

Andrzej Urbański SDS

Fr. Andrzej Urbański was born on 11 May 1947 in Rajcza, Poland. He grew up in a pious family with his brother, Józef, and his parents, Józef and Maria née Jeleśniańska. His father was a tailor and his mother was a housewife. Andrzej was baptized on 26 June 1947 in his home parish church in Rajcza. After having finished elementary school in Leśna in 1961, he went to secondary school at Żywiec. In his early years, he was an exemplary altar boy in his parish. Being born into a deeply catholic family, a religious and missionary vocation surged in the young Andrzej. It was his grandmother who brought him into contact with the Salvatorians at Trzebinia who sparked his interest in the work and missionary spirit of Fr. Francis Jordan. For that reason, after having finished 9th grade of secondary school, he went directly to Bagno and started his Salvatorian journey as a novice on 14 August 1963. One year later, on 15 August 1964 he professed his first vows. As a professed member of the Society, he continued his secondary school education and finished it in 1966.

Missionary zeal was growing in his heart and this motivated him to learn English and Portuguese on his own. In 1966, he began his studies in Philosophy and Theology. Due to the communist regime and despite the protest of his religious superiors, Andrzej was called to military service in Szczecin-Podjuchy. As a young zealous religious, he kept faithful to his vocation and continued to prepare himself to become a missionary. Andrzej deepened his knowledge of foreign languages and studied Philosophy, even outside the seminary. In 1969, he was eventually sent to Kraków-Zakrzówek to live with other seminarians and to study at the Vincentian Fathers Institute, also known as the Congregation of Priests of the Mission. In 1970, he professed his perpetual vows and continued his studies with determination and perseverance, working toward the realization of his vocation as a missionary in the Society. On 9 June 1973 he was ordained a priest in the church of the Vincentians in Kraków-Stradom by Bishop Stanisław Smoleński.

After his ordination, Fr. Andrzej was appointed as a vicar and teacher of religious education at Mother of the Divine Saviour Parish in Mikołów. One year later, he received permission to leave his mother country and minister in Tanzania. He arrived in January 1975, after having completed an intensive English language course in the United Kingdom. Once in Tanzania, he then immediately had to learn Swahili. His first assignments were in the parishes of Lukuledi and Lionja in the Diocese of Nachingwea.

In 1977, Fr. Andrzej was appointed to be the novice master at Namiungo. In 1981, he was elected Mission Superior of the Salvatorians in Tanzania, an office he would hold for three terms. Under his leadership, the Salvatorian presence grew through various apostolates. In Tanzania, Salvatorians expanded to two other dioceses in Dar es Salaam and in Morogoro. As a centenary initiative, the Salvatorians in Tanzania were asked by the Generalate to re-open the first SDS mission in Assam. This Salvatorian apostolate was originally directed by our Founder himself. It is because of Fr. Andrzej's efforts, that the Society would also start a Salvatorian formation house in Bangalore, India. Being concerned and very much interested in the good formation of religious, it was Fr. Andrzej who dared to begin the huge project of the Salvatorian Institute of Philosophy and Theology in Morogoro. Today it is widely known as Jordan University College. Fr. Andrzej's missionary zeal had been observed through the years by the members of the XV General Chapter in 1993 in Krakow. It was no doubt a contributing factor to his being elected as Vicar General. The General Superior was wise in appointing him as the General Mission Secretary. Fr. Andrzej became responsible for the existing missions and for the expansion of new foundations, e.g. in the Philippines and Comoros Islands. Together with the Polish Province, Fr. Andrzej also promoted the establishment of our Salvatorian presence in former communist countries, e.g. Hungary and Albania.

During the XVI General Chapter in Graz, in 1999, Fr. Andrzej was elected to be General Superior. Aside from his missionary commitment, he was very much inspired by the apostolic spirit of Fr. Francis Jordan and wanted to intensify Fr. Jordan's beatification process. As General Superior, Fr. Andrzej had listened carefully to the desires of the General Chapter. He kept stressing the need for expansion as one of the Society's first priorities. As a result, new missions were initiated in Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, and Latin America.

In 2013, after having finished his second term of office as General Superior, Fr. Andrzej went to Poland for a sabbatical year in order to prepare for his return to Tanzania and work in pastoral ministry. After two years, he returned to his mother province of Poland because of health issues. Fr. Andrzej was then appointed to the community in Bielsko-Biala, where he assisted in a parish and was a hospice chaplain.

At the Silver Jubilee of Jordan University College in Morogoro, Fr. Andrzej was asked to give a talk about the genesis of the Institute which he had started with fellow Salvatorians. After the celebration, Fr. Andrzej hosted his home parish priest and some relatives. They all drove to a place by the Indian Ocean, Bagamoyo, where the first evangelization of that part of the country was started exactly 150 years ago by the Holy Spirit Missionaries. While spending some time at the beach, Fr. Andrzej drowned. This tragic news was a shock to us all.

Fr. Andrzej entered eternal life in his 72nd year, having been professed 55 years as a Salvatorian, and having served over 45 years as a priest. Before his remains were repatriated to Poland, on 21 March 2019, a mass in thanksgiving for his life and work was celebrated at the Salvatorian Kurasini parish, presided by Fr. Andrzej's friend, Archbishop Polycarp Cardinal Pengo, assisted by other bishops and more than 30 priests, in the presence of lots of religious and faithful. In that celebration also the former President of Tanzania, Hon. Benjamin William Mkapa and other government officials honored Fr. Andrzej with their presence. On 22 March, his remains were transported to his home-country, where he was buried in the Salvatorian tomb in Trzebinia on Wednesday 27 March 2019 in the presence of the Church, civil leaders, and many Salvatorians from all over the world. Among them, General Superior Fr. Milton Zonta preached on this solemn occasion to honor and celebrate our revered and beloved confrere. Rest in peace, Baba Andrea.