



## **Bishop Rayappu Joseph**

**16.4.1940 -- 1.4.2021**

Bishop Rayappu Joseph was born on April 16, 1940 in Neduntheevu (Delft). He received his early education at Neduntheevu Roman Catholic School and Murungan Maha Vidyalayam. He then joined St Martin's minor seminary and was educated at St Patrick's College, Jaffna. He studied for priesthood at the National Seminary, Ampitya, Kandy and St Paul's Seminary, Tiruchirappalli, India and was ordained a priest on Dec. 13, 1967 at St Mary's Cathedral, Jaffna. Bishop Rayappu obtained a doctorate in Canon law at the Pontifical Urbaniana University, Rome and was later appointed Professor at St Francis Xavier's Seminary Jaffna. He was appointed as the 2nd Bishop of Mannar on July 6, 1992 and was consecrated on August 16, 1992. He served as vice president of the bishops' conference in Sri Lanka and chairman for the Catholic National Commission for Laity. He was fluent in Italian, German and English and worked in close collaboration with the Vatican, international Caritas agencies and countries of the European Union to promote peace in Sri Lanka.

Dr Paul Newman wrote in 2014 "Under his leadership, Mannar diocese is running homes for war orphans, abandoned children and the elderly, health care centres, dispensaries, girls' hostels, vocational training centres, rehabilitation centres for refugees, centres for fishermen, and conducting human rights training programs for the clergy and civilians. Bishop Rayappu has fostered the spirit of humanism and human rights, as he says human values and Christian values are one and the same."

As the Bishop of Mannar, in 2001, Bishop Rayappu arranged for the 400-year old statue of Our Lady of Madhu to be taken in procession to many parishes in Sri Lanka as a spiritual effort to encourage Catholics to pray for peace and an end to the civil war. On January 14, 2015, Bishop Rayappu (as the Bishop of Mannar) hosted Pope Francis when he visited the Shrine of Our Lady of Madhu.

Bishop Rayappu retired in 2016 and after a long illness, passed away peacefully, at the Holy Cross Health Centre, Jaffna, surrounded by Holy Cross nuns including his niece, Rev. Sr. Anushala on Thursday, April 1, 2021. He was laid to rest at St Sebastian's Cathedral, Mannar on April 5, 2021.

In an interview with D.B.S.Jeyaraj in 2012, Bishop Rayappu stated "As a priest and follower of Jesus Christ who was a victim of violence yet manifested the Truth, the Life and the Way, I am doing my duties. I am only standing for the truth and justice. We are talking about human lives and there are no 'adjustments' in human lives". Mr Jeyaraj wrote in *DailyFT* on 5.4.2021 "The words of St. Paul (2.Timothy 4.7) – I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith – serve as a fitting epitaph to Most Rev. Rayappu Joseph."