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In the Shadow of the Cross

Salvatorian- Indian Mission Vicariate Magazine



*Special
Edition*



**Silver Jubilee of the Vicariate
&
Salvatorian Missionary Year**



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Message

It is indeed phenomenal that the Silver Jubilee of the re-establishment of Salvatorian presence in India coincides with Salvatorian Missionary Year and the 125th death anniversary of Fr. Otto Hopfenmuller. It is all the more joyful to have these celebrations taking place during the Year dedicated to Consecrated Life by the Universal Church.



We are constantly bombarded with eternal clichés like "life's a journey, enjoy the ride and be sure to stop and smell the roses." These expressions exist to firmly remind us to take time out to celebrate our experiences and that it is important to do so. Celebrating our successes and acknowledging personal growth helps keep us on track and motivated towards our goals. Regardless of whether we have achieved something concrete or not, or even if we think we have failed, get what we can out of every experience and celebrate our progress along our own path.

It is 25 years since Salvatorians re-embarked to the land of our first mission. Twenty five adorable years have passed so quickly in the golden pages of Salvatorian history in India. Life is a journey. It was indeed been a long and enriching journey of 25 years. It is an apt occasion to look back the path we have tread together with God and one another. It also calls us to gather courage to walk the less travelled roads that lies ahead. When we look back we can see that God was helping us to sail through these many years because it wasn't all a bed of roses. The 25 years had its own ups and downs. We have been constantly accompanied by God all these years and that is why we have been able to make it, this far.

It is said a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step". We are celebrating the fruits of the bold decisions of the few valiant missionaries, who dared to hope and courageously walked the paths less travelled by others. Therefore we would not make this far without those who made their way out of their comfort zones and dared to explore what God has planned for them in a distant land. Our lives ought to be thanks-filled for the pioneering missionaries who dared to re-establish the mission in India amidst uncertainties and adversities.

This issue of the magazine is delayed deliberately for two months in-order to include the significance of Salvatorian Missionary Year. We hope that the delay was indeed useful and worth. As we look towards to the future with confidence, let these celebrations revitalize our vocation, conviction and commitment to work for the Saviour wherever we are planted.

Yours in Saviour
Fr. Peter Kordor Nengong, SDS



FORWARD

“God’s work flourishes only in the shadow of the cross”

Fr. Sunil Thomas SDS, Vicariate Superior

Fr. Jordan

We come across various kinds of occasions in our daily lives; of which some are of great significance but definitely not all. As we began the year 2015, we are at the threshold to witness few of such rarest occasions in the history of our Society. We have already opened the Silver Jubilee Year of the resumption of Salvatorian presence in India on 16 June, 2014 by Rev. Fr. Milton Zonta SDS, the Superior General. As we continue to celebrate the Jubilee Year, it is coinciding with other major events of the Society, viz. the Salvatorian Missionary Year (125 Anniversary of sending the first missionaries to Assam) and the 125 death anniversary of Fr. Otto Hopfenmüller, the first Mission Superior of Assam Mission. It is definitely God’s grace to have all this major events of the Society commenced during the Year dedicated to Consecrated Life. Therefore, it gives us added reason to rejoice and celebrate this time of grace and the gift of faith.

These celebrations of faith should not be confined to external pomp and decorum. We should try to assimilate and personalize the message of these major events, which would surely enable us to witness the Savior to the world through our words and deeds. Therefore my sincere wish for all of us is to make use of this occasion as an opportunity to value the sacredness of our call to Salvatorian way of life and radically live out this call every moment of our lives with better conviction, dedication, passion and commitment. Divine Saviour invites every Salvatorian through these celebrations to invigorate our missionary spirit at personal, community and congregational level.

Fr. Jordan on his farewell address to the first missionaries on January 17, 1890 exhorted “the greater your sufferings the greater will be yours success...but success will come! And even if you will not be there to see it.” These words sound very true as we witness a vibrant Catholic faith in Northeast India after 125 years since our pioneers proclaimed the Good News in this land. Therefore every celebration reminds us of God’s plan for us being gradually unfolded amidst great sufferings and uncertainties. When we often meet with setbacks and tribulations in our work for God’s Kingdom, we can only trust like our founder, “work for the Lord and He himself will nourish you.” For God says “My thoughts are not your thoughts and your ways are not my ways,” (Isaiah 55:8). Therefore, let us not be discouraged in difficulties but be assured that we are called by the Saviour to witness to his Holy name and He would surely lead our ways and guide our paths. Be courageous and optimistic for He is with us to the end of days.

Let us also recollect and remember with gratitude all the Salvatorians, who directly or indirectly contributed in establishing this foundation on the corner stone of Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

It is indeed commendable to have this edition of the “In the Shadow of the Cross” dedicated to the events of significance. I am sure that all the articles would definitely enlighten us on various aspects of our celebration. As we continue to grow together as Salvatorians, let us pray that the Saviour may help all of us to make His Mission our Passion.

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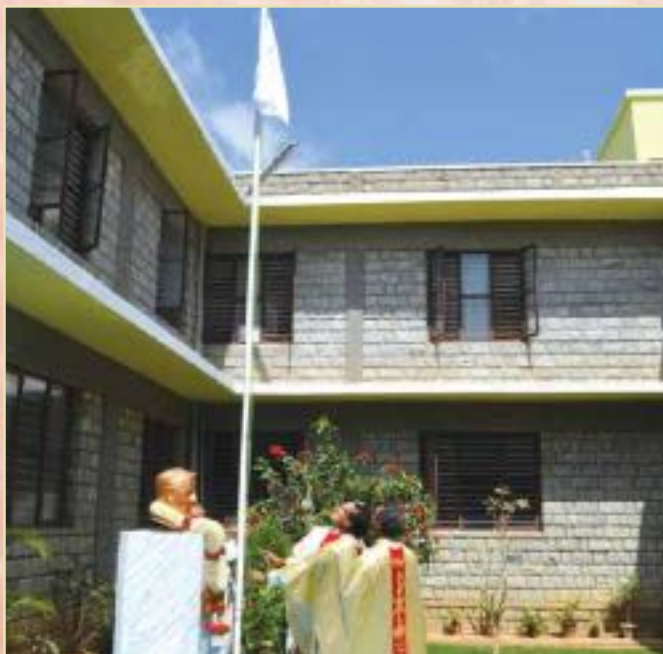
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The Opening Ceremony of Silver Jubilee Year



The memorable event of the opening of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the Salvatorian re-establishment in India was held at Rashaka Sadan House, Bangalore on 16 June 2014. The ceremony began with the invocation of God's presence through the celebration of Holy Eucharist; during which four of our brothers professed their first religious vows in the Society and another four renewed their temporary vows. The Silver Jubilee Year was officially inaugurated with the hoisting of the Jubilee flag by Rev. Fr. Milton Zonta, the General Superior. The loving presence of the family members of the newly professed members and the Indian Salvatorian Confreres from different communities including the Sisters added a festive spirit to the event. The luscious meal served on this occasion was not only delicious but also enthusing enough to prepare the confreres to participate in a friendly football match organized between the Bangalore Community Vs 'rest of the world.' The football match was fun-filled to watch the older members struggling to outsmart the youngsters! The memorable day continued to be celebrated with the mesmerizing cultural programmes which entertained all and marked a happy ending to the opening ceremony of the Silver Jubilee Year.



Celebrating:

Fr. Jose SDS

The Salvatorian Way



From time immemorial, celebrations have united human communities in honoring momentous events. Celebrating as a group brought out a sense of belonging, which is crucial to human fulfillment. It makes us aware of who we are, where we come from, what we have done, etc. As we celebrate two important events of our Society, namely the Silver Jubilee of Salvatorian re-establishment in India and the International Salvatorian Missionary Year, it is apt to analyze how can we add some Salvatorian flavors to these celebrations. It is undoubtedly true that we can celebrate an event in various ways and differing perspectives; but as Salvatorians, we are called to celebrate the way our founder would envisage it with a blend of unique Salvatorian spirituality and missionary dimension.

A Moment of Thanks Giving:- celebrating various elements of significance is a way to develop an “attitude of gratitude” that would enable us to transform our attitude in our life and our ability to more deeply enjoy what we already have. It is an occasion specially marked to thank with meaning everyone who helped us to reach this milestone in the history of the Society. In the words of our venerable founder “it should be an occasion above all a thanksgiving in which we express the deepest gratitude for innumerable benefits”. Celebrations therefore need to be an awesome occasion set-apart to thank God and many people who helped us significantly in our way towards the reasons for these celebrations. Fr. Jordan reminds us “it is not against humility to recognize God’s gift in ourselves.”

Appreciate the “Negatives” in Life:- Obstacles and challenges teach us resilience, humility and they allow us to become more capable of overcoming bigger problems. Remember to be grateful for what we have got instead of pining for what we don’t have. It is a call to look upon every tragedy/setbacks of the Society positively and became stronger as a result – do not ask “Who did this bad things to me?” rather, we should ask “how does this enable



me to do that I could not have done otherwise." We are called to be agents of hope not victims of circumstance. In our journey amidst difficulties and failures the words of Fr. Jordan finds us some comfort for he says "God will not try you beyond your strength and he will bring the matter to a happy conclusion. Always go ahead with the Lord."

Re-discover Meaning & Love for the Society. Life can be monotonous and mediocre when we end up doing same things every other day. As an Institute gets older and mature, there is always this danger that it becomes more organized but fades the original vision for which it is established. Celebrations such as this are an occasion to ask in our humdrum life "Why am I here?" What do I hope to achieve? How best can I use my gifts? Finding

meaning is essential to a fulfilled religious life – and we will never find it if we never look, if we don't know where we want to go, we will never get there, however fast we run. At the same time being Salvatorians, we will not find fulfillment and satisfaction in this particular way of life unless we are fully at the disposal of the Society and love her sincerely. In this regard, we have no better example than our founder himself, who says "the Society is your mother; she brought you up and trained you. You must love her and be grateful."

To be Connected to Fr. Jordan: the most important question we should ask ourselves at this great jubilation is that; are we connected to Fr. Jordan's visions? The original vision of Fr. Jordan can be summarized in short as "ut co-gnoscant" (that they may know, Jn 17:3) and "euntes in universum mundum praedicate" (go into the whole world and preach the gospel to all creatures, Mk 16:15a). It is time to introspect; is our community life, apostolate and identity connected to the original vision of Fr. Jordan which God gave to the Salvatorians. Otherwise we will do many wonderful things for which Fr. Jordan did not found the Salvatorians.

To be Proactive and Futuristic: - the most important aspect of these celebrations is to look to the future in the light of what our pioneers have achieved or failed in the past. It is neither a call to be satisfied with our glorious past achievements and snub the need to plan for the future nor it is an occasion to blame the mistakes of the past as a reason for everything that happens in the Society now or later. For the Society to move forward and be relevant, we need to be proactive and future oriented. We need to draw new road maps not on how to do different things but how can we do differently as Salvatorians for the glory of God and salvation of souls.

Conclusion: We are at a decisive period in the life of our Society and the Vicariate. Our actions or inactions are going to be written as the history by the generations to come. It is up to us to read the past and act wisely so that a better history may be written by those who come after us. Therefore let these celebrations invigorate our call as Salvatorians to witness to the Saviour by all ways and means. Hence the words of the prophet Daniel may be fulfilled in our lives: "But the wise shall shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament, and those who lead many to justice shall be like the stars forever." (Dn 12: 3 & Phil 2:15b)



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JOURNEY TO THE SILVER JUBILEE

By Fr. Vinoy Joseph, SDS

We live in a time of rapid change, a time of progress. We may observe a tendency of preference to define ourselves in terms of where we are going, not where we come from. Jubilee is a graceful time for recalling and reliving the story of the past that is significant and true; the history. As the saying goes; that one who controls the past controls the future, so our view of history shapes the way we view the present, and therefore it dictates what answers we offer for existing problems. This jubilee celebration of the Salvatorians is connected to the nostalgic home coming of the missionaries. Now, when the Indian Mission Vicariate with about 30 priests, hundreds of students at different stages of formation and various apostolic undertakings spread across 7 states of India, certainly it is a time of jubilation, not a time for complacency and external celebration alone but for becoming more vibrant apostles of our times imbibing the spirit of apostolic zeal of the pioneers.

