

## Obituary of Fr. Thomas Karthanam, S.J (86/65)

Born: 07.01.1939 Entered: 01.07.1959  
Ordained: 29.04.1975 Final Vows: 15.08.1985  
Died in Xavier Bhavan, Patna, India on 27.01.2025



### **Studies and Formation:**

Secondary Education: Govt. High School, Cherthala 1957  
Higher Education: St. Thomas College Palai 1958-59  
Graduation: St. Xavier's College, Ranchi 1963-66  
Post Graduate Study: Science College, Patna, 1968-71  
M. Ed: Loyola University, Chicago, 1978-80

Tertiaship: St. Stanslaus  
College, Sitagarha – 1980-81  
Final Vows: Loyola School, Jamshedpur – 15.8.1985

### **Formation in Society of Jesus:**

Novitiate: Sacred Heart Novitiate, Sitagarha – 1959-60  
X.T.T.I, Patna – 1960-61  
Juniorate: X.T.T.I, Patna – 1961-63  
Philosophy: Sacred heart College, Shembaganur 1966-68  
Regency: Catholic High School, Ara – 1968  
Loyola Middle School, Chuharhi – 1971  
K. R. School, Bettiah – 1972  
Theology: Vidya Jyoti, Delhi – 1972-76  
Ordination: St. Thomas Church, Cherthala – 29.4.1975

### **Apostolic Assignment in the Society**

Asst. Head master, K. R School, Bettiah 1972  
Vice Principal, St. Xavier's School, Delhi 1976-78  
Principal, St. Michael's School Patna, 1981-84  
Professor, Loyola College of Edu., Jamshedpur, 1984-89  
Principal, St. Xavier's College of Edn., Patna, 1989-2008  
Chairman, College Core Committee, Patna Prov. 2009-11  
Acting Principal, St. Xavier's College, Patna, 2009  
Superior, XISR Community, Patna, 2010-2011  
Coordinator, For Higher Education, 2009-2011  
Consultant, Higher Education, Patna, 2012  
Retired to Xavier Bhavan, 2022

Since all the bishops were away in Bhubaneshwar for CCBI meeting, Fr. Vimal Kishore, SJ, Provincial of Patna, was the main celebrant. Concelebrants at the main altar were Fr. James George, VG of Patna Archdiocese, Frs. Francis and Jimmy, nephews of Fr. Thomas Karthanam and Fr. Joseph Vellingatt, the homilist. Fr. Vimal Kishore welcomed the people for the funeral mass for Fr. Thomas Karthanam and gave a short introduction of Fr. Karthanam.

When Fr. Thomas Karthanam passed away at 8.00 am on 27 January 2025, the news came as a shock to most of us. He spent a few days in Kuri Holy Family Hospital for his prostate surgery. After his discharge from the hospital, Fr. Tom was confined to his room in Xavier Bhavan. Every morning Fr. Antony Pendanath used to give him Holy Communion. On the last two days of his life on earth, Fr. Tom sat up in his bed and received Communion. On the 27th, after receiving Communion, he made the sign of the Cross by himself. It was a sign that he was ready to return to the Lord. We can reasonably assume that, during his convalescence, he was silently preparing himself for his final journey to his eternal abode. He must have spent the last days of his life in Xavier Bhavan in prayer and intimacy with the Lord. So, we can be rest assured that now Fr. Tom is in heaven interceding for all of us.

In the death of Fr. Tom, Patna Jesuit Province and the Church in Bihar and Jharkhand have lost a very committed, loyal and exceptionally gifted and honest Jesuit Priest. In 1959 nine of us joined the Society of Jesus. Of these nine, Fr. Tom is the first one to take leave of us. For me, his death is a personal loss. From the novitiate onwards we have been close friends.

Who was Fr. Thomas Karthanam? He was an exceptionally talented person. His main contribution to the Society of Jesus and the Church has been in the field of higher education. It was a very outstanding and praiseworthy contribution. After serving as the Principal of St. Michael's High School for a few years, Fr. Tom, along with late Fr. P. T. Augustine, after bravely facing and overcoming many obstacles, established St. Xavier's College of Education in the campus of St. Michael's High School. After several years, when St. Xavier's College (now Xavier University Patna) was established in 2009, Fr. Thomas Karthanam played a very crucial role. He made frequent trips to Gaya to meet the Magadh University Vice Chancellor and other important officials.

While Fr. Tom was the Principal of St. Xavier's College of Education, he exhibited the qualities of an excellent educationalist and administrator. He had a very cordial and friendly relationship with the students and the teaching and clerical staff. In later years, when Fr. Tom had retired from active involvement in the education ministry and was spending his time in Xavier Bhavan, his former students and staff used to visit him frequently and express their love and respect for him. This makes it very evident that his attitude towards them has left a lasting impact on their minds and hearts.

Fr. Tom was a man of integrity. He always had a very positive attitude towards one and all. He never harbored any ill feelings towards others. He had no enemies. I have never heard him speak ill of others. As a result, all who knew him had only positive regard for him. He had also a sense of humor. He could make others laugh by cracking jokes. The key to his loving relationship with others was his deep spiritual life.

In his second letter to Timothy, St. Paul writes: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day."(4:6-8) Surely, in his last moments on earth, Fr. Tom must have repeated these words of St. Paul.

Fr. Joseph Vellaringatt, SJ.