

**OBITUARY OF
FR. GAUDENTIUS KONGARI S.J. (HAZ)
(1934 – 2020)**

Fr. Gaudentius Kongari S.J. (*Popularly known as Gaudie*), was born on 22 February, 1934 in Torpa, Dt. Ranchi (Presently Khunti District of Jharkhand) to Mr. Joseph Kongari and Ms. Triphonia Topno. They were 05 brothers and 03 sisters, Gaudie was the eldest of them. Two of his brothers, Fr. Walter Kongari S.J. and Fr. Hilarius Kongari S.J. belong to Jamshedpur Province of the Society. One of their sisters is a religious nun.

His Primary Education was in St. Michael's Middle School, Khunti. His High School was at St. John's High School, Ranchi where he joined as an apostolic candidate in 1949. He joined St. Xavier's College, Ranchi for his Intermediate studies.

Gaudentius Kongari can be hailed as the first Indian vocation to the Hazaribag Jesuits. And he has the added distinction of having joined the Hazaribag Jesuits even before Hazaribag was formed as an independent unit of the Society. In 1951 and 1952, while still a High School boy, living in what was then known as the Apostolic School in Ranchi, he made the acquaintance of the first arrivals from Australia by being assigned to teach them some of the elements of Hindi and assist them by giving tuition in pronunciation. When he finally joined the novitiate in Sitagarha, Hazaribag in 1954 he had already come to know some of the missionaries from Australia and New Zealand. Hazaribag was still to be declared a Region of the Society. He has thus seen it grow from being just a part of the Ranchi Mission to being a Province of the Society.

He did his Philosophical studies 1958-60 from Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth Pune, followed by 02 years of regency in PTEC Sitagarha. During his Juniorate he had - Sahitya Ratan (a sort of diploma course) in Hindi from Aligarh University and later, he did his graduation (Eng. Lit.) from St. Xavier's College, Ranchi in 1964 and was thus well fitted for any ministry connected with teaching and writing.

He completed his theology from St. Mary's College, Kurseong and was ordained Priest on 12 March in 1967 at St. Stanislaus College, Sitagarha. Immediately after his Ordination his first appointment was in Maheshmunda. He was the last Jesuit Parish Priest of Maheshmunda before the parish was ceded to the diocese of Bhagalpur. And later he served at Mahuadanr Parish for 2 years. He did his Tertianship at Melbourne Australia, in 1972. And soon after his return from Australia, he was appointed the first Parish Priest of Gothgaon in 1973. As a first Parish Priest, he nurtured and developed the infant Parish so well that it grew like as big tree. He took his final vows at Gothgaon in 1976. Thereafter, he began his long innings of his Pastoral ministry for many years in different Parishes.

Besides being a pastor, he was a teacher for some time and was for three years Headmaster of St Robert's Hazaribag, two years each, Rector of St. Xavier's Hazaribag and St. Stanislaus College Sitagarha respectively. But, it has been as a parish Pastor that he has made a great contribution to the development of the Church in the Province. As a Pastor he served in many parishes such as; Maheshmunda, Mahuadanr, Gothgaon, Hazaribag and Tundtoli. He has been in Pastoral ministry for 30 years. He was also a Parish Priest [PP] of Hazaribag Parish at two occasions. According to one of the former Provincials (Fr. Edward Mudavassery) of Hazaribag Province; "Fr. Gaudie was a "history maker", in the Chechari valley of the diocese of Daltonganj. [as a Pastor in Chechari- 21 yrs and at St. Xavier' College 03 yrs]. He displayed his excellent pastoral initiatives and commitment in the Chechari Valley and elsewhere was of great importance and significance. All these pastoral ministries were carried out with a quiet efficiency and his characteristic attention to details. Everywhere he was well liked by his parishioners – the hallmark of a good Parish Priest.



Gaudi played a great role in shaping the ethos of these ministries following the unique and successful model of Ranchi missionaries. It is said, 'still waters run deep'. Gaudi was a quiet and simple gentleman, always neat and clean not only in his attire but also in his room and office. He spoke little, but when he spoke, he spoke with conviction and wisdom from his vast knowledge of the geography and culture and the wisdom of the people. Gaudi never liked limelight. One never saw him debating his ideas or projects during the province meetings. But once he was assigned to a task, he brought order and established a system suited to the needs of the people and he was always at it. As the parish priest of Mahuadanr and director of Catholic Cooperative bank or as the principal of St. Robert's School, he would be punctually present in his office every day during the office hours ready to meet people and resolve their problems. Gaudi was a much loved and valued person in the province both for ours and for the laity.