When the Salvatorian missionaries had to bid adieu on a rainy day that matched the sorrowful mood of the occasion to their "beloved mission land" on 9 July, 1915, they might not have envisaged a long wait till



1989 to see the sunshine of hope of re-opening the Salvatorian mission back in India. The providential twenty five years of Salvatorians' return to India is an occasion to recall the guiding hands of God working through various persons and events. History therefore can teach the ways God works for His people. Only when we re-read the history in the light of faith, we realize the ways and means God was guiding us in the "deserts" of life.

The hope of immediate return to the first Salvatorian missions was obstructed when the General Chapter held in 1921 declared about the painful decision of postponing the re-opening of the Indian Mission since the British government had obstructed every effort of the German Catholic Missionaries to their field of apostolate. The decision of the General Chapter in 1921 called off the first mission of the Salvatorians in India but not the missionary zeal of the Salvatorians to return to India. It was a long cherished dream of Salvatorians to come back to their first mission land since 1915. The desire got a new momentum with the visit of Rev. Fr. Gerard



Rogowski, the superior General to India in June 1986. He made preliminary inquiries on the possibility of re-establishing the mission. On the 21 of June, 1986, he met Rt. Rev. Packiam Arokiasamy, Archbishop of Bangalore and requested for the permission to open a formation house in his Archdiocese. On the 22 of June, 1986, the Archbishop responded positively to the request. However the Generalate had to wait a few more years until they could find a province or a mission, who was willing to take the responsibility of the new Foundation in India.



The Tanzanian Mission Chapter (9-10 of December, 1987) responded positively to the request of Fr. Waldyslaw Pawlik, the General Mission Secretary to take up the responsibility of starting the Indian Foundation. Fr. Malachy McBride, the superior General, in his letter dated 7 June 1988, officially entrusted this work to the Tanzanian Mission. The Mission Council delegated Fr Andrew Urbanski and Bro. Donlad Maurer with the responsibility of re-establishing Salvatorian Mission in India. They arrived in India in 1989 and met Rt. Rev. Alphonsus Mathias, the Archbishop of Bangalore and validated the permission granted by his predecessor. Subsequently they began to look for a proper land for the formation house in Bangalore and Mysore. In the middle of the very same year, Fr Andrew Urbanski, the Mission Superior, and Fr Wladyslaw Pawlik, the General Mission Secretary came to India and bought twelve acres of land from the Carmelite Fathers (OCD) in Carmelaram which is located about 20 kms away from the center of Bangalore. At that time, the British Province already had an Indian priest, Fr. John Vallomprayil, who was asked by Rev. Fr. Malachy McBride, the Superior General,

to join the Tanzanian Mission in re-establishing the Salvatorian Mission. The presence and dedication of Fr. John Vallomprayil was indeed a great help towards the re-establishment and growth of the Indian Foundation.

In July, 1990, Fr Andrew Urbanski accompanied by Fr. Krystian Golisz came to India to organize the initial formation. At this time, there were 8 candidates, who were promoted by Fr. John Vallomprayil. The new Foundation got a desired structure with the appointment of Fr. John as the co-ordinator of Indian Foundation, Fr. Krystian as his assistant and

procurator, and Fr. Eugeniusz Grytner as prefect of the candidates. They were the pioneering missionaries to dedicate themselves to the Indian Foundation wholeheartedly. In the beginning, the priests and the candidates stayed with the Cleritian Missionaries, renting a portion of their house because the present formation house was under construction.

The year 1990-1991, is very significant in the history of the Society in India. First, the Catholic Church in North East India celebrated its centenary in a solemn manner lasting for 10 days in November 1990, Shillong. All the esteemed members of the Generalate team were invited to take part in the celebrations. Rev. Fr. Malachy McBride, the Superior General, Rev. Fr. Andrew Urbanski, the Mission Superior, Rev. Fr. Wladyslaw Pawlik, the General Mission Secretary, and Rev. Fr. Willibald Ulrich, attended the celebration. The visit also helped the Society to procure a plot of land with an unfinished building in Shillong with the help of the Auxiliary Bishop of Shillong, Rt. Rev. Tracisius Resto and Rev. Fr Sebastian Karotempel SDB. During the



same visit, Fr. Malachy McBride blessed the Novitiate House and the foundation stone for the new Study House at Carmelaram, Bangalore. The hard work and enthusiasm exhibited by the then Salvatorian candidates in formation and the priests in completing the present Rashaka Sadan in Bangalore (Study House) is commendable.

The first Novitiate of the Foundation commenced on 18 March 1991. Fr. Eugeniusz Reśliński and Fr. John Vallomprayil served as the first novice masters. Fr. Malachy McBride, the Superior General and Fr. Wladyslaw Pawlik, the General Mission Secretary accompanied by Fr. Andrew Urbanski, the Vicar Mission Superior and Fr. Ryszard Falkiewicz, the Procurator of the Mission Procura in Poland visited the Indian Foundation in 1992. During this visitation they bought another plot of land in Khasi hills for the Indian Foundation.

At this time Fr. Genifried Nnai came to India to avail himself to the young Foundation. He replaced Fr. Eugeniusz as the novice master. During this time since Fr. John Vallomprayil had to leave for Assam to take care of the mission at Nagaon (his contribution towards the enormous growth of Christ Jyoti School, Nagaon between the years 1993-1999 is indeed commendable), Fr. Genifried Nnai also had to assume the responsibility of the prefect of the scholastics and candidates. After a short while, Fr. Marian Brzozowski came to India to help in the formation. He shouldered the responsibilities as the co-ordinator, the prefect of candidates and the treasurer of the Community. Both

the fathers stayed for a year and contributed a lot to the young Foundation.

The Formation House at Bangalore (Rashaka Sadan) was blessed by Fr. Genifried Nnai on 19 March 1993. It was a milestone in the formation history of the Indian Foundation. Subsequently Frs. Genifried and Marian were replaced by Frs. Krysztof Szczotka and Stanisław Golus in 1993. Another red letter day in the history of the Foundation was the first religious profession of Fr. G.K Prakash, on 4 April 1994, who joined us from Guwahati Archdiocese. The Vicariate is wholly indebted to him for the present Christ Jyothi Missions at Nagon, Dhing and Tokobari. Yet another milestone in the history of the Foundation was the first religious profession of Fr. Cyprian Phrang Lyngdoh on 16 June, 1994. He joined us from the Archdiocese of Shillong and soon was appointed as the prefect of candidates and the assistant treasurer of Bangalore Community (he later joined back to his Archdiocese in 1997 and shortly was called for his eternal reward). Fr. Mathias Millanzi and Fr. Jarosław Dziuba later assumed the role of local coordinator and Novice master respectively after the departure of Frs. Fr. Genifried and Krysztof. They were then replaced by Fr. Mariusz Sztuk and Fr. Artur Chrzanowski. The ordination of the first Indian priests (Selvaraj Mallavaruppu, Philip Pukkurayil and Anandraj) took place at Tyrna in Meghalaya on 16 February 1997. They soon rendered their service in the formation apostolate in Bangalore.

The long cherished dream of Salvatorians was fulfilled when the first house was opened in Shillong after



our re-establishment in India. His Eminence Dominic Jala, SDB, the Archbishop of Shillong inaugurated Otto Hopfenmuller Study House on the feast of *Mater Salvatoris* on 11 October 2000. (Fr.) Sahaya Raj (left the Society) was the coordinator of the first community in Shillong. It was the official re-opening of our presence in Khasi-Jaintia Hills. The mortal remains of Fr.

Otto was transferred to the memorial tomb erected next to Shillong Cathedral during a solemn ceremony on 1 July 2001. Back in Shillong, we are trying to reconnect our historical roots. The sign of Salvatorian missionary spirit and historical continuity was visibly manifested in accepting to take up Sts. Peter & Paul Parish, Laitkynsew, which is one of the oldest mission stations established by the pioneering Salvatorian missionaries in the Khasi land. The parish was officially entrusted to Salvatorians by His Grace Dominic Jala on 25 January, 2004 and Fr. Rajesh Toppo was appointed as the first parish priest.

Fr. Artur Chrzanowski, after contributing a lot towards the structural re-formulation in the Foundation, left for Manila in 2002, therefore the leadership of the Foundation fell entirely in the hands of local members. After the first general body meeting of the Foundation, Fr. Joseph Kannamparambil was appointed as the first Indian superior (2004-2010). Subsequent years with the leap in number of priests, the Foundation witnessed many new developments. New theology house in Shillong was blessed by His Excellency, Rt. Rev. Dominic Jala, the Archbishop of Shillong and was inaugurated by Fr. Andrew Urbanski, the Superior General in the presence of Fr. Piet Cuijpers, the Mission Secretary on 17 April 2005. Few days later on 21 April 2005, Junior College at Christ Jyoti School, Nagon was blessed by His Excellency the archbishop of Guwahati, Rt. Rev. Thomas Menamparambil and Fr. Piet Cuijpers dedicated the building to the fond remembrance of Dr. Christophorus Becker. A small estate was purchased at Chullikkara, Kerala in 2005 in the Archdiocese of

Thalassery with the possibility of opening an apostolate in the future (the plan of building a minor seminary for pre-philosophy formation is underway).

The leadership decided to shift the philosophical studies from Christ King College, Shillong to Warangal, Andhra Pradesh in 2007. They took temporary shelter at St. Xaviers Major Seminary of the Diocese of Warangal for a few years until a new Philosophy Study House was constructed. The same year the Indian Foundation received the shocking news of the sudden demise of the young priest, Fr. Orlysius in a fatal accident on his way to Sts. Peter & Paul Parish, Laitkynsew on 16 February 2007.

The visit of the Archbishop of Bamberg, His Excellency, Dr. Ludwig Schick in 2009 was a blessing to the Indian Foundation. He participated in the 119 death anniversary of Fr. Otto Hopfenmuller and assured his support in the process of opening the cause for the beatification of Fr. Otto Hopfenmuller as well as the construction of a memorial chapel in his name. During the visit he also blessed Christ Jyoti School, Dhing. The much awaited blessing of the Jordan Philosophy Study House took place on 9 January 2010 by Most Rev. Thumma Bala, Bishop of Warangal and was inaugurated by Fr. Andrew in the presence of Fr. Piet Cuijpers. The expansion of Salvatorian presence in India got a new boost with the opening of Divine Saviour Parish in Ranchi on 14 January 2010 by His Eminence Telesphore Cardinal Toppo and Fr. Rajesh Toppo was appointed as the first parish priest.

As the vicariate is growing, the unit began to share actively in the universal character of Salvatorian mission by responsibly collaborating with other units



in terms of sharing recourses and personals in the best possible way. In this context establishing the first community in Sri Lanka as part of the Indian Vicariate has a profound significance. It is significant to mention the dedicated role of the East Asian Mission Vicariate in promoting vocations and forming the first Sri Lankan members in the Philippines. As the first members of the Island, completed their initial formation in Manila and on their return to the homeland, the Indian Vicariate with the active collaboration of the Salvatorian sisters in Sri Lanka established the first Salvatorian house in Sri Lanka at Chilaw. It was inaugurated by Fr. Piet Cuijpers, and was blessed by his grace Rt. Rev. Dr. Valence Mendis, the bishop of Chilaw on 16 June 2010. Fr. Philip Pukkurayil was appointed as the first local coordinator.

At the Mission Chapter held on 7 January 2010 in Bangalore, Fr. Andrew proposed the upgrading of the Indian Mission Foundation to the status of Vicariate and subsequently Fr. Andrew Urbanski with the deliberative vote of his council created the Indian Mission Vicariate effective from 1 March 2010 and appointed Fr. Rosario Chinnappan as the first Vicariate Superior. On 22 January 2012, Fr. Andrew Urbanski and Fr. Piet Cuijpers, participated in the opening of the centenary celebration of Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, Laityknew. During the same visit, they also blessed Jordan Minor Seminary at Tokobari, Assam. Fr. Sunil Thomas took over from his predecessor as the Superior of the Vicariate effective from 8 December 2013. Indian



Mission Vicariate is indebted to Frs. Andrew and Piet and various others for the role they played in the growth of the vicariate for more than a decade.

