

MISSION LEGACY OF ST. CHAVARA

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By

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To Rev. Fr. Thomas Perumpplackal, CMI.
with love, gratitude & Best Compliments
from Fr. St. Hermins, CMI

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INTRODUCTION

Some months back I had a dream of writing a short book on Bl. Chavara during the occasion of the canonization of Bl. Chavara to Sainthood. In 2014 I had celebrated the Golden Jubilee of my ordination. Naturally it was an occasion to reflect on my life as a missionary religious priest in the CMI congregation. In the normal sense of the word St.Chavara was not a missionary. However the congregation which he has founded has become 'a missionary congregation' in the true sense of the word reaching to about many nations in all the continents. I was curious to understand the journey of an indigenous spiritual movement to reach the four corners of the world as a missionary endeavor. This small booklet is the result of my effort to understand the missionary zeal of my congregation.

Since the major part of my life I have spent as a missionary I thought it would be a good idea to write about Chavara as a great missionary and also the way his mission legacy followed by his sons and daughters. This book is mainly meant for the North Indian people who have practically no knowledge about Chavara, the founder of the CMI congregation.

Chavara was a pioneer in many respects; today the CMIs are trying to imitate him in various fields. Whatever be the apostolate they have undertaken and fulfilled, I must say it was seminally started by Chavara. He was a man of mission and vision. This is my humble attempt to project Chavara as a missionary and how he has inspired his sons and daughters to be good missionaries.

It is you, the readers, who can judge how far I have been successful in this endeavour. Many have encouraged and helped me in making this possible. I owe a debt of gratitude to all of them. I express my

heartfelt thanks to each and everyone who has helped me in bringing out this booklet. Here I have to express my special thanks to Sr. Philippa, who took all the pains to go through the manuscript and did the necessary corrections, to Fr. Abish and Bro. Nithish, who were very helpful in typing and settings, to Fr. Paulson Thaliyath, who took so much interest in the manuscript, gave necessary and valuable suggestions, to Fr. Jose Pellissery, who did the final touches to the major part of the last draft, to Fr. Justin Akkara, the councilor for Evangelization and Pastoral Ministry, for printing and publishing this booklet.

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CHAPTER 1

THE LIFE OF SAINT CHAVARA AT A GLANCE

I have mentioned in the introduction that this booklet is mainly meant for North India. The people of North India are not very familiar with the life history of Saint Chavara, who hailed from Kerala. I here present some glimpses of the historical background of this blessed and pious soul.

APOSTOLIC TRADITION OF ST. THOMAS CHRISTIANS

Kerala is one of the small states of India, situated in the Southern part of the country. The state received the Christian faith from none other than St. Thomas, the Apostle. It is believed that India was assigned to him by lot for evangelization. But Thomas was disheartened and afraid to go to that distant and unknown land. It is said that Blessed Mother herself encouraged and persuaded him to proceed to the then unknown land of India.

According to tradition, St.Thomas travelled all the way, reached Kerala and landed in Kodungallor (Cranganore) in A. D. 52, proclaimed the Good News and converted many to Christianity, especially many from the high caste families. He established seven churches in different parts of Kerala. They are: Kodungallor (Cranganore), Kollam (Quilon), Chayal, Kokkomangalam, Niranam, Parur, and Palayur. At last, he was martyred in Mylapore near Madras (Chennai) in A. D. 72. The fact that no other place in India claims it and there exists a Christian community near to the tomb of St. Thomas is a compelling reason for credibility of this tradition.

There is a living community in Kerala that claims that they received the faith from St. Thomas, the Apostle himself. Historically it may

be difficult to prove the evangelization of St. Thomas in India. Many question the historicity of St.Thomas' apostolate in India. Many have also written volumes to prove the fact that St. Thomas proclaimed the Good News in India.

In 1523 St. Thomas' tomb was opened by the Portuguese. A report on this event written in 1538 and preserved in the national archives of Lisbon describes the tomb in details. Bricks used there are of the first century A. D. and of the same kind as used in Rome at that time. These historical facts coupled with strong oral and liturgical tradition of the Syro Malabar Christians is proof enough of the veracity of the fact St.Thomas has visited India in the first century and brought the light of Jesus Christ to India.

