



My Dear Confreres of the Indian Mission Vicariate,

Greetings from Rome!

First of all, I would like to congratulate all of you for your hard work that you have put in for the celebration of the 125 anniversary of the presence of the Church in Northeast India, the commemoration of the death of the first Mission Superior, Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller, SDS and the celebration of 25 years of re-establishment of Salvatorians in India.



I was very happy to be part of the celebration because I was able to assist in the triduum with a variety of festivities. It was a marvelous experience for me to see how much Salvatorians are loved by the Catholics in Northeast India. It was also wonderful to feel what a deep conscious memory the people have regarding the hard work of our first Salvatorian Missionaries in that region. It may be also for us, who live more than one century later, an inspiration and an encouragement to grow and develop.

In general we can say that everything went on smoothly. There was a good atmosphere among the confreres. People could see how resourcefully the Vicariate Leadership had delegated different tasks to confreres. We also witnessed how our young brothers and sisters were very well involved in different activities. If something did not go well, let us not take it as a blunder or a reason to blame, rather it is to be seen and taken as an opportunity to learn and grow better. Let it be for the Glory of our Saviour and the good of His people.

As you know, the festivities, however important they were, were not the only reason of my visit. I was happy that I could meet and talk with all the members personally. I am very grateful to you for your availability, open dialogue and trust. It is very much encouraging to observe how seriously most of you are engaged in various tasks for the development of the Unit. Hence, I am sure that the consultation, which was entrusted to me by the Superior General to do, will be a great help regarding the appointment of the new leadership of the Indian Mission Vicariate.

It was also very nice to meet our aspirants and novices in Bangalore, the candidates and Philosophy students in Warangal and our minor seminarians in Tokobari, and all those people who are directly associated with our communities and apostolate in different places. A lot of information has come to me and it will be a question of assimilating it and putting it in the right frame.

During my stay the Superior of the Indian Vicariate convened a meeting with his Council, in which I could observe fraternal dialogue and a common search for the good of the Unit, which is really a very lively part of our Society! It is great to see how development takes place slowly but firmly. I am sure that some of the decisions made, together with my recommendations, are published in the Newsletter and you might be already reading it.

I wish you all the very best and assure you of my prayers. The prayers and intentions which were given to me by some of our candidates and confreres, I have already placed them on the tomb of our Venerable Founder, Father Francis Jordan.

Many thanks to all! May God bless you!

Fr. Agustín Van Baelen, SDS

General Mission Secretary

### Salvatorian Spiritual Encounter

The Salvatorian Spiritual Encounter was held at Villa Maria in Rome from July 6 – 31, 2015. Frs. Stephen Louis, Lalit Kerketta and Patrick Damien Raj Peries participated in the encounter from Indian Mission Vicariate. There were 29 participants from many nationalities, 6 coordinators and 3 translators. Though initially there was difficulty in communicating with each other; but as days went by it was no more a barrier. The best part of the encounter was getting to know each other, sharing different cultures, traditions, views and the experience of living together under the same roof as one Salvatorian family. The encounter stretched along a period of four weeks, which highlighted the themes like **Call, Discipleship, Pentecost** and **Evangelization**. In the first week there was a reflection upon our call as Salvatorians while the second week reflected on our call as disciples of Jesus in the footsteps of Fr. Jordan, wherein the participants were led to revitalize the roots of our charism, mission, spirituality and identity as Salvatorians. The consecutive week highlighted the call to become Apostles of Jesus guided by the Spirit through a renewed Pentecostal experience. In the final week the participants were invited to contemplate on the Paschal Mystery of Christ and relive that Paschal experience. The encounter ended with lot of spiritual enthusiasm and vigor among the participants who longed to become effective missionaries in order to carry out the works of evangelization in the Church.



