

CMIssion

magazine

'21

Encounter, Experience, Evangelize

**Go into all the
World
and proclaim
the good news
to the whole Creation.**

Mk 16

Reaching out Peripheries



September - January



Days on which you have not rendered any good to others will not be reckoned in the book of life. Be desirous of others' love and respect than they becoming fearful of you. Let no beggar leave your home empty handed; likewise, don't hesitate, as much as you can, to give alms.

St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara (1805-1871)
Founder of CMI-CMC Congregations



Pope Francis
on World Mission Day 2020

Mission is a free and conscious
response to God's call.



CMIssion Pays Tribute

Mar Joseph Pastor Neelankavil CMI (1930-2021)
Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Sagar

CMIssion pays prayerful homage to Mar Joseph Pastor Neelankavil CMI, the Bishop Emeritus of the diocese of Sagar who passed away on 17th February 2021. Although CMISSION was called to life in 1980, it was during his tenure as General Councillor for Evangelization and Pastoral Ministry, that CMIssion began in 1985 as a regular mission bulletin for wider circulation with different views and perspectives on mission, events and incidents from mission fields and attractive missionary experiences of missionaries etc. The objective of CMIssion as made clear in his first editorial was "to promote and inspire our missionary endeavours according to the needs of the time and place and following in the footsteps of our fathers." As the General Councillor for Evangelization and Pastoral Ministry he initiated several creative and innovative programmes to promote the missionary zeal and enthusiasm among the missionaries. Later in the year 1987 he was appointed the second bishop of the diocese of Sagar to succeed Bishop Clemens Thottungal CMI, the first bishop. With the motto 'For Peter and People' as the second bishop he led the mission diocese of Sagar which was entrusted to CMI congregation in 1968 as an Apostolic Exarchate by the bull 'Quo Aptius'. May the good Lord grant him eternal rest and the eternal light shine upon him !

View of Himalaya on the way to pilgrimage of samnva students

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Mission of God is ever moving, transforming and converting the hearts of many. It is an opportune time to think about our mission dynamically and creatively for the kingdom of God and His works. CMission is a publication from the Department of Evangelization and Pastoral Ministry engaging in transmitting the views and the visions on CMI missions around the globe.

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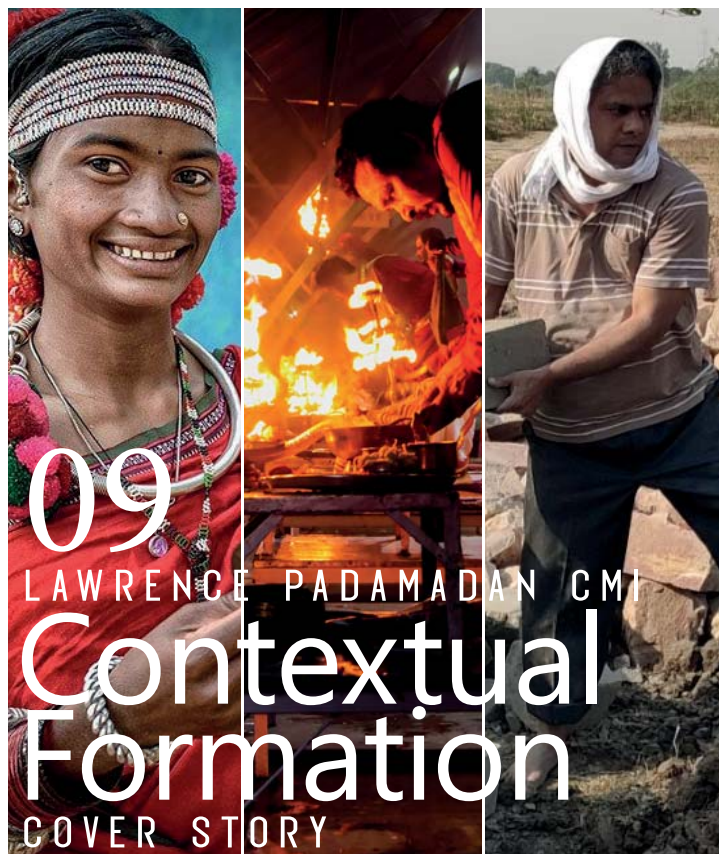
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we Encounter



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CONTENTS

ENCOUNTER

SAMANVAYAM: A MOVEMENT FOR INTEGRATION
Davis Varayilan CMI

OUR HOME MISSION: MISSION MODELS 20
Benny Thettayil CMI



EXPERIENCE

MAR PRINCE: A MIRACLE AT THE MISSION
Joshy Pazhukkathara CMI

FR THEODORE TOPPO: FIRST NORTH INDIAN CMI
Ajesh Vadakkal CMI

WHEN GOD CALLED 39
Paulson Muthipeedika CMI



EVANGELIZE

MISSION MEDITATION: MOUNTAIN CALLS US TO BE A MOUNTAIN 48
Deepu parayil CMI

FRONTIER MISSIONARY: CHAVARA ASHRAM KSHITIJ 58
Varghese Puthaparambil CMI

FOR MISSION

EMBRACING SPIRITUALITY- A VEERING MOST NEEDED 60
Melbin Elamplasseril CMI

CMINESS: DARE TO BE KOODAPIRAPUKAL... 62
Phillips Chalackal CMI

MISSION VILLAGES: OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL
Linto Punnasery CMI



BEST PRACTICES: DIVYODAYA
John Peter Muringathery CMI



MISSION COLLABORATORS
"NEUES KERALA" IN GERMANY WITH THE CMIS
Franz Schiffers

Editorial



Josey Thamarassery CMI
Vicar General, Chief Editor

The second issue of CMISSION in the present format is now reaching you. The missionary mandate of Jesus is an ever-relevant and indispensable one for the world. Today's world stands all the more in need of the mission of God, making every creature worthy of receiving the message of God's unfailing love for them. As Pope Francis in one of his recent books *Let us Dream* (2021, 119) writes: "The loss of relationship with God and a loss of a sense of universal fraternity have contributed to a sense of isolation and fear of the future." In such a context, CMISSION attempts to bring to the readers stories, events and persons who tried to convey the message of the ever-abiding love of God to the people of all places and times. Such a presentation of people and events with passion for the Gospel enables us to understand the need to have a 'renewed and empowered community mission' which is one of the major thrusts of the 38th CMI General Synaxis. The present issue is structured into three main categories. They are:

- **Encounter** tries to present events and issues where we encounter God in mission in a particular place and context. It attempts to present a particular relevant and current event/ issue from this perspective. This issue of CMISSION presents the very concept of *Samanvaya* – a venture of CMI congregation for contextual missionary formation of the students who can be equipped for the mission beyond borders. The articles presented under this title give a vivid picture of the formation programme of *Samanvaya* integrating life with theology.
 - **Experience** presents the lives and views of people with their strong passion for Jesus and the Gospel, who dedicated their entire life for the cause of the Gospel and shall become an inspiration for our missionary commitment. This section presents the life of Bishop Prince Antony Panangadan, a young and dynamic missionary bishop who moves from village to village preaching the word of God through his life and words. This feature also presents the life of Fr Theodore Toppo, the first non-Keralite CMI priest, who rendered his service amidst the tribals of Bastar.
 - **Evangelize** is a feature which brings forth best practices and initiatives to give witness to the Gospel to the people of a particular area. This section speaks about the initiatives of inter-religious dialogue of Fr John Peter Muringathery under the auspices of *Divyodaya*. Besides, we have the evangelization initiatives of Fr Paulson Muthipeedika in a village called *Usri* in Madhya Pradesh and the frontier ministry at *Chavara Ashram* at *Kshitij* in Maharashtra of Fr Varghese Puthuparampil CMI, Vicar General of Chanda diocese, giving a social face for evangelization. It also presents a new village in the Amazon region which is entrusted to the CMI Fathers. Fr Linto Punnassery presents his enriching missionary and pastoral experience in this region – an exciting experience of a pastor from one of the global missions of the congregation.
- Besides these main features, we have the second part of the CMI mission voyage by Fr Benny Thettayil CMI, presenting CMI Indian mission models and a feature on the collaborators of the mission from Germany – the *Neues Kerala* initiative of German friends to support the missions in India and thus to participate in the missionary endeavours of the Church in India. The current issue also gives important news and events from the mission areas both from India as well as from around the globe.
- With these features the CMISSION wishes to instill in the minds of the readers a passion for the Gospel and the readiness to be partakers of *Missio Dei*. At a time when certain elements of the secular media and other critics are writing off the Church as in terminal decline, the enthusiasm and zeal of our missionaries are proof for Lord's promise to be with us to the end of the age.

M e s s a g e



Thomas Chathamparampil CMI
Prior General

Communitarian witnessing beyond borders' is the programme envisaged by the 38th General Synaxis of CMI Congregation for the coming six years. It reminds us of our 'missionary awareness and commitment', rooted in the grace of our vocation as Christians in the Church and consecrated people in the CMI congregation. This thrust speaks of the importance of renewing our missionary commitment and giving fresh evangelical impulse to the work of proclaiming the Gospel and bringing it to the ends of the earth.

The call to be a missionary is a call to rediscover the missionary mandate of our faith in Jesus Christ, a faith graciously bestowed on us in baptism. The Church is on mission in the world. This missionary mandate touches each one of us personally as we are called to participate in the mission of Christ. The mandate given by the Risen Jesus at Easter is inherent in Baptism and all the more inherent in the religious commitment that we have made. Therefore, this mission is part of our identity as Christians and consecrated people. The founding fathers of our congregation were well aware of this mandate. Therefore, looking beyond the horizon, they attempted all that was good – not what they saw, but what they were shown by the Spirit of God (kannil kattapetta nanmakalellam) – for proclaiming the Good News to the people and to bring transformation within the Church and the society. They focused also on the overall good of the larger society trying to make available their services to all people, going beyond boundaries.

Today, the Church and all the more our congregation, need people who, by virtue of their baptism, respond generously to the call to leave behind home, family, country, language and local Church, and to be sent forth to the nations, to a world not yet transformed by the sacraments of Jesus Christ and his holy Church. Pope Francis while addressing the members of the Amazon Synod members, said, "A renewed Pentecost opens wide the doors of the Church, in order that no culture remain closed in on itself and no people cut off from the universal communion of the faith. No one ought to remain closed in self-absorption, in the self-referentiality of his or her own ethnic and religious affiliation."

To be missionary means to reach out beyond borders, beyond ourselves, beyond our own communities. To be missionary is to look for opportunities to share our faith and invite others to come to experience our faith. Let us pray that the Lord will give us a missionary heart. Let us ask the Lord for the fire of the Holy Spirit who inspired the first Christians to proclaim their faith to the world, to be in our hearts and animate our lives as Catholics. Let us offer ourselves to the Lord – use me! Show me what to do!



Theological education should enable students to discuss courageously the problems of the Church, of the context and to intervene in that context. This would offer them the confidence and the strength to confront the challenges in the future ministry.

Mar Gratian Mundadan CMI

Let's face God in context and text

ENCOUNTER



Cover Story



Samanvayic Life **A Doing**

Theology

Integrating

life and

Theology



Lawrence Padamadan CMI
Bhopal

As the jeep made a sudden halt with a shuddering jolt, I woke up to a world of commotion and confusion. A huge rock had landed in the middle of the road blocking the passage of all the vehicles on the way. People were trying desperately to move the rock away from the track employing all the available means. There was no possibility of clearing the road and moving forward without a few hours of patient waiting. Seeing our anxious and worried faces an old man tried to console us: "Yeh to hotā hai, ji" (This is very usual here). Landslides are quite common in the Himalayan region. Sometimes loose rocks with mud skate down hindering the traffic in both directions on the roads winding around the Himalayan peaks. Sometimes the 'national highway' itself slithers down and disappears in the deep valley below!

We were (we were 13 in our group) on our way to Joshimath, one of the stations of our pilgrimage to Badrinath and Hemkund, the holy places of the Hindus and the Sikhs in the Himalayas. The mysterious Himalayan peaks have been from time immemorial the fascinating destination of pilgrims from all parts of India. They are considered abodes of the gods and the divinities whose glorious and faith-inspiring memories are celebrated through myths, stories and hymns. Participating in a pilgrimage is the most effective means to know the deepest sentiments that are woven into a religious faith. The Samanvaya seminarians as part of the course on Interreligious Dialogue venture to make pilgrimage to holy places of the Hindus and the Sikhs. Pilgrimages give natural roots to a religious faith. Christian faith in India, in order to strike deep roots, demands not only a rational "mindscape" but also a perceptual "landscape" where the Christian mysteries of faith can be experienced by the devotees also in terms of natural phenomena like mountains, rivers and pilgrim route. Respect and appreciation of nature and sensitivity to its symbolic energy are basic presuppositions for developing a spirituality of pilgrimage. The Samanvaya formation program has developed pilgrimage as a valid theological language to experience and communicate faith in the context of our country.

Samanvaya Theology College is a synonym for the spirit of the theological experience and innovativeness. It was a dream come true of the missionary spirit of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) that was founded by St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, Frs. Thomas Palakkal and Thomas Porukkara in 1831. CMI Congregation has always been able to read the signs of the time. From the very beginning of the congregation, giving leadership in intellectual, spiritual and contextual formation to the priestly and religious candidates has been one of our unique charisms. To impart priestly education through systematic formation and to improve the quality of priests our Founding Fathers established seminaries attached to our monasteries. In the same way in the late 1980s and early 1990s our Congregation realised and foresaw the need and relevance of a new kind of theological education and formation especially for the priestly candidates of north India. Thus on 3rd July, 1994, Samanvaya Theology College was established at Nirmal Sadan Provincial House Jagdalpur. Today Samanvaya is proud that it has actively conjoined in the venture of providing missionaries for the global mission, a special thrust that has been echoing since a few years.

Historic Perspective

CMI presence became visible to the North India when a few mission territories were entrusted to the Syro Malabar Community.

Initially Chanda (a territory in the state of Maharashtra) was given to the CMIs. In early 1960s it was CMIs who courageously took up challenging steps for the mission entrusted to the Syro Malabar Church, though we had no experience and exposure outside Kerala. As a result CMIs were entrusted with four more mission areas in different parts of the India, which indeed encouraged the members to shift their motivation for new realms of mission work. A few years later the missionaries felt incompetent in the field and they wanted to form the younger generations 'in the mission for the mission'. Consequently Samanvaya was launched by the pioneers on account of the pressing need of the time for a mission oriented ecclesiastical education that envisions the changing evangelizing needs of the Church in India. The first thought about it was conceived in the mind of Fr. Vijayanand Nedumpuram CMI (Bishop Emeritus of Chanda). As the Prior General of the Congregation during his visits to the Regional Mission Theologate at Ashta, Madhya Pradesh, Fr. Vijayanand articulated the need of a mission oriented formation for our Congregation and motivated a few missionary priests of our Congregation to establish a seminary that would train the young generations for the mission. We were not new to this concept as some of our members were staff and students of the aforesaid Mission Theologate and a good number of priests had been to the mission territories for more than three decades. Thereafter several intense deliberation and discernment took place along with multi-stage preparations. Different committees were appointed by the Major Superiors to explore the possibilities and probabilities. Thorough studies were conducted with regard to the academic, spiritual and formative ideals. The various Committees eventually designed a seminary curriculum suitable for the mission oriented formation. 'Samanvayam' in Sanskrit means integration or harmony or wholeness. We have adopted this term from Bhagvat Gita. 'Samanvayena Sakshatkarah' means only through an experience of wholeness and harmony within oneself and with creation can one attain God-realization. Learning takes place only when one is able to harmoniously personalize and it necessarily includes knowing, loving and doing. The academic and formative curricula and life activities of Samanvaya are set according to this vision. Samanvaya envisages a program for contextual theological formation, integrating learning with life and personal development in view of the community's mission. The goal, vision and identity articulated by the XXXIII General Synaxis can be summarized as: "The theological studies and associated programs in the centers should be organized in such a way that the study actually becomes an intense God-experience in the future missionaries... The dynamics of the program should, therefore, include the thrust of evangelization, liberative action-orientation and inculturation process in formation which should eventually contribute towards a contextualized theological experience and thus form the basis of a new Indian hermeneutics." Thus on 3rd July, 1994 Samanvaya Theology College was inaugurated. According to Fr. Prasanna Bhai the launch of Samanvaya is similar to those of Jesus' Birth, namely "no readymade infra structures to begin the studies or no place to be born but Samanvaya was accepted in the tribal belt of Jagdalpur mission."



Samanvaya always stands for context and the experience. students learn theology not only from the class rooms but also from the living context. My experience in Bhopal was ever and inspiring. Even though we felt annoyed or unwanted the occasional group discussions after our 'mission on Wednesdays' was enriching. We could make a synthesis of our study with our life experience. The pastoral experience we received in Bhopal was very helpful in our future ministry. Our family visits during the prayer meetings gave us the motivation for our mission. As a batch we enjoyed every activity of the community. Active participation in the community activities and managing of the house by us gave us a feeling of belongingness. We had a good relationship with the staff members and they could inspire us with their lives. What Samanvaya, Bhopal gave us was a family experience and foretaste of a future mission life. We learned how to apply the theology in the practical life.

Jaino Chunayanmackal CMI Rome



Raphi Kadavi CMI Bengaluru

At Rishikesh on our evening walks we used to interact with spiritual seekers from all over the world on philosophical, theological and spiritual matters. Those interactions made us to know that many of them have a very negative understanding of Christianity and Christians. But it did not hinder us and they were very always welcoming and ready for dialogue. At the end of the year, when we paid a last visit to the gurus and ashrams near to our life and heart. One of the inmates of a prominent ashram came to the gate to see us off and said, "I had heard so much about Christians, mostly not so positive ... but now I have a new understanding of Christians from my experiences with you and it's very positive." Life at Rishikesh gave us the realization - where ever we are, we witness Christ.