The year 2014-2015 is very significant for Salvatorians because it makes the 25 years since the re-establishment of Salvatorian presence in India. It is 125 years since Fr. Otto laid down his life for the mission in Northeast India. It also makes the 100 years since Salvatorians left the Indian Mission due to World War-I. In the backdrop of these historical and nostalgic memories of the past, Fr. Milton Zonta, the Superior General opened the silver jubilee celebration of Salvatorian re-establishment in India on 16 June 2014 in Bangalore.

A glance through this glorious 25 years, reminds us the growth of the Salvatorians in India in term of spiritual maturity, numerical growth, diversity in apostolate and geographical expansion. In these 25 years of God's sustaining grace, continued providence, ever-loving presence and accompaniment, there has been many occasions of human success and failures, ups and downs, joys and sorrows, fidelity and betrayal. But God has been to us always faithful, loving and compassionate all through.

Let us hope and pray that we, individually and as a community, may encounter Jesus on our road ahead and we begin anew to develop the practices we need to incorporate into our lives today and in the future that will enable us to be more fully 'Salvatorians' to one another and to "Go, then, to all peoples everywhere, and share the news about the Saviour." It is jubilee time; a time of drawing strength from root and certainly a time for gratitude.



Fr. Vinoy Joseph is a member of the Indian Mission Vicariate. He served the Vicariate as the prefects of aspirants, candidates and philosophy students. Presently he is serving the Salvatorian mission in the Philippines as Rector of scholastics, while perusing his Masters in Psychology at the University of Santo Tomas, Manila. He is also one of the members of the Salvatorian Historical Commission.

SILVER JUBILEE:

A Call to Reflection, Renewal and Restoration of Salvatorian Missions in India

Sr. Jiji K. George, SDS



We are blessed to have the Divine Saviour in our midst and His spirit upon us over the past 25 years of Salvatorian presence in India. Jubilee is called a Holy Year, not only because it begins and ends with solemn holy acts, but also its purpose is to encourage holiness of life. It is actually convoked to strengthen faith, encourage works of charity and brotherly communion within the Church and the Society. It is a call for Salvatorians to be more sincere and coherent in our confidence in following Christ, the only Savior. "Rejoice in the Lord. I say again Rejoice." (Ph 4:4). Jubilee is a time of rejoicing or jubilation. It is a season of happiness and festivity for the Salvatorians.

As we rejoice at the silver jubilee, we realised that we have reached a milestone in our mission in India. It is a sign that calls us to take time out, to suspend activities and spend a while in wonder and appreciation of God's work in and through our lives. It is a time to look back to our missions and see God's guiding hands visibly present in all our undertakings. However, recalling

past is not so much about what we remember but how we remember things. It is how we recall the past that made all the difference to the way we live the present and face the future. We know how important it is to find new directions in life. It is an opportunity God has given us to Reflect, Renew and Restore our lives. We are called to restore the missionary gifts, we have received and bring it back to its original beauty and blessing. There is always room for Reflection, Renewal and Restoration.

A call to Reflection

Given these short details on Silver jubilee, I focus my attention on the mission of Salvatorians in India. Salvatorians exists in the Church as witnesses and followers of the Divine Saviour. Eternal life is the promise of God to human beings. This is what happens to us when God comes to meet us. This is the self-awareness of those who lived the Salvatorian charism down the times. It is this heritage that we have got to



transmit to the universal church and to the humanity. From this eternal truth we have to reach out to others and others seek after our Holy parents: Fr. Francis Jordan and Mother Mary of the Apostles as guiding stars in their spiritual journey.

Salvatorian roots are to be traced back to the life and spirit of Fr. Jordan who experienced in Lebanon the power of the Divine Saviour as a burning Zeal for continuing Jesus' mission. We have to be conscious of this root that remind us of our great tradition in making the Saviour known to the millions in India. All the great things happen from the insignificant efforts in the remote past as great Bamboos start from tiny shoots. In our mission there are innumerable types of situations and circumstances that requires ability to decide and take responsibility. We need to respond to the requirements of the Society by all ways and means. In these efforts we are called to be enlivening ferment to the society which is much affected with violence, corruption and desperation. This human desperation around itself is a call to renewal.

A call to Renewal

It is the Spirit of the Lord "that has filled the world and renews the face of the earth." (Wis 1:7). We need to be attentive and open to the mysterious stirrings of the Spirit in the realities of India. Renewal is both God's gift as well as our own task. God has already accomplished it in the mission of Jesus and through the Spirit. Yet renewal is a gift waiting to be made in the life of men and women of India through the members of Salvatorian family. We do acknowledge that we have in many ways, fallen short of our vocation to the mission of love and



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service. Here is a challenging question; what are some of the "hidden resistance" we are experiencing these days when we look at our missionary life?

A call to Restoration

"I shall pour out my Spirit on all humanity. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old people shall dream dreams and your young people shall see vision." (Joel 3:1). In this moment of the Silver Jubilee, the words of the Prophet animate our hearts. We give thanks to Fr. Jordan who has realised for us the dream and vision of eternal life (Jn 17:3). Fr. Jordan is our model, companion and intercessor in our journey towards our growth as zealous missionaries in the days to come. Lets seek his intercession to be vibrant missionary in the world. Pope Francis calls every missionary to restore the mission of Jesus. 'Francis' is not a name. It is a church that walks by paths, together with the least. It is an ecological church which embraces all without division. Francis –the name Pope Francis and Father Jordan added to their names.

Let me conclude with a word of prayer of gratitude. Divine Saviour, thank you for the missionary call we have received from you. We claim the mission you have given us through Fr. Jordan. We pray for a renewed, restored, humble heart which will always thirst for your presence; a shepherds' heart which will always seek the least and the lost; a restless heart which will be at peace only when every brother and sister of ours find their joy in you; a missionary heart which will help us to abandon the ways of the world and fix our eyes on you until we meet face to face in eternal glory. May our dear mother, be with this flock of Salvatorians as we put our nets into greater depths of communion and mission.



The Opening Ceremony of "Salvatorian Missionary Year"



Schlackl SDS of the Sisters' Generalate, an original Swahili song composed by Fr. Sayon Rukurugu SDS of the Motherhouse community, and poetry of Bl. Mary of the Apostles and Dom Helder Camara declaimed by S. Paola Marcialis SDS of the Sisters' Rome Region and Mr. Giuseppe Rogolino of the Lay Salvatorians. The celebration ended with a celebratory toast and festive pranzo." (Informationes, Vol XI, Nr. 13 February 2015, Rome)

"On Saturday, 17 January 2015, the Generalate marked the beginning of the Salvatorian Missionary Year with an inaugural celebration. Everything began with the Eucharist in the main chapel, presided by Fr. Milton Zonta SDS, Superior General. Afterwards about 50 participants representing all three branches as well as the members of the Motherhouse community and the employees of the Generalate, gathered in the library for an academic session. Speakers included Fr. Agustin Van Baelen SDS, General Mission Secretary, who spoke on the missionary year. S. Lilly Kurian SDS, Consultor of the Generalate of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Savior, spoke on the history of the Salvatorian mission in India. And, Mr. Roberto Gattini, President of the Lay Salvatorians in Italy, spoke about the mission efforts in Peru being carried out by Lay Salvatorians. The program also included instrumental music performed by S. Marion Etzel SDS and S. Teresa



Assam: The Land of the Golden Gardens as the First Salvatorian Mission (1890-1915)

Fr. Aloysius Hemrom, SDB

When Pope Francis took up the ministry of guiding, teaching and governing the church as the vicar of Christ on 13 March 2013, he gave a greater depth to the church's vision and mission through his exhortations of *Lumen Fidei* (light of faith, 29/6/2013) and *Evangelii gaudium* (joy of the gospel, 24/11/2013). However, such missionary vision and mission, we already find active in the first salvatorian mission of the Venerable John Baptist Jordan (in religion, Francis Mary of the Cross, 1848-1918), the founder of the Society of the Divine Saviour (the Salvatorians) in 1881.

Having been ordained on 21 July 1878 for the diocese of Freiburg (Germany), Jordan had an unquenchable fire burning within him even before this event to accomplish 'something special' for the 'greater glory of God and the salvation of souls' (*Gloria Dei et salus animarum*) for the great Saviour of the world. Hence, it is of no wonder that on 19 September 1878, he wrote in his diary: "Found the Apostolic Society [its patroness being Mary, Queen of the Apostles] and keep a calm mind in all trials". Jordan's dream was actualized on 8 December 1881, feast of the Immaculate Conception, in the Church of St Bridget, Piazza Farnese of Rome, in the humble and simple room-chapel where the saint of Sweden had lived and died. It was during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist that the *Societas Apostolicam Instructiva – The Apostolic Teaching Society* came into existence with just three members (Luethen, von Leonardi and Jordan). His zeal of souls found further expression in the founding of the *Society of the Sisters of the Divine Saviour* on 12 August 1888 in Tivoli, outskirts of Rome. In 1894, the Roman dicastery of the Congregation for bishops and regulars invested him with a new name of *Societas Divini Salvatoris – The Society of the Divine Saviour (SDS)*, by which the whole world would remember him for generations to come. On 27 May 1904, Holy See granted *decretum laudis* (decree of praise) to the Society and on 8 March 1911, Pope Pius X gave the final approbation to the Society.



These events further deepened the missionary zeal of Jordan together with his followers.

Armed with the Society's motto of *Gloria Dei et salus animarum*, Jordan applied to the Propaganda Fide for a mission field. On 18 November 1889, Holy See gave the mandate of the newly erected Assam Prefecture Apostolic to the fledgling Society of the Divine Saviour and Jordan accepted it with joy, happiness and thanksgiving in his heart. During the British Raj, the whole of Northeast India was grouped under name of Assam with Shillong as its headquarters. The founder, Fr Jordan, too wanted to launch the Salvatorian mission from the political capital of Assam, Shillong. And from this centre, the pioneers would venture out centrifugally. Therefore, he chose four of his best men, namely, Fr Otto Hopfenmueller (leader), Fr Angelus Muenzloher, Br Marianus Schumm and Br Joseph Bachhle) to set foot in Assam Mission although the society's membership was just 154 (6 priests, 3 deacons, 4 sub-deacons, 124 students, 17 brothers). This showed Jordan's missionary courage and zeal and ever ready to take 'risk' for God's kingdom. Thus on 17 January 1890, the four valiant Assam pioneers

were given a tearful but joyous farewell in the Roman Motherhouse. They set sail from Bindisi on 19 January 1890 and docked at Bombay Harbour on 2 February. Their life's longest train journey whistled off in the same evening and arrived in Calcutta on the morning of 5 February. The Assam Train left on 16 February at 9.00pm and arrived at Goalando. The steamer ride through the mighty Brahmaputra was breath-taking, making a day's halt at Dhubri on 18 February, allowing the four pioneers to set foot on Assam soil for the first time in their life. On 19 February, the pioneers arrived in Gauhati (today's Guwahati) and were welcomed by Fr Broi and his small Christian community. The Psalms speak of the 'bulls of Bashan' but the 'bulls of Gauhati' in a bullock-cart carried the pioneers and made them set foot on the sacred mountains of Shillong (*Lum Shyllong*) on 27 February 1890. Thus begun the famous Assam Mission for the Society for the great apostolate of *plantatio ecclesiae* (implanting of the church among the khasis and other groups in their appropriate socio-cultural context)! After a year, three Salvatorian pioneer-Sisters joined the missionaries on 12 January 1891.

Assam, the 'land of contrasts and extremes', had beckoned Jordan and his followers to 'plant the cross of Christ and to unfurl his flag' for generations. To begin the work of evangelization and liturgization, it would demand from the pioneers extraordinary vision and mission and courage. The Welsh Presbyterians had already solidified their mission work in Shillong from 22 June 1841. The pioneers had no fear or anxiety because in the school of Jordan (whose obsession was always 'mission') in Rome they had been sufficiently groomed to face such missionary challenges. The Salvatorian Constitutions and traditions are filled with missionary zeal and *missio ad gentes*. Great emphasis is laid on the missionary spirit in the formation of candidates. Jordan's writings are filled with such pertinent words as 'Eucharist, sacraments, prayer life, interior life, apostolic zeal, salvation, eternal life, salvation of souls, divine providence and glory of God' which demonstrate the priority of mission in his lifelong endeavours. Living with such a person as Jordan, the Assam pioneers could not but be affected and imbued by the founder himself. Moreover, with their sturdy German background and the experiences gained through scholastic and secular studies, prayer and reflection, praxis and theory, the pioneers would set out courageously to sow the seeds of faith among the tribes of Northeast India.

