to his parents and family and welcomed him as a child of God. Then years later, Fr. Lourdu was ordained on Feb. 14th!

Fr. Lourdu's parents are both deceased. He lost his father when he was enrolled in his school studies. He lost his mother due to ill health shortly after his Ordination to the priesthood. He is further survived by 4 brothers; 2 that are older and 2 younger brothers that are twins. He does have one older sister.

Fr. Lourdu took on his father's responsibility of searching out suitable marriage partners for his brothers. In India arranged marriages are customary. Once a partner has been selected, members of both families become acquainted with each other's families and the couple gets married. It was a successful match as both couples are still married. According to Fr. Lourdu, divorces are not allowed. If there is a problem, both parties and their families are brought together along with the priest and the issues are resolved.

Fr. Lourdu has a special devotion to pray the Rosary which also impacted his journey of becoming a priest. Fr. Lourdu received the calling from God for the priesthood in the 4th grade. It happened so subtly! It was customary beginning the 1st day of May and every day during the month, that the priest and nuns would visit each house to pray the Rosary. The statue of our Blessed Mother was also taken from house to house. An older nun, 83 years old and 6-7 other nuns were gathered to pray at his parent's home. When they were finished praying, Fr. Lourdu overheard the older nun say, this young boy will become a priest. He did not tell anyone of this, not even his parents. Some time passed and his father wanted to offer a child, his oldest brother, in the 10th grade, to the local parish priest and asked that his son be enrolled in the seminary. His oldest brother indicated that was not his calling. So, the father and the son returned home. When his next older brother who was entering the 10th grade, his father again went to the local priest and asked that he would like this son enrolled in the seminary. The second brother also denied the opportunity. Lourdu, now in the 7th grade, went to his father and told him, take me to the priest. So once again, they go to the priest, this time his father and Lourdu were told to return, if Lourdu still felt the calling when he was entering the 10th grade. So, when Lourdu became of age, he was able to enter the seminary!

Fr. while completing his studies in the seminary resided in different dioceses in India. After he was ordained, he was assigned as an Assistant Parish Priest at St. Joseph's Parish. He also had experience as a Principal Correspondent and Rector of a high school for 2-years.

Fr. Lourdu's first assignment in the United States was placement in Wisconsin in the clustered parishes of Gilman, Sheldon, Lublin, and Jump River. He enjoyed his 3-year term and tells of many great times spent with the families in those areas. A big part of his ministry is spending time visiting the families in their homes. Fr. encourages social events: garage sales, church bazaars, and Council of Catholic Women's activities as this is the best way to meet the people in the parish. His involvement with a clustered parish setting doesn't allow him time to visit with parishioners after Mass.

When Fr. Lourdu was in Gilman, he recalled how excited he was to participate in Christmas caroling and readily joined a group of parishioners that went from house to house singing carols, blessing the houses, and giving out candy. They even came to Medford to sing. What was most memorable beside the fun he had was the temperature that evening. It was 35 degrees below zero! He did not expect to experience such cold. He still enjoys seeing snow in the winter, but not extreme winter chills! As Fr. remarks, in winter, you enjoy what you get! There is beauty in each season.

Fr. does enjoy the summer and fall. He enjoys gardening and spending time working in his garden is relaxing for him. His garden is always plentiful, and he shares the tomatoes, eggplant and squash with fellow priests and parishioners. He grows Indian squash which is difficult to find in grocery stores in our area. Indian squash is one of his main ingredients he uses in his menus. He can often be found in the kitchen cooking dinner for his fellow priests or preparing a meal, for a group of 10 – 15 people as part of a fund raiser. He has a special dish he prepares, call "Chicken 65"! He uses the maximum of 65 ingredients when he prepares that dish! Besides cooking, Fr. also enjoys fishing, even ice fishing in the winter, golfing, bicycling, or walking. He keeps himself busy.

It is evident during this interview, Fr. Lourdu is a people person. His voice is happy, and one can hear his laugh and excitement when talking. Fr. Lourdu states, "I most enjoy being a priest and sharing the love of Our Lord with the people". The Diocese of Superior is blessed to have him amongst the priests in the diocese.

Thank you Fr. Lourdu for sharing your story. I hope you all have the chance to meet Fr. Lourdu, not only does he have an awesome story to tell but he has a magical smile too!

Jane Schiszik, SDCCW President