### SDS Retreat

The combined Salvatorian Retreat cum Workshop was held from July 9-13, 2015 in Bangalore, 18-20 in Warangal and 23-27 in Shillong. **It was animated by Rev. Fr. Peter Van Meijl, SDS, from Austrian Province.** He has extensively studied and made research on the Charism and Spirituality of Our Founder Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan. The participants were Fathers, Sisters, Deacons, Novices, and students of theology and philosophy. The topics of



the session were very interesting as they highlighted the original spirit of the Founder. Fr. Peter Van Meijl, SDS, was successful in imparting the zeal of the Founder to the participants. He could vividly present the life and works of the First Salvatorian Missionaries.

Each day, priests were assigned to preside over the Holy Eucharist. The power-point presentations and the printed materials were of great use. Another highlight of the entire session was the focus on the Spiritual Diary (SD) of our Founder Fr. Jordan, which is a great testimony to his personality.

Everyone at the end of the Workshop was able to know and is encouraged to study the SD in an orderly and a systematic manner. It was indeed a spiritual food for thought and reflection for the participants. The entire team has benefitted a lot from the Retreat. It is to be noted that the workshop took place during the course of the Jubilee of the Salvatorians: (1890-2015; 1989-1914), a tribute to the vision of Fr. Jordan and the tireless efforts of our First Missionaries to Assam.

### New Chapel

In order to commemorate the Jubilee on August 23, 2015 the foundation stone for a new chapel at Otto Hopfenmuller Study House, Shillong was blessed by Rev. Fr. Milton Zonta SDS, the Superior General and jointly laid by Fr. Raul Gomez, SDS, the Vicar General and Fr. Agustin Van Baelen, SDS, the Mission Secretary. This



event was witnessed by many Salvatorian dignitaries from different parts of the globe and several Salvatorian confreres and Sisters representing the different communities in India. This chapel will eventually serve the spiritual needs of the people around Mawlai-Mawroh, Shillong.

### Triple Celebration

The Triple celebration began with memorial Eucharistic celebration on August 21 marking the 125 death anniversary of Fr. Otto Hopfenmuller SDS, the Pioneer Missionary of Northeast India. On August 22 evening a prayer service was conducted in which Fr. Agustin Van Baelen, SDS, the Mission Secretary introduced the Salvatorian mission to the gathering. It was the beginning of a new chapter in the Salvatorian history in India. **Together with thousands of people, in the Shillong Cathedral, Salvatorians gratefully commemorated the arrival of 125 years of Catholic Faith in Northeast India and the 125 Death Anniversary of Rev. Fr. Otto Hopfenmuller, SDS and the completion of 25 years of re-establishment of Salvatorians in India.**

August 23 was a historic day as the rain clouded atmosphere could not dampen the spirit of thousands of people gathered for the Thanksgiving Eucharistic celebration which was presided over by Most. Rev. Dominic Jala SDB, the Archbishop of Shillong. There were about 90 priests, out of them 25 Salvatorian Priests; among them there were Salvatorian dignitaries namely: Very Rev. Fr. Milton Zonta, Superior General,





Frs. Raul Gomez, Vicar General, Agustin Van Baelen, General Mission Secretary, Alex McAllister, Provincial from UK, Piotr Filas, Provincial from Poland, Mirek, Mission in-charge from Poland, Mieczyslaw, former missionary in India, John Vallomprayil, the pioneer who assisted to re-establish the Salvatorian mission in India, Thomas Runggaldier, Missionary from Austria, Jesurajan Lambert Juliu from Sri Lanka, Sunil Thomas, Vicariate Superior and several Salvatorians confreres representing the different communities in India.



The whole ceremony started with a solemn procession from the Archbishop's House to the newly constructed Monument of Fr. Otto Hopfenmuller leading to the Cathedral wherein the monument was unveiled by Rev. Fr. Milton Zonta, SDS, the Superior General and blessed by the Archbishop Dominic Jala, SDB. The Archbishop in his homily lauded the relentless and hard work of the pioneer missionaries. Regardless of the most

trying circumstances Fr. Otto Hopfenmuller, SDS and his team implanted the faith in this region.

In this grand occasion, a documentary on Fr. Otto and the Jubilee Souvenir were released. The entire Liturgy was geared towards thanking and praising God for his wondrous ways in which He made use of Salvatorian pioneer fathers, brothers and sisters in implanting faith in the Northeast India.