The axis of the world apostolate of Jordan was: "As long

as there is one person on earth who does not know God and does not love Him above all things, you dare not allow yourself a moment's rest." This apostolic zeal set afire the four pioneers as they set about evangelization and liturgization in the vast expanse land of the mighty *Ahoms*. This vision would include the use of whatever reasonable means and manner that God would inspire in them: "Be it a sermon, a discussion, a spoken or written word; in church, in school with the young or the old, with the educated or uneducated." To be a true 'apostolic missionary', one should saturate oneself in the theology of the cross and suffering and to endure it gladly in one's effort to make Christ known, accepted and loved, for "the words of God flourish only in the shadow of the cross", and "to the extent the apostolic man suffers, he works for the salvation of souls". This would at times require even shedding of one's blood and the red cincture around the waist in the salvatorian habit was a constant reminder to this great challenge. To fulfil such charisma of the founder and the society, the salvatorian pioneers would venture out with faith, hope and love into the Assam mission.

The Lord of the Mission, the Divine Saviour, had entrusted the task of *plantatio fidei et ecclesiae* (implanting of faith and the church) through the Propaganda Fide to the Salvatorian pioneers and as soon as they set foot on the sacred mission soil of Shillong on 27 February 1890, they left no stones unturned to accomplish the wish and desire of the Divine Saviour, the great missionary of the Father. After having settled down in a little residence called 'Good Hope Villa' (present day Laban of Shillong), the four pioneers began learning immediately the khasi language to evangelize the khasis. The weather of Shillong was a real challenge to the pioneers and the first sad page of the pioneers was written on 21 August 1890 when the mission-leader,



Fr Otto, succumbed to a meningitis attack. Angelus, the newly appointed young Apostolic Administrator of Assam had to re-pool his resources to begin anew where Otto had left. More personnel (priests and sisters) were needed to continue the great mission. After the 'decree of praise' of the Holy See to the society in 1904, Assam had the privilege of having its own Prefect Apostolic *de jure* and by a decree of 9 January 1906 the Holy See appointed Fr Christoph Edmund Becker (1875-1937) as the first Prefect Apostolic of Assam (1906-1921). With the dynamic and enthusiastic Becker at the helm of affairs, the Assam Mission would experience a new lease of life.



Becker would be known as the 'great apostle of the press' and made maximum use of the 'apostolate of the press' together with the other pioneers through the following: i) translations and interpretations of all the liturgical books, ii) apologetical writings to defend the faith against the onslaught of the Presbyterians

and the *seng khasi*, iii) catechetical books, iv) devotional writings, and v) letters, articles, mission reports, etc. Gradually, the Khasi Church would have a missal, lectionary, liturgical calendar, prayer and song book, and other tools for the spread of the gospel among the various tribes of Northeast India. In the different aspects of the tribal life, the salvatorians ventured to 'inculturate' Christian life (*lex vivendi*), celebration (liturgy – *lex orandi*) and thought (biblical/theological concepts – *lex credendi*) so as to make the tribals 'feel at home' in their faith in the Divine Saviour, Jesus Christ.

When we look for the great contribution of the Salvatorian pioneers to the Assam Mission, we discover that they accomplished wonders especially through the apostolate of the press. The great writers of the Word of God expressed through catechisms, catechetics, apologetical and devotional books and

mission news and views were the following: Otto Hopfenmueller, Angelus Muenzloher, Ignatius Bethan, Gebhard Abele, Marcus Anton Dombrowski, Corbianus Bohnheim, Pius Steinherr, Dominicus Mary Daunderer, Christopher Edmund Becker, Frumentius Stegmiller, Eduard Hackenbroich, and Heribert Winkler. Together with these prominent writers, the 'silent majority' of the 27 other Salvatorians together with 20 Sisters of the Divine Saviour pushed forward the Assam Mission. The writers wrote in Khasi, German, Latin and English. Regular letters and reports were sent to Rome, Germany and other parts of Europe. Besides the books on faith, reports, letters and articles appeared in the famous *U Nongialam Katholik* (The Catholic Leader), a monthly apologetic, edited by Abele from January 1902 (and later by other editors) and rechristened as *Ka Ing Khristan* (The Christian Family) from September 1906 which continues till this day. Furthermore, mission reports and news, letters and views, articles and reflections of the pioneers were published from the Roman Motherhouse in the monthly newsletters, such as, *Der Missionaer* 1881-1923 (DM, The Missionary), *Salvatorianische Mitteilungen* 1900-1912 (SM, The Salvatorian Fraternity), *Apostolische Kalender* 1891-1916 (AK, The Apostolic Calendar), *Annales SCI* (annual reports of the society), the annual *status Missionorum* (mission reports) to Rome, in the *Bamberger Volksblatt* (Bamberg's News-page for people; started by Otto before joining the society), *Die Katholischen Missionen* (The Catholic Mission, Freiburg) and *Annalen zur Verbreitung des Glaubens vom Ludwig Missionsverein* (Faith-works Reports of Ludwig Mission agency, Munich).

The first and foremost daunting task was to master the Khasi language which the pioneers did quite successfully and quickly. Otto with the help of an educated Khasi prepared the first basic catechism, *Ka Jinghikaijongkaniam Khristan* ('Lessons on Christianity') by 22 July 1890, but before he could complete the 'short life-sketch of Christ and Our Lady', he had to report to the Lord of the mission. It was however completed by Bohnheim and Bethan and published in 1893. Bethan will ever be remembered in the annals of the Northeast Church History, especially among the khasis for his monumental and famous 'Book of Prayers and Songs or The Way to Heaven' – *Ka Lynti Bneng* of today (erstwhile *Ka Lynti sha Byneng*) in 1894 (with 251 pages). In 1895, Abele wrote (in German) 'On works and life of a catholic missionary, priest on the Himalayan rivers' detailing Khasi culture (marriage ceremonies, death and funeral, song and dance, devil-worship), and the Protestants' influence in the region. His intention was to solicit

help and prayers from abroad. Later in 1900, he wrote an important apologetical work: 'The Difference between the Religion of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Religion of the Protestants'. He followed it up further by publishing in 1900 'The Life of St Martin' to conscientize the Protestants about their own founder, who was a catholic priest but renegaded. The other books that Abele wrote were the following: Prayers for the sick (1900), First Manual on Learning Khasi (1900), Why am I a Catholic? (1902, no extant copies), St Xavier Calendar for the Catholics of Khasi Hills (1901), The Life and Teachings of Martin Luther, the Father of Protestant Denominations (1901), Reply to those who criticize this Book (1901), the First Step towards learning Music (1901), Hymns for the Mass and Christmas season (1902), A Catholic Prayer Book (1903), and The Epistles and Gospel Readings of Sundays and Feast Days in a year (1904).

Angelus wrote in 1899 the 'Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus', but unfortunately no copies are extant. In the same year, he followed it up with 'The Assam Apostolic Prefecture: History and Development' (in German) to enthuse people at home to contribute generously to the mission works in Assam. Moreover, the periodical reports and letters (published in DM, SM, AK) that Angelus had to furnish Rome contains abundance of mission material. Bohnheim wrote a 'Bible History' in 1900 and again in the same year 'Life of Saints' (no extant copies). The other books that he wrote are the following: *Laudate Dominum Omnes Gentes*, a Khasi Hymnal (1902), for the use of the Catholics, Book of Latin Songs (1902), Devotion to Holy Pictures (1902), The Imitation of Christ (1905, no extant copies), Khasi-German Dictionary (1906, no extant copies), and The Reason of Faith from the Infallibility of the Church of Jesus Christ (1913). Daunderer, who was elected to be a general council member in Rome, wrote a big Catechism which was published in 1911 from the Vatican Polyglot Press. Dombrowski wrote *Cantate Domino* (Khasi Hymnal) in 1903. And Steinherr wrote another catechism in 1904. All such books sowed

and nurtured faith among the Khasi catholics and strengthened them to oppose the power and influence of the Presbyterians.

The first Prefect Apostolic of Assam, Fr Christopher Edmund Becker will be ever remembered in the Assam Church History for his *Im Stromtal des Brahmaputra* (trans. In the Brahmaputra River Valley) which was published in Munich in 1923 (published with revision again in 1927). This gives us valuable reference with the early history of the Catholic Mission in Northeast India (1598-1890) but also contains a rich anthropology on Indian life and culture (especially of Assam). The other works that Becker wrote were the following (all in German): Egg-breaking Ceremony of the Khasis (1917-



18), Indian Caste System and Christian Mission (1921), Medical Care in the Mission (1921), Fr Otto Hopfenmueller SDS: A German Pioneer to an Indian Mission (1923), Sr Eustachia Bauer SDS: A Religious Sister and an Exemplar of Mission (1924),

Family Property and the Mother's Right in Assam (1925), and Indian Narrations (n.d.).

Besides these, other monographs (in German) of the salvatorians wrote much on the 'mission life' in Assam. They are the following: My Journey to Assam by Dombrowski (1895), On the Religious Life of the Khasis (Stegmiller, 1921-22), Devil-worship: Stories from the Khasi Hills (Stegmiller, 1922), Khasi Sacrifice and Sacrificial Rites (Stegmiller, 1924), Khasi Archery and Hunting (Stegmiller, 1925), Khasi Market Life (Stegmiller, 1926), The Story of My Life (Winkler, 1967, in English), and The Journey of E. Bergrath from Rhine to Brahmaputra (Hackenbroich, 1876). Such mission accounts persuaded the catholics in Europe to be part of the Assam mission by their monetary contributions.

There is a beautiful saying that God writes straight in crooked lines. Or there is a silver lining in every black cloud. In the pioneering work of the missionaries, there were some opposing factors, even dangerous ones that helped their cause indirectly. These were the writings,

especially the Khasi monthlies of the Protestants and other denominations and the *Seng Khasi* as well, namely, i) *U Nongkit Khubor* (The Messenger, Shella, 1889 by W. Williams – the first Khasi periodical), ii) *U Khasi Mynta* (The Khasi Today, Oct 1895 by Hormu Roy Diengdoh, later taken up by the *Seng Khasi* from 23 Nov 1899), iii) *Ka Pateng Khristan* (The Christian Posterity, Jan 1901 by the Calvinistic Methodists), iv) *U Nongialam Khristan* (The Christian Leader, July 1902 by Dr. Roberts of the Presbyterian Church; later by J.C. Evans), v) *U Nongphira* (The Sentinel by S.C. Roy, July 1903), vi) *U Jaintia* (The Jaintia People, April 1904 by S.R. Manners and S. Blah), vii) *Ka Jingshai ka Gospel* (The Gospel-Light, 1905 by J.J. M. Nichols Roy), and viii) *U Lurshai* (The Morning Star, 1910 by Wilson Reade). In spite of the battle of words and arguments, at times very vehement, these writings not only supplied the salvatorians with several liturgical and theological terms and nuances, but also sharpened their wits and orthodoxy in every sphere and in the process brought out the best of all they had acquired and assimilated in Germany and Rome. The themes the missionaries treated were the following: faith formation, prayer life, Bible, sacramental life, missal, lectionary, liturgical calendar, liturgical year, liturgical music, Marian devotions, popular devotions and sacramentals, liturgical space: the church, formation of lay-leadership, associations and confraternities in the church.

