

Obituary of Fr. Seraphim John Lal, S.J.

“I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live.”- John 11:25

With faith in the Risen Lord and deep gratitude to Almighty God, we remember the life and mission of Fr. Seraphim John Lal, S.J., a devoted Jesuit priest, compassionate pastor, joyful companion, and humble servant of God's people. His life was a beautiful witness of faith, simplicity, dedication, and loving service. Through his prayerful life, gentle spirit, and tireless ministry, he touched countless hearts and inspired many in their journey of faith.



Fr. Seraphim John Lal was born on 29 June 1957 in Bettiah to Mr. John Anthony and Mrs. Lily Gracy. He grew up in a deeply faith-filled Catholic family together with his five brothers and four sisters. The atmosphere of prayer, discipline, simplicity, and mutual care within the family deeply shaped his personality and nurtured in him the desire to dedicate his life to God. His parents planted in him the seeds of faith, compassion, and service.

He received his early education at St. Stanislaus School, Bettiah, and later continued his studies at Khrist Raja High School, Bettiah. After completing his schooling, he pursued higher studies at M.J.K. College, Bettiah. During these formative years, the gentle voice of God continued to grow stronger in his heart. With generosity and courage, he responded to this divine call and chose the path of religious life and priesthood.

He joined the Society of Jesus and entered the novitiate at XTTI in 1978. After completing his novitiate formation, he took his first vows in 1980. He continued his Jesuit and theological formation with sincerity, discipline, and perseverance, growing steadily in his love for Christ and the mission of the Church. On 27 September 1992, he was ordained a priest, joyfully offering his life for the service of God and His people. Later, on 22 April 1999, he pronounced his final vows in the Society of Jesus, sealing his lifelong commitment to the Jesuit vocation.

During his years of formation and studies in Ranchi, Fr. Seraphim developed a deep love and appreciation for the Church of Chotanagpur and its people. He easily related to people from different castes, cultures and social backgrounds. His simplicity, openness, and jovial personality made everyone feel welcomed and comfortable in his presence. He carried a cheerful spirit and a warm smile that brought joy to communities and families alike.

Those who knew him closely remember not only his prayerful and disciplined life but also his joyful nature. He loved old songs and would often sing with delight: *“Zindagi ek safar haisuhana...”* *“jindagi ka safar ek aisasafar koi samjhanahi koi janani...”*

Through such simple moments, he spread happiness and reminded people to live life with faith and gratitude. He would often encourage others with simple but meaningful words like, “Be happy and make others happy,” and frequently reminded people, “God is good all the time.” These words reflected the joyful faith with which he lived his life.

Fr. Seraphim served the Church in many capacities with quiet dedication and a generous heart. He worked as a vocation promoter, inspiring and guiding many young men toward religious life and priesthood. He firmly believed that vocations should not only be promoted but also lovingly accompanied and nurtured. These words reflected his deep concern for the growth and perseverance of young Jesuits and seminarians. As Pre-Novitiate Director and PCF, he patiently guided many candidates in their formation journey with fatherly care, understanding, and compassion.

He also served faithfully as Parish Priest of Sasaram, Rector of St. Michael's School, professor of theology in local language, writer, translator, and social worker. Yet titles never defined him. What truly defined him was his humanity, humility, and closeness to people. He could easily sit with the poor, laugh with children, guide the youth, comfort the suffering, and listen patiently to anyone in need. People felt at home with him because he loved without judging and served without expecting anything in return.

Fr. Seraphim had a deep devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. On First Fridays, he often sang: "*Yesu ka preamhaijiwan ka aadhar...*" For him, this was not merely a hymn but the very centre of his life. His love for Jesus could be seen not only in his prayers but also in his compassion, kindness, and tireless service to others.

Even during sickness and physical suffering, Fr. Seraphim remained spiritually strong, cheerful, and hopeful. He faced illness with patience, courage, and complete trust in God. Until his final days, he continued serving quietly visiting the sick at Holy Family Hospital, Patna, guiding nurses and staff spiritually, helping at Kurji Parish, serving for some time in Sasaram, and even assisting in the kitchen at Xavier Bhawan.

Truly, the words of St. Paul beautifully summarize his life and mission: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." (2 Timothy 4:7). Today, as we bid farewell to our beloved Fr. Seraphim, we remember a life beautifully lived for God and for others. His life reminds us that true greatness lies not in power or recognition, but in humble service, faithful prayer, gentle words, and a joyful heart.

We thank Almighty God for the precious gift of Fr. Seraphim John Lal, S.J. We are especially grateful to his family for their sacrifices, prayers, support, and encouragement throughout his journey as a Jesuit priest. May the Good Shepherd, whom he served faithfully throughout his life, now welcome him into eternal peace and joy. May the angels lead him into paradise, and may his noble soul rest forever in the loving embrace of the Lord.

Fr. Augustine Kisku, SJ