I consider myself lucky to get my first year theological formation in the CMI Mission Theology college Samanvaya at Jagdalpur. We got ample opportunities to think contextually on dogmatic matters of catholic faith. As part of Samanvaya curriculum and extra curricular activities, I got many chances for regular visits to the villages near and far. We were given instructions before being sent to the villages. It was indeed very necessary and enriching because most of us are from Kerala and new to north India village life milieu. All were happy and considered privileged to go for the village ministry. Now when I look back I feel that it was really the plan of God to have such an experience - 'a priest should be with the people knowing their feeling. Now I realize the real meaning of the very words of the Holy Father Pope Francis "shepherds with the smell of the sheep."

Jomet Chakkalayil Jagdalpur Diocese



The first batch of Samanvaya included nine students and five staff members who wished to follow a simple life-style just like a Gurukul (the ancient Indian educational system where the students lived in the house of the teacher during the period of education). The rest is history. Samanvaya was established as an initiative of the CMI mission provinces but today it is a common undertaking of the Congregation under Prior General. Today the Coordinating centre of Samanvaya is in Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh) and other two centers are in Jagdalpur (Chhattisgarh) and Rishikesh (Uttarakhand). Samanvaya plays a vital role in forming young missionaries and continues to contribute erudite scholars and promising leaders to the Church and it is seen as the extension and continuation of the CMI legacy of seminary formation bequeathed by the founding fathers.



'Samanvayena Sakshatkarah' means only through an experience of wholeness and harmony within oneself and with creation can one attain God-realization.

Academic Perspective

Academic perspective of Samanvaya promotes serious intellectual inquiry into, and mastery of, essential aspects of the Catholic religious tradition of both East and West and its history. It aims that students acquire, along with a general culture in accord with the needs of contemporary society, extensive and solid learning in the sacred disciplines. After they have been grounded and nourished in their own faith, they are prepared to proclaim the Gospel to those they have been assigned to serve. Theological studies, imparted in the light of faith and with close exposure to the context lead younger generations into a solid understanding of the truths based on divine revelation. The academic program is God-oriented, Christ-focused, life-oriented, context-bound, community-based and culture-centered. Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore, the Major Seminary of CMI Congregation has designed an academic prospectus for Samanvaya. The syllabus is extensive and there is sufficient room for contextual subjects and exposure programs. Here not only the text but also the context is theologized. As the context is always on change the theologizing is also always on a paradigm shift; as a result theology is never stagnant and we call it 'theology on wheels'.

The whole academic program is divided into six semesters and is conducted in three different contexts. The theme focused in the first year enhances the students to be God-oriented. The topics of the classes are arranged accordingly that besides classroom learning they are given the opportunity to approach the world of the subaltern context of tribal communities and reflect in the light of the word of God. Along with the classroom interactions the action-reflection programs inculcate in the students a catholic (all inclusive) vision of the world around and acquire an ability to observe the nature and world created by God, appreciate the cultural and traditional customs of the tribal milieu and develop a love for the poor and marginalized. If insertion into tribal culture is the external context in the first academic year, immersion into the spiritual world is the trajectory of the second year. The challenging context chosen for this causes internal conflicts. However, when one is oriented with the theme of the second year, namely, Christ and the human, one is enabled to be more tolerant and this helps one to get rid of all bigotries against other religions. Besides, it motivates one to have dialogue with the people of other religions. Exposure to this context gives the candidates to meet and converse with people from all over the world who have come for spiritual experience and pilgrimage. Because of the unique spiritual milieu of the place the students are introduced and some are made experts in Indian method of prayers, meditation, yoga etc. without making any compromising to our traditional spiritual activities and prayers. Christ is the epitome of incarnational and inclusive spirituality. At the completion of the second year one is deepened in the Christian faith and forms a Christ like attitude, namely, a broad outlook towards people of other religions. This opens the door for an interreligious dialogue, especially India being a country of many religions. Inter-religious dialogue, with its values of rootedness in one's own religious tradition, respect and regards for the believers of other religions and openness to the Spirit, is an effective means to resolve conflicts and promote a community of fellowship, justice and peace. Samanvaya model of interreligious dialogue through exposure and encounter with the pilgrims and seekers help one to enter into the domain of other religions.

Spirit and the human is the theme of the final year. To boost the theological education in this stage more pastoral and moral courses are taught. As part of the classroom learning they are familiarized the ways in and through which Spirit is at work and are guided techniques and the skills to efficiently perform the pastoral duties. Pastoral activities are assisted with social sensitization programs such as activities at slums, among street children, visiting government hospitals, old age homes, prisons, juvenile homes and children in shelter homes. All these generate in the students pastoral concern for the world and the relevance of priesthood. Regular social sensitization programs equip them automatically in making them the shepherds who have 'the smell of the sheep' as Pope Francis said.

Formation Perspective

One of the major thrusts for the launch of Samanvaya was the need for a 'formation for mission in mission'. Formation includes several realms like human formation, spiritual formation and pastoral/social formation. Priestly formation involves the integration of four areas namely, academic, pastoral, spiritual and human formation, all directed towards the unique vocation of configuration to Christ to act in his person as head and pastor of the Church and in the name of the whole people of God as conferred in the Sacrament of Orders. Thus all formation is preparation to proclaim the Gospel to the world and to build up the Church in the name and person of Christ, the head and shepherd (Pastores Dabo Vobis, 15). Many debate on the need of increasing seminaries in India when there is a gradual decline in vocations. Accepting this fact Samanvaya puts forward a few unique specialties, intending why we need the Samanvaya style of formation. Certain characteristics can be the personal pride of Samanvaya.

Small Community

One of the impressive characteristics of Samanvaya formation is the 'small community'. It is in a small community the human formation becomes more effective. Human Formation seeks to promote in the candidate a level of affective maturity with which a man can commit himself to Christ, to the Church, and to priestly life and ministry with true self-knowledge and acceptance, inner freedom, emotional balance, and a generous capacity for self-giving. Such a development occurs through daily interactions within the Seminary community and, more specifically, in the life and activities of one's class and corridor through regular participation in the days and evenings of human spiritual formation and through open and self-disclosing conversations with one's spiritual director and master. The system of small community envisions constant and close accompaniment, active participation in the community life and equal sharing of the responsibilities that help the seminarians to have integral growth. This growth enables them to take up novel initiatives and share the responsibilities maturely. The candidates get opportunity to share their views in the class, share the spiritual experience in the community and to unveil personal qualities and abilities thus community life becomes revivifying. The present propensity of the religious community life is generally filled with individualism and independence whereas here in Samanvaya the candidates always experience interdependence which indeed is a fulfillment of community life.

Spiritual Integration

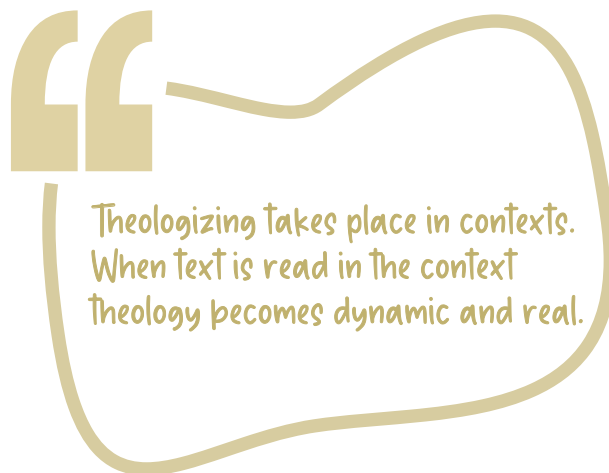
Spiritual formation exists to be an integrative force within the entire formation experience. A theology student without spiritual integration is like a finished product of a firm. In the context of daily Mass and community prayer, through the availability of the sacraments and individual spiritual direction seminarians in Samanvaya are assisted in developing sound spiritual life. The candidates of Samanvaya learn different facets of theology in the class room and read books written by great theologians. Besides these they are also exposed to the drastic realities of life through the sensitization programs and exposure programs. To construe, the concepts learnt in the class and the realities outside the seminary life, is where theologizing takes place. As true students these bring in them internal conflicts and dilemma. However to calm the conflicts and answer clearly to the dilemma they bring all these into their prayer. The weekly adoration in silence in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament not only solves their internal conflicts but also enlightens the community in general with their sharing. Thus the students understand and assimilate the faith as proposed and safeguarded by the Magisterium of the Church as well as appreciate the task of theology by identifying the Catholic synthesis of faith and reason as the presupposition of the study of theology. The spiritual talks, spiritual reading, monthly recollections and retreats create in them an awareness of the human need for redemption, prayerful communion with God, love for the Church, vocational discernment, mature celibate love for others, simplicity of life, the spirit of obedience, concern for justice, and pastoral care. In General the spiritual formation program aims to aid the student's ordered spiritual life in the seminary and also to foster an enduring spirituality which will deepen after one leaves the Seminary for the priestly ministry.

Broader World View and Embracing Risks

Pastoral formation provides for the personal engagement of seminarians in Church ministry under the guidance of Priests in Charge. It assists seminarians in their development of ministerial skills, namely, pastoral counseling, preaching, organizing, and catechizing so as to prepare them to serve effectively in the mission of the Church. In the parish setting, present-day social, political, environmental, moral, and ecclesial issues are confronted in their relation to the Christian faith. At the same time, the parish experience prompts reflection on the ecclesial context of pastoral ministry, including the specific responsibilities of the priest, skills of collaborative leadership, and promotion of the gifts and charismata of others in the Church community. Today the whole world is a small village. At the tip and touch of the finger the whole world is at our glance. But a true vision of any reality is incomparable to the virtual experience. Our Sub-continent is bigger than many other continents and each state in India is vivid in culture and social status. A theological study in an immobile infra structure has got a lot of effectiveness but it cannot change our world view. Samanvaya providing room for 'moving from one place to another' and changing the 'contexts' enables the students to have an enlarged world view and this helps them to approach the world without prejudices and fear. Gradually one is capable to take up any risk in the mission and ministry; possesses ability to leave the comfort zones; to get rid of the consumeristic culture and form the mind to lead a simple life.

For instance I am reminded of our Women Empowerment Activity in Bhopal that Samanvaya used to organize as part of social sensitization program. One of such programs was to train the women in the village in tailoring. With the assistance of a female staff, a few women were trained in tailoring so that they could not only enhance the livelihood of the family but could also prolifically contribute to the society. It was a six month package. The road to village was with full of squalid gutters and a nasty sticky sludge mostly dirtied our sandals. In the beginning these women were unable to face us and they always covered their faces before us and talked with us in wobbly voice. (Unfortunately this had been the custom in the villages here that women had to appear in public with a veil on the face). The lady teacher told us (George Palimattam and me): "Except the politicians at the time of election no outsider enters this village and the women never get out of this village." In the beginning we were afraid to enter the village predisposing the response of the villagers. We were embarrassed to know that in a capital city like Bhopal people living in the contiguous expanse of the Legislative Assembly were not supposed to appear in public without a veil on the face. However after sixth months at the completion of the course, these women appeared on Samanvaya Campus without covering their faces. They addressed the gathering keeping their head straight and presenting us all a smile on their face.

Theologizing takes place in contexts. When text is read in the context theology becomes dynamic and real. Dynamic theology redeems theology from absolutism and torpor. Theological formation at Samanvaya stands for critical analysis, systematic reflection, ingenious synthesis and clear articulation of one's life experience from the standpoint of faith. Samanvaya creates an ambience for encountering realities of this world closely. Here text ignites them and context challenges them. The theological formation in Samanvaya encourages the students to turn the challenges into opportunities and enables them to do the priestly ministry in the future with spiritual vigour. Thus Samanvaya has been producing not only academicians, scholars and theologians but also zealous missionaries and pastors having fire within them to inflame the fire of love for



*Theologizing takes place in contexts.
When text is read in the context
Theology becomes dynamic and real.*

SAMANVAYAM
A MOVEMENT
FOR INTEGRATION

Samanvaya Theology College, formally inaugurated on 3 July 1994, imparts theological education and promotes a theological formation programme oriented towards *missio ad gentes*. The situation in which “peoples or groups who do not yet believe in Christ,” and whose culture has not yet been influenced by the Gospel (EN 18-20) is called *missio ad gentes* in the proper sense of the term (AG 6) by Saint John Paul II. The vision and orientation of Samanvaya is an outcome of the discussions, deliberations and live-together of the CMI scholars and missionaries working in various parts of the country, especially north India where Christians are a tiny minority. The CMI General Synaxis 33 held in 1991 has given the primary thrust of Samanvaya theological formation as evangelization. It was originally envisaged for the contextual theological formation of missionary students of CMI mission provinces but today, obliging the requests from the CMI southern provinces, other congregations and mission dioceses; it is open to the students who would involve in *missio ad gentes*. Since the main thrust of Samanvaya is *missio ad gentes*, its method is contextual and dialogical.

Samanvaya theological formation is contextual because it provides the students reasonable exposure to religio-cultural and socio-economic contexts and ample opportunities to immerse themselves in the real contexts of mission in north India. The purpose is to provide them with an experiential knowledge of the people and cultures from their perspective and go through a pastoral and missionary conversion. These experiences and facts are further analysed by using the tools of social analysis to find out what effect they have on human consciousness, family and spiritual and social life of the people. Then, by the guidance of the Spirit, these effects are interpreted in the light of the Scripture and tradition (GS 44) to discern where the Spirit is leading the local Church and what actions are called for *missio ad gentes*. The approach to the context of mission is not in a donor model in which the emphasis is on what the giver has to offer but in a recognizing model in which we pay attention to God’s saving grace already present in the lives of people. Thus Samanvaya takes contextual realities not as background for developing theology but as resources for theological reflection together with Christian source of Scripture and Tradition. They become resources of theology in so far as they embody and manifest the presence and action of the Spirit. This contextual manner of doing theology begins from experience in the field rather than from doctrines. The context makes imperative to adopt the basic mode of evangelization as dialogue: dialogue with nature, with cultures, with religions and with the poor. Thus theology is integrated with real context of *missio ad gentes*.

2 Biblical Insights for Samanvayic Existence

The New Testament portrays diverse images of Jesus which is an indication of the possibility and necessity of articulating the Christic experience from different worldviews and communicating them in a language meaningful to those to whom it is



Davis Varayilan CMI
Bhopal



Both Paul and John show us how the mystery of Jesus Christ can be experienced, articulated and proclaimed using both Hebrew and Hellenistic world-views. Paul addressed his Jewish listeners quoting Scripture but when he addressed Gentiles, he began with general revelation. The focus of Paul's preaching remained the same, the Gospel. However, Paul shifted his presentation of the Gospel to fit the worldviews of his listeners. Augustine theologized in the context of controversies regarding the validity of Baptism, the necessity of grace, etc. Thomas Aquinas's context was the new culture of thirteenth century Europe, Luther's context was widespread corruption in the church and Karl Rahner's context was a world torn apart by war. Theology is and has always been contextual. According to Bp Desmond Tutu "Theology seeks to make sense of the experience of a particular Christian community in relation to what God has done, what he is doing in the present, and what we believe He has promised to do in the future and the ultimate reference point is the man Jesus Christ."

The Second Vatican Council paved the way for theological education and formation in context. To be a priest is not a choice but a call (Jn 15:26; Mk 3:13-15). To be called by God is not to occupy a place of honour in the Church, nor a preference over others but to be with him and to be sent out (Mk 3:13-15), to engage actively in God's mission. Mission is the ultimate aim of any call by God both in the Old Testament & New Testament. In the Scriptures, election is not a privilege but a mission. Therefore, Pope Francis says, "Mission is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world" (EG 273). The statement of Apostle Paul: "Woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel (1 Cor 9:16)" is true of every Christian who has received an identity and a mission through baptism. Mission is bringing Jesus to the people and people to Jesus. In his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II insists on the centrality of Christ in mission and emphasizes that explicit faith in Christ is what gives women and men the fullness of life. He affirms that all grace comes through Christ and Christ alone. "No one, therefore, can enter into communion with God except through Christ, by the working of the Holy Spirit" (RM 5).

The second chapter of RM focuses on the centrality of the Reign of God in Jesus' ministry; but Pope insists that the Reign of God is not a concept, a doctrine or a program; it is the person of Jesus of Nazareth (RM 18). In his Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, Pope Benedict XVI says, "Christianity is not a religion of the Book but of the word of God', not of 'a written and mute word, but of the incarnate and living Word'" (VD 7). Therefore, there can be no true evangelisation if the name of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, is not proclaimed (EN 22). The subject matter of the classical theology was not the person of Jesus but the revealed truths because revelation was understood as identical with the communication of a set of supernatural truths that contained in the Scripture and Tradition. This supernatural revelation was necessary for salvation. And so the task of theology was to explain and interpret the revealed truths for better understanding (*Fides quaerens intellectum*). The theology that was taught in the seminaries was primarily concerned with eternal truths valid for all places and times, and life beyond death. From the Council of Trent to the Second Vatican Council, Church followed a classical approach in matters of theological education. This systematically analysed and skilfully woven presentation of theological literature has become less relevant to the life of the students as well as the people whom they minister today. However, Vatican II boldly introduced a paradigm shift in the understanding of revelation as personal self-communication of God to human beings in the history of salvation, which reaches its fullness in the person of Jesus Christ (DV 2). Thus the focus of theology shifted from the revealed truths to the Revealer or from the gifts to the giver. When we understand revelation in interpersonal terms or a personal self-offer of God's very self to men and women, the context becomes important because this offer becomes meaningful only in terms that men and women could understand. God's revelation to the men and women of India has to be in terms of categories, language and forms that really speak to the Indians. In the classical theology the faith was understood as a light that illumines the intellect or as an intellectual assent to the revealed truths but Vatican II explains faith as a total and personal response to God's Word, the Word incarnate (DV 5). Pope Benedict XVI says that the Word that we follow is Jesus Christ and we are drawn to him by both Tradition and Scripture (VD 7).





