

BR. BERNARD SINGH, S.J. (89/63)

Died at Xavier Bhawan, Patna, on 26 October 2021

Born : 28.06.1932 Entered SJ : 21.12.1957
Baptized : 17.03.1950 Final Vows : 02.02.1970



Studies & Formation:

Secondary Education : Khrist Raja High School, Bettiah, Bihar; 1950

Nursing: Holy Family Hospital, Patna; 1950-53

Novitiate : Vinayalaya, Mumbai; 1957-59

Juniorate : Vinayalaya, Mumbai; 1959-60

Regency & Ministry: XTTI, Patna; 1961-67

Tertianship: Shembaganur, Tamil Nadu; 1968

Final Vows : KR, Bettiah, Bihar; 02.02.1970

Apostolic Assignments as a Priest:

Sub-Minister : Catholic High School, Ara; 1968

Minister : KR High School, Bettiah; 1969-71

Hostel Superintendent & Teacher:

KR High School, Bettiah; 1971-80

Minister : St. Michael's, Patna; 1980-83

Director : Sewa Kendra, Patna; 1983-2002

Province Consultor : 1989-95

Treasurer: KRHS, Bettiah; 2003-05

(Suffered first stroke on 29 Sept. 2004)

Sub-minister: St. Michael's, Patna; 2005-12

Praying for the SJ & Church: X T T I; 2012-17

: Xavier Bhawan; 2017-2021

Br. Bernard Singh, SJ was an 'exceptional Jesuit' in many ways: though hailing from a family of Bihar that considers religious and caste identity as of supreme value, Baijnath Singh defied his family and caste-community and took baptism at the age of eighteen and became Bernard Singh; though he was the eldest of the nine siblings and so felt a strong sense of responsibility towards the family, he answered the call of Jesus and joined the Society of Jesus to offer his life as a Jesuit Brother; he was an accomplished teacher and an efficient hostel superintendent for ten years, but became a house-hold name among poor and marginalized communities of Bihar during his nearly two decades of tenure as Director of Sewa Kendra, Patna, the Social Service centre of Patna Diocese; he is the only Brother of the Province so far, who has served as Province Consultor; he gave an eloquent witness of joyful religious life from the wheelchair to which he was confined to for almost a decade.

While studying as a student and residing in the hostel at Khrist Raja High School, Bettiah, Br. Bernard experienced Jesus in the Jesuit Fathers and Brothers there; he grew in the love of Jesus and decided to follow Him closely. He was ostracized by the family and faced threats to his life; but, he dealt with everything with faith in Jesus and a courage born of that faith. Personal prayer and daily Eucharist nourished his intimacy with Jesus. Br. Bernard became an ardent devotee of Mother Mary and recited rosary regularly. His love for the Church and loyalty to the Society grew continually.

These spiritual sources bore the fruit the apostolic zeal and personal life witness of Br. Bernard. His former students and many of their family members across religions were in constant touch with him for guidance. Relief work in times of floods which is an annual feature in Bihar, feeding poor hostel children, Mother and Child Health (MCH) programme and several schemes to promote literacy, vocational training, safe drinking water for poor and many other welfare projects were initiated and administered by Br. Bernard for nearly two decades, enhancing the lives of millions of marginalized and vulnerable sections of people of Bihar.

The funeral was a fitting tribute to the 'exceptional Jesuit': Most Rev. Sebastian Kallupura, Archbishop of Patna, the main celebrant, was Br. Bernard's successor as Director of Sewa Kendra, Patna; and the principal concelebrant was Most Rev. Cajetan Francis, Bishop of Muzaffarpur, whose vocation to priesthood was promoted and nurtured by Br. Bernard. About 40 Jesuit and Diocesan priests were concelebrants at the altar. Along with the two younger brothers of Br. Bernard - Mr. Bisnath Singh and Mr. Dudhnath Singh – more than 20 of his family members including many women, all Hindus, participated in the funeral liturgy and the funeral service. While Fr. Susai Raj, SJ, Socius to and representative of the Provincial, gave the introduction, Fr. Abraham Puthumana, SJ, former Provincial, gave the funeral oration and Fr. Seraphim John, SJ, whose Jesuit vocation Br. Bernard had promoted and nurtured, conducted the burial ceremony.

Thank you Br. Bernard, for your heroic and exemplary Jesuit life. Intercede for us, your companions on earth.

[All the members of Patna Province are to offer one Mass intention for Br. Bernard and members of XB, two Masses.]