To sum up: we have made an attempt to reflect briefly on the significance of the first Salvatorian mission in the famous Assam Mission of 1890 to 1915, their missionary spirit and method and their contribution to the Northeast Church especially through the apostolate of the press. Before setting foot on the Assam mission soil, the pioneers had to strengthen their missionary vocation through their philosophical, theological, liturgical and pastoral formation in Rome. When they arrived in Shillong, with meager means at their disposal, in the fulfillment of the Society's motto of *Gloria Dei et salus animarum* among the Khasis, they laboured tirelessly to sow, nurture, develop and strengthen the faith among the people of God. This they tried to accomplish by creating a liturgical language, by giving a concrete foundation to their faith

by emphasizing scripture and tradition, church history, liturgical formation and through various apologetic and liturgical books. Something of ingenuity was the continuous ongoing catechesis given to the young Christian church through *Ka Ing Khristan* on the tenets of the Christian faith, doctrine, magisterium and popular devotions in response to the scathing attack and opposition of the protestant denominations and the *Seng Khasi*. Such apostolate of the press instilled in the catholics a filial devotion to Mary and the saints into their life and work supported by a strong lay-leadership of catechists, teachers, schools, hostels, sodalities, associations and confraternities. What was put down in the numerous writings was the outcome of their own firm faith and deep conviction which they acquired in the school of Venerable Jordan, notwithstanding their own individual idiosyncrasies and drawbacks. What they produced in the short span at their disposal, they brought out quite a systematic treatment on the various sacraments and the liturgical life for the praxis of the Khasi catholics. This however did not mean in any way that the Christian life of the Khasis had achieved its zenith, once and for all. The pioneers sowed, planted and nurtured the faith amidst arduous difficulties and lack of means. They tried to develop and strengthen the same when some unforeseen circumstances passed by. That was the outbreak of World War I in 1914 which would last till 1918. Being 'spies and enemies of the crown' (they were mostly Germans), on 9 July 1915, the young Church of the Khasis gave farewell to the 14 valiant pioneers and soon after on 15 November 1915 to the ten Salvatorian Sisters as well. But God has his own ways to accomplish and continue his mission for a particular group as the Salvatorians. After a long wait from 1915 to 2003, two Salvatorian priests took up residence in Sts Peter and Paul parish, Laitkynsew, Cherrapunjee, from 3 January 2003 which was founded by the pioneer, Fr Abele, on 25 Sept 1897. It was officially inaugurated on 25 January 2004 by Archbishop Dominic Jala sdb, DD, in the presence of the Salvatorian Vicar General, Fr Piet Cuijpers SDS with the very descendants of the first Khasi Catholics of Laitkynsew. Everything for the *Gloria Dei et salus animarum!*

Aloysius Hemrom SDB, presently 2nd co-pastor in Holy Family Parish, Rongjeng, East Garo Hills, Meghalaya. From 1997 to 2011, he taught Liturgy, Systematic Theology and allied subjects in Sacred Heart Theological College, Shillong (also in Oriens Theological College, Shillong 1997-2001; and Divyadaan, Nashik 2009-2011). Presently, he combines pastoral life with academic ministry in Nagpur (Liturgy, Pilar Niketan), Ranchi (Philosophy, St Albert's College), Guwahati (Philosophy, Church History, allied subjects to FMA Personnel in formation) and in, Shillong (Sacred Heart Theological College). He is also the author of the book, "The Salvatorians among the Khasis."



A COMMUNITY IN MISSION



Fr. Michael Marbaniang

'Go to the whole world, proclaim the Good News' (Mk 16:15). Jesus is the 'Good News' of the Father. The disciples did this powerfully with the power of the Holy Spirit. This sense of Mission determines their way of being Church. All Church structures, i.e. doctrinal formulations, rites and rituals, code and government emerge from this Missionary character. As time passes, these structures condition her existence and as a result the Church identity suffers. Mission becomes only one of her activities or what can be worst still, the Church forgets her Missionary Identity. Vatican II was a 'New Pentecost'. It gives the Church once again her Missionary Identity. It was a special intervention of God in the life of the Church to prepare her for the third millennium. It makes the Church more aware of the Mystery which she herself is. It also brings back into focus the Apostolic Mission entrusted to her by the Lord. The Church must become leaven in the midst of

human society to renew it in Christ and transformed it into the family of God.

The Salvatorians: Pioneer Missionary Congregation in N.E. India

Pope Leo XIII received a petition in 1889 to erect the then Assam as a separate mission territory. The Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of Faith erected the Prefecture of Assam, Bhutan and Manipur on 13th December 1889. The Prefecture was entrusted to the Catholic Teaching Society which was founded by Rev. Fr. Francis Jordan in 1881. This Society was later known as The Society of the Divine Saviour. The Salvatorians were mandated by the Church to evangelize North East India. They were imbued with a missionary dynamism and in the very short span of their initial missionary activity here at the beginning, they laid a strong foundation for the growth of the Church in N.E. India.

After the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the Salvatorian Missionaries, who were from Germany, then considered an enemy country, had to leave the Assam Mission in 1915. "The last annual report of the Assam Mission, drawn up a few months before the Salvatorians left, contains the accounts of a fervent and well-organised Catholic Community". The congregation returned twenty five years ago to re-launch their presence here among us. I believe that the strength of the congregation, as it was at the beginning, comes from the Gospel and its Mission and now they can look forward to the future with hope.

Every congregation is part and parcel of the Church, the Body of Christ, which continues the saving mission of Jesus Christ, the Lord. Jesus' mission was to fulfil 'the will of His Father'. It was his purpose and his direction for all that he did while on earth, including his death (Jn 6:38). Three instances in the Gospel gives an insight into Jesus' mission. These passages are Lk 4:18f; Mk 10:45; Lk 19:10. These articulate who He was, why he had come, and how and where He led his disciples. Jesus led with a vision, which is His Father's Vision of life. He envisioned what our life would be like if God's Love rule our hearts. Jesus called this Vision, 'The Kingdom of God'. Jesus calls all his disciples to join him to bring this Vision to fulfilment.

By Baptism, every member of the Church is called to Mission. Religious life, which is a deepening of the Baptismal Consecration, inevitably implies Mission. *Lumen Gentium*, 46 states, "Religious by their form of consecration, are necessarily and deeply committed to the Mission of Christ. Like Him they are called for others: wholly turned in love to the Father and, by that very fact, entirely given to Christ's saving service of their brothers and sisters ... Religious life dedicated to work of the apostolate continue in our time Christ's announcing God's Kingdom to the

multitude, healing the sick and maimed, converting sinners to good life, blessing children, doing good to all, and always 'obeying the Will of the Father who sent Him". The mission of religious is first and foremost to be wholly and exclusively given to God and secondly, a special manner of given-ness to others. Religious congregation are to express the Mystery of the Church as 'bride of Christ' through personal and communitarian holiness. They are also to express the Mystery of the Church as a communion in Christ. They are to reflect the Mystery of the Church as bearer of God's Love to the world. Any religious congregation that forgets this reality of their being will become irrelevant for the world.

The life of Contemplation: the Basic Mission Dimension

Religious respond to the call of God because they are captivated by the love of Christ. Their lives are Christ-centred. They must necessarily nourish their union with Him by constantly pondering on His Word and living by it. Their lives witness to the total possession by Christ as the one meaning of their lives. If this relationship is lacking or superficial, nothing can make up for it. It is a basic and indispensable foundation of religious life.

Religious are to make the Word of God the daily nourishment of their prayer life and their approach to the situations and problems of living in today's world. The Word of God will make them knowledgeable regarding the Good News of Jesus, not merely in theory, but in an experiential way. This experience will become a pattern and an inspiration especially for the laity in the Parish. The life of contemplation springing from a continual pondering on the Word of God will be a powerful driving force of the Spirit in the life and work of the religious. Religious who nourish their lives of contemplation with faithful diligence are fulfilling their mission in a



most effective manner. People look up to the religious as persons of prayer and contemplation. Without this essential dimension, apostolic activities become just another form of social uplift. It is the search for union with God which gives meaning to service of others. Every religious community have to ask themselves seriously whether or not this dimension is sufficiently emphasized in community life today. Do people come to members of the community to learn ways of prayer and contemplation to obtain that experience of God for which every human heart hungers?

A Prophetic Role in the Church (VC 87)

Another important aspect of the Consecrated Life is that it points to God as the 'Absolute Good'. This is what the Religious vows of Chastity, Poverty and Obedience is all about. St. John Paul II has said that though the many apostolic works religious perform are extremely important, nevertheless, the truly fundamental work of the apostolate remains always what and at the same time who the religious are in the Church and in the world.

In the early Church, one notices the charism of renunciation of marriage for the sake of the Kingdom. The joyful living of chastity witnesses to a dimension of human fulfilment that transcends the natural desires for sense pleasure. This liberates the person to love others in selfless freedom. In this way chastity is a prophetic challenge to the hedonistic culture that characterizes our present day world that promotes the 'cult of the body' which is a kind of idolatry (VC 88).

The love of the Father which is in the heart of Jesus is placed deep within the heart of the person endowed with this gift of chastity. This love is essentially a 'love of self-giving' and is at the heart of religious consecration and it expresses itself in joyful service to others.

Another charism which was lived in the early Christian community is the renunciation of possession for the sake of the Gospel. It is a reminder for the Church not to forget its provisional character and setting in this world. In spite of the service of the poor, I would say that the religious still enjoys a comparative degree of security and material well-being. Today's society is marked by acute shortage of housing (particularly in urban areas), problems of migrants, unemployment or underemployment and the increasing economic disparity between the rich and the poor. In N.E. India today we see the mad rush to make money and to accumulate more and more material goods. Corruption is on the rise at every level of life. To be prophetic today, religious must return to a life of simplicity and a certain self-denial and restraint in the consumption of material goods (VC 90). The religious, by their way of life, must witness that they possess a 'treasure' far above every material blessing and that they enjoy a blessedness which follows on being poor for the sake of the Kingdom (Mt 5:3). In this way, religious will challenge consumerism and materialism that debase the value of the human person in the emphasis given to 'having' over 'being'. Today many religious congregations have adopted the preferential option for the poor as one of their priorities. This should not mean that they are distributors of material relief. Religious are life-bearers nourishing the seed of human development within the people they serve. They must enable people to seek the dignity of growing up to a self-reliant human living through the exercise of their own God-given potential.

The third challenge of the religious life is the joyful practice of 'obedience to the Father's Will' both by the individual and communities. The world today emphasizes human freedom, independence and respect for the human person. These are genuine values, but they can be often distorted

The world today emphasizes human freedom, independence and respect for the human person. These are genuine values, but they can be often distorted



into selfish pursuit of one's own interests to the detriment of less powerful members of the society. The religious are called to challenge this unbridled license and uncontrolled self-will by humble attentiveness to the Will of God and by putting aside self-interest in order to carry it out in true freedom of religious obedience. Such obedience gives the person a dignity which flows from willing surrender to God. It also frees a person for selfless service of others, not for personal ends, but in pure self-giving in the spirit of Christ.

Apostolic Activities

The religious community is rooted in the Local Church. It cannot be turned in on itself. Naturally, then, the religious love the Particular Church; they enrich it with their charisms and open it to the universal and ultimate dimension. Whatever the charism and form of service, they must look for new ways of being integrated into the Church and society; at the same time they must safeguard to foster the life of Contemplation. This will lead to an openness to the problems of the people and the urge to respond to them both by prayer and whatever action that is in their power.

The religious must remain faithful to their charism. The charism has its source in the special experience of God's Love which led the founder to bring the congregation to birth. It is necessary, therefore, to reflect deeply on the original experience of the founder in order to awaken in the members' consciousness the particular implications of their call which is a participation in that of the founder. Such an awareness will restore the balance, so much needed today, between the prayer life and contemplation and the involvement in the Apostolate, bringing a harmonious integration between the two. It is important to bear in mind that charisms are primarily special relationships with God in Christ and with members of the Congregation. This will fructify in corresponding forms of service to others.

Every Congregation runs institutions for organized service to others. There is always the danger that efficiency in such administration will take priority over being 'bearers of God's Love' to those who are served. I believe the primary objective of any service a congregation offers is that of 'Evangelization': spreading the Good News of God's Love in Christ to all. A Congregation needs to safeguard that institutions should not be power-oriented but service-oriented in the spirit of Christ, characterized by approachability, friendliness, helpfulness, especially, to the poorer sections of society.

Being open to the needs of the people a congregation serves calls for an authentic inculturation in apostolic activities. The Good News is meant for all persons in whatever culture they are rooted, and is meant to fulfil and purify all things human so as to draw them into the unity of Christ. Hence, religious communities, while being true to their charism, will also be alive to the gifts of the Spirit in others, especially the laity. Religious can promote charisms among the laity and encourage leadership of lay faithful in every temporal aspect of life. This will enlarge their own vision and they can share their charism with the people at a deeper level. This will build and strengthens the Church's Evangelization of society.