In his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI says, "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction" (DCE 1). In other words, the focus of theology has to be shifted from the revealed truths to God the Revealer and from the focus on Scripture and Tradition to encounter with the person of Jesus through them. Therefore, Vatican II departs from linking priesthood to the Eucharist and binds to Christ. The document *Presbyterorum Ordinis* speaks about priests as instruments of Christ (PO 12), ministers of Jesus Christ (PO 2), and representatives of Christ (AG 39). Priests are not ministers of the Church but ministers of Christ who act in the name of the Church. Therefore, the primary objective of theological formation is not just faith in Christ but configuration to Christ or conformity to Christ. Faith is not primarily a body of doctrine or creed but a living, personal relationship between God and human person. This new, interpersonal notion of revelation and faith points to the necessity of a theology that takes seriously the actual context in which men and women can experience the person of Jesus.

Jesus Christ is the fullness of God's revelation (DV 2) and we await no further public revelation before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ (DV 4). This fullness of revelation does not exclude growth and development in our appropriation of the Christ-event. Therefore, the Church always believes more than what she teaches. The Church affirms God's presence and activity in the world through the Spirit. According to St John Paul, "Spirit's presence and activity affect not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions" (RM 28). Since the same Spirit who was active in Jesus and in the Church is active in the religions, the cultures and the poor, we have to dialogue with the contextual realities in order to deepen our relationship with Jesus. Faith is not static but dynamic and therefore, it must keep growing in dialogue with the context where the Spirit is active. According to *Dei Verbum* the on-going perfection of faith in the individual and in the Church takes place through the gifts given by the Spirit (DV 5). Lucien Legrand affirms: "A faith perception without cultural appropriation would mean contempt of the God of the incarnation." In a world of unjust social divide between the poor and the rich, the on-going perfection of faith in the Spirit calls us to embody our faith commitment in engagement of struggle for justice, peace and love.

In a situation of religious pluralism, the dialogical listening and relating to people of other faiths belong to the perfection of faith in the Spirit. Our faith in the Spirit demands to "acknowledge, preserve and encounter" (NA 2) whatever is good in other religions. The biblical expression of obedience of faith (Rom 16:26) which a believer renders to God is an act of the total person which embraces intellect and will. In such an understanding of obedience of faith there is no dichotomy between faith as belief (*fides quae*) and faith as commitment (*fides qua*). Faith keeps growing when both these dimensions are integrated. Thus St John Paul says, "A faith that does not become culture is not fully accepted, not entirely thought out, not faithfully lived." Another shift in theology is the flight from the world to involvement in the world as emphasized by *Gaudium et Spes*. In general, the Church's attitude to the world was often negative. Vatican II conceived the role of the Church in the modern world as that of a servant (GS 2, 4, 36, 59) who listens to the world. In his address at the opening of the Council on October 11, 1962, Pope John XXIII emphatically declared his disagreement with "the prophets of the doom," who could "see nothing but calamity and disaster in the present state of the world." He told, "We must recognize here the hand of God who, as the years roll by, is ever directing men's efforts, whether they realise it or not, towards the fulfilment of the inscrutable designs of His providence, wisely arranging everything, even adverse human fortune, for the Church's good." He told the Council, "Our duty is not just to guard this treasure, as though it were some museum-piece and we the curators, but earnestly and fearlessly to dedicate ourselves to the work that needs to be done in this modern age of ours." Pope was convinced that God is still present and active in the world through the Spirit. His positive attitude and openness to the modern world had great impact on *Gaudium et Spes* which challenges the Church to "scrutinize the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel" (GS 4) by following the principle of incarnation. Pope Paul VI suggests that scrutinizing the signs of the times "is a question of detecting 'in the times,' that is in the course of events, in history, those aspects, those 'signs' ... that can be indications to us... of some connection with the 'kingdom of God,' with its secret action... with the possibility, the availability, the exigency of an apostolic action." It means that one should know the great changes that are taking place in the modern world because "the world becomes a book for us."

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Spirit who was active in Jesus and in the Church is active in the religions, the cultures and the poor, we have to dialogue with the contextual realities in order to deepen our relationship with Jesus.



OUR
HOME
MISSION

Mission Models



Benny Thettayil CMI
Bijnor



A veteran Chanda missionary Fr Canisius CMI

Chanda: The Ascending Model

In 1962, Chanda was the first mission territory entrusted to the Syro-Malabar Church for mission ad gentes. Although the CMI had harboured the dream of a separate territory in the Raigarh-Amibikapur mission to engage in evangelizing activities as per the promise of Bp. Oscar Sevarin, it did not materialize. However, another door was opened through the generous initiative of Archbishop Eugene D'Souza of Nagpur. Taking the CMI contribution to the Ambikapur mission into consideration, he offered to part with a territory of the large unevangelized areas of his archdiocese and invited the CMIs to launch the mission and develop it in the Syro-Malabar Rite. This paved the way for the establishment of the CMI mission of Chanda in 1962, with Bp. Januarius as the Ordinary.

In the first century AD, the message of the Kingdom was brought to Rome by Christians from the working class and it got rooted first among the proletariat transforming everything, liberating and directing lives for good. Taking this evangelizing scheme as the standard, the missionaries of Chanda turned the Christian message directly into a programme of alteration of the living standards of the people at various levels beginning at the margins. Bp. Januarius, the visionary leader and his companions would concentrate on the rural masses of the geographical area that was entrusted to them to evangelize. The philosophy behind the idea was to start the evangelizing work at the rural levels and work the way up to the urban centre rather than beginning the work at the top and letting the message and values percolate down to the bottom. As far as the first mission of the community was concerned, the evangelizers came from all over the south no matter which provincial area they belonged to. Chanda being the first north Indian mission, all the mission-minded and zealous members of the community jumped on the band wagon.

From the part of the congregation, the first mission territory entrusted to the community had to be a success and the to a certain extent, a bit of recruitment and at the same time, a bit of screening also took place. The reasonable success that was achieved in Chanda, could be attributed to the commitment of this mission minded creamy layer of the community. Ad hoc missionaries as they were, they were often ill-prepared and were not backed by a formal training in missiology. This notwithstanding, the pioneers were far more effective evangelizers than those who were trained in missiology and were drilled in lessons on missiology. They had rock-solid fideistic underpinnings before they ever set foot on the field. One of the models of evangelization that was deployed in Chanda was Christianization of the jungles by means of migration. The migration model of mission had worked well with the early Church. The dispersion of Christians in persecution helped build up the Samaritan Church in the care of Philip (Acts 8:4-8). Back home, the migration of a community of 400 Syriac-speaking Jewish-Christian families from Cana in the Middle East to India sometime between the 4th and the 9th century brought vitality to the Southern Church in India. The Church had always been a people's movement. The mission that was launched in Chanda was for the sake of planting the seed of the Word and building up the reign of God which would develop into self-governing, self-propagating, self-sustaining churches. Rural plantation of the church was given the primary emphasis. The stress was on baptizing, making disciples and teaching them. Bp Januarius believed in the power of the Word and was able to motivate his companions. He held that there was no culture or people under the sun that the gospel of Jesus cannot change. His approach shows that Christianity is not alien to Indian culture.



Sagar: The Descending Model

The missionary approach adopted by the Carmelites in Sagar was based on an understanding of mission that is substantially different from that of their confreres who launched it in Chanda a decade before. The difference of missionary styles between the two groups is striking. This versatility in the Church's understanding of itself and its mission was so significant that it ushered the coming of age of an indigenous local Indian Churches in these places.

Sagar mission was constituted and entrusted to the CMIs in 1968, in the wake of the Vatican II. Geographically, it is situated at the very central part of India. Significantly, it is the region where, according to archaeological evidence, there existed a community of St. Thomas Christians. Ever since the inception of the mission, in various pastoral activities, the missionaries have met the spiritual needs of the community and have engaged in various evangelizing programmes. Missionaries in Sagar have always ventured into many developmental programmes by which the poor farmers and poverty stricken people are helped and have envisaged new areas of apostolate according to the need.

The Church has a long and impressive history of social involvement in those areas, which are under-developed due to various social, economic and cultural reasons. This involvement inspired by the love of Christ is one of the characteristic features of Christian disciples. In combating underlying causes of poverty such as unemployment, under-productivity of farmland and debt, or providing immediate help through food banks, the Church was always in the frontline. The doors of the church were wide open helping the needy to meet a plethora of their needs. Over the past decades, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of missionaries taking social development activities more seriously. As they stepped into the rural areas, they found that about 85% of the rural people were farmers or farm-labourers who were often exploited.

In this mission, vigorous socio-pastoral, medical and rural educational apostolates were carried out under the auspices of Rural Development Service Society (RDSS) out of which thousands of people benefited.

Some of the missionaries in front line service are concerned not just relative poverty, but absolute poverty. The Church was very good at pulling people out of the river (relative poverty), some people went upstream to ask who was pushing them in (absolute poverty). Hence, the Church in Sagar had a 'prophetic voice', holding leaders and governments accountable. It accused the government of 'trying to define poverty out of existence' by changing the way in which it is measured, talking about the 'injustice' of a society that has 'massive divides' between rich and poor.

The Church is the ideal place for the people to find support. The programs such as family counselling, crisis counselling, support groups, respite services, rural educational programmes and a variety of health and nutritional programmes were made available in these rural regions. "If we do not, who will? The church has a moral responsibility to provide for the community," said Bp Clemens to whom the leadership of the mission was entrusted.

Mainly, the community development programmes formed the basis for the dissemination of Christian values in the area. The evangelizers explored the potential to develop partnerships with the state for more effective and sustainable development. Financial well-being is not the only indicator of poverty. There is poverty of vision and of lifestyle. There is the wealth of being part of a community and going out and making your way in the world, doing it well. Certainly, the good intentions of the missionaries were critical; knowledge and courage were essential also. The institutional structure of the Church is vertical; yet some of the modern protest movements have shown that a horizontal orientation can produce greater change and progress. Of the CMI socio-political action front, Sagar has been in the pole position.



Jagdarpur: The Immersion Model

The region of Bastar is a plateau in Chhattisgarh, and is home to many tribal people. It was a vast area with almost little development and the rural essence of India could easily be found here. It was an unknown and isolated corner of the country and it had remained impassable to the Christian missionaries till the period of British invasion. From the 1893 onwards we have reference to Christian missionaries and their activities in the area. At the time when the CMI's took up the mission under the leadership of Bp Paulinus, the Catholic presence under the leadership of the Pilar Fathers was found at Jagdarpur with a social welfare centre to help the aboriginals and at Kirandul with a school.

The tribals enjoyed almost share in the distribution of the rich natural resources mined from their hills. The sources of livelihood of the tribals are land, cattle, crops and forests. They suffered marginalization and powerlessness due to proliferation of unjust power-play by the wealthy and powerful, and they were denied of their right to live a dignified human life especially by the migrant merchants from the mainland. It is to the unadulterated tribal people of the land, in order to experience the God revealed in the land in the raw tribal experiences, that the CMI's stepped into the pristine jungles of Bastar. Immersion into the life of the tribals and drinking deep into the spirit of the tribals were the only ways open for an effective evangelization in the tribal belt. What the missionaries did was just that.

Visualizing a Tribal Church, the CMI missionaries followed the instruction of Paul to "have the same mind of Jesus" (Phil 2:5). Today, the Church in the area is truly a Tribal Church, as she is well-integrated into the tribal context. She addresses the agonies and struggles of the tribals. Imbibing the spirit of the tribals who regard greed and pride as grave sins, and sharing whatever could be spared in a need-based economy, the Church adopted a style of 'need based' and not 'greed based' economic life.

Despite the onslaught of the colonial mentality and the implementation of the transplantation model of the mission, the Church in Bastar is reasonably safe in the hands of those evangelizers who have been inspired by the tribal ethos and have laid a strong foundation to the Church in the culture of the land.

The Bastar Church is in an ecclesial dilemma that is caused often by the standoff between the administration protected by the police and the Naxalites. There are thousands of innocent people, Christians including, wedged between these two parties. In the past, both these parties have used innocent civilians as human shields and got away with it. The dilemma also is seen in the possibility that if the administration concedes to the demands of the Naxalites, the nation would get the message that violent methods bear fruits. If the administration is relentless, they endanger lives of innocent people. And the Church is strictly warned by the administration to be aloof. The dilemma of a Church that is too visible!

Every challenge is an opportunity. Bastar mission is both an opportunity and a challenge. On the one hand, we have a people with a unique world-view which is an opportunity for the Church to express its diversity. We are presented with an opportunity to showcase the uniqueness of the Tribal Church with a tribal flare. On the other hand, the great challenge of the Church is the transplantation model of evangelization, which is a comfortable way out through the beaten path. But to make the incarnational model of mission to work by means of the adaptation of space and manner of worship and life-style that are truly tribal, at the same time, keeping the faith intact is a challenge indeed. The mission, to a great extent, has succeeded in meeting the challenge and grabbing the opportunity, but it has a longer stretch to travel.



Rajkot: The Buyout Model

The people of Saurashtra and Kutch have strong socio-political moorings and are proud of their ancient culture and involvement in promoting and controlling Indian trade and commerce. The land is often haunted by natural calamities like cyclones, earthquakes, droughts, floods, etc. In 1972, faced with a shortage of priests, the Jesuits invited the CMI's to work and develop the mission territory, which they were manning until then. A territory of Ahmedabad Diocese was handed over to the CMI's for pastoral care and apostolate. With a view to integral development, the CMI's launched their mission in the Gujjar Rashtra in the Western India headed by Bp Jonas. Rajkot was relatively a developed mission when it was entrusted to the CMI's. Word of God would be better received when bread is served first. Hand in hand with the administration of the institutions that the community inherited, rural welfare was a driving motive behind health awareness programmes, treatment and rehabilitation of leprosy patients and treatment and care of the terminally ill in various parts of the region. Rural transformation programmes included agriculture development through irrigation, distribution of seeds and fertilizers and training of farmers, formation of people's organizations like farmers' co-operative societies, women's groups and village development committees. All these working together at various fronts, transformed the desert into an arable land. Means of sustenance was put in place by means of social awareness programmes organized for these groups. Moreover, welfare schemes for the supply of clean drinking water, construction of low-cost houses for the poor, providing for the means of livelihood through self-employment, promotion of village arts and handicrafts, environmental protection, etc, brought a notable difference into the life

Since the mission was a buyout from the Jesuits, and unlike the other missions, there was a conspicuous lack of birth pangs at the launch of the mission in Rajkot. However, the Christian message began to trickle down to the less fortunate ones in the society in the care of those affected by HIV and AIDS in a comprehensive care and support programme for them to improve their health and status in the family and in the community. There are several such care and support centres in various towns of the mission. Similarly, a scheme was set in motion to provide basic education for social transformation for the rural poor children, about 4000 of them, from the villages and slums, especially of Saurashtra and Kutch.

Rajkot mission is partially inter-ritual as far as worship is concerned. In *Ut unum sint* 54, Pope John Paul II wrote: "the Church must breathe with her two lungs!" – its Eastern one and its Western one. He was referring to the need of unity between Churches and Rites. His encyclical calls for a balanced resuscitation and cooperation between the main traditions of the Church. In the effort to achieve this balance, the Church herself might begin to breathe more fully and grow in better health and strength. It is to this end that a bi-ritual experience in the context of mission can further enhance this holy objective by making the experience of liturgy more fulfilling. In a tradition that tends to close on itself in fanatic bigotry in matters of liturgy, the bi-ritual model of Rajkot mission is promising.



Bijnor: The Divination Model

In 1972, the north-western part of the diocese of Meerut, which consisted of the district of Bijnor in Uttar Pradesh in the plains, and the five hill districts of Pauri Garhwal, Tehri, Chamoli, Rudraprayag and Uttarkashi in Utrakhand, was entrusted to the CMI congregation. The Christian presence in the area was confined to a parish in Dhampur division of the district of Bijnor, which was lassoed out and was retained by the mother diocese making the new mission territory virtually virgin, with no house, no land, and no Catholic presence at all – a unique mission indeed!

With no community to begin their ministry with or to stay in relationship with, the evangelizers under the leadership of Bp. Gratian, started their work literally from the scratch. All the other missions that were taken up by the CMIs had at least a few believing communities or families in the area. Bijnor had none. Just as people go around divining for water, so they travelled the length and breadth of the new territory to launch their programme, all the while, diving for the water to strike. Hence, the divination Model.

It was in this area that Veda Vyasa wrote Mahabharata and Skandapurana and centuries later Sankaracharya travelled the interiors of Garhwal and established his math there. The Pandavas traversed Garhwal on their way to heaven. This part of the country is sacred to the followers of Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism. Kedarnath and Badrinath are abodes of the gods. Himalaya is the abode of Shiva. The sacred river Ganges making all that it touches sacred, is a sign of spiritual challenge. Swami Abhishikhananda, a Christian monk living in austerity in the Himalayas, suggested spiritual insertion as a means of evangelisation to be adopted for the mission in Bijnor. As a model of evangelization, it is at once ideal and challenging and serves almost as a parameter for one's mode of existence in this mission. This is especially the case when the religiosity of the people of the region is taken into consideration. The main concern of the evangelizers in establishing the mission was to get into a harmonious relationship between the culture and spiritual ethos of the place.

As the evangelizers went around, exploring the place, they realized that education was not only the felt need of the people, especially in the hills, but also the means to reach the maximum number of people. The apostolate of education is beneficial to all the strata of the community. In Christian education, they aimed at people's growth 'in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man' (Lk 2:52). As far as the missionaries were concerned, it was also their need to launch the ministry of education in order to find a foothold in the area and establish themselves in the virgin mission. From that launching pad, they would move on. Conscious of these aims of human and Christian education, they founded several formal educational institutions. Hand in hand with the formal education, a non-formal education programme was implemented for the primary education of the poor children of the villages who, for various reasons, did not go to school.

This model could be compared to the late nineteenth century mission in China. The Church, in 1742, had condemned the efforts of Matteo Ricci and his Jesuit companions to convert China from the top down. The evangelizers were mostly interested in the masses of China, not in its intelligentsia. It was not until around 1924 that the Church began to attach importance to higher education, but by then rising nationalism had made the opening of schools under western auspices very difficult. There had been, however, one major exception. In 1842, the French Jesuits professed that Ricci's methods of evangelization, although "indirect" in nature, were still the most effective of all because they allowed evangelizers to influence the highest circles of the Chinese society.