RELATION OF THE KERALA CHURCH TO THE PERSIAN CHURCH

According to tradition, though St. Thomas had appointed native bishops and clergy to take care of the Christian communities he established in Kerala, there is no evidence to prove the continuance of native bishops. The St. Thomas Christians came under the rule of Syrian (Chaldean) bishops from the early centuries and they were using the East Syrian Liturgy and thus they were known as Syrian Christians.

THE ARRIVAL OF EUROPEANS

The arrival of the Portuguese in 1498 in India was a turning - point in the history of St. Thomas Christians. Along with Portuguese traders came many zealous missionaries. Unfortunately they had little knowledge of the ancient Christian community in India. They could hardly understand the liturgical language of Syriac or the culture. They found that these Christians were quite different in many respects from their own people in Europe, since for them the only Christianity was what was practiced by them in Europe.

So the missionaries started the process of Latinization of St. Thomas Christians. They introduced new liturgical forms and prayer books in place of the Syriac traditions that the local Christians were previously using. Besides, they even wanted to change the social customs of the people. They wanted to have full authority over them. Thus they even prevented the Syrian bishops from coming to India. These actions were not at all acceptable to the Syro - Malabar people and for this reason the people were not happy with the Portuguese. The situation became very critical after the Synod of Diamper of 1599 A. D. following which Archbishop Menezes of Goa practically eliminated the East Syrian Liturgy of the St. Thomas Christians.

"KOONAN CROSS OATH"

"Koonan Cross" was the darkest moment in the history of Syro - Malabar Church. It happened on 3 January 1653. A certain Monk called Attallah came to Kerala claiming that he was appointed as the Patriarch (the highest authority in a Particular Church) of Malabar. Hearing this native Christians were very jubilant and wanted to receive him. But the Portuguese arrested and jailed him. As soon as they heard that the patriarch was brought to Cochin, many St. Thomas Christians under the leadership of Archdeacon Thomas de Campo gathered there on that fateful day. The Portuguese did not allow them even to see him. Also there was a rumour that the Portuguese killed Attallah whom the faithful considered as their patriarch. Infuriated at the rumor they hastened to the Koonan Cross (the bent cross) at Mattanchery in Cochin. Tying a long rope to the cross and holding on to it, they took an oath that they would never be under the jurisdiction of the Portuguese missionaries who mainly belonged to the Jesuit Society. Thus, for the first time, there occurred a split in the St. Thomas Syrian community. Many priests and

faithful followed the Archdeacon who was against foreign domination. In this way, the Jacobite Church came into being in Kerala, which it paved the way for many more splits in that Church.

CARMELITES IN KERALA

This split among the St. Thomas Christians was a great concern for the Pope who wanted to mend it? So he sent some Carmelite missionaries headed by Fr. Joseph Sebastiani. Though they worked hard, their success was questionable. The Malabar Vicariate was created for St. Thomas Christians in 1659 and Fr. Joseph Sebastiani was appointed the first Vicar Apostolic of Malabar, later known as Diocese of Verapoly. The Carmelites continued in charge of the diocese for a long time. But the establishment of Vicariate and diocese did not solve the problem of the Syro - Malabar Church or St. Thomas Christians. European domination was a necessary evil for them. St. Thomas Christians accepted it, because of their allegiance to the Pope.

In short, the Portuguese domination left the Malabar Church in a state of confusion and stagnation. By the beginning of the 18th century the Portuguese lost their political power. Naturally they lost also the ecclesiastical power over the Malabar Church. But then, foreign domination continued and the cry for native bishops was a cry in the wilderness.