Soon after the fraternal meal there was Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament conducted by Fr. John Madur, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Shillong, who thanked God profusely for sending the Salvatorian missionaries to Northeast India to spread the seed of Catholic Faith which has now grown into 15 dioceses with several local priests, sisters and brothers and a good number of seminarians.

After that, a beautiful cultural program followed, in which Fr. Milton Zonta, SDS, Mr. Vincent Pala, MP and the Archbishop of Shillong spoke on the contribution of the Salvatorians in Northeast India. To make this occasion more solemn, the cultural dances namely: Bihu, Garo, Khasi and Jaintia were performed which entertained the gathering.

### **Formation House at Chullikkara**

The council has decided in the presence of Fr Agustin Van Baelen, SDS, the General Mission Secretary, to begin the construction of the Formation House in Chullikkara, Kerela in November 2015; provided the Generalate approves the request of a partial loan of the total construction cost.

### Laitkynsew Parish



The council proposed to the Generalate to request the Archbishop of Shillong for granting the Laitkynsew mission in perpetuity to our Society. On behalf of the Superior General, Fr. Agustin Van Baelen, SDS, the Mission Secretary has presented the request to the Archbishop and a final decision is awaited from the Archdiocese of Shillong.

### Nongbah Mission

Vicariate has planned to open a new mission in Nongbah under Jowai Diocese, Meghalaya in the first part of 2016. In August 21, 2015, on the 125 death anniversary of Fr. Otto Hopfenmuller, Fr. Milton Zonta, SDS, the Superior General together with other council members visited the mission and requested the Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese for opening a new mission. Nongbah was one the first missions that were looked after by our Salvatorian pioneers 100 years ago.



### Tamil Nadu Mission

Our confreres have tried ways and means to open a new mission in Tamil Nadu since long, but it has not been materialized so far. Hence, with the same long cherished desire of the Vicariate, the council has formed a Commission for Tamil Nadu Project, which consists of 2 members for studying the possibility and location to begin a new mission in Tamil Nadu. Designated and responsible members of the said Commission are Fr. A. Alexis SDS and Fr. Johnson Vinoth Kumar SDS. We are hopeful to materialize the project soon.

### Recommendations from the General Mission Secretary

After having had personal talks with all the members present in the Indian Mission Vicariate, Fr. Agustin Van Baelen, SDS, the General Mission Secretary has suggested the following recommendations:-

- that all the members have to try their level best to carry out faithfully and diligently the assigned apostolate entrusted to them. In next to no time we will witness the growth of the Vicariate.
- that we pray for the existing and the new projects of the Vicariate, and the upcoming Vicariate Chapter as well.
- that all communities organize a community meeting and recollection day at least once in a month.
- that all the formators meet the students for personal talk every month on regular basis.
- that all the members respect the roles, authority and functions of our Superiors and Administrators. The Superiors, with their council, have the right and the duty to make decisions

for the wellbeing of the members and the community. The Administrators execute the decisions made in the community.

- that the budgets, approved by the Vicariate Superior and his Council, and by the General Mission Secretary as well, have to be respected. Exception or extra ordinary or unforeseen expenses have to be duly presented first to the Vicariate Superior and his Council before executing.
- that the members responsible for vocation promotion take very seriously their task, in terms of promoting good vocations to the society.
- that all written official requests of the superior/local coordinator to the Vicariate Superior and his council need a timely response from the Vicariate.
- that the financial system, initiated and introduced by the present leadership of the Vicariate, is to be respected and strictly followed.
- that all the communities and apostolates undergo an internal audit by a professional auditor introduced by the Vicariate Leadership.
- that in all the communities common prayers, Holy Mass and other spiritual exercises are to be respected where everyone participates regularly without lame excuses. Whenever there is a deliberate negligence by the members, the local superiors/local coordinators inform the Vicariate Superior for appropriate correction.
- that at the latest two weeks after a Vicariate Council meeting a Newsletter is to be published and make sure to send to all the professed members of the Indian Mission Vicariate and to the General Mission Secretary as well.
- that at the latest one week after the community meetings, the minutes are to be sent to the Superior of the Vicariate with questions and clarification, if any.
- that the "Commission (Fr. A. Alexis SDS and Fr. Johnson Vinoth Kumar SDS) for Tamil Nadu project has to make thorough study of at least 3 different projects there and furnish a report to the Vicariate Superior and his Council before December 8, 2015, in order to make a decision for materializing the said project at the earliest.