Bijnor, indeed, has found a foot-hold in the land. Despite the spiritual fortresses like Rishikesh, Haridwar and the numerous other pilgrim centres, the mission has been advancing slowly but steadily. If this Chinese Jesuit paradigm is anything to go by, the mission needs to step up the efforts and redirect the energies for that spiritual insertion, "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:20).



The Church must discover the power of silence. Confronted with the sorrows, doubts and uncertainties of people she cannot pretend to give easy solutions. In Jesus, silence becomes the way of attentive listening, compassion and prayer.

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle
Prefect of the Congregation
for the Evangelization of Peoples

Experience is shared
and transmitted to
the next generation in Mission.

EXPERIENCE

MAR PRINCE

A MIRACLE AT THE MISSION

A talk with Mar Antony Prince Bishop of Adilabad Diocese



Joshy Pazhukkathara CMI Hyderabad

In 2022, we celebrate the sixtieth year of CMI and Syro-Malabar Presence in Chanda and Adilabad missions. Despite the hard work of the pioneering missionaries there are number of villages where we could not bring the message of the Lord. The topography and geography make it still difficult to reach the interior villages. If, even today Adilabad mission is one of the remotest area of Telangana, one would be able to imagine the hardships these pioneers endured sixty years ago, when the CMI missionaries came to this mission land with the good news of the Lord. Adilabad mission was part of the first mission of Syro-Malabar Church outside Kerala - namely Chanda Mission - that was entrusted to the CMI Congregation. If Syro-Malabar Church claims to be missionary, it owes totally to the efforts of CMI missionaries.

Facts argue for the ever-burning missionary spirit of the CMIs, because as it stands now, the CMI Congregation is spread over 36 countries, among which most of them are undeveloped countries, remote than Adilabad Mission. Of course, for many, CMIs seem to be institutional oriented; but in fact, such institutionalization is projected in India due to different reasons; i) the non-availability of pastoral opportunities, as there are enough people to take up those activities in the diocesan level; ii) the excellence of the CMI institutions, which add more visibility to them unlike the institutions of other Congregations and dioceses; iii) the lack of visibility of the social and pastoral face of the CMI missionaries in the other part of the world, iv) the diminished interest in advertising its pastoral and social activities, etc. In many other countries where such opportunities are open, CMIs still are with the people and for their cause. However, obviously, the Congregation has to seek new avenues to revamp the original spirit of pastoral orientation in all its ministries and apostolates. Adilabad mission is still in its growth, and with the installation of Bp. Prince, there has been a revived interest in the development of the mission. Everyone sees a renewed interest for Evangelization and other pastoral activities under the leadership of its new Shepherd Bp. Prince Antony Panengadan. New centers, parishes, schools and colleges are coming up in the mission through the constant efforts of Bp. Prince. In this interview as the classmate of Bishop Prince, I would like to shed light on the life, call, vision, and mission of Bp. Prince Antony. I hope it would proffer a clear picture about the missionary modes and methods of Bp. Prince, which would definitely be a guideline for all the missionaries around the globe.

Early life in the family and your Inspiration

Answer: I was brought up in a traditional Catholic family in an ordinary village called Manakody in Arimpur. My father was typist and later fair copy superintendent in the police department and my mother was housewife. My parents were very keen to give all four of us spiritual formation and quality education. All my siblings, two brothers and one sister, got married and lead a faithful Christian life. All four of us could say without any tint of doubt that we proudly follow the great spiritual and Christian legacy of our home.

My primary and upper primary education was at St Gemma's Convent U P School in our own village, and had my high school education at St Aloysius High School, Elthuruth. Definitely, my school days played a significant role in shaping a vision regarding my future life. I got inspiration to become a priest from my uncle, late Fr Antony Panengadan, a priest in the Archdiocese of Thrissur. His occasional visits to our home and his exemplary life inspired me to become a priest. Besides him, my grant uncle, Fr John Kollannur CMI, was a real source of inspiration and a guiding figure in the discernment of my vocation.

CMI Association

I was in CMI Devamatha Province for six years (1994 to 2000). I had minor seminary, novitiate, regency and philosophy studies in these six years. I had a great time in the province. Unfortunately, I fell seriously sick towards the end of novitiate and I continued to be so during the days of philosophy studies. I was suffering from disc prolapse. I am very grateful to Devamatha province for all the blessings I received in the six years of my life in the province. In a special way, I remember with gratitude that I was taken care of very well in the days of my sickness. On this occasion, I place on record my deep sentiments of gratitude towards Fr Norbert Edattukaran CMI for his great understanding and concern during the days of my suffering. I am happy to say that I still have many good friends in Devamatha province.

Reason to join the Adilabad Diocese?

I had to break the formation in CMI congregation in 2000 due to my prolonged sickness and treatment. When I was almost healed in 2001, after a gap of one year, with the help and advice of Rev Fr Paul Kalluveetil CMI and Sebastian Poonolly CMI, I joined the new diocese of Adilabad, thanks to the understanding and kindness of Bp Joseph Kunnath CMI.

Ordination and first Ministry

I was ordained on 25 April 2007 in my home parish in Arimpur in the Archdiocese of Thrissur. I considered my priestly ordina-

tion as sheer mercy of the Lord. God intervened very powerfully in my life when I was afraid that I would never be able to become a priest. So, on the day of my ordination I was wondering at the providence of the Lord. At the time of imposition of hands, I prayed for the grace of preaching the Word of God in the mission diocese of Adilabad.

The first ministry after my ordination was at Holy Family Cathedral Church, Adilabad, as assistant parish priest. I do not know to specify any particular model in the mission. My whole idea about mission was centred around proclaiming Jesus Christ with words and deeds.



As a Bible scholar and an Academician

I was sent to Rome for studies in the "Year of Priests" (2009-2010). Moreover, priesthood was the most important factor of my personal identity. Therefore, I selected a text from the Book of Numbers (Num 18:20), which throws light on the relationship between God and priests. I believe that the verse I studied, "You shall have no allotment in their land, nor shall you have any share among them; I am your share and your possession among the Israelites" still motivates me to depend upon God and consider Him as my share and possession than any other person or material wealth of this world.



I had to learn classical languages and modern languages as part of my study. I took special interest to learn languages to study and understand the Bible more. With more languages one can read more books in different languages and enter into more thinking patterns. Apart from the biblical studies, I have done studies in Telugu literature. I have completed BAL from Kakatiya University. At present I have registered for MA in Telugu (Distance Study) in Kakatiya University. I have not done any substantial contribution in the academic field to date.

Your thoughts when you were elected to be the second Bishop of Adilabad and your plans about the Diocese.

Once I was afraid that I could never become a priest. But the Lord was kind enough to grant me the fullness of priesthood! So, I was surprised to know the amazing ways of divine providence.

I can say that it is not myself, but Jesus who acted through me all throughout these five years. I could really experience that the Lord is my greatest possession. Despite many challenges and limitations, the Lord took care of this diocese in a marvellous way. My episcopal ministry of the last five years has increased my faith and dependence on God.

My first priority is to preach the Gospel in as many new villages as possible. Taking cue from St Paul, I would like to proclaim the good news, not where Christ has already been named, but rather in the new places. I do not try to build on someone else's foundation, but rather I would like to lay new foundations (cf Rom 15:20).

Secondly, I would like to strengthen the existing Catholic communities through the Word of God and catechism. Thirdly, I would like to make the Church credible and presentable in front of the world by diligently translating "Words" into deeds. More than 2.5million people have not heard the Good News in the area of the Diocese of Adilabad. If we do not preach, they will not hear. The real purpose of our existence here is to preach the Gospel. If we do not proclaim the Gospel, woe to us! (cf 1 Cor 9:16). Jevaswaram Bible Convention is one of the programs designed to make the Gospel heard among those who have not heard it, for faith comes from hearing and hearing comes from preaching (cf Rom 10:14-17).

We are in the process of constructing a retreat centre, which is envisaged to be a centre of evangelization, faith formation and study of the Bible. I believe that this centre will greatly contribute to the development of mission in Adilabad.

Your Mission Methodology and advice to the future missionaries

The ultimate aim of Jesus' incarnation was not to give something to the world, but to give Himself to the world. He is not just a social reformer, activist, liberator, healer or wonder worker, but he is the saviour of the world. The ultimate aim of our mission, therefore, need to be giving Jesus Himself as He is, i.e as saviour. If our mission work is oriented towards ensuring only material well-being of the people, it fails to be the mission of Jesus Christ. Though Jesus attended to the material needs of the people, He did not limit himself to it. His ultimate goal was to give eternal life to the world (cf Mk 10: 45; Jn 3:16; Jn 10:10 etc). It is not just material benefits that He gave those who believed in Him, but the "power to become children of God" (cf Jn 1:12). If our works are able to offer people only the things of this world, our mission is incomplete and imperfect. Any person, even an atheist for that matter, can do such things. Missionary's activities should be oriented to the integral salvation of the people.

To the CMI's

First of all, the CMI congregation deserves great appreciation for its enormous contribution to the Church and society ever since its inception. CMI congregation can be proud of being instrumental for taking the Syro-Malabar Church beyond the boundaries of Kerala for the first time. I am happy to mention in this connection that the CMI missionaries were the pioneers and architects of Adilabad Mission.

However, I do feel that the current CMI congregation, as seen in India, is more institution-oriented than people-oriented. Of course, I am sure that CMIs are doing a lot of pastoral and evangelizing activities in many other countries; and most of them are in under developed countries than India. I do not want to put down such activities of the Congregation, which as far as I know is spread around thirty-six countries. Nevertheless, the face of the Congregation in India is reflected through its institution-orientated activities. The problem with such an orientation is that in the beginning, we run the institutions and gradually institutions begin to run us. If institutions begin to run us, we need to redefine their functions and purposes. Often these institutions are well known for efficiency, excellence, technology and management. However, I fear that if the Gospel values are overlooked, the above-mentioned values of the world will remain meaningless. We cannot forget that the values of the Gospel are in contrast with the values of the world. Therefore, it will be nice to ensure that the Gospel values are not put into oblivion in our pursuit of excellence. Our primary mission is not to nurture the values of the world, but the values of the Gospel.

I do really believe that if such an original spirit for mission is revived, CMIs can do greater things better than anyone else. May St. Chavara's vision and action help all of us to live and work for the glory of God.





Mar Antony Prince

My first priority is to preach the Gospel in as many new villages as possible. Secondly, I would like to strengthen the existing Catholic communities through the Word of God and catechism. Thirdly, I would like to make the Church credible and presentable in front of the world by diligently translating “Words” into deeds.



Fr Theodore Toppo CMI

For the success of a mission we need to work together as a team for which certain sacrifices are required.

My feeling is that mission is for all and working together will only bring good results. A priest is for all and when ever there is a need one should be ready for mission at any time at any place.



FIRST North Indian CMI

Fr Theodore Toppo



Ajesh Vadakkal CMI
Jagdapur

Early life at home and schooling

We are nine children - five brothers and four sisters - and I am the fifth one born on 14 March 1959. Though my parents were illiterate all the children were sent to school. Since my elder brothers and sister were going to school I was given the responsibility of the house. Therefore, I joined the school a little late and I have very vivid memories of going to the school with my elder brothers to join the first standard. The name of the school was Pratap Boys Higher Secondary School, Gholeng. It is still there at Gholeng. I still have contact with some of the school friends and they come to meet me when I am at home. Many of them are in very good job but still they come home when I am there. In the school I could study rather easily.

Your entry into the Congregation

Those days Fr. Kurian Macheril CMI was the Provincial of our Province. And Fr. Simon Stock was probably staying at Bishop's House who had asked Mr. Anaskarius Tirkey, a very active catechist who lived in the Bishop's House at Jagdalpur, to bring some candidates for priesthood if there were some willing. He came to Jashpur and I happened to meet him. I told him about my desire to join a seminary for priesthood. He agreed to it but my family members were not willing to send me out of the house. They wanted me to be at home to help them in the house hold activities because my brothers were studying and I was given the responsibility of the house. But I insisted on it and they agreed half-heartedly. I went to the then parish priest Fr. Paul Toppo for permission to join the congregation. But he was very skeptical about it and asked whether I had registered my name during my high school days. When I said that I had not registered he declined to give permission letter. Therefore, I went to the school and asked my principal Fr. Nicodim Beck for character certificate. And he happily agreed to give it. With that character certificate I came to join the congregation on 13 July 1979.

I left the village to join the congregation but nobody knew that I joined a congregation except my family members. I also did not want anyone to know about it because I thought if I could not become a priest that would be a shame for me and for my family. But when I made my First Profession and Vestition and went home for holidays some of my villagers knew about it.

Initial days in the minor seminary at Palligaon

I was not very comfortable during the initial days of stay at Suman Ashram, Palligaon. I couldn't follow the language; I didn't understand the liturgy and so on. But after a few days I adjusted to the new situation. And I remember my fellow brothers always helped me in everything. Five of them are priests now - Fr. Abraham Kochukarackal, Fr. Mathew Kunnel, Fr. Thomas Paithottiyil, Fr. Mani Kadaplackal and Fr. Abraham Kannampala. And Fr. Abraham Thuruthumalil was our rector in the first year. Since I had completed my matriculation I was supposed to go to Novitiate in the second year. But in those days novitiate formation was in Kerala and I was asked to stay back because fathers thought it would be difficult for me to adjust. And I was sent to P.G. College, Dharampura for my graduation in Arts. During my college studies Fr. Xavier Thanamavunkal and Fr. Thomas Vadaparampil were Rectors. After my graduation I moved to Anudhavana Novitiate, Mancherial, and we were the first batch of Anudhavana. Our senior brothers were at Konta for their Novitiate and later they came to Anudhavana Fr. Ligouri and Fr. Somon Stock Palathara were our novice masters and Fr. Mathew Kaniamparampil and Fr. Michael Ukken were team members.

My missionary orientation during the seminary formation and some formators who inspired you

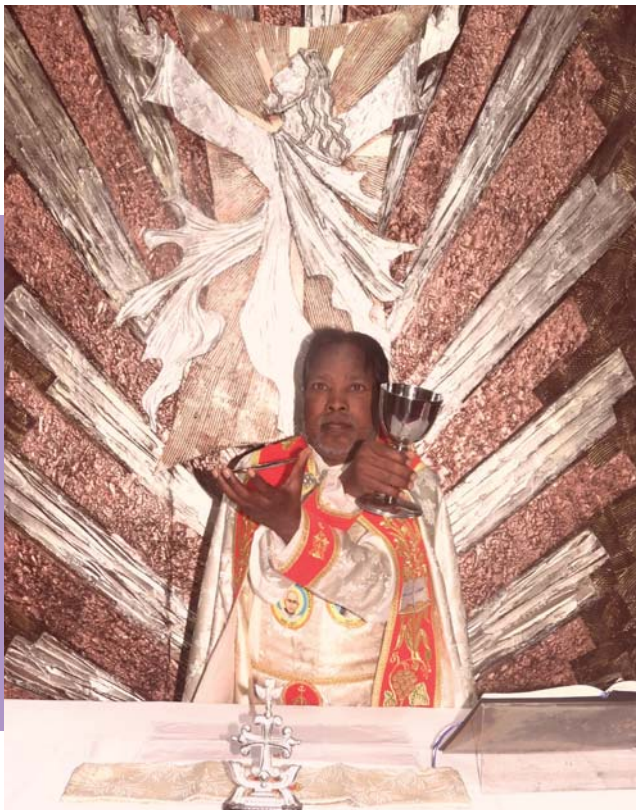
Though I had some difficulty in the initial days in the seminary I could adjust well with the new situation and my companions were also very much helpful. And I always had a thought in my mind that since I have left my home for priestly life I should be ready to do anything at any time, any mission should be taken up. We should be ready to go to any place in spite of the difficulties that may come on our way. Fr. Kaniyamparampil, Bp. Simon Stock and Fr. Ligouri are some of the formators who inspired me.

Priestly Ordination and Ministry

I was ordained on 20 May 1992 at Catholic Church, Gholeng (Now I belong to Bara Koronja Parish - Gholeng parish was divided).



We were five deacons ordained on the same day. Three of them were for the diocese of Jashpur and one was a Pallotine. Among the three for the Diocese one was my classmate. But both of us didn't know that the other was in the seminary until the ordination day. I still have vivid memories of that day. We were accompanied by our parents on both sides. The ordaining bishop was Victor Kindo of Jashpur. The programme was organized by the parish and many fathers and sisters from Jagdalpur had joined the ordination ceremony. After the ordination I stayed back at home some fifteen days celebrating Mass at nearby villages where some of my relatives were also settled. My first appointment was at Chavara Bhavan, Dugoli, our first year Aspirants' house. Fr. Thomas Muppathinchira was rector and I was assisting him in the seminary and in the parish. I am very happy that seven of them (three diocesans and four CMI's since we had a combined formation those days) were ordained priests and are working in Bastar. After a year I was transferred to Geetom station and worked there for one year. At Geetom I was involved in pastoral ministry mostly, celebrating Mass and administering Sacraments in the villages. In 1994 I was transferred to Mariguda. I was taking care of the students in the hostel and also involved in teaching. Since I had my regency there it was easy for me to manage those duties. My regency at Mariguda was eventful. I was actually appointed at Suman Ashram, Palligaon. One day when I met Fr. Thomas Thuruthiyil who was the priest in-charge at Mariguda he asked me, "Why can't you do your regency at Mariguda where you can be involved more?" And I told him that if Fr. Provincial agreed I was ready to come. That was a casual talk and I never thought over it again. But I think Fr. Thuruthiyil discussed the matter with the then Provincial Fr. Thomas Manickam and I was asked to move to Mariguda for my regency. I reached Mariguda soon after the demolition of the school and hostel building. In the beginning since there was no building Fr. Thuruthiyil, Mr. Hilarius Ekka, a teacher and I used to sleep under a tree on the campus. We had only two cots and I used to sleep on the edge of the two cots kept together. Soon after the demolition incident and arrest of Fr. Thuruthiyil, he was transferred and Fr. Joy Kollamparmapil, the present Bishop, took charge of the station. An incident that I remember while doing my regency is a verbal fight with one of the sisters. We had a small thatched building there on the campus which was used as kitchen in which I used to sleep on a bench during the rainy season. The cattle were also kept at the corner of the same single room during monsoon. Since it was very difficult for me to sleep there I asked Sr. Martina to keep the cattle out of the room. But she couldn't agree with that suggestion and got angry. And she said that villagers keep their cattle in the same room where they sleep. We have come here to live like them. Listening to her reply I also got angry and we had a verbal fight. Sister reported this incident to Fr. Provincial. A few days later Fr. Simon Stock came to Mariguda. Seeing him I knew that he had known everything and had come to enquire about it. After lunch Fr. Provincial asked me to go for a walk with him to the ground. While walking he asked me what had happened and I narrated the incident to him. He listened to me very quietly and at the end said that these are all part of our life therefore try to adjust with the situation.



