

Our Pastor – Rev. Rakshaganathan Selvaraj (Fr. Raj)

The Vocations Ministry continues its spotlight on those in our parish who have committed to a vocation of religious life. This week we focus on our pastor, Fr. Raj, who also is celebrating his ordination anniversary this weekend. Sunday, May 20, starts Fr. Raj's 25th year as a priest.

Fr. Raj began his life on May 6, 1967 in Eleanganny in the state of Tamilnadu, India. Born to an agricultural worker, his parents, Anthony and Kitheriammal Selvaraj, already had five children, Anthony, Theresa, Summanasu, Antonine and Arokiam. All the children learned to do their part of the chores and to help as needed for the family, which instilled in each of them a great work ethic.

Both parents and brother Anthony are deceased. Anthony's wife and son still live in the village. Theresa stayed home to raise her children while her husband worked. Summanasu's husband is deceased so she supported their four children as an agricultural laborer. Antonine is a Sister in the Missionaries of Charity, which is Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta's order. Arokiam is a coolly worker (laborer) and he and his wife have four children.



Fr. Raj went to elementary school in his village and completed his other studies at Don Bosco Higher Secondary School in Pannur, India. Answering his call to the priesthood after his senior year, he completed eight years of seminary formation at Bangalore St. Peter's Pontifical Seminary. He was ordained on May 20, 1994 in Eleanganny and was appointed as an associate in two parishes and as pastor in two parishes. He also served as Youth Director for his Diocese for three years. Fr. Raj desired to come to the USA for higher studies and did so on his own in 2002. He was in Tyler, Texas briefly before coming to the Austin Diocese. St. Jerome Church was very blessed to have Fr. Raj come to our parish in 2004 but we soon saw him leave to briefly pastor St. Theresa Church in Austin. He returned to us at St. Jerome as our pastor in 2005.

Fr. Raj desired to become a US citizen while here and received citizenship status on March 27, 2014. He was incardinated into the Diocese of Austin May 3 of this year. He has gently pastored our parish to participate in over 40 ministries to actively reach out beyond our parish into our communities and also into the world. Our parish has actively supported him in his efforts to build an orphanage and a home for the aged in his village in India. His outstanding leadership allowed us to keep the Little Lions Learning Center active and see it grow to full capacity. He also led us in fulfilling a dream of building a parish activity center, the Mother Teresa Center for Family and Youth. Named for his beloved saint, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, this state of the art center was completed in late 2016 and is helping our parish to continue to grow in its ministries.

With his outgoing personality and friendly smile Fr. Raj greets all his parishioners by name and always has time for anyone who needs his counsel. The children are very special to him and he never hesitates to take time to talk with them and share with them his love for our Blessed Mother Mary. His example of welcoming everyone and anyone is a testament to his love for Christ and his commitment to the priesthood. Prayer is very important to Fr. Raj and he makes time for it daily, encouraging others to do the same. He says to anyone who does not know what they want to do with their lives to take to heart the words of Jesus, "Take up your cross and follow me." Praying for guidance from the Holy Spirit is a sure way to know what the Lord is calling you to do with your life.