

## FR. THODORE BRANDS BOWLING, S.J. (97/80)

Died in Sahyadri Hospital, Pune, on 22 November 2021

Born : 04.05.1924                      Ordained : 24.03.1955  
Entered the SJ : 01.09.1941              Final Vows : 02.02.1979



### Formation, Studies & Apostolic Assignments as a Priest:

Secondary Education : St. Xavier's, Louisville, KY, USA; 1941

Post-Graduate studies : M. Sc Chem, Detroit, USA; 1951 [Came to India in 1951]

Novitiate: Milford, OH; 1941-43              Theology: DNC Pune; 1952-56

Juniorate: Milford, OH; 1943-45              Ordination: Pune; 22.03.1955

Final Vows: KRHS, Bettiah;

Philosophy: West Baden; 1945-48              Tertianship: Shembaganur; 1956-57

02.02.1979

Staff: Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth (JDV), Pune; 1957-2003

Director: Institute of Home Studies (IHS), Pune; 1959-2013

Prof. Emeritus: JDV, Pune; 2003-2021

Pune Diocesan Family Welfare Centre; 1973-2003

Fr. Theodore B. Bowling, SJ, affectionately called 'Fr. Ted', lived his missionary vocation in a special way: upon arrival in India in 1951, he spent a few months learning Hindi, after which he came to De Nobili College (DNC) Pune for his theological studies. From 1952 to 2021, for seven decades, he stayed in DNC doing three ministries officially after his priestly ordination and an additional one 'unofficially': 1. Teaching at DNC/JDV, Pune (1957-2003); 2. Managing the Institute for Home Study (IHS), Correspondence Course, Pune (1959-2013); and, 3. Administering the Family Welfare Centre of Pune Diocese (1973-2003). The 'unofficial' ministry was turning the hilly terrain of DNC/JDV into a green cover of this part of the city.

In carrying out these ministries, i) prayer ii) discipline iii) zeal and iv) a people-centered approach were the hallmarks of Fr. Ted. Life in Jesus nourished through prayer and Eucharist, guided and sustained by discipline, became an inexhaustible fountain of zeal in him for serving people and caring for trees and plants. Every day he spent time in personal prayer and participated in the celebration of the Eucharist. He made sure that he attended all the community activities – liturgical celebrations, meals, meetings, recreations community games and cultural programmes. Whenever he came for province gatherings, he was prompt to get back to his room exactly at 9.00 pm.

Fr. Ted was a man for others: he loved the poor and was ready to do anything for them. He would long for the return of the Scholastics after the summer, update himself by reading the names from the Province newsletters and then remember most of the community members by name, year after year. When they approached him, he was quick to strike a conversation. He enjoyed the company of community members at the table and during recreations. He used to keep himself updated about all the people and activities of Patna province. He also kept himself in contact with his people in the USA through letters and emails.

During his five decades of teaching career in DNC/JDV, he taught 'Basic Science' to those who didn't have much exposure to science and 'Scientific Questions Connected with Philosophy' for all Philosophy students as preparation for the course on Cosmology; his teaching was marked by simplicity, clarity, joy of learning and perseverance. In 1959, when he began helping Fr. Peter Sontag, SJ, in running the Institute of Home Study, there were only six Catholic Enquiry Centres in India; but through his efforts, by 2000 there were fifty centres, most of them offering study materials in regional languages. This was a simple and non-controversial method of making Jesus and the Church known to non-Christians. In 1973 he volunteered to the Bishop of Poona to start a Family Welfare Centre, which in association with others, gave birth to the 'Natural Family Planning Association of India' and Fr. Ted became one of its founding members. He was a true 'missionary' in all these.

He spent his evenings planting and caring for plants and trees. The greenery of DNC/JDV campus, filled with flower and fruit bearing plants and trees, will ever remain a living testimony of his passion for nature and love for the environment. This is indeed one of the powerful expressions of his spirituality and missionary zeal.

Well into his 90s, Fr. Ted had stopped renewing his visa. A young police officer from Ramwadi Police Station came and asked him, "Why do you want to stay in India in spite of not having renewed your visa?" "Because I want to be buried in the Indian soil", pat came the reply from Fr. Ted. The officer left without uttering a word. 'To be buried in the Indian soil' was the deepest desire of Fr. Ted, the missionary; and, his desire was fulfilled on 23 November 2021 when his mortal remains were interred in DNC/JDV cemetery.

Thank you Fr. Ted for your exemplary missionary life. Intercede for us, your younger brothers on earth.

*[All the members of Patna Province are to offer one Mass intention for Fr. Theodore B. Bowling, SJ]*