Conclusion

The Church needs persons 'capable of devoting themselves totally to God and to others for the love of God'. The religious life is God's answer to the Church's need for renewal and to be conformed to the Mission of Christ on earth (Eph 3:1-10). It up to each member of the congregation to respond to this same need today by allowing themselves to be transformed by God's grace so that their living in the presence of the Church, may penetrate Christian life like leaven in the dough, making it one with Christ's Eucharistic offering to the Father of all creation.

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REVISITING THE MISSIONARY

ROLE OF THE LAITY

The lay faithful along with priests and religious form part of the labour force Jesus sends forth into His vineyard (Mt. 20: 1-16). Everyone without an exception are called; some at the first hour, some at the third and some at the eleventh hour.

Blessed are the ones who are called at the first hour, because they have been granted 'bonus time' to spend with the Good Master. The labour in the vineyard becomes for them a fulfilling experience because they treasure the proximity of Jesus right here in this temporal world.

Jesus' mandate to preach the Good news to the ends of the earth has no exception. If one is not a missionary, he/she is either insensitive to the unconditional love and mercy of God or is too proud to admit the same. He/she has indeed turned a deaf ear to the call. St Paul in his letter to the Corinthians says "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (Col. 9:16).

Over the years, the role of laity has been understood as: pay, pray and obey. This understanding has not been

completely wrong. It is our duty to support the church financially. It is crucial that we humble ourselves and plead before the Lord for we cannot do anything on our own and we ought to remain obedient to people in authority because Christ was obedient even unto death on the cross. But our role as laity does not stop here. We are called to tread deeper and farther.

The most essential duty of a Christian is to know, love and serve Christ. Every other duty stems from this. True knowledge of the person of Jesus is the beginning of it all. Once we know who He is and who we are, we will truly be drawn closer to Him. St Augustine said: "My heart will be restless until it rests in thee." The third step of serving the Lord is the natural response to the relationship we share with Him. This "serving" is what Jesus means when he gives His final mandate "Go and preach the good news to all creation" (Mk 16:15). In the gospel of Mathew Jesus says referring to the last judgment "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt 25:40).

Jacob Jose



Since we are unable to repay God for the great deeds He has dispensed to us, we are to dispense freely to "others". Jesus said "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 22:39). I would like to believe that Jesus is saying, "be concerned about my neighbor's soul just as I'm concerned about my soul not perishing in hell" for the greatest of all failures is losing heaven.

THE CALL TO EVANGELIZE

Evangelization is not a process of brain washing the other and driving home some ideology dear to us, screaming out loud in middle of the street with a microphone in hand. Instead it is the "expression" of the true awareness of God and self and the imminent transformation within. This expression is possible only to the one who "loves others as Christ loves" It is also, one's loving response to the Father's will that no one should be perished (2 Pet 3:9).

The laity has a unique and prominent role in the mission of the church - to evangelize. Having a family and having to toil hard to earn a living are additional responsibilities we undertake. These responsibilities do offer us great challenge, but at the same time are unique opportunities as missionaries.

St. Francis of Assisi said "preach always but use words if necessary". Mother Teresa is a shining example of preaching without words. Our mothers too preach a silent sermon, sacrificing little by little their life nourishing the young ones, just as Christ did.

MISSION TO THE FAMILY

The primary mission area of laity is family. The family offers far too many challenges that we often are tempted to quit rather than embrace it. The only role model before us is the Crucified Christ and the only rule is the rule of Love. St Paul in the letter to Ephesians reminds us: "Husbands should love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her to make her" (Eph 5:25).

Marriage is the divine call to a lifelong commitment to cohabit with the other despite any necessary common ground; for the sake of becoming 'a gift' to each other, just as Christ did. One ought to go through the painful process of "dying" on a daily basis in order to empty himself and be truly fruitful. Jesus said: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (Jn 12:24).

The only thing that is common between me and my wife is that we both do not have the habit of reading. In everything else we have contradicting opinions and tastes. We fall, fret and fight yet start all over again because



at the altar we were entrusted to each other in a divine covenant to be Christ like and not quit. With the generous supply of God's mercy family life is extremely fulfilling and joyful. As husband and wife, we enrich each other and grow as a single unit experiencing the true happiness and peace on a daily basis. Sincere perseverance despite growing challenges within marital covenant transforms the persons thoroughly to be Christ like. Such families are great source of encouragement for the generations to come.

RAISING CHILDREN

The fruit of selfless love shared between couples is children. Children bring joy to every parent but at the same time demands an emptying similar to the one above. I must say the only private time my wife gets is when she is in the bathroom. Other times she is at work either for my children or for me.

No two children are the same though they are born of the same parents. No single tactic or diplomacy works for all but each one has to be dealt uniquely. Among the three children I have, the older one needs to be told things with the foot down. Second one needs little cajoling and petting to take a word seriously and with the third one, we are yet to figure out a tactic.

When children are young, we sincerely hope things would be better when they grow up. But we know as parents, no such time arrives. We are on our toes no matter what age they are in. Every age begets its own challenges. And after all this ordeal, as for parents we are only custodians of the children God gives us. Like Mary who raised the Son of God for a unique purpose, we too raise them for God and He does with them as He wishes.

The only model of instruction that works with children is a life of witness. They silently watch how we do things and emulate us. To a great extent what sticks on with them in the future is what they pick up from us at a tender age. Apart from creating a good, healthy atmosphere for children to grow up, and educating them, what must become the prime concern of every parent is the salvation of their children. We must be confident that if we introduce our children to the relating-interacting Jesus; they have it all and they will lack nothing in the days to come and to eternity. Remember Jesus said "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Mt 6:33).

One child rightly cared for can bring many others to salvation when they mature. If we do that, our job as parents is well done.

WITNESSING AT WORK

Christifideles Laici also notes: "It is necessary, then, to keep a watchful eye on this our world, with its problems and values, its unrest and hopes, its defeats and triumphs: a world whose economic, social, political and cultural affairs pose problems and grave difficulties in light of the description provided by the council in the pastoral constitution, *Gaudium et Spes* (7). This, then, is the vineyard; this is the field in which the faithful are called to fulfill their mission. Jesus wants them, as He wants all His disciples, to be the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" (Mt 5:13- 14). But what is the actual state of affairs of the "earth" and the "world," for which Christians ought to be "salt" and "light"? (CL. 3).

Having to work in the real world offers the faithful, tremendous opportunity as missionaries. They have access to where priests and the religious have limited access. If sensitive enough, he comes face to face with people who hunger and thirst for that ultimate Love



which alone can satisfy. They unfortunately are ignorant or have their minds warped by worldly priorities. The laity awakened by the truth, propelled by His love, by the example of his life is truly effective in challenging people to rediscover God and be reconciled to His Church.

Humility, selfless love and availability are the keys to be effective instruments in hands of God. Jesus says in the gospel of Mathew "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Mt 5:5).

Being in business, I get to acknowledge to my clients, my faith and reliance on God's unfailing providence, its impact on my life and work. The conversations often tread beyond the official boundaries and linger in to the personal realm where life and relationships are discussed. My website does not hide my identity as a beloved of Christ and boldly acknowledge that I'm a pencil in the hands of God. In the 7 years of my business, I have never been without work and there has been not a single need that is not met though I never have surplus money in my bank account. Jesus says: "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven" (Mt 10:32).

The uniqueness of a business built around Christ and Christian values, fares well in a world that is alien to such concepts. It's "newness" often enthuse people to dialogue where one could share his dominating values and sow the seed of Christ. In such a business scenario, the dignity of the other person is upheld above all other worldly values. Money is a reward for sincere hard work and not the ultimate goal of business.

When we are driven by the Holy Spirit, we are raised above the law. Yet by being obedient to the authorities and by being honest in paying taxes, we impact the lives around.

Internet and mobile technologies throw open a unique



world to the 21st century missionary to communicate beyond geographical boundaries. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, Instant Messaging tools like Skype, Gtalk etc are excellent platforms to engage with people. These tools offers us great opportunity if due respect is given and the dignity of the person is upheld at all times.

OTHER AREAS OF IMPORTANCE

The role of the laity is to renew the temporal order. He must seek the Kingdom of God, engaging in the social, cultural and political affairs, ordering them according to the plan of God.

The world is where the laity fulfils his Christian vocation. Their vocation therefore is not to leave but to sanctify the world from within, like leaven, by fulfilling their particular duties - not merely in the anthropological or sociological reality, but also in the theological and ecclesiological reality, in the very sense that God handed over the world to them so that they may participate in the work of creation and free creation from the influence of sin.

Lay men and women may choose to work among teenagers, campus students, migrants, professionals, families and the aged; depending on the unique charism each has been given. People who are gifted with musical and artistic talents must use them to glorify God and to bring His kingdom down on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus said "Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on God's saving justice, and all these other things will be given you as well" (Mt 6: 33)

The greatest service one could offer to our children is to give them an opportunity to experience Jesus as a living, interacting personal saviour and God whose love is unconditional and everlasting. And also to experience His Church as the ship they have embarked as they journey to the shore of eternity; where all the essential graces to strive forward are supplied limitlessly though Holy Sacraments. Laity therefore may entrust themselves to teaching catechism in their own parishes.

Driven by His love, people can dedicate themselves to care for the poor, marginalized and the downtrodden according to the measure of grace they have been given. In the gospel of Mathew, Jesus says: "I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters; you were doing it to me" (Mt 25: 40).

Lay people also have the opportunity to be at decisive official positions to ensure social justice, not compromising Truth at any cost. Christian professionals especially in sports, music, art and cinema have a huge role to play as they have a big impact on common people. They could also present to their contemporaries, a transformed life style, challenging them to wiggle themselves out of the bohemian life styles they lead.

CONCLUSION

In *Christifideles Laici*, Pope John Paul II writes about the two temptations laity have not always known how to avoid: "the temptation of being so strongly interested in Church services and tasks that some fail to become actively engaged in their responsibilities in the professional, social, cultural and political world; and the temptation of legitimizing the unwarranted separation of faith from life, that is, a separation of the Gospel's acceptance from the actual living of the Gospel in various situations in the world" (CL.2).

As laity, we are called and sent forth into the vineyard of the Lord as a "universal sacrament of salvation" to the people in the world. "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Lk 10:2).

Evangelization is ineffective if it does not stem out from true love. The foundation is the desire to follow Christ, the decision to love Him above all and setting out to serve Him despite odds. Jesus asks us "Why do you stand here idle all day?" (Mt 20:6)

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Ronnie Wahlang

MISSION AND CHALLENGES BEFORE THE CATHOLIC YOUTH IN NORTHEAST INDIA

As I sit to pen down my thoughts, I am reminded of the common hymn in the 'Lynti Bneng' called 'Phah Jingshai' or 'send forth your light'. This hymn which is a favourite among the Catholic youth is but a tribute to the Salvatorian missionaries who more than a century ago set their foot in our beloved hills and sowed the seeds of the Catholic faith. The painstaking labour and the mettle of the Salvatorian fathers are evident from the phenomenal growth of the seeds that they have sowed which has now become a massive tree which provides shelter and fruits to over half a million people. The growth of the Catholic faith in Khasi and Jaintia Hills is unparalleled as is evident from the infrastructure and services that one can find in every nook and corner of the Archdiocese and this growth is but a fitting tribute to the Salvatorian missionaries.

As a Catholic youth, I am filled with joy and pride to witness the rapid growth of the Catholic faith among the Khasi people and each Easter season, I am filled with elation to witness new entrants into the Catholic faith. My joy is doubled when I come across religious and priests who strive towards further growth of the seeds sowed by the Salvatorian fathers. The increase in priestly ordinations' and religious professions are an apparent indication of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the Archdiocese. The Annual Eucharistic Procession and the ICYM (Indian Catholic Youth Movement) Convention amply demonstrates the strength of the Catholic faith among the people of our beloved hills.

