

Called to Live and Share life ...and Serve God's people (Creation)



Hello brothers and sisters of OFS, greetings of peace. I would like to introduce myself and share the purpose of coming to Canada.

I am Fr. Manoj Xalxo OFM from northern India. I was born into a Catholic village June 28, 1983 from pious Catholic parents and blessed to have two sisters and a younger brother. At 16, I joined the Minor Seminary of OFM, in the province of

St. Thomas the Apostle, India. I entered Novitiate in 2003, made Simple Vows in 2004 and Solemn Vows in 2009 and was ordained as a friar priest on May 6th, 2012.

Year 2015 marked a new chapter in my life when I came to Canada as a young friar priest. Leaving a country which is rich in its religious practices, in its traditions and cultures and coming to a new country where there is decline in these areas, could be disheartening. But for me among other options; to go for higher studies in Rome, or go for mission in Netherlands with the mother province of India, in the year 2014 God also opened the door to Canada (old OFM province of Christ the King, Western Canada) and since then there have been many blessings.

My formators are so happy that I am given this opportunity to proclaim the Gospel in this part of the universe but there were a few friars and friends who were deeply concerned that I was leaving a vibrant parish in Bangalore and going to a place where there is decline in church attendance, big decline in religious vocation as well and where there is rise of secularism. Questions like, what are you going to do with only old people coming to church, are you going bring the people back to church, are you going to be social reformer, etc. were asked. To all these brotherly concerns of my friars and friends, I simply said “***I am called to live and share life with the brothers and serve God's people (creation).***”

Coming to Canada as a young friar priest has been a great blessing. I am learning a lot from the brothers of the province and also from the people of God whom I am entrusted to serve. Brothers of the community and the province, and the people of God have been a big part for the growth of my human, Christian and Franciscan vocation. I did not choose the brothers or the people to live and work with, they are given to me by God, therefore being intentional in living my Christian and Franciscan vocation

among them makes a difference. Doing the ordinary things of life in extraordinary ways bridges relationships with them.

It is timely intervention of the Holy Spirit that we have named the new OFM province in Canada to be Holy Spirit province, as He is the true Minister General of the Order. This remains a constant reminder that I need to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and make my move accordingly in bearing witness to the Gospel of our Lord.

Often we tend to live in the past glory of the Church and the Order and forget to be in the present and read the signs of the time. Yes, we need to learn lessons from the glorious past of the Church and the Order and be rooted in our origin to live the present and our Franciscan charism vibrantly and that will do the rest. Times have changed but the basics and essence of our faith remain the same, we need to find ways to live them in unique ways that appeal to people.

I have not worked directly in any official capacity with the OFS family before but indirectly as a hidden instrument I had the blessing to guide and inspire vocation to OFS. I remember when I first encountered a member of OFS at St. Joseph's Basilica, Edmonton in 2015 where I began my pastoral ministry as an associate pastor. I still remember the day, after the noon mass when a devout Korean woman approached me seeing my brown habit and spoke to me about her love for St. Francis of Assisi...and there you go, the next week as a secret agent I met the Korean delegation led by the devout woman and now a Korean OFS fraternity in Edmonton. I feel blessed to initiate the conception of that Korean OFS fraternity and inspire a few others to join the gang of OFS.

My brothers and sisters in St. Francis of Assisi, I love my Franciscan vocation which is to live the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the footprints of our Seraphic father Francis of Assisi and that inspires and motivates me to serve my brothers and sisters of OFS. That's why I simply say let us make it intentional to appreciate and accept each other as a gift from God. We are all called to ***Live and Share our life and Serve God's people (creation)*** in our ordinary day to day life and make a difference in our broken world as a Franciscan.