### **Prayer Requests**

- Beatification of our Venerable Founder.
- Vocations to the Society
- Deceased members
- Benefactors
- International Formation Commission Meeting

### **Special Note**

The Superiors/Local coordinators are requested to make the copies of the newsletter available in the community space. Suggestions are most welcome to make our newsletter more effective and fruitful.

**Speech of Fr. Agustin Van Baelen SDS during the Triple Celebration**

Your Excellency Most Rev. Domnic Jala, SDB, the Archbishop of Shillong

Dear Confreres and Sisters, Members of the Salvatorian Family

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ the Saviour,

Kublei!

On August 21, it was exactly 125 years ago that one of the pioneers, Fr Otto Hopfenmüller, SDS, who was the first Mission Superior of Assam, exchanged the temporary with eternity. Together with him and his death, we also remember the witness of many Salvatorian confreres and sisters who gave their life to proclaim the love of God, which was revealed in a unique and definite way in Jesus our Saviour.

This was the reason why, our Rev. Superior General, Father Milton Zonta SDS, convoked a Salvatorian Missionary year: to commemorate the past with all the beautiful things which happened through our first missionaries who were sent by our Founder, Fr. Francis Jordan, without forgetting

the difficulties they underwent, the sacrifices they had to make for the sake of faith in Jesus, the Saviour of all. The witness of our first missionaries, may inspire us to be committed religious men and women, who feel sent to the people, as our first missionaries were: to remote areas where nobody else wanted to go, without looking for honor or other



superficial things. The only thing, which was of their interest, was to proclaim God's love and kindness among the people of Northeast Asia, here in Assam. And they did not hesitate. They gave just the best of themselves, because they believed that God was with them.

It must have been extremely difficult for our Founder, Fr Jordan, just one month after having received the first official recognition by the Church authority, to put his Society totally available to the Church, willing to bring the Gospel wherever it was needed. He had just six priests and didn't count with the needed resources to develop the mission. But in spite of difficulties and big concerns, he was able to send two of them to Assam, together with two other confreres. Our Founder learned that God blesses difficult works and sacrifices. The big works of God flourish only in the shadow of the Cross!

The sudden demise of Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller, because of exhaustion and just 9 days later the death of Brother Marianus, are just two, but very significant examples. It must have been a very hard time for all people involved, for the missionaries here in Assam, as well for our Founder and his collaborators in Rome. This first group of missionaries was suddenly reduced to half and the two remaining confreres, in spite of their young age and a lack of experience, had to continue with the responsibility over an enormous missionary territory in tragic circumstances.



Therefore I think it is worthy to underline the historical dimension of this event: a missionary spirit and an attitude of availability to the Church facing difficult situations, without fears for sacrifices to be brought, were put in his work by the Founder himself.

This event has also its deep meaning in the present context. When an organization or a commitment has already some years of existence, the danger becomes real that the initial enthusiasm or the intense freshness, the passion, the deep colors get faded and similarly when the zeal is lacking. This is true for each of us personally, as well for our Salvatorian Family, even for the whole Church! We are continuously called to “renewal” and to “conversion”, which just does mean that we remember ourselves to what and by whom we are called. The person who doesn't focus continuously the core of the case, will soon lose orientation. In this sense we have to understand the celebration of the missionary year, as an invitation for us, here gathered in Shillong and for our worldwide Salvatorian Family as well, to check our “mission”, not only at geographical level, but mainly at the level of our core values and vision, and compare it with what God and the Church ask us, in the present age. In fact, it is about the inner fire, the depth and the enthusiasm, the commitment or consecration of each one of us, which becomes visible through our way of being and is translated in our way of doing. In this sense it is really fitting that Pope Francis rightly declared 2015 as the year of Religious Life. Consecration and mission are inseparable realities. Both are existential dimensions of Religious Life, also for us Salvatorians. As Jesus was sent to make known his Father among the people as a merciful God, we are also sent to be witnesses of God's Love, by our life and wherever needed, even with words.