View and opinion about a Tribal Church of Bastar

To be very frank, I am of the opinion that we need not look into the Rite of the people. Our mission is to proclaim the gospel. Therefore, we need to look into the needs of the people we serve. Faith is the most important thing we need to cater to. For me there is only one Church. We may adapt and adopt certain elements from the local custom as per the need and wish of the people of the place. With regard to the Church in Bastar there are different tribal groups. If we decide to serve them as individual groups taking everything from their culture alone there is a possibility of individual churches and division. To put it very clearly, if we go for a tribal church we will have to take into consideration every particular tribe which will do more harm than good.

Future Prospects of the CMI Mission in Chhattisgarh and the Diocese of Jagdalpur

It is quite natural that everything changes as time goes. Comparing the initial days of mission and the present day I have a feeling that there is a change of mentality of the missionaries. A certain amount of comfort seeking has crept into our activities. As infrastructure and other living facilities increase it is possible that we all look for easy life. But for the success of a mission we need to work together as a team for which certain sacrifices are required. My feeling is that mission is for all and working together will only bring good results. A priest is for all and whenever there is a need one should be ready for mission at any time at any place. We have all possibilities and scope for more faithful to the Church and I have great hope in this mission. But we need a life style that is fitting. We need to have simple life to be a model for the people and need to identify with the people. People do not need a commanding priest but a priest who understands their life situations, their problems and so on.

Long years as a teacher and adjusting to an early retired life

During my regency I was involved in teaching and I was interested in it. Two years after the ordination I was again appointed at Mariguda where my main ministry was teaching the boarding children. I served there mainly as a teacher till 2003. And then I was transferred to Provincial House. Except that one year appointment at Provincial house I was always involved in teaching. I enjoyed it. Moreover, since that was the duty given to me I was happy to do it. In 2006 I was again appointed at Mariguda primarily as a teacher and after two years I moved to Karpawand when we could purchase a plot of land there. I continued to teach in the school until 2013 when started losing my vision due to diabetes.

Actually I did not care much about the diabetics. Only when my vision was blurred I went for treatment. I had gone to different kinds of treatments at different hospitals. Retired life is boring, to be very frank. But I think positively that now I can hear therefore, I go to hear confessions. Whatever I am able to do now I am happy to do. I go to hear confession at any time to any place on demand. My only demand is that since I can't drive and reach the place myself somebody has to take me to the place. And I will be ready for it at any time. And I have no regrets that I am not able to do much now. But whatever is possible I will do happily.

When

God

Called



Paulson Muthipeedika CMI
Bhopal On His Usri mission

was at Usri mission centre in Jabalpur diocese in Narsinghpur district of Madhya Pradesh, India. I had been in this village mission station of CMI St. Paul Province Bhopal from 2000 to 2017. We were focussing mainly on social work activities for the betterment of the rural folks mostly belonging to Gond tribes of Central India. We were working actively in about 30 villages. Mostly we were intervening in the field of awareness generation, agricultural and economic activities of the villagers. We supported the villagers to have seed, motor pumps for irrigation, clearing the land for better cultivation, small village ponds, Self Help Groups(SHG) etc mainly aimed at enhancing their means for livelihood.

Later in 2002 when we had the decennial of the mission centre, we had an evaluation on the mission with the all the fathers and sisters involved in the mission from the very beginning of the mission in 1992. We also had a meeting with the leaders of the villages to get their feedback on the works we were undertaking in the villages for their wellbeing. In these meetings it was suggested that a school would help better empower the tribal people to face the challenges of a dignified life as the quality of the education in the govt. schools was not very good. Though we tried to enhance the quality of the govt. schools in these villages by conducting Bal Mela – A day of arts and sports competitions for the children -, seminars and workshop for the teachers, small box libraries in the govt. schools etc, we could to enhance the quality of the schools to a desired level. So, after discussing it in two Provincial Chapters, the Province decided to open a formal school in the village of Usri for the people of the villages. Thus, in 2005 a school – Sanjeevani Vidhyapeeth- was opened. Now the school has reached class tenth and over 500 students read in this village English Medium school. Over 50% of the students belong to the Gond tribes, about 35% to OBC- Other Backward Castes- 10% SC- Scheduled Castes-, 1% to General Category and the rest to other categories.

I was the principal from 2012 to 2017 and was busy with social work and running the school. I enjoyed the job as I found it to be a very good means to mould the minds of the students to be the future leaders for the society.

In 2013, one evening we had gone to visit a family in Jetlapur village eight kms away from Usri. It was the home of the animator of the village creche centre run by the OSF Sisters working in Usri, who had lost the younger brother of her father those days. After the visit while we were coming away, the animator told us that if we had time it would be nice to visit one of the neighbouring families where an old lady was sick. So, we visited this family. On reaching the family we found the grandmother of the family was very sick. She was about 70 years old and had severe fever. She could not move her tongue and so could not speak, eat or even drink water. The family thought she would not live long. Then I felt like praying for this lady. The fact was that I was in this area for 13 year and used to visit the villages and families extensively, but we never prayed in the village or in their families or took the name of Jesus. We were always very sacred as the Sangh Parivar was very much active in Usri and surrounding villages and was always on the lookout if we were doing anything to propagate Christian faith or convert people to it. So, we did not want to invite trouble and thought this would even deprive us of the chance now we have to serve people in the name of Jesus Christ.





But on that evening in this family I felt an inner urge to pray for this old lady and I told the Sisters that we should pray for her. The Sisters were surprised that I wanted to pray for her, which we had not at all done for all these years. But they gladly agreed and I asked the people - there were about 15 people - to keep quiet. I prayed for this old lady. After this we came away from the village. We did not forget to tell the family to take her to the hospital if situation would become serious. On reaching back I started having a strong feeling to pray to the Lord for this lady. I felt that the family might have some hope in our prayer, so, I told Lord Jesus to heal her. Even in the middle of the night when I woke up, I prayed for her. Next day during the Holy Mass we prayed for her. By about 10 am the next day, the family brought her to the clinic run by the Sisters in a bullock cart. What had happened was that she was alright after one hour or so of our departure. She could speak, eat, drink and fever left her. But she had trouble in passing urine and she and the family wanted to get prayed for and get treatment. The Sisters called me from the school and I came and prayed for her. The Sisters administered drip and medicines on her and by evening she was alright and they went home. With this small event I started thinking that I am called not just to be a social worker or give education to the people but was primarily called to give Jesus and his message of love, mercy and compassion to the people. I started reflecting on it and thinking how I could

bring the message of Jesus Christ to this people. Those days I was reading a book by Fr. Cyril Kuttianickal CMI from our province on the Kristha Bhaktas of Martri Dham Ashram, Varanasi. From their Satsangh, I got the idea why not we too start Friday adoration in our church and invite the sick and suffering to come and pray and prayed for by the Catholics. I put this idea to the Sisters and our Catholics who were about 35 at that time, came from other places to work in our school and in other activities. All of them agreed to this idea and we started Friday Adoration in our small church. We instructed our village animator who is a Hindu from Usri village itself to tell the villagers that if there was anybody who was sick for long, they could bring them to the church to be prayed for. Somehow he was very enthusiastic about it and informed the villagers of this and some people started coming for Friday Adoration in ones and twos. There were no great miracles or healings but people felt better.

During this time, I decided to visit the families of our students. So, every evening I used to visit four or five families. I used to have chat with them regarding the study of their children, if the interpersonal relationship at home and with the neighbours was fine, etc. I used to conclude the visit with a prayer. One day I had been to Usri village to visit one of the families of our students. There I found that the grandmother at home was very sick. She had severe joint pain and was unable to move around and was totally confined to her bed. Though she was taking treatment from the hospital, she had no relief from the pain. So, I offered to pray over her. They welcomed me to pray for her. Then I told her son who is an active RSS member to bring her for our Friday adoration and the entire Catholic group would pray for her. He said that he would bring her to the church for prayer. Next Friday they brought her to the church on their bike. She found it very difficult to sit in the church but somehow she spent one hour in the church. We all prayed for her.

At the end of the adoration I asked her how she felt. She said that she felt better but she still had severe pain. So, we suggested her to come for prayer on the following day as well. She came again on the following day with the help of her son. After a few days she was alright and she could walk around and started visiting her friends in the village. She told one of the parishioners that she was alright due to our prayer for her. Slowly this news spread in the village. This helped more people to seek prayer from us. We took a group of 23 faithful from different CMI parishes in the province for a five-day training programme at Suvarta Kendra - a centre for evangelisation under CBCI - at Pachmari in Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh in December 2015. There were six people from Usri Mission. The training was on the theme 'Laity for Evangelization'. It was a very good programme and the participants were very much enriched by this training and they were enthusiastic about sharing the message of Jesus Christ with the people of other faiths.

Once Mr. Natram from Jetlapur village came to my office in the school. He was told by our animator that if anyone was sick at home for long, they might go to the church and the Christians would pray for them. He told me that his wife was very sick and bed ridden due to severe joint pain. He had taken her to many doctors and hospitals but she did not have any relief. So, he asked me what to do. I suggested to him to take her to primary health centre at Singhpur where Dr. Banaria gives very good treatment and care to all the patients. I told him that I knew that doctor personally and that he might tell the doctor that he was sent by me. He agreed to my suggestion and went home. After a month or so he came back to me to the school and told me that he had taken her to Dr. Banaria but did not have any relief at all. Then I told him to bring her to Friday adoration in our church. And it was a Friday and, in the evening, he brought her to our church for the adoration. During the adoration we had special prayers for her. After the adoration I asked her how she felt. She told that she was good but still had a lot of pain. I asked her to come Friday also. They came the Friday too. We prayed for her in a special way. After the adoration I asked her how she was. She said that she felt better but still had pain. Then we suggested that we should go to her village and pray for her at her home. They were very happy about it as they were coming the village eight kms away from Usri.

I encouraged the parishioners to join us to go the village to pray for the sick lady. After the training programme at Pachmari, they were very enthusiastic and ten of them including two Sisters came along to the village. As we reached, we told our animator, who had come along with us to announce in the whole village that Father, Sisters and Christians from Usri have come to the village and those who want to have prayer for them may come to Mr. Natram's house. About 60 people gathered at Mr. Natram's house that day. We had singing, Bhajan, praise and worship, proclamation of the Gospel, reflection, intercessory prayers by the parishioners and I prayed over five sick people who especially sought prayer including the wife of Mr. Natram. The prayer service lasted for one and half an hour. After the prayer I asked them how they felt about it. Most of them told it was very good and that we should come to their village again to pray for the sick. It was the first time that we had a prayer service and proclamation of the Gospel in any village in our area. We were very happy that we got a chance to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ openly to the villagers that evening for the first time.

We usually had bimonthly parent teacher meet in our school-Sanjeevani Vidhyapeeth those days. During these meetings we analyse the results of the students of the current month compared to the previous month. Discuss about various aspects about the progress of the students and the school etc. Then the Principal addresses the parent teacher meet in which usually 300-400 parents participate. Once I took Bible quotations on rearing the children and parenting to explain them to the parents. In fact, I had received it from CMC Sisters who had brought out a small booklet with Bible quotations on different themes, for the Silver Jubilee Celebration of their school at Amlai in Shadol district of Madhya Pradesh. I got them typed out and printouts were made available to all the parents and I explained them during my address to the parents telling them plainly that those were from the Bible but it would help them to help their children grow better. Though there were many among the parents who were active members of the Sangh Parivar none of them had any objection to me explaining to them from the Bible on good parenting. In fact, after the meet when I went to my office some of the parents came to me and told me that it was very good and I would have done much better if I had given it earlier.

Earlier we used to have Way of the Cross on Good Friday from the Mission Centre to our school which is by the other side of the village and there were no houses between our mission centre and the school. We did this because we were sacred to take out the way of the cross through the village. But later we started to make the way of the cross on Good Friday through the village to the last end of the village. We used public address system to sing and say the prayers. During this way of the cross on Good Friday through the village, I gave the message at three centres in the village where more people were available to listen to the message about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. People were not only not against us but served us with cold water and cool drinks in front of their houses. Many venerated the Holy Cross carried at fore of the way of cross. Our fear was misplaced and people really had no objection to our having the way of the Cross through the village. Often times we assume that people may feel bad and oppose some of our religious rituals and practices if they are carried out in the public. It may be true in some places and but in many places it may just be our fear or apprehension.

We used to invite all the Dalit families who were considered untouchables in the village Easter Meal. Our Catholic community used to prepare the meal and share the meal with all the members of the families of the Dalits in the village. There used to be about 80-100 participants in this celebration. The idea was to give them the message that they are not untouchables for us and Jesus Christ had taught us that all are children same God. In the subsequent years we started inviting the village Panchayath president and the ward members for this fellowship meal on the Easter Sunday. But they would always promise to come but never came as they still felt it too liberal to share the meal with the Dalits. So, we thought next time around that we should not call only the village of the same Panchayath president and the ward members but one from every household in the village in which the entire family members of the Dalit families were invited. So, at the following Easter Meal there were about 400 people to participate. The meal was prepared under the supervision of the village leaders and they actively involved in preparing the meal.

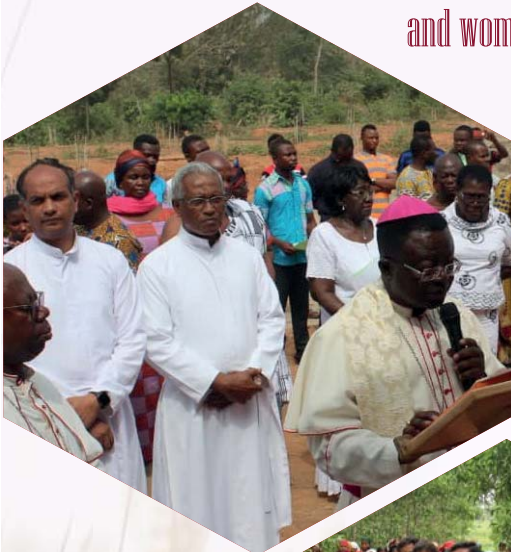
Before the meal we had a gathering in which I spoke about Easter, Good Friday and gave the message. . Our fathers and Sisters from the neighbouring houses also participated in it. After the message one of the participants - he was Revenue Inspector at Narsinghpur- told me that they had heard that Jesus Christ had died on Good Friday. But they never knew that he had resurrected on the third day. He said, "Father you never told this to us." Quite often we were reluctant to speak about Jesus and his message, sacred of the trouble it would invite. So, we found it secure to keep quiet and leave the witnessing to Jesus to our life and activities alone. After the meals there was Satsangh in which some of the parishioners gave message of Easter and had bhajans and songs. The villagers also sang their folk songs and bhajans till midnight.

The next year during the Easter Meal we invited all the members of all the households in Usri village. There were about 800 participants for the Easter Meal that year. This year too the Easter Meal was prepared under the supervision and active involvement of the local leaders. We had meeting with the village leaders twice in this regard and everything was fixed up as per their suggestions and opinion. Before the meal we had a gathering in which we showed some clippings from the film 'Passion of Christ'. Many people were moved by it and were found crying. We also used this occasion to explain to them the message of the death of Jesus on the cross. After the meals there was some thing called Fag Mukabula – a sort of competition between two renowned folk song poets / singers based on the stories of Mahabharat, singing for the whole night. This kind of Fag Mukabula is very much appreciated and popular in the area and people sing them every year during and after the festival of Holi. This Fag Mukabula after the Easter Meal was totally sponsored by us, though booking the poets and singers etc were done by the villagers themselves. There over 700 people for this programme and the programme began with screening of some scenes Khristayan a Hindi film on the life of Jesus Christ. We found it a good way to give the message of Jesus Christ to the people.





I am a mission, always;
you are a mission, always;
every baptized man
and woman is a mission.



Dear,

Every baptized is a missionary. We can become a missionary in different ways, in whatever situation you are. St Therese of Child Jesus, Patron of missionaries had never been to a mission yet was a missionary to the core of her heart. She became a missionary by praying for the mission and the missionaries. So CMission offers the forum to become a missionary by praying for the missionary. Those who are interested- parishes families, religious communities, retreat centres, and prayer centres- can adopt missionaries and pray for them.

Those who wish to join,

One Family One Missionary Prayer Programme

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The spirit of the theological experience and enterprise may be said to have been captured by the term Samanvayam (integration/ harmony/wholeness). Samanvayena sakshat karah, says Bhagavat Gita. Only through an experience of wholeness and harmony within oneself and with creation can one attain God-realisation. And theological education must lead a person to a holistic and harmonious experience of personal integration in which knowing, loving and doing (jnana-bhakti-karma) are united.

Late Fr Louis Malieckal CMI
Father of Contextual Theological Formation

Chosen ones are ready for it.
Let's always do it together.