He was a deeply spiritual man. He drew his strength from a life of prayer and life of integrity. He was a man of spiritual exercises and led his life according to our way of Proceeding. He had love of God, the Church, the Society of Jesus and the love of the people of God. In order to accomplish all these he re-ordered his own life and became a man of principles. He had followed a meticulously planned routine life in his personal, spiritual and apostolic life. He was very methodical and systematic in everything he did. His records were kept meticulously. Files were noted and kept in order. These were a great help to people who succeeded him in jobs. He prepared his homilies and meetings well in advance. They were very precise and short.

In 1984 Sprinkled among these pastoral activities he spent some months at Vatican Radio, and did spirituality course in Pymble, Sydney, Australia. He was the Provincial Superior of Hazaribag Province from 1998 to 2004. His time as Provincial has been characterised by his tireless touring to keep in touch with his men, especially those in the more remote corners of the Province, and by his desire to furnish many of the younger men with opportunities for more training and new experiences, laying the foundation for the future. He was manifestation of community centeredness who kept up his unique individuality. He was a man of determination who possessed a sharp mind and an indomitable spirit in doing the ordinary works in an extraordinary way.

Gaudie was open and more ready to listen than to talk, a man at ease with himself, and at ease with others, evincing sympathy without being intrusive, more alert to follow the approach of the person he meets than to take command of interpersonal relationships. Gaudie has merged with the Australians and New Zealanders very comfortably, and is liked by all. Because of his tertainship in Australia and some subsequent visits to Australia he has a wide circle of friends in the original mother Province. He never forgot to write to the benefactors and kept them informed about the Mission.

He is the first person to attempt any written work concerning the Brijjiya Tribe. He has spent time sitting in the houses of the people observing closely their ways of life. In this he made a valuable and original contribution. He was an excellent proof-reader who did all the proof reading of Xavier's college magazines, news bulletins, service rules, prospectus, and numerous pamphlets for the last three years. He exhibited his outstanding quality and excellent skilful knowledge in editing any script of any written content that was given to him. He left foot prints of his memory in the hearts and minds of many as he was always available and ready to reach out to the needs of others. He was a blessing to the Society of Jesus, to the faithful and very specially a blessing and an invaluable support to St. Xavier's College, Mahuadanr for the last three years.

His inner disposition and pleasant nature were remarkably inspiring. He led a life of total commitment and dedication in whatever ministry he was assigned to. Even at the death bed he was thinking of coming back to complete the writing apostolate that was entrusted to him by the Society of Jesus. This is another solid example of his commitment to the mission. But sadly, he breathed his last on 12 August, 2020, St. Anne's Hospital, Raja Ulhatu, Ranchi. May his Soul rest in Peace!

On a personal notes;

[A] “Of late Fr. Gaudie was a ‘history writer’, and anthropologist, as he was busy writing a book on one of the minor tribes of central India, the ‘Brijiyas’. He has almost completed his book writing, after going through a thorough research. He followed the random sampling of research methodology for his findings. He has exhibited his intellectual acumen and scholarly astuteness in his research studies at the age of 86! [Fr. M.K. Jose SJ]

[B] “It was Gaudi who launched me into the Common Works by assigning me to Punjab to be the director of the pre-philosophy formation of the seminarians of Delhi Archdiocese. My only regret is that he won’t be there to tell me all the stories during the long gap of 16 years I have been away from the province! But God had other plans for him, to inspire us from above, to be simple and available for the mission of Jesus today.” - Fr. Edward Mudavassery SJ

[C] “As Provincial, he agreed to Cardinal Telesphore’s request to put me as Director of CCMCCS Ranchi. Even though this appointment didn’t continue in the long run, it did benefit me personally. It introduced me to the world of Co-operatives. This made it easier to help establish our present Co-operative in the Chechari and provide hope for benefits that will come to the people living here.” Fr. Peter Jones SJ.