Last but not the least; I would like to focus on the dimension of projecting the future. This missionary year is a direct invitation to develop a clear vision, inwards and outwards. The one, who



really is passionate by the mission of the Saviour, will not hide himself in beautiful structures of marvelous decisions or ideas, which are in danger of being unworldly. It is in fact a matter of finding ways and means, which can help us, in different contexts but with an unambiguous inspiration and an authentic consecration, to reach the people, convinced that Salvation is

for everybody! I really hope that in the future, in all our communities of the Indian Mission Vicariate, including those of Sri Lanka, the passion for Salvation of genuine people will always prevail and that there will be an openness to refine and to correct structures, in order to guarantee the outwork of our service with joy.

This Salvatorian Missionary year, dear Sisters and Brothers, commemorate not only the past, but focuses on its impact for us in our days and for the future. We study the past in order to understand the present and to project the future. As 125 years ago, first Salvatorian missionaries were sent to difficult and marginal areas, also today, Salvatorians, Lay, Sisters and Confreres are working hard



in remote areas, mostly in silence, catering to the needs of people, trying to be a tool of God's Love, of His Salvation. This can only make us silent and thankful. In this sense, all of us are invited to underline always the importance of our commitment with God and the Church, as our Founder and the first Salvatorian missionaries here in Northeast India did.

We have reasons to be proud, when we see how many works were started in the first years, but at the same time, let it be an invitation to look very well to what happened in the early beginning of Fr. Jordan's work. Remembering the efforts and the amazing example of the first missionaries, we are very near to the roots of our Salvatorian Family. They have been lively and visible examples of the Salvatorian Charisma in action. We can call it the first implementation of the foundational charisma in a concrete apostolate at the service of the Church and I am sure that we can learn a lot from it. Let us not be afraid rather let us get into work!

Now, for sure, we are living in other circumstances, and we can only be happy and satisfied that our Salvatorian Family has grown a lot. Since we started the new mission in Vietnam, last year, our Society of the Divine Saviour is present in 40 countries and on December 8, 2015, we will start in Kenya, a mission under the name of "Father Otto Hopfenmüller". Thanks be to God, every day more and more we can count on the very valuable help through our Mission procuras in Europe and the United States, the financial aid we can get through our Office for International Aid, SOFIA, the one which is connected with the department of the General Mission Secretariat, as well here at local level, in the field, in our missions, where you, dear brothers and sisters help with your daily assistance, your prayers, your support, to our mission. With all my heart, to all of you I can only say, KUBLEI, thank you very much!

I would like to finish this short reflection, expressing my deep hope, as General Mission Secretary and the one in-charge of our missions on behalf of the Generalate, that the awareness regarding the most difficult yet most trusting and enthusiastic beginning of our mission, at the time of our Founder, may grow, here in the Indian Mission Vicariate, in our Society and also in our entire Salvatorian Family. Hopefully this will encourage us all to see that our predecessors made tremendous efforts and sacrifices and didn't hesitate to put themselves aside in favor of God's sake. I am convinced this is a big part of the success of the fulfillment of our mission as Salvatorians.

Furthermore I hope that this grateful commemoration will launch us into the future, individually and as a religious community. Let us feel invited to accomplish our apostolates with the same dedication and with the same level of apostolic zeal as our spiritual predecessors had, but now of course with updated ways and means within the framework of the present context.

May God bless us all!

Agustín Van Baelen SDS  
General Mission Secretary

**Speech of Fr. Milton Zonta SDS during the Triple Celebration**

Your Excellency Most Rev. Domnic Jala, SDB, the Archbishop of Shillong, honourable MP Mr. Vincent Pala, respected MLAs and MDCs, dear Salvatorian Confreres and Salvatorian Sisters, dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ the Saviour, Kublei!