Evangelize





A Mountain calls us to be a mountain

We started our journey in the morning and the path was already crowded as it was the peak of pilgrimage season. Pilgrims carry water from the river Ganges and pour it under the ancient banyan tree in the temple building and tie colorful threads around the tree trunk ceremoniously. Taking up severe form of tapas/mannath some people were performing the 'ceremonial crawling' towards the temple through the whole path. For me the very journey up the mountain was an occasion and content for a thorough reflection rather than visiting the temple (I don't mean that it was not important as it is the sole purpose of the pilgrimage). Why do people search God in high places and on mountains? Mountains were associated with divinity from the ancient time onwards. In many religions, mountain tops were the places of encountering God. Moses conversed with God on Mount Sinai (Ex 19:1-25). Prophet Elijah encountered God on the Mount Horeb (Kings 19:11-19). Even Jesus frequently went into the mountains to pray (Lk 6:12). St. Chavara, our founding Father and a great visionary himself chose a hilltop for the establishment of the first monastery (Mannanam) and his spiritual experience was understood as the "Bethsrouma Experience".

In Indian/Hindu religious understanding people go on pilgrimage into the Himalayan ranges perhaps not to return or to return with a great bounty of experiences with them (as enlightened). As pope Pius XII says, "... it is a lesson in spiritual elevation, of an energy which is more moral than physical...the spirit is lifting up to God on the breath of prayer and gratitude towards the Creator."

Perhaps, the concept 'Mountain calls us to be a mountain' is a great realization. The great virtue of equanimity can be understood as a quality very much related to the mountains. It is all about the inner balance and disposition of heart towards both positives and negatives of life, as a mountain encounters extreme climatic conditions like heat and cold, rain and drought but it remain as it is. It is all about remaining in the state of contentment with whatever we have; no leap of joy or long faces. In Hindu religion, we can find an almost same concept called as the "sthithapranja". The very term means always at peace, not shaken by any disturbances in events or situations. Be free from any outcomes of actions and anyone who practices it may be firmly grounded in the wisdom of his/her inner self. Overall, it is important to understand that God's grace is the source of one's equanimity as St. Paul says; "Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Phil 4:11-13).

Mission Meditation



Deepu Parayil CMI
Bengaluru

You can never cross the ocean unless you have the courage to lose sight of the shore.' The spirit of these words triggered repeatedly within when I tightened my laze and packed my bags for the journey into an unfamiliar land. Definitely, the Amazon mission was a daring attempt in my life. The providence of God and the trust in Him sufficiently filled the courage and determination which I need for this mission.

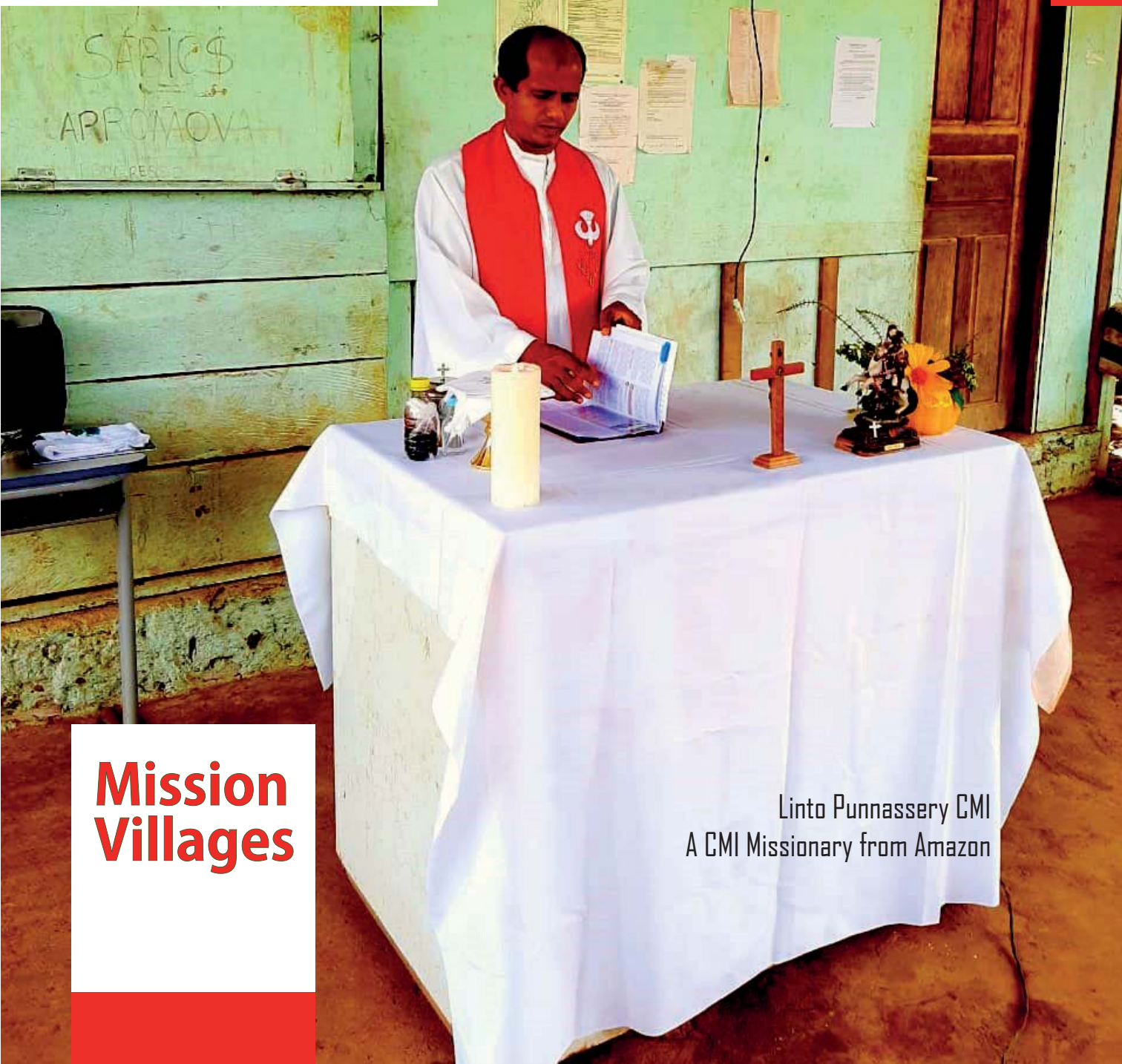
As a preparation, i spent a few months spend to learn Portuguese. However, it took almost one year to get the clearance of all the documents of my journey. I reached Amazonia in Santarém Diocese (elevated to Archdiocese in 2020), on 10th of February in 2016 with the second batch. The then Bishop, Flavio Giovenale SDB and few priests were present at the airport and gave us a grand welcome to their mission land. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Santarém is situated in the northern Brazil. It was a suffragan diocese in the Ecclesiastical province of Belém of Pará until 6 November 2019. The Catidral is dedicated to our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. Located at the confluence of the Tapajós and Amazon rivers. This joining of two rivers is the most spectacular view that I've ever witnessed in my life. And it is one of the wonderful natural attractions of Brazil. The reluctance of mixing between the brown Amazon and blue Tapajós reminded me of the life that I need to live in this mission; to be in the world but not of the world.

After four months of integration courses, Bishop directed us to be with the local priests in order to familiarize the land and culture. Those preliminary days were learning experiences. We came across lot of unfamiliar things which were totally new to our knowledge. Those unfamiliar situations reminded me of the arduous efforts of our elderly priests, who pioneered missions in different parts of India and other countries. Yes, it was a huge challenge to each one of us to get acquainted and adapted to the culture, language and customs. We also bumped into very interesting moments in the initial days. I remember, once after the Holy Mass, I urgently needed to go to restroom (restroom=banheiro) and I asked them, Onde está o dinheiro? (Dinheiro=Money, Mass collection) instead of asking, Onde é o banheiro? And I still remember, they went running and brought me the collection of the Holy Mass, informing the Vicar. But, as time passed, our hard work and determination enabled us to acquaint ourselves with the local culture and to the competent in Portuguese. It surprised me when many people including the priest showed the curiosity to know about Indian culture. They were very eager to know more about India and Indians. Later I came to know the reason why they are very excited to know about India. It was because of the popular TV serial of Brazilian soap opera. In this serial the story begins in Brazil then reaches Jaipur. The entire cast of this soap opera is Brazilian. But their stature and appearance are totally Indian. Actually this show displays a negative image of India and its culture. I suppose that because of this negative impression, they didn't've any respect for us in the beginning. We were down upon as Indígenas (Indigenous). Once my Vicar Jocivaldo Peixoto asked me whether the poverty in India

Today, I visited the new Community, which will be called as Our Lady of Carmel, with our political leaders and people in charge of Water and Electricity. We had a meeting with the Inhabitants there. The leaders promised, they will provide Energy, Water and build a Bridge(with wood, for one Kilometer). In the end, we elected leaders for the community and prepared an official letter with the names and signature of all the inhabitants there, to pass to the Mayor. So to say, I was very much happy with the visitation today. Tomorrow, I will be visiting another 2 communities, very far from the city (85 Kilometers) to give basic baskets and vaccine for Malaria and flu.

According to Pope Francis, Amazon is "heart of the church". But in reality, the "heart of the church" is without 'Shepherd'. I wish and pray that Amazon, the 'Lungs of the Planet' may become the heart of CMIs.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel - a village in Amazon



Mission Villages

Linto Punnassery CMI
A CMI Missionary from Amazon

forced me to work in the Amazon. I had to face such doubts from various people as I find majority are very poor in general knowledge.

In the initial stage it was very difficult for us to adjust and accommodate ourselves to the new culture, customs and food habit. We faced many challenging situations day after day. Many times we had to fight for our basic needs. In the early days when Fr. Saji Valamangalam and myself were staying in the Seminary, many times we were deprived of lunch and dinner. I felt dejected very often when we come back after the four hour continuous language class and having nothing to eat. But we made those moments more enjoyable, having something from the Brazilian thattukada (eatery shop) specials, managing with our broken Portuguese. After many such struggled days the concerned people came to know about it later and took care of our needs well.

The six month preparations gave us more confidence and energy to start our pastoral mission in the Amazon region. We were entrusted with five parishes in this region; Nossa Senhora Aparecida - Santarém, Cristi Ressuscitado - Santarém, N.Sra. Da Graças- Prainha, N. Sra. Conceição- Almerim, and N. Sra. De Nazaré- Monte Dourado. I began my parish ministry assisting Fr. Joby Virippamattathil at Monte Dourado parish, which is 600 km away from the Bishop's house and our journey takes 24 to 26 hrs in boat in the middle of the dangerous muddy water of the Amazon River. It is the greatest river of South America and the largest drainage system in the world in terms of the volume of its flow and the area of its basin. The Amazon River System meanders through nine South America countries. The river is generally believed to be at least 4,000 miles (6,400 km) long, which makes it the second longest river in the world after the Nile River in Africa. During the wet season, parts of the Amazon exceed 120 miles (190) in width. Because of its size, it is sometimes called The Sea. The Amazon River is also famous for the rainforest found along its shores. The Amazon Rainforest represents about half of Earth's remaining rainforest and is the world's largest biological reservoir, home to more than a million species.

Sailing through this Grand River we reached a place called Almerim. But this arduous boating wasn't enough to reach at our destination. The most adventurous journey was ahead. We had to pass through the great Amazon rainforest. This 120 km journey on muddy road of this wild forest in a mini bus needed great courage. Finally, after 4 hrs risky Journey, on 28th August, exactly on my heavenly patron's day, we reached safely in the Parish, Nossa Senhora De Nazaré, Monte Dourado, where Fr. Joby and myself took the charge of parish. This parish is located in a small city called Monte Dourado. The city is known for two Factories: Pulp mill (Jari cellulose) and Kaolin Plant (CADAM). The Monte Dourado Project in 1967, by an American billionaire Daniel Keith Ludwig and his partner Joaquim Nines Almeida. Monte Dourado was a historic site to build houses for the residents of factory management. Compared with other cities, Monte Dourado has very low crime rates and it makes the city serene and attractive. On the next day we received a grant reception from the Parishioners. The joyful and friendly faces reflected their inner beauty. We experienced it from their warmth and friendliness with us. There, we had a teacher named Paulina to polish our language and assist us to get accustomed to their culture. The Parish Administration is an extraordinarily uncomplicated since each Parish is directly controlled by the Curia.

Fr. Joby Virippamattathil and myself were together only for one and half years, then he moved to the neighboring Parish, which is 124 km away from the Monte Dourado Parish and need to cross the thick forest. For the next one year, Fr. Tomy Vattukulathil joined the parish for one year. We worked hard to bring a substantial difference in the parish mainly focusing on the uplift of the communities. Fr. Tomy Vattukulathil moved to Santarém to substitute Fr. Binoy; from there he went to the Diocese of Bahia to undertake a new mission. Since then, it is exactly one year I am all alone, serving the people in this mission land. There were only 18 rural communities, when we took up the mission. But later we added three more communities to the church and these communities were located in the most remote places. The success of bringing back these communities accelerated our zeal to work in the Amazonia. Due to the unavailability of roads, long distances and wild forest, it is very difficult to reach out to these communities regularly. But in spite of this risky condition we go to them to meet their pastoral needs. The village environment is quite pathetic. The conditions of houses are precarious. Some of the villages are totally deprived of electricity, water and access to education and health care. It is quiet common the death of children in the villages. Mostly child death is due to the bite of poisonous insects, reptiles and Arachnids. The vulnerable living conditions are the major cause of these misfortunes. The houses in the villages are covered only with tarpaulins, sometimes they use clay or straw. These communities live in the banks of rivers and use the polluted water for their daily purpose which also affects their health.

I, always visit communities and stay 2-3 days visiting families, blessing their homes, celebrating Holy Mass, Catechizing and giving orientation on the importance of the Sacraments in our life, preparing them for Baptism, Chrism, Holy Eucharist and Matrimony. We conduct Community Marriage in the Parish Church and also in the Community Churches, every year. During the village visit, we always have the objectives like; help them with basic baskets, Rosary, Prayer books, medicines, study tools for children, cold water, chocolate, clothes, shoes, materials for hygiene, etc. The social group of the Parish, really worked hard, especially in the time of covid 19 pandemic to orient the people, what to do and how to prepare home remedies to battle the COVID-19. The awareness campaigning is done in our own vehicle throughout the cities three times a day. We also distributed 1000 Masks, Vitamin tablets and 400 Basic baskets to the needy. We always receive the commendation of our Archbishop Irineu Roman CSJ, for our brave and timely done social work.

I had gone through many heart-whelming experiences since the last four years of my life at Monte Dourado. One among them was becoming a mediator to a community and helping them to come back to Christian faith. Once, as I was sitting in the dining room in the afternoon, I heard a lady calling Padre, Padre... I inquired about her and was told that she wants me to give Baptism to her children and for her. Since she was from an unknown community called Água suja (dirty water), I decided to go along with her on the same day itself to know more about that community. As I reached there, an elderly lady told me very sadly, "we are like animals, living in this community for the last 26 years, without any help and support from the political leaders and the church." But, in spite of all their problems, they were very happy for having me there in their community because it is first time a priest visiting their community.



After that day I started to visit the community regularly. We gave Baptism to 30 people and preparing them for other Sacraments. Our Lady of Mount Carmel was the name given to this community. We recently built a wooden bridge of 325 meters, with the help of Bhopal Province and the Mayor of the city, Monte Dourado. Now the community is more accessible to the city for education of the children, hospital and finding Manual work, etc. At present we are trying to reach electricity, to begin a school and to make a borewell for this community. We have a special concern for this community since it was being abandoned for the last 26 years. The IST Archbishop Irineu Roman CSJ visited this community in the month of November 2020 inspiring the uplift work done to this community. Archbishop was very excited and happy about the immense services that we rendered to the villages and the city.



These pastoral services give me great joy and contentment to work more among the people of God. And I believe this is the real purpose of my call as missionary. When I see the joy of the people after attending Holy Mass and other sacraments, I praise God for making me an instrument to draw many to Him. At this juncture I remember and thankful to all the Major Superiors, who had great confidence in me to pioneer a mission along with other nine priests in the Amazon. Also, I'm grateful to all the Superiors, who visited me and encouraged me to be a true and dedicated missionary, here in Amazonia. I give a special gratitude to Fr. Paulson Muthupedika, my former vicar provincial, who stayed 15 days with me visiting communities, giving a great support, encouragement and guidance for my mission in Brazil.



Best Practices

John Peter Muringathery CMI
Coimbatore

Divyodaya **A** **man** **Behind** **Tolerance** **to Stop** **Violence**



CMI Preshitha Province, Coimbatore started Divyodaya Inter religious Centre in 1980. I was instrumental and was its director from the start till 1993. Now in the evening my of life I am back at the Centre after 25 years. What follows is supported by my experience in and through Divyodaya.

The motto of Divyodaya runs, "The bonds that unite us are stronger than the barriers that separate us". The Centre has succeeded in spreading the ideal enshrined in the motto among many people belonging to various religions. Divyodaya has become a landmark in Coimbatore.

Today we witness the alarming situation in our country where barriers are being built instead of bonds. When the Vatican II called for dialogue with other religions it was a part of its teaching for an open attitude to the world. But we in India should read the Council's teaching about our relation to other religions with an existential urgency. "Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral values in other religions and cultures through dialogue and cooperation" (NA §2).