Amidst the elation at the strength and growth of the Catholic faith, one, however cannot ignore or afford to disregard the gradual decline in human values and the escalation of secular thoughts and acts among the

children of the Catholic faith. The catholic faithful in general and the youth in particular have come under great duress due to the forces of darkness which are at work to destroy the seeds that have been sowed over a century ago. Hushed conscience coupled with anxiety owing to the forces at work is beginning to push young Catholics to the threshold of hopelessness and utter bewilderment. The unexpected spurt in crime against children and women and the disconcerting trend of young people engaged in satanic worship poses a serious challenge to Catholic values. The ethics which have been inculcated among the Catholic youth are beginning to show signs of wearing out and are being gradually replaced with new set of values espoused by the secular world.

The forces of darkness have sounded the war bugle against Catholic doctrine and ethics and are making all attempts to win over the gullible youth. The challenge and danger posed by these forces are real and therefore it is pertinent to take note of the warning of St. Mark in his Gospel 13:33 'Be on your guard, stay awake.' St. Mark makes a clarion call to the local Church and the youth in particular to stay awake and remain on guard as the designs of the evil one is to destroy the Church through secular thoughts and acts. While we look back and thank God for the light that has lead out of darkness over a century ago and for the rapid growth of the Catholic faith in our hills, we must confront the forces of darkness with doubled edged swords which is the Holy Eucharist, the Holy Bible, the Sacraments and steadfast prayers. It is a challenge and opportune moment for the clergy, the parents, the young people and the children to unite against secular forces and cling on to the 'light' that has saved us from the scourge of death and sin.



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Impact of Christianity in Northeast India

Introduction

The North Eastern Region of India (hereafter, Northeast) suggests nature's exotic beauty of the plains and hills blended by variety of ethnic groups and cultures. The region is also aaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. It is a cluster of contiguous region, 98% of which is bordering with international boundaries and 2% linked with the rest of India at Siliguri junction in West Bengal (popularly known as the "chicken neck"). More than 26 million of the total population of this region is made up of tribal people and their habitats are found both in hills and plains. For centuries Northeast (particularly tribal) people lived in isolation from the mainland, and to a great extent from one another.

1. Arrival of Christianity

Christianity made its presence felt in Northeast since the 17th century. But more tangibly with the British administration in the beginning of 19 century when

it came in contact with the region culminated by the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826; and it is at this time that the tribal people were exposed to Christianity. Like a leaven, Christianity slowly and effectively percolated into the receptive cultures of the tribal communities. The new religion, however, appeared to them in the form of Churches, as Protestant Churches (Anglicans, Welsh Christians, Presbyterians, Baptists, Evangelicals, Pentecostal, Seventh-Day Adventists, etc.) and the Catholic Church (distinguished internally by different nomenclatures like Salvatorians, Jesuits, Salesians, Diocesans, Franciscans, Carmelites, etc). The Churches evangelized in different areas, to mention a few (in alphabetical order): Arunachal Pradesh (Baptists in 1940s, Catholics 1970s), Assam (Catholics in 1626, Protestants in 1812), Manipur (Baptists in 1890, Catholics in 1952 but some missionaries and immigrant Catholics entered much earlier from Burma), Meghalaya (Garro Hills: Protestants in 1867, Catholics in 1933; Khasi

Hills: Catholics in 1889, Anglicans and Presbyterians ...), Mizoram (Baptists in 1894, Presbyterians in 1897, Catholics in 1952), Nagaland (Baptists in 1872, Catholics in 1948), and Tripura (Catholics in 1683; Baptists in 1912).

Christianity in Northeast did not undergo organized persecution, though it had to endure various types of hardships. Evangelization was in a way easy as there was no coercive imposition of the Gospels as done in some other regions of India during the colonial period (e.g., Portuguese empire in Goa). During the colonial period, the British administration, characterized by Protestantism, tried to apportion territories to different Churches to prevent the interference of religious rivalries in the political expansion. For instance, the states of Meghalaya and Mizoram were allotted to the Presbyterians, while the states of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura were given to the Baptists.

2. The Prism of Impact

The history of Christian movement in Northeast can only be understood as an integral part of a larger process of political, social, economic, cultural and religious change. A study of this movement would not be complete unless one knows and is familiar with the political developments which have impinged upon a highly complex situation. The region itself has an extremely complex population and cultural diversity that it is not easy to make a blanket statement when we discuss certain issues, especially the impact of Christianity among the peoples of Northeast India.

3. Exposition to the New World-View

Prior to the arrival of Christianity the tribal world-view was governed by clan, village, tribe, sub-tribe or at the most by a particular area or state. Christianity exposed the tribal people to the rest of India and simultaneously to the international community particularly Europe and America through Church organization. Social transformation began to take place as the Americans and Europeans were intimately in touch with the indigenous people much more than the Indian counterparts who were mostly Hindus.

The tribal world-view characterized by beliefs in the good and bad spirits was overpowered by the Christian world-view founded on God who is Creator and Father of all humankind and this impact gave a leap in the understanding of human dignity and human

fraternity much beyond the traditional understanding. The Christian world-view is radically determined by the person of Jesus Christ, his love, mercy, pardon, forgiveness, acceptance, and unity.

4. Sense of Universal Solidarity

Traditionally, the sense of unity and fellowship in the tribal community was weak insofar as it was constrained by clan, tribe, sub-tribe and dialect-based social adherence.

Christianity, being a world-wide religion effortlessly initiated greater communion and solidarity in Jesus Christ, despite internal tensions and divisions due to theological and historical differences. Nevertheless, the foundation of Christianity brought a qualitative change in tribal, inter-tribal, and non-tribal relationship in Northeast.

Christian missionaries (who were linked with their communities in Europe and America) gave a great sense of solidarity and support to the tribal communities who suffered great isolation from the rest of the world. The indigenous communities began to expand their horizons to reach out to other villages sharing their joy of discovering the new faith in Christ and forming new ways of fellowship conducive to stability of society.

Education and Literature

Christianity as a religion was accompanied by the package of education. Christian churches applied maximum energy and resources in the field of education. Many local, regional and national leaders have received their education and training in Church sponsored educational institutions. Even those communities who had hardly embraced Christianity



enjoyed great benefits from Christian educational services right from nursery to university level.



Another aspect of education came with the development of tribal literature. For example, the Khasis owe their script to Rev. Thomas Jones, the Aos to Rev. Clark, the Tangkhuls to William Pettigrew, etc. The use of Roman script in place of Bengali script had also created initial resistance (e.g., in Khasi and Jaintia Hills). Very soon a group of Khasi authors and the

Catholic missionaries and leaders of other communities adopted a new and phonetic mode of spelling, and gradually books composed by the Catholic German Salvatorian missionaries were adopted as standard texts. From then on Khasi was written quite consistently using the new phonetic spelling. Today most of the tribal dialects are written in Roman script and they are officially recognized as major regional languages in educational system, some of of them are recognized up to doctorate degree in the Universities (e.g., Khasi, Mizo, Angami languages).

5. Health Care

Prior to the arrival of Christianity, there was hardly any consciousness of health care, prevention of sickness, diagnosis, treatment, care, dietary habits, special care of the old, mother and child care, etc. The tribal world in Northeast was practically unacquainted with hygienic ways of living. All the sicknesses and diseases were attributed to the evil spirits. The healing ministry of Jesus Christ articulated by the missionaries became a tangible and effective means of witness to the personal involvement of God in the lives of the native people.

Alongside the governmental efforts, different Churches actively organized and established hospitals, hundreds

of rural dispensaries, health centres, etc., thus changing the attitude of the people towards sickness, diagnosis, treatment, and health care in general. With the impact of the work done yesterday, the present generation has taken up nursing and medical profession with amazing stories of success.

6. Development and Leadership

The Christian concept of development is understood as an act of religious commitment concerned with spiritual and moral well-being of the human person. The holistic well-being would be unthinkable without a minimum standard of material comfort and security and without adequate provision of spiritual atmosphere. So the two-sided developmental activities, i.e., spiritual and temporal, were not only interdependent but also indispensable. Hence, Christian anthropology focuses on the human person, human dignity and human rights. God made man in his own image and likeness. When this image of God was damaged by sin, God intervened through His Son, Jesus Christ to redeem the worth and dignity of human beings.

Christianity provided the leadership needed for social transformation among the tribals, which otherwise would lag behind the rest of the world. This was done through the agency of education and by creating various social platforms to exercise the human faculties to lead and organize in the path of development and change.

7. Tribal Identity

Northeast India is a home to many indigenous tribal communities that are actively engaged in self-preservation (culturally and politically). Despite some degrees of success, several communities have failed to integrate with India, and many others continue to experience different levels of economic deprivation, political indifference or deceit, and gimmicks of international politics (like China and South Asian countries sponsoring insurgencies against each other) but often galvanized by indigenous slogans of greater autonomy and self-determination, a fascination for minority communities.

Experience of Christian faith in this context is a complex issue. Multiplicity of tribes, sub-tribes and non-tribal communities raises several sensitive issues of self-assertions and self-preservation. Over and above this, there is also the issue of multiple-churches struggling for its own existence and co-existence with other churches and other faiths. Therefore, even though the

majority of the tribals in some states has embraced Christianity, very little can be done when it comes to finding feasible solutions to ethnic conflicts. It is mainly because the Church leaders and the community elders forget their identity as Christians, while clinging to their own tribal identity.

8. Value System

Northeast's encounter with Christianity and its impact has two characteristics, namely, change and renewal. Christianity brought the Gospel that proposed a new kingdom for all, a kingdom of love and brotherhood. It would turn things up side down, inside out, and having the power to turn the greatest to the least and the first to the last. It was a kingdom opened to loving strangers and enemies and hating blood relations in order to be worthy as true followers of Christ, the liberator and saviour of the world.

Alongside Christianity, modern civilization also brought a package as attractive as that of Christianity. Now in the race of privatization and globalization, the most deceitful methods are being employed in this region to take maximum advantage of the vulnerability and innocent mind of the tribal communities which own land. The government backed by industrialists come with a package of mega-development (new gospel of change) with 'good news' for the poor to proclaim better road, communication, agriculture, horticulture, etc. The new designation of the liberator is the "developer" the saviour of un-development. The 'developer' has his kingdom in this world. With a huge purchasing power it can buy up the entire tribal land by overnight. Similar to the power of the Christian Gospel, the gospel of "development" has a high potentiality to turn things upside down, inside out, to love strangers



and hate blood relations to obtain citizenship in the kingdom of worldly well-being. The natives will be tempted or compelled to exchange their sacred land, culture and language for money, job and development. The developers will design strategically as to how to mesmerize the indigenous people and spin their world into profit oriented avenue until the latter attain their salvation and live in the 'new heaven and new earth' in the gutters and slums of urban cities where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

9. Art, Music, and Dramatic Culture

The tribal communities are by nature endowed with singing talents, and they perform their marvellous fiat with their indigenous musical instruments. The missionaries enhanced their talents and promoted social gatherings through religious services, collaborative ministries and endeavours. Some churches gave greater contribution to singing and music (Protestants), while other churches on art and culture (Catholics). For instance, it is reported that in Khasi Hills, the first significant Catholic influence on Khasi theatre began with Fr. Heribert Winkler, a German Salvatorian missionary (1875-1967) who started music and dramatics among the Khasi youth in small communities. When the Germans left during the First World War, the Salesians of Don Bosco came and promoted art, music and dramatics with greater vigour.

10. Conclusion

We can speak of different types of impact of Christianity on the people of Northeast India: i) Christ and his message which provided a new vision of life and implanted certain fundamental values (faith, love, forgiveness, universal brotherhood, etc.); ii) the Christian Church which taught new modes of social organization, patterns of common worship, art and architecture, introduced new feasts, education, health care and social services and leadership, etc.; and iv) Christian society which introduced new models for public life-standards, new cultures, different types of social, economic and political activities.

The extraordinary growth of Christianity during the last fifty years cannot be attributed only to 'foreign' missionary efforts, because they are not the primary agents of evangelization except during the time when Christianity was introduced in the region. There has been scores of pioneer missionaries from the

region itself, as unsung heroes, who gave their lives for the growth of the Kingdom of God and for social transformation.