It is really a great pleasure for me, to be with you, here in this Salvatorian jubilee celebration. It is something great to witness how beautifully you have organised the celebration in honour of the pioneers of the Catholic Church in Assam.

As you know, the region of Assam is very important for Salvatorians, because our Founder himself, Fr Francis Jordan, sent some of his best collaborators to this first mission. Together with our Founder, our first Salvatorians were full of apostolic zeal. Nothing or nobody could stop them. They had just one goal: to make known God and his beloved Son: Jesus the Saviour of the world.

In this moment, I have two feelings in my heart: a feeling of gratefulness and a feeling of hope. Let me begin with the feeling of thankfulness. In the first place I feel grateful because of the faithfulness of our Founder Francis Jordan to the Church and the strong commitment of our first missionaries, who had done so much in the Assam mission, presently which has flourished into fifteen dioceses. They laid the foundation and they had really done well, not because of long or big preparation or studies, but because of their commitment with God and their love for the people of India. They came and saw what to do; they started immediately to serve the people. They worked with them. They spent their time with them. They celebrated the sacraments with them. They really sacrificed themselves. The first Salvatorian missionaries became a Sacrament of God's love. That was the way they made known God and his Son, Jesus the Saviour. And they are an inspiration for us and for many to live our vocation in its fullness, loving our Church and serving the people everywhere.



I am grateful for this witness, which is very much related with the Foundation of our Society. When we think on our first mission, we refer on its essential, on its charism and its spirituality. Our first pioneer Fathers, Brothers and Sisters, their way of doing... their humble lifestyle... their human approach... their continuous desire to evangelise... their committed service to the people, to the poor and those who didn't know God in the person of Jesus... their profound love for the Divine Saviour and their unconditional trust in the Divine Providence... their faithfulness to the Church and fraternal relationship with our Founder... their huge sense of belongingness to our Society,... all these things tell us about our own charism as Salvatorians. And we only can be thankful for that. Thank you Divine Saviour, for having given us these confreres whom you have sent to this people, here in Assam, and granting us the privilege of being, as a Salvatorian Community, the first representatives of your Church....



However our history does not only consist in what was in the past... We are living in the present and we have also a future. Therefore, my heart is filled with hope. The reason of this profound hope, are you, my dear Brothers and Sisters. I am so hopeful because the sacrifices brought by our first Salvatorian Missionaries, were like seeds in the soil that have given and still give very good fruits.

You are the living Church, which daily gives witness to God's kindness and goodness, in this community, among the Khasi – people, through its shepherds... bishops and priests... religious sisters and brothers of different congregations... catechists... men and women... youth and children,... So many people have known God's love, because of the fact that 125 years ago the first seeds were sown by Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller, Brother Marianus Schumm, Father Angelus and other brothers, fathers and sisters....

And off late, we see that our Salvatorian community is blessed with more and more vocations here in India which fills us with hope and new perspectives. Our expectations on you are immense, my dear confreres. Keep always in mind and in your heart, how big the commitment of our predecessors was. Let us be authentic missionaries...like the apostles...let us keep our eyes fixed on Him, the Saviour of the world... Let us be men of community and fraternity... Let us be men of prayer, men of the Spirit... Let us be really Apostles, with our hearts inflamed by Jesus, our Saviour. This is my hope and prayer, for all Salvatorians, but today, especially for you.

Thankfulness and hopefulness, two feelings: one speaks about the past and another about hope in the future. These two experiences fill our hearts with deep joy, making us aware that God is walking among us, through his instruments, through simple people as our first missionaries, as you and me, having been called by God to give our life for others. To Him all the Glory and Honour...! Finally I would like to conclude, together with you with a short prayer:



*Our confrere Father Otto, you died and gave your life as a sacrifice for the young Salvatorian mission here in Assam and with the Khasi people. Help us to live our faith in our daily life and to become missionaries of Jesus the Saviour, wherever we live or work. God our Father, may we become holy missionaries and zealous apostles in the Church as he, Father Otto, showed us to be, by the example of his life and death. Through Christ, our Saviour! Amen.*

Fr. Milton Zonta SDS  
Superior General