In the early days of Divyodaya in my contact with people of other religions, especially Hindus, I came to know that what they knew about the Church was our traditional negative attitude towards other religions: "there is no salvation outside the Church". It is very clear, with such an "holier than thou" attitude we cannot establish positive relationship with the followers of other religions. That is why the Church in the above mentioned document speaks about the positive values in other religions and the change of attitude that is required in us towards them. Thus the Church recognizes the spiritual and moral values in Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam etc. This attitude reflects the conviction of the Church that God who wants the salvation of all has invested "a ray of that divine light that enlightens every man" in these

the Church that God who wants the salvation of all has invested "a ray of that divine light that enlightens every man" in these

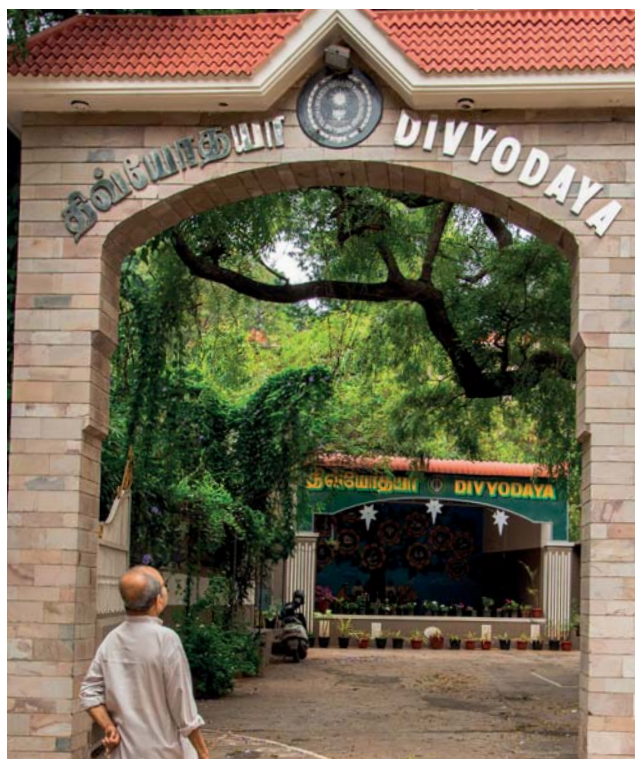
religions and cultures. while holding her faith that the fullness of that light is manifested in Christ. I would like to say briefly about the services of Divyodaya. We started with celebrations of the festivals of different religions: Christmas, Diwali, Ramzan, Gurunanak Day, and Mahavir Jayanti. These are the religious communities in Coimbatore. We invite a representative of the particular religion to speak on the significance of the festival, while some one from another religion will preside. These celebrations helped the members to know the values in different religions and strengthen the bonds of friendship with members. We do not entertain discussion on differences. Divyodaya organized leadership programmes for college students, interschool competitions, village out reach programmes etc. We realized that harmony among religions called for promoting ecumenical relationship. The local CSI bishop cooperated with us very closely, especially during riots following the demolition of Babri Masjid. We used to have ecumenical programmes like pastors' get-together, carols singing and Sangamam of two or three days concluding with visit to different worship places. The ultimate aim is to build the bonds that unite.

Again and again I have faced the question: Is not conversion your ultimate aim? Always our members answered. I still remember how Prof. Feroze, a Muslim answered such a question during the solemn inauguration on 16th January 1983. He said: "Some people may think that the ultimate aim is conversion. But I can tell you, there is conversion taking place here, not from one religion to another, but conversion in one's attitude to other religions".

In connection with the silver jubilee of Divyodaya (2005), The Hindu newspaper wrote: "During the past 25 years, the young and the old have converged on its premises to participate in conferences, discussions, discourses and prayer meetings. It is a busy place during festival time, with people of all religions turning up for the celebrations and greeting one another. The bonds that unite us are stronger than the barriers that separate us is the motto of this organization, which is known for its peace rallies, inter-religious pilgrimages, youth programs and inter-school competitions on religious harmony, patriotism and human values. The aim is to highlight positive values in different faiths".

Here I would like to share a few thoughts on the motto of Divyodaya: 'The bonds that unite us are stronger than the barriers that separate us.' After the assassination of Smt. Indira Gandhi in 1984 I was invited for some meetings organized in the city by other organizations. In one such meeting I met Ramaswamy Adigalar, the revered head of Perur Adheenam, the famous Hindu Math. I requested him to pay a visit to Divyodaya. He said, "I will not come there. You may visit me." We organized a group of Divyodaya members from different religions and visited him during Pongal. I had already told our members that we were not going to speak about Divyodaya but to listen to Swamiji and learn about the Math. Swamiji was very much pleased, he sat with us to take prasadam and spoke about the history and services of the Adheenam. Our visit was an opening. Afterwards whenever we invited him he made it a point to come to Divyodaya. When Cardinal Arinze, President of the Pontifical Council for Dialogue, visited Divyodaya in 1990, Swamiji was present along with other religious heads. It was from this and similar experiences from our visits to the religious places of different communities that we formulated the motto. Now the motto of Divyodaya is widely known in the region and much appreciated.

Dialogue demands that we come down from our supposed superior position. The barriers are psychological blocks through prejudices about others. The gesture of coming down from our self-styled pedestal to the level of the dialogue partners with an open mind to learn from them will lead to mutual trust which is the key to dialogue and fellowship. I consider my appointment as novice master after leaving Divyodaya in 1993 as a sign of the recognition from the part of the Province. Though in the beginning our members had a lot of difficulty to understand the relevance of the mission gradually the misconceptions were overcome. I used to share my experiences with the novices. I sent the seniors for out door novitiate to a nearby village to teach English to the students. There was no place to receive the children except the front side of the temple. We approached the chief of the village for permission. While giving his permission he added "Teach them anything good for them. Don't teach religion". Before starting classes we invited the parents to introduce ourselves. I told them that we had only one religion, religion of love - anbumatham. This is the saying of Saibaba. "Ore matham, anbu matham, ore jathi manitha jathi, ore mozhi idaya mozhi" (language of the heart).



ദിവിയോദായ DIVYODAYA

Once I took the novices to the nearby Kaumaramadam, an important Hindu Math, at Saravanampatti nearby. I prepared the novices beforehand. I took with me my team members Fr.Dunston and Fr.Joy Chalissery along. After meeting the Swamiji, Sundaraswamigal who was very familiar with Divyodaya I took the novices to the nearby vedapadasala where boys are trained to become pujarees. The novices freely mingled with the boys. After supper we shared the impressions of that day. I asked them what impressed them most. The novices mentioned the time they spent with the pujaree boys. I jokingly said that our next outdoor novitiate could be with the pujaree boys. Then our saintly Fr.Dunston said, they are nice boys. Don't spoil them! When I was general formation coordinator under Fr.Alex Ukken, Prior General. I could visit all our formation houses more than once. While introducing myself naturally I shared my Divyodaya experiences.

In 2011 a small book about Divyodaya was published by Fr.Joy Arackal the then director. I was in Germany when the book was published. The title I suggested for the book was "Divyodaya: God's own Dream". The mission is God's dream and we are only instruments. I used to say, "Vallabhanu Pullum Ayudham". This is my deep conviction. In 1999 we started another centre in Salem with the name "Arulcholai" - valley of grace. The motto of Arulcholai is "Foster Fellowship accepting Differences". A long time Divyodaya member Prof. Palaniswamy has written an article on Divyodaya in the previous number of CMIssion, "The bonds that unite...". Divyodaya is known to the public through people like Prof.Palaniswamy.

Frontier
Missionary

Chavara Ashram Kshitij A Ray of Hope



Varghese Puthuparambil CMI
Chanda

Doctorji, mera dimag ka cell khatam ho gaya, recharge kar dijiye”, yells out Buchubai to the Psychiatric doctor Dr. Sr. Sally SJB, who treats the mental patients of this Ashram. Yes! Now Chavara Ashram, Kshitij takes care of 46 abandoned mental patients (15 men and 31 women) collected mostly from the streets. Responding positively to the call of the 36th General Synaxis of CMI Congregation to venture out to frontier ministries, Mar Thoma Province of Chanda established this Ashram in the village Jam of Wardha district in Maharashtra. The very name Kshitij in Marathi refers to horizon, which symbolizes HOPE. Accordingly, giving hope to “hopeless” people is the singular aim of this institution.

Ashram Kshitij was inaugurated on March 25, 2011, coinciding with the celebrations of the Feast of Annunciation and World Pro-life day. "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full" (Jn 10:10) is the motto of the Ashram. It signifies our commitment to the protection of LIFE in all conditions. Being thrown out from the society, numerous human beings live on the streets in far more miserable conditions than that of the street dogs. Often they are labelled as "mad" and no one dares to accommodate them anywhere. The mission of the Ashram is to see the incarnation of divine LIFE in these "wretched beings" and to serve them at the best as we can.

Along with providing psychiatric medication and other essential amenities of life, we give them training in skills for living, like tailoring, beautician, mobile repairing, knitting, chocolate making, driving, Zero Budget Natural Farming, Poultry farming, etc. The sad thing is that only a very few of them pick up and advance in these skills. Therefore we opened up these training facilities to the youth of the nearby villages, too, and they had benefitted immensely from these programs.

Further, the daily prayer sessions in the Ashram indeed cool down their mental disturbances and enhance the speed of their recovery. Through various entertainment programs, TV shows, Films, picnics, celebrations of national, local and religious festivals, birthdays, jovial and encouraging interactions of the staff etc, we try to keep always a happy and positive environment in the Ashram.

The rehabilitation of these people seems an almost impossible task due to the social stigma attached to mental illness; neither their own families nor the institutions rarely accept them back. However, we have success stories too. A young lady who had been here under psychiatric treatment for almost four years got cured and now married and settled in Pune leading a happy family life with her husband and a child.

Protect and safeguard LIFE, especially of the vulnerable and the abandoned, is the primary responsibility of any human being. As Gandhiji said, "the responsibility of a free India is to wipe away the tears from eyes of the poor." With great optimism we look forward to see the day our beloved CMI Congregation takes a U turn to address the real problems of our people.



For Mission

Embracing Spirituality- A Veering most Needed

Most of the millennials today associate themselves to the statement - Spiritual but not religious. There is a reluctance to associate themselves with traditional religions but at the same time most of them value certain aspects of the religion. For example, one may say, "I like Jesus but not Christianity", or "I do yoga and meditation, but I don't visit temples; This suggests that the modern men and women have not stopped the search for God but they only make efforts to rise above religion and adopt a method suitable for them. In the Hindu tradition sanyasins are considered to be above the religion. But the sanyasins always begin their search for God with religion. Later they advance in the grades of spirituality in a gradual process. However, the millennials seem to be more confident when they begin the search for God outside the religion. For good or bad, the search for God here becomes a personal business and there is a shift from religiosity to spirituality. We generally say that every corner of India is dedicated to God and speaking of Rishikesh it is truly affirmed. Known as the pilgrimage town and regarded as one of the holiest places to Hindus, Rishikesh, since ancient times, has the history of many sages and saints meditating here in the ashrams and kutiyas across the banks of river Ganges. They were immersed in prayer and meditation keeping the spiritual mood of the place alive. Many spiritual seekers visited these eminent Gurus for inspiration and enlightenment. But the lockdown days saw a backpedalling of the wheel of time to the beginning when Rishikesh was a true abode of spirituality with the presence of only the rishis and yogis as the pilgrims returned and the tourists decamped. I would like to look at this as a phenomenon as a microcosm of the shift from religiosity to spirituality that the entire world is experiencing right now. But the outbreak of Covid 19 and the imposition of lockdown meant no aarti. The temples in the foothills of the Himalayas remained closed. The flow of devotees stopped. The live chanting of mantras and singing of kirtanas in the temples

gave way to pre recorded audios played through microphones. Rafting was halted, no more adventures like bungee jumping, trekking or camping. No more pilgrims and tourists were to be seen in Rishikesh.

All the while there was a group of people who remained unaffected by the locked down-the saduhs and the sanyasins. Be it the closing of the temple or the shutdown of public places of worship they had their life in track, the time they spent in meditation didn't change. Their recitation of namajapas didn't cease. Even when the tourists and the pilgrims left the city the spiritual seekers remained stayed back. They devoted time to meditation and yoga. Looking forward to meet gurus for satsangs, when the lock down ends they stayed in the land of sages. When the last tourist also left the city and when every business was shut, slowly and gradually Rishikesh was transforming to the cradle of Hindu spirituality. With all the meditation, spirituality and feeding of the poor that took place in the city, Rishikesh did live up to the title of 'Dev Bhoomi'. Thus this is how visible shift from religiosity to spirituality took place in Rishikesh. By and large this must have been the experience of all major organized religions which follow congregational worship and prayer. Will religion become more personal in our post-Covid-19 world? Will the pandemic shake the very foundations of traditional religions? When the pandemic would end, will people retreat into their inner capsules of faith or take religiosity to unseen heights? These are some of the questions that only time can answer. With the corona virus pandemic, we see people turning more inward. Religion has become a household affair as places of worship continue to alter their faith modalities. Believers have chosen to stay out of large religious gatherings, preferring to demonstrate their piety and faith on personal platforms.



Melbin Elamplasseril CMI
Bhopal



In Christianity priests and religious actors are increasingly making use of new technologies and social media platforms to charge the community spirit and hold their faith groups together. Today every Parish or community of believers has Whatsapp groups and YouTube channels enabling them for a virtual Koinonia experience. These virtual platforms may tenuously hold faith communities together and even enable their sustenance for the time being, but it's another matter to doctrinally embrace virtual religion as congregational faith.

Digital religion reshapes congregational dynamics.

There is a vacuum experienced by people who have been regular practitioners of traditional religions. And this has sparked a wave of innovation in online religious services. Many start-ups are now collaborating with places of worship like temples churches and pilgrim centres to air their rituals live on virtual reality platforms, allowing devotees to seek divine intervention from their homes.

However, attending rituals on interactive or virtual reality platforms cannot match up the intense emotional experience of group-worship. It is here that more people have begun to realize the importance of spirituality. Although not as an alternative to religious worship as congregational religion, practice of spirituality can help believers to fill the vacuum they experience. Every religion has both a cultic and spiritual dimension. When the cultic dimension is stressed more religion becomes mere cultic and ritualistic. It further fosters religiosity to the extent that some of the believers become fundamental and forget the values one's religion upholds. The major religions of India, namely, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity have rich spiritual traditions which remain unexplored and unappreciated till date. It is high time that every one explored and embraced spirituality. Every individual can practice spirituality through following spiritual disciplines and practices.

For example, in Christianity spiritual disciplines may include: prayer, fasting, reading and meditating on the word of God, constant participation of the sacraments such as the Eucharist whenever possible, careful observance of the Lord's Day and days of Obligation, receiving spiritual communion, offering daily prayer at one's home altar, praying the rosary, contemplative prayer, almsgiving, reconciliation, praying the liturgy of the hours etc. And devoting to such disciplines can be further enhanced by coming together in small groups as "house churches". Now "house church" is a label used to describe a group of Christians who regularly gather for worship in private homes. Several passages in the Bible specifically mention churches meeting in houses. The first house church is recorded in Acts 1:13, where the disciples of Jesus along with Mother Mary gathered together in the "Upper Room" of a house. Correspondingly I think every religion intends to increase the spirituality for which the rituals are being made use of as a means. Spirituality should not be considered as something opposed to religiosity. In fact spirituality is described as a state of being spiritual or a state of concern with the spirit over physical things. The term Spirituality is derived from Hebrew 'ruach', which has a range of meanings such as spirit, breath, wind, etc. It also means 'that which gives life and animation to something'. Spirituality is something which animates a person's life of faith or something that moves a person's faith to greater depths and perfection. In this time of the pandemic it is spirituality which enables believers to live the faith and connect with the divine. Spirituality also influences how we view the world and relationships. Every individual has a desire to embrace spirituality.

have always been fascinated by the way eagles fly, the way they flutter their wings and soar above the skies. A question has always struck my heart regarding the way eagles fly.

Why can't the eagle fly with just one wing? An eagle flying with two wings teaches each one of us a great secret, a spiritual secret. An eagle can never soar high with just one wing. It needs two wings to stabilize its movement. Similarly, in our religious life, our minds cannot soar high without the help of the other. We need the other in order to enjoy and nurture our religious missionary life. The members of our religious community play a pivotal role in making us true missionaries and preachers of the Good News of the Kingdom. The theme for the General Synaxis XXXVIII – 'Renewed and Empowered for Communitarian Mission beyond Borders' is so apt for the present day situation and the crisis that each individual religious faces in the society. A re-discovery of the Koodapirapukal sentiment that was deeply rooted and grounded by our Founding Fathers in our congregation is a need of the hour to combat the violent forces that destroy our congregation's missionary spirit. I firmly believe that these years would be a time when every missionary of our congregation will 'wake up to become a contemplative prophet by

St. Chavara had a vision for each one of us. He said, "No matter how many monasteries there may be, they should be like a single family and all the members should be like the children born of the same mother and grown up drinking her milk. This kind of genuine love among them should never diminish, but keep increasing. All should consider this as the greatest of my advices." (CWC IV, 2020, Pg. 115) St. Chavara did not put this across as a theory but also gave practical steps to make them a reality. He continues, "In order to ensure that this love never decreases, the superiors of monasteries should take interest in responding to the requests of one another rather than meeting the needs of their own respective communities. Meeting together from time to time they must settle all accounts and through frequent letters keep mutually informed of matters concerning the well-being of members and take care of one another." (CWC IV, 2020, Pg. 116) For St. Chavara, an ideal religious community is a family. Every religious community in the mission should grow as a family. It is undeniable that the very CMI spirituality is a spirituality of communion. We all know that a missionary's life is like a roller coaster ride. There are many vicissitudes in the life of every missionary.



CMIness
Dare to be
Koodapirapukal...

returning to the roots and draw inspiration from our founding fathers.'

In the missions, there has been a dire necessity to re-awaken our commitment to our community life in order to work with zeal for the people of God and to reach the good news to the farthest lands. In the letter to the consecrated men and women published in 2014 by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life titled "Re-joice" the community is defined as the "first and most believable Gospel we preach." For our missions to be effective the Koodapirapukal movement has to be re-awakened. People in the missions should see the joy we share in our communities and long to be a part of our faith life. Remember that a missionary is like an eagle that cannot soar high without the help of the other.