Christianity has come to stay in the Northeast India, although it is still a small minority group, except in some states (Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland). The Churches have to review their outlook and their missionary activities according to the signs of time. For what used to be their "ministry" in the past (e.g., education and health care services) has become

"industry" today (commercial activity). With the trend of "Look East Policy" the agents of "development" are looking for a borderless trade and communication in the Northeast and beyond. This effort itself will give rise to another type of regional instability and social unrest. There is an urgent need that the Church/es, together with all stake holders, synergise their efforts to effectively proclaim the Gospel and to render tangible services to humanity worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, because Christianity is here to stay in Northeast.



Fr. Linus Neli hails from the Archdiocese of Imphal. He holds a Master degree in Human Rights and Doctorate in Canon Law (Rome). He worked as Associate Director in St. John's Medical College, Bengaluru, and as Administrator of Caritas India, New Delhi. He has authored several books and published researched articles in several reviews. He teaches Canon Law at Oriens Theological College and Sacred Heart Theological College, Shillong. Currently he is the rector of Oriens Theological College, Shillong.

THE MAKING OF A MISSIONARY



Northeast India is one of the flourishing Mission territories even today. Nevertheless Northeast India, even in the present millennium is one of the difficult places of missions due to slow implementation of technological advancements, poor road and transport connectivity, lack of basic facilities, plurality of customs, language, traditions etc., Amidst all these struggles and difficulties, the region has seen some of the veteran missionaries, who are from both in and outside India. There are many who gave their lives in sacrifice for the mission starting with the Salvatorian Pioneers. One of such living missionaries of par excellence is Fr. G.K Prakash, SDS, who has made Northeast India his home for many decades. He is fondly called as the "Missionary to the Assamese." Even at the age of 80's he is still an inspiration and model to the aspiring missionaries, whose untiring missionary zeal does not diminish with age or ill health. It is befitting to hear from his life and experience as a missionary in a distance land in the Salvatorian "Missionary Year."

Fr. G.K Prakash, SDS was born in Kerala, 1934, in the southern state of India and raised in a rich traditional Syrian-catholic faith. He was ordained priest in 1967 and later joined the Salvatorians and pronounced his final religious vows in the year 1994. Assam is one of the important places of mission for the Vicariate with its three centers. Indeed, God has led us to this land of mission through the person of Fr. G.k Prakash, who started and developed the missions before it was officially handed over to the Salvatorians. The following is an interview with Fr. G.k Prakash, in which he shares his life and work as a missionary.

Can you tell us about your family and childhood?

My family consists of parents and 5 children. Four of us are missionaries: two priests and two religious Nuns. Our youngest brother, his wife and four children continue our family at Villa Kallanode, under the Diocese of Thamarasserry. Their eldest son is a Parish Priest in the same Diocese.

What inspired you to choose priestly life and why did you choose to be a missionary?

I was an altar boy of my parish. I became a teacher in the Parish school. In those days, the headlines in the newspapers were on freeing India from foreign Missionaries especially from Assam! A Holy diocesan priest of Palai began a Mission Home to prepare young men to go to missions in north India. The Congregation began advertising in Catholic Periodicals. After my one year at Mission Home, my desire to go the Jesuits at Patna was frustrated! I joined the Society of St. Pauls, later I became a Diocesan priest of Tezpur Diocese.

Can you narrate about your seminary formation?

During my seminary life, I came in close contact with saintly priests, first Diocesan Indians. Later on I came under zealous and hardworking Paulist and Salesian priests, all Italians. I had also opportunity to learn Italian. I never doubted my vocation nor got discouraged, when my plans met with obstacles. All along my subject was Bible study, research, meditation etc.,

What does mission mean to you?

Missionary life for me is to contribute to preserve the faith of the Catholics and to establish the Church in new places. With opportunities and the means God gave me, the missions of Hojai, Manaldai, Silchang, Kaki got established. They are all parishes with High Schools under Diocesan clergy. I was fortunate to get the friendship of the protestant churches and the *Nam Dharma*.

How do you remember your early years of missionary life?

During my early years I learned the local language, history, culture etc., I had the privilege of friendship with our saintly pioneer missionaries' like Servant of God Bp. S. Ferrendo, Bp. O. Marengo, Fr. Maschio, Fr. I. Rubio. The Guido Brothers, Fr. Marino Peditto, Bp. Rosario and many others. All along I did not face hostility or obstacles from the government or the people

How do you face challenges, success and failures in your missionary life?

Following always my motto: "DO NOT BE OVERCOME BY EVIL, BUT OVERCOME EVIL BY DOING GOOD". And by my understanding that life consists of day and night, I have lived un-discouraged.

How do you value your life as a Salvatorian Missionary?

My providential role with regard to the Salvatorians in Assam was to acquire lands, establish parishes and schools at Nagaon and Dhing and invite the Salvatorians to develop and continue the apostolate and I joined the Salvatorians and am happy. Happy also that the Salvatorians Sisters are coming to Assam. Praise to God for using me to bring to Assam also the OMI Fathers at Bhurbandha Town and the MPV Sisters at Nagaon.

What is your hope for the Church in Assam?

At present and providential stage of Church in Assam, I rejoice to see that the Diocesan priests and the Religious Societies are establishing parishes and formation houses, Schools, Colleges even University, Hospital etc. I hope and pray that in future these works of apostolate will produce lasting spiritual fruits and local communities and vocations.

What do you think are the most essential elements a missionary should cultivate in his/her life?

I wish that the seminaries grow in the love of God and loyalty to the Church. The habit of daily Bible study and meditation will protect them from secular ambitions and media for pleasure. If the example of Muslims and Hindu youth under religious training in the uniforms people respect and in their movement is two or three groups, their reverence for thing of religious etc. were to have their good influence on our seminarians! May they gain the ecclesiastical spirit! And be protected from traps!

Do you have any advice for the young missionaries?

Let us IMITATE CHRIST! Let the Book "Imitation of Christ" show us the way.



EVENTS

Farewell for Class X and for Dear Sisters

The Christ Jyothi School, Dhing bid farewell to the outgoing students of class X and beloved Sisters Sr. Callista CCR and Sr. Marita Jane CCR. The function began with an emotional and touching group song by class IX students. The Principal, Rev. Fr. Vara Prasad SDS in his speech encouraged them to be good human beings in the days to come in the light of what they have learned at Christ Jyothi. Both Sr. Callista and Sr. Marita shared their happy experience with students and parents at the school.



Children's' Day

Children's day was commemorated with immense joy, enthusiasm and magnificence in Divine Saviour School, Ranchi on 14 November, 2014. Prizes were given away to the children who were the winners in the curricular and co-curricular activities.

Together for Mission

Gathering of the finally professed members of the Vicariate was convened at the Passionist Retreat Center, Bangalore to plan and discuss strategies and agendas for the growth and development of the vicariate. The meeting was valued positively by all the participants in terms of collaboration and community spirit.



Vicariate Visitation

The official visit of all the Communities under the Vicariate took place from Nov 18 - Dec 10, 2014 by the Vicariate leadership. The official visit is held on regular intervals to foster better relation among the Communities and members. It also helps to cultivate a healthy Salvatorian Community living.



Foundation Day Celebration

The 133 foundation day of the Society was celebrated in a very meaningful way. The salvatorian community in Bangalore was joined by the Salvatorian Sisters to mark the event. The celebrations began with the Holy Eucharist followed by meal, games and concluded with cultural evening.



Surprise Visit

The members of Rashaka Sadan formation community paid a friendly visit to the neighboring Salvatorian Sisters Community at Electronic City, Bangalore during the Christmas week. It was the first occasion for the students of initial formation to enjoy the hospitality of the Salvatorian Sisters



Salvatorian Missionary Year

The vicariate organized special programmes to mark the opening day of the "Missionary Year" on 17 January 2015. It also commemorated the 125 year of sending the first salvatorian missionaries to Northeast India. The 'Missionary Year' all set revitalize missionary enthusiasm.



Music Album

The first music album of the Indian Mission Vicariate, titled "Saviour: Salvatorian Songs" by Dn. Joby Koonthamattathil, SDS was released by His Grace Rt. Rev. James Thoppil, the Bishop of Kohima in Dimapur, Nagaland on January 6, 2015. The Album was dedicated to the "Salvatorian Missionary Year" by Fr. Sunil Thomas SDS on January 17, 2015 on the opening day of Missionary Year. It was a privilege to have the Album released in Northeast India, which is the first place of the Salvatorian Mission as well as the first song ever composed on Fr. Otto, is sung by a Khasi, for whom Fr. Otto laid down his life.



Mission in Progress

The renovated building of Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, Laitkynsew was re-dedicated by Most Rev. Dominic Jala, the Archbishop of Shillong and the newly constructed building of Divine Saviour English Medium School and Community Centre was inaugurated by Fr. Sunil Thomas SDS, the vicariate superior on 1 February 2015. It is one of the oldest existing missions begun by the pioneering Salvatorian missionaries in the Northeast India. The Vicariate is grateful to SOFIA in helping to materialize the project.

Workshop

Fr. Sunil Thomas, Fr. Vimal Raj, Fr. Chinnaiyah Bellamkonda and Fr. Johnson Vinoth Kumar participated in the national level workshop on Project Management and Fundraising held at the North Eastern Diocesan Social Forum, Guwahati. The seminar has helped them to gain a lot of technical and practical knowledge in the areas concerning fund raising and project management.



Picnic Fun

It was a lot of fun for the aspiring Salvatorian students in formation at Rashaka Sadan, Bangalore to have spent a day at the Wonderla Amusement Parks in the outskirts of Bangalore. The students enjoyed the whole day engaging in a lot of fun-filled activities and explored various entertaining felicities at the park.



Cardinal's visit

It was a surprise visit by His Eminence Cardinal Polycarp Pengo, the Archbishop of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. We were blessed to have his presence in the Salvatorian Community, Bangalore. He shared with the community about his lovingly cherished long-term relationship with the Salvatorians.



Go Green Campaign

The Republic Day (26 January) was celebrated in a unique way at the Rashaka Sadan, Bangalore. The day began with the Eucharist celebration followed by the hosting of the national flag. In the afternoon, the Community undertook the noble venture of planting about hundred trees around the campus.

Indo-German Partnership Program

The German representatives of the Indo-German Partnership Program visited Christ Jyoti School, Nagaon and Dhing for the second time. The partnership aims at cultural and educational exchange between the two nations.



At the Service of the Mission

Presentation Sisters (DPMT) accepted the invitation to collaborate in the Salvatorian missions at Christ Jyoti School, Dhing. The new community of Sisters were formally and cordially welcomed to the mission on 3 February 2015 during the Eucharist celebration presided over by Rev. Fr. Sunil Thomas, SDS, the Vicariate Superior in the presence of Rev. Fr. Varaprasad SDS, the Principal, Sr. Tessa DPMT, the Provincial Superior and other invited guests. The Sisters presence would be a great boost to the religious and academic atmosphere of the school campus.





*“Always be
happy and
cheerful in
the Lord
towards all”*

Fr. Jordan

Notice: - The volume numbering of the magazine is altered in order to number the editions published before the year 2010, which were not otherwise numbered.

Thanks



It has been four years since I had the privilege of editing the magazine of the Indian Mission Vicariate, “In the Shadow of the Cross.” It is now time to say thanksto many people as we would have a new editor from the next issue onwards. The constant support and encouragement from the readers have helped tremendously to bring out every issue in time without interruption for the past four years. I place on record my sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed articles on request without any remuneration. I am grateful to many people who have helped with language edition of the various issues of the magazine namely: Fr. Abraham Nirappel (Spiritual Direction, Orients Theological College (OTC), Fr. Tomy Palely (Former Dean, OTC), Fr. Isaac Padinjarekuttu (Dean, OTC), Mr. Nirmal Kr. Sarkar (former Vice-Principal, Shillong College), Mr. J.T Lyngdoh (Ex-Officer, Govt. of Meghalaya), Bro. Solomon (Novice Master, Patrician Brothers). Thanks to Fr. Peter Nengong, (Rector, Otto Hopfenmuller Study House) for entrusting me with the responsibility of editing the magazine. Thanks to all for the many encouraging e-mails, monetary help and moral support. May God bless all.

Joby Koonthamattathil, SDS
(Editor)

*"Our principal task is the imitation and following of
our Lord, the Saviour above every other demand."*

Fr. Jordan



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