

# Who is Fr. Sonny?

**Born:** 20 August 1973      **Where:** Uttan, a fishing village which is situated on the beach or sea shore just north of Mumbai City (once called Bombay) in India



## Family:

- Poor, yet hardworking fisherman's family
- 8 siblings, 5 brothers and 3 sisters. I am the 5<sup>th</sup> born
- 2 of my brothers died (youngest one a few days after birth and one older than me five years ago. Both my parents are also resting in peace.

## Growing up:

- Born in a Catholic family and studied at a Catholic school
- An altar server from grade 7 and sang in children's choir at my parish
- I used to go and conduct or pray the Rosary at families in my village, whenever someone had a birthday or some special occasion in the family
- Growing up was tough but I completed my primary and high school education at Saint Joseph Anglo-Indian Marathi Catholic School in Uttan

## The Calling:

- I did my one year of college studies Vasai but from school days I desired to be a priest (inspired by the life of my school principal who was a priest) but didn't know how to go about it
- So much was however going on in my life as I was doing my college studies. Within one year I left college and was about to go fishing with my dad and brothers, in our own boat. All was set and the next day we were planning to go deep sea fishing but God had other plans for me. **I suppose he wanted me not to become a fisherman, but fisher of men.**
- From nowhere my school principal, the priest, comes to my house as he had heard something about me leaving the college and planning to go fishing. With his intervention the plans for my life were change, I again joined the college, here I could see God's hand in this event, and always wondered, why this had to happen? I completed college studies and expressed my desire to my parents of becoming a priest.

## Family response:

- My mom was like my friend, she always stood by me, my dad too, when I was altar server, we boys, who were altar servers, we used to take turns to serve on the altar, even on the week days too, so my dad used to wake me up and would take me to church to serve at 6am mass. He had seen me serving in the mass and had his own dream that one day I will not just serve but celebrate the Mass. So when I expressed my thoughts of taking this path in life, both were happy but my dad had only one condition,

## **“IF YOU PUT YOUR HAND TO THE PLOUGH, PROMISE ME YOU WILL NEVER LOOK BACK”**

meaning, I will never betray the Lord in taking other path in life.

### **Road to Priesthood:**

- So, in 1994 I joined the seminary in city of Gao, as an aspirant.
- In 1995, I did my postulancy in city of Mangalore, and received the religious habit that same year
- 1996 I finished my Novitiate again it was in the city of Mangalore, and took my simple vows, which is call simple profession of religious life, in that year.
- Next three years I did my philosophical studies in city of Bangalore, in our own seminary. Simultaneously along with philosophical studies, I did my graduation studies in the open university of city of Mysore.
- After that, for one year, I was sent to city of Latur, for community and parish experience.
- I returned to the city of Mysore for my theological studies, which is course of 4 years.
- In the year 2002 which was somewhere middle of my theological studies I was promoted to make my final vows to religious life. In the third year of theological studies, I was made Reader, then Acolyte, and in the middle of 4<sup>th</sup> year, that is just a half year before my priestly ordination I was ordained Deacon, and did my diaconate ministry in Manori parish in Mumbai diocese.
- So, it was 11 years journey with lots of studies before becoming priest. I was ordained priest on 23 April 2004.

### **Life as a Priest:**

- I worked in India, two years as director to aspirants, these are the young men who wish to become priests
- and one and half year as assistant in a small parish, total three and half years in India.
- On 18 September 2007 came as missionary to South Africa, 5 years I work as assistant priest and 5 years as Parish Priest at Immaculate Conception Church Parow, Cape Town.
- Then in December 2017, I was transferred to Pretoria at Padre Pio retreat and Conference Centre, as a Director and Guardian to the community. After two years I asked for transfer &
- was assigned to San Francesco church as Parish Priest, I came in March but because of lock down and the construction work of catechism classes remain silent till the completion of the project.

And now here I am. Sorry! it is just a short story of my life, couldn't write everything that happened in my life, what I did in my previous parishes you can ask me personally or when you visit Parow in Cape Town, or Padre Pio in Pretoria, you will see it..

I humbly request you to pray for me and I assure you of my prayers, God bless us all.