There may be moments when he/she feels adventurous and at times bored. The presence of a loving and sharing community will obviously strengthen the individual to be a true religious. Even in formation, our brothers should be positively motivated to encourage our missionaries who work in remote places through frequent letters, messages and phone calls rather than just focusing on calling their superior and previous formators. This would ablaze a spark in the heart of young missionaries and also soothe the hearts of the tired and tried missionaries who are at work in their mission lands. In the life of a missionary, his/her community is very important in making him/her a person of prayer. Without a community, the missionary's life remains incomplete. If there is someone who can say that he/she can be a missionary without the help of a community, he is a bare liar.

For Mission



All the pioneering missions of our congregation were founded not single-handedly but as a communion of visionaries putting their heart and mind together for the common good of the Church. What makes one a true CMI is his personal affection and true commitment to the religious community to which he belongs. When we had our batch gathering two years back, the one fact that was reiterated by almost all my fellow brothers was that the element that kept them happy and going in the CMI congregation is the community life. I have also witnessed many priests sharing that they would have quit religious life if they had not been given a chance to enjoy the warmth and love of their communities. The strength of our congregation truly lies in our communitarian dimension.

Being a budding missionary, I have always relished the joy of community life in the missions. I have observed right from my aspirancy, which was in a house adjacent to the Provincial House, how our fathers visit the provincial house regularly and share their wiles and woes with the other brethren. It has always touched me because I know that they have travelled hundreds of kilometers just to be a part of the community and know that someone is there for them to speak to, share their happiness and sorrows. While they leave, I have seen a spark in their eyes that was so dim when they had come to the provincial house. All of them go back energized and rejuvenated. Without the help of a community, they have confessed, their missionary life would be incomplete.

The benefits of a community life in the missions are ineffable. A communitarian CMI will be successful wherever he goes. The theme for the present General Synaxis invites and inspires every missionary to re-discover the Koodapirapukal movement started by our Founding Fathers and be effective missionaries and proclaim the fraternal love of the Children of God. Let every CMI missionary be elated at the thought that there is a community that strengthens him in his difficult times. An eagle needs two wings to soar high...



Phillips Chalackal CMI
Wardha





Mission Collaborators

“Neues Kerala” in Germany with the CMIs



Franz Schiffers
Germany



Rev. Herbert Krings

With joy and gratitude - but also with a little pride - we are looking back at the work of our long-standing association of more than 55 years with the Indian Church and especially with the CMI congregation. This movement began as an initiative of the people out of their Christian faith to promote humanitarian works as well as to support the students who aspired to become religious, missionary priests in the CMI Congregation. It also aimed at exchanging contacts between the cultures and arranged different trips and visits to India to see the activities of the Church in India.

We are grateful to those who took initiative for this.

1. Rev. Fr. Werner Chakkalackal and Rev. Fr. Roger Kattarath who were in Germany for their studies had made wide contact with the people in Bonn.
2. It was in 1965 that a group of people involved in politics and business from the region of Cologne (Köln) founded the "Neues Kerala" to support the indigenous CMI congregation.
3. At the same time, Rev. Ludwig Schumacher, a Parish Priest in Bonn, took initiative to start an organisation to support the "Works of the Malabar Carmelites". His goal was primarily to provide personal sponsorships for Indian seminarians in Dharmaram College, Bangalore, who were undergoing priestly formation.

There was a great interest among high-ranking officials mainly residing in Bonn, which was once the capital of West Germany, to get involved in the developmental activities in India. They came into contact with CMI fathers who came to Germany for their study. In the wake of the Second World War Germany was divided into two, and one part (DDR) was under the communist regime. This experience caused great apprehension among them of communism and its impact on the world. Against this background as in 1953 a communist government came to power in Kerala for the first time, they feared this could adversely affect Christianity in Kerala. Fr Werner who was in Germany at that time spoke about the Deepika Project, perhaps the only daily newspaper run by the Catholic church in the world and owned by CMI Congregation. The Germans were impressed by this media project which could make great impact in the minds of the people as the literacy rate in Kerala was high and this received great response in Cologne and in the surrounding regions. They wholeheartedly supported the request of Fr Werner for a new printing press for Deepika, since they thought it would help the Catholic daily to achieve higher circulations in order to counteract the highly communist publications.

Meanwhile Fr Werner explored the possibility of getting a German made printing press at Sardinia in Italy. However, it was very costly to purchase and transport to India. The cost was estimated to be more than half a million German Marks. After a series of complicated negotiations, the diocese of Paderborn and the Archdiocese of Cologne agreed to bear the cost by donating a total of 150,000 German Marks. On January 3, 1968, the printing press was officially commissioned in Kottayam. As a result, Deepika could increase its circulation. Thus, the first goal of the association was achieved. Following this the association took up supporting the construction of Amala Cancer Hospital near Thrissur and a school with a boarding school for disabled children. The "Work of the Malabar Carmelites" During the same period, Rev. Ludwig Schumacher, who taught religion in the school and was Pastor of Bonn-Pützchen parish, founded the organisation called "Work of the Malabar Carmelites." He gave priority to promote regular monthly donations from his friends and family members for Indian Carmelite seminarians and collected also donations for social and pastoral programmes of the congregation. Because of the rapidly increasing numbers of the donors and benefactors he found it difficult to carry out the administrative formalities related to management of the fund. Pastor Schumacher hence requested the CMI congregation to send a priest who could be a contact person to take care of the administration and management of funds in Germany. Prelate Joseph Pock, who was a board member of Schumacher's association, agreed to take this CMI priest as an associate priest in his parish in Königswinter close to Bonn. With the permission of the Archdiocese of Cologne and agreement with the CMI Congregation Fr Dr. John Peter Murangathery CMI came in 1975 as the first CMI priest to assist in a German parish.

Despite the initial resistance and problems, Father John Peter, with his energetic and jovial nature, succeeded in 1976 in unifying the two above mentioned organisations under the name of Fördereverein "Neues Kerala". In the same year he had to return to India as decided by his religious authorities to take up the new assignment in Bangalore. Fr Joseph Thondipura was sent to succeed him. Father Joseph was very successful in advertising for the different projects of the CMI congregation in Germany and to win over many friends and benefactors for the organisation. Different groups of donors and benefactors were formed in parishes and different places and the campaign for personal benefactors and sponsors for the seminarians got acceptance and approval among the people. The rapid growth of the number of the sponsors spread all over Germany was really astonishing. Donations came from Hamburg, München or Heidelberg and sometimes even from Austria and Switzerland. It was very important for the donors to know that every donated amount was transferred to India without any reduction for the cost of administration. All those who worked for the organisation were volunteers and spent their time and energy freely for this cause. The priests who worked for the organisation as managing directors were also associate priests in a German parish. The interest of the contributions in the bank was used to cover the administrative cost which was very minimal. We have been able to keep this commitment up to this day.

Other CMI priests in Germany: Fr Geo Mangara CMI came as associate pastor in Königswinter. In 1979 Fr Jacob Thanniyil became CMI pastor of Königswinter. Later in 1982 he moved to the parish of St. Servatius in Bonn-Friesdorf. In 1983 Cardinal Höffner, Archbishop of Cologne, offered the presbytery of the parish as official house of the CMI community, which became the first establishment of an Indian congregation in Germany. In this parish the much loved CMI fathers worked until 2010. Then they moved to a new parish am Ennert. It included the parish at Pützchen where Rev. Ludwig Schumacher had been a pastor until his death.

The CMI fathers had their residence providentially at a street named after the Carmelites and the parish had a long-standing Carmelite tradition. However, the CMIs left Bonn in 2019 and moved now to the Knechtsteden monastery near Dormagen north of Cologne. In 1983 Father Joseph Thondipura moved to another parish and the following fathers took up the assignment in his place from time to time. They are: Dr. James Aerthayil, Dr. Lucius Nereparambil, Joseph Thondipura (again for three years), Thomas Kaniyanadackal, Joy Manjaly, Dr. Josey Thamarassery and George Joseph Kuttiyanickal until 2020. Over the years it became increasingly difficult to find sponsors and benefactors for the seminarians. However, donations continued for social projects and welfare programmes, but mostly as determined by the donors. Since its foundation the organisation has funded more than 700 seminarians and transferred donations of about seven million Euros for different projects and purposes in India.

The Funding Group of Pastor Kringe in Bruchhausen Parallel to Pastor Schumacher's Aiding Group, Pastor Herbert Kringe of Bruchhausen in the Archdiocese of Paderborn, a small village in the Sauerland area east of Cologne, initiated activities in the same direction. During his trips to India he informed himself about the most urgent needs and was able to help exactly the needy. Thanks to his creative initiatives he could collect large donations and was thus able to support numerous social projects of CMI congregations in India. He had placed a placard in his church saying "To Bethlehem through India," which motivated the people to support the programmes in India. In addition to that he could organize a lot of sponsorships for seminarians from the area of Bruchhausen and its surroundings. Although Pastor Kringe did not work with "Neues Kerala", he was closely associated with Pastor Schumacher and his group. However, Neues Kerala offered support with regard to the administrative dealings of the many sponsorships from Bruchhausen.

Fr Joseph Thondipura regarded his work in Germany and in the funding association as a favourable opportunity to acquaint the Germans with people and culture of his homeland. He loved his land Kerala and India and wanted his German friends to know and to love the country and the church. Therefore, he planned different trips to India for the members of the association and friends. Already in 1977, he organized the first trip for the board members Heinz Roleff and Hubert Bigalke and their family to visit his country and the works of the CMI congregation. He took up further tour programmes of 25 participants each in 1978/79 and 1980/81.

They spent three weeks in South India, visiting towns, villages, cultural monuments, beauties of nature and above all, monasteries, schools and other social institutions of the CMI congregation. The trip was very much important for the sponsors as it was an occasion for them to meet the seminarians who were supported by them at Dharmaram College, the CMI Major Seminary. Many similar trips were planned and executed till this day, under the guidance and leadership of fathers working in Germany. There are no statistics, but definitely several hundred Germans got chance to have their valuable impressions of the culture of India by travelling along with CMI fathers. There were lasting personal connections and friendships with a culturally high-ranking country, which many Germans previously considered to be exotic, poor and backward. The knowledge about the origin of Christianity in India which was brought by St Thomas the Apostle might have been new for many of the German visitors. The Christian traditions of Kerala are definitely older than the missionary work in Germany by Irish monks in the 6th century.

The funding association "Neues Kerala" fulfilled its original task of collecting donations well, but in addition has made commendable contribution of exchange of two different cultures.

Franz Schiffers (Honorary chairman of "Neues Kerala"), Bad Honnef, October 20, 2020.



Rev. Ludwig Schumacher



Rev. Joseph Thondipura CMI



Dr Georg Heumann
Present Chairman

IN BRIEF news / events



On 3rd January, 57 new priests of our Congregation celebrated Holy Qurbana at Mannanam. On the same day evening they were given reception at Prior General's House. On the next day, along with Chavara Hills community the new priests celebrated Holy Mass. With this new batch of priests we have also reached 2000 members as priests in our Congregation with this batch. It was a grace-filled occasion to thank God for the greatest gifts of these many young buds to our CMI Congregation. Congratulations and prayerful wishes dear fathers!

Sixth anniversary of the canonization of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara was held at on November 23rd, 2020. Rev. Fr. Prior General and General Team celebrated Holy Qurbana and offered special prayers at the tomb of St. Chavara. It was a blessed moment to thank God and recommit the missionary spirit enkindles by St. Chavara and the founding Fathers to go beyond the borders doing service to the people.



A music ministry under the patronage of CMI General Department of Evangelization and Pastoral Ministry introduced a 'Priest Band' known as "Men in Cassocks" on 10th February, on the 216th birth day of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara. The purpose of the band is to proclaim the Gospel message through music ministry. A beautiful song which was also released on the same day by Fr. Prior General. Young musicians from different provinces of CMI congregation are encouraged and motivated through this initiative to work together for witnessing their faith. Congratulations and best wishes dear MEN IN CASSOCK!



Our Ugandan missionaries Saju Kollanoor, Stenin Puthooran and Dhibin Thekkayil cordially invite n solicit your prayerful presence n support as our province venture into this unknown land of Africa, and are going to mark the epoch making formal CMI presence in this most peaceful country of Africa, Uganda. The official inauguration of the "CARMELITES HOUSE" (1st CMI house in Uganda) and the official erection and handing over of the St. Joseph's Catholic Parish, Kannyanda, to the CMIs, for its pastoral care, took place on 21/2/21.



On 9th November 2020, Fr. Dr. Anto Thekkudan was appointed as its Regional Superior of of CMI East Africa Region for the term 2021-2024, and on 30th November Fr. Julius, Fr. Christopher, Fr. Lawrence, Fr. Ajith and Fr. Stephen were appointed as councillors. Fr. Anto succeeds Fr. Dr. Johny Thachuparamban who served the Region as its Regional Superior for the last six years. On 8th December was a day of blessing for St. Thomas Region, East Africa. On that very special day our four novices, Jackson Orwa, Dismas Atancha, Julius Kodjo, and Joseph Mbithi, said yes to God by their first religious profession and Simon Okiya offered himself perpetually to God.



Fr Binoy ittikunnel of Muvattupuzha province has arrived at the diocese of Terxeira of Freitas and started his mission work. He is appointed pastor in one of the largest parishes of the diocese.

Please sent your news and updates on mission and missionary activities and its immages for the next issue before 25 Noveber 2020
✉ cmissionmagazine@gmail.com, 94255 29603, 9539747947



A meeting of the CMI Bishops was held at Chavara Hills on 06 January 2021. There was a lively discussion of the Bishops with General Council and Chavara Hills community. It was an occasion for the congregation to reflect together with bishops about the missionary activities and to plan for the better coordination and collaboration in the mission.

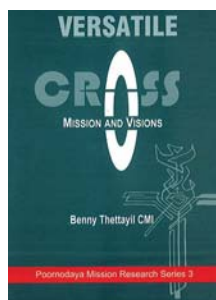


Our Ecuador mission is blessed with a Church of St Kuriakose Elias Chavara of Holy family in the village of Salazar in Medio. The Church was consecrated by Arch Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr Eduardo Castillo Pino of Porto Viahio in November 20,2020 in the presence of our great CMI Missionaries. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, only the representatives of the different villages could attend the ceremony. Best wishes and congratulations to our missionaries.



Besrauma Convention was an initiative of the General Pastoral Department for the families in connection with the feast of St Chavara. As part of it, three-day convention was organized on themes for Christian families based on scripture and teachings of St Chavara which was preached by CMI retreat preachers. The convention was broadcasted by Shalom, Goodness and Shekinah TV Channels.

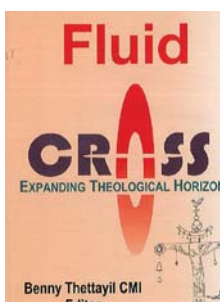
Books



Versatile Cross: Mission and Visions

By Benny Thettayil CMI
Dharmaram Publications

The Versatile Cross: Mission and Visions is inviting us to look at the mission from various perspectives. The focus of the reflections is evangelization in our land. Beginning with the Bible, the author brings various topical and very relevant missiological material into the discussion. He travels through the contours of the biblical, ecclesial, historical, missiological and inter-religious avenues to look at the role of the modern-day evangelizer in the context of the present-day national, tribal, subaltern and subversive challenges. The missiological work that calls several of our assumptions into question, demands a challenging reading.



Fluid Cross: Expanding Theological Horizons

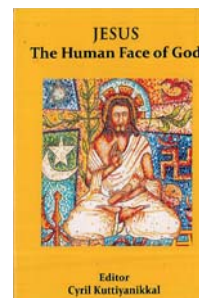
By Benny Thettayil CMI
By Dharmaram Publications

Fluid Cross is the theological representation of the ideal of contextual theology that is ever connected to the expanding Christian theological horizons. It also represents the expendable conventional visions that have to be discarded from time to time to keep it from getting stagnated and stale. The Fluid Cross is physically present among the pictorial presentation of Tribal Theology in the oratory of Samanvaya Theology College Jagdalpur, in the heart of the Tribal land.

Please sent information on releasing books , videos, Apps and its images for the next issue before 25 Noveber 2020
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Jesus : The Human Face of God

By Cyril Kuttianikkal CMI
ISPCK Publications



The practice or doing of theology is not confined to small class of scholars, but it is engaged by anyone with an inquisitive mind into the realities of the world and the word. The articles in the present volume is an earnest search for making theological reflection relevant to Indian cultural and religious ethos. Moreover they are written by those who are actively engaged in the making of contextual theological movement and programme concrete. For those who search for making theology and theological education meaningful, relevant and pertinent to the present day context, these articles are a ready reference and a roadmap.

Album

Kroosithane Kandu Njan MEN IN CASSOCKS

<https://youtu.be/5UV0u2Lj-zU>

Lyrics and Music

Naiby Varghese
Department for Evangelization
and Pastoral Ministry



Vocals: Prince Parathinal CMI, Vipin Kurisuthara CMI, Phinil Ezherath CMI, Thomson Koodapatt CMI & Subin Kottoor CMI, **Keyboard:** Joyis Kolamkuzhiyil CMI.
Guitars: Subin Kottoor CMI, Gijo Maveli CMI, **Flute:** Jijo Urumbil CMI, **Drums:** Fr. Justin Kaliyaniyil CMI **Media Co-ordinator** Sonychen CMI, **Media Assistance** Fr. Sijesh Vathukkadan CMI & Richu Kunnel CMI.
English subtitles: Fr. Lawrence Padamadan CMI,
Logo Designing: Fr. Joby Koodakatu CMI, **Recorded @** Pop Media, Ernakulam, **Mixing & Mastering:** Ni-noy Varghese, **Shoot and Editz:** Don Valiyavelicham



1st CMI house and the official erection and handing over of the St. Joseph's Catholic Parish, Kannyanda in Uganda.



Installation of Binoy Ittikunnel CMI as the parish priest of the diocese of Terxeira of Freitas.



Consecration of the Church of St Kuriakose Elias Chavara of Holy family in the village of Salazar in Medio in Ecuador.



The newly ordained priests of CMI congregation with Rev Fr Prior General and General team at CMI Prior General's House Kakkannad.



Logo of 150th Death Anniversary of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara (1805-1871)