ATTEMPTS FOR UNIFICATION

Various attempts were made towards the unification of the St. Thomas Christians. Attempts made by Dr. Joseph Cariatti, an illustrious son of the St. Thomas Church, were noteworthy. Also his attempts to have native bishops were praiseworthy. Dr. Cariatti together with Fr. Thomas Paremmackal travelled to Lisbon and Rome. In Rome they submitted a petition to the Pope for the

unification of the Jacobite Church. This petition was drawn up at the initiative of Thomas VI (Dionysius) the Jacobite leader in Malabar. Dr. Cariatti was appointed Archbishop of Kodungallor (Cranganore) and was authorized to take steps for the unification. Unfortunately Archbishop Cariatti died in Goa on his way to Kerala. Before his death Dr. Cariatti appointed Fr. Thomas Paremmackal, Governodor (Administrator) of Cranganore. He convened a meeting of all the Syrian priests and endorsed the proposition that all Syrian Christians should be under Governodor. In 1799 Fr. Paremmackal died. Later a new Governodor was elected, but he was not so efficient. So the Syrian Christians joined the Verapoly Diocese.

At the dawn of the 19th century the Syrian Christians were disorganized. Practically there was nobody to lead them. Latinization and subsequent administration of Jesuit Bishops had almost torn asunder the fabric of Christian faith. So the Syro Malabar Church was waiting for a reformer.

RAY OF HOPE

A ray of hope dawned in the Syro - Malabar Church, with the birth of Kuriakose Elias Chavara. Kuriakose Elias was born of the famous Chavara family in Kuttanad that had a lineage to Pakalomattam family, one of the reputed families baptized by St. Thomas. Kuttanad is famous for its paddy fields. Many, even the foreigners are attracted to this area for its scenic beauty. Kuttanad is blessed with rivers and beautiful coconut palms. The soil of this area is very fertile and suited for paddy cultivation. The village of Kuttanad had a Christian settlement from the early times and Kainakari is one such Christian center. This village is situated 6 kilometers east of Alleppy, a famous tourist place, in Kerala.

BIRTH AND INFANCY

Kuriakose Elias was born at Kainakari in Kuttanad of Kottayam District on 10th February 1805. His parents were Kuriakose and Mariyam Chavara. His mother was a great devotee of Blessed Virgin Mary. She took special care to bring him up her child of with devotion to Blessed Mother. In "Athmaanuthapam" (Compunction of the Soul, a long poem written by Chavara) he says, "She gave me lessons in prayer, during breast feeding. Also woke me up at midnight to recite some prayers. When I was able to recite the prayers, she helped me to say some prayers to Jesus and Mary and thank God for his innumerable gifts."

DEDICATION TO BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

When Kuriakose was a baby, his mother took him to the famous Vechoor Church and consecrated him to the Mother of God. This dedication is well described in the following words of "Athmaanuthapam."

The Lord of mercy in His great compassion

To His Blessed Mother did enslave me;

And while on nectar, mother on earth fed me; Mary at her feet kept me safe.

VISIT OF FR. THOMAS PALACKAL

The visit of Fr. Thomas Palackal to the Chavara family was a very important incident. Fr. Thomas Palackal was a well read man and was called a Malpan (a learned man, usually a Rector or Professor in a seminary). Once he visited Kainakari and met little Kuriakose. Fr. Palackal was taken up by the spiritual leanings of the child, and wanted to take him along with him to prepare him for priesthood. But his parents were not ready to part with the child.

Later at the insistence of Fr. Geevarghese Thopil, an uncle of Kuriakose, his parents agreed to send the child with Fr. Palackal.

CHAVARA IN THE SEMINARY

When Chavara was 13 he entered the seminary at Pallipuram and Fr. Palackal was the Rector there at that time. Fr. Palackal led a very simple life. Fr. Palackal was not only the Rector, but also Chavara's confessor and spiritual director. When Chavara was in the seminary, it was a testing time for him. The Cholera epidemic prevailing in Kuttanadu that time took away the lives of many including his parents and only brother. He became an orphan, and had only one married sister. His uncles brought Chavara back home and discouraged and almost blocked him from going back to seminary. They said, "There is nobody to look after the house. So better you remain here and get married. Forget your seminary life. It is the desire of all and the will of God for you." He was in a dilemma. But Bro. Kuriakose had given himself fully to the Lord from his infancy. So it was unthinkable for him to leave the seminary. He went to his sister's house and told the sister and brother in law that he would give all his possessions to them, if they took care of the house. To this they agreed and they moved to his house, and he was able to continue at the seminary.

ORDINATION

To become a priest was Chavara's childhood dream. He knew that a priest should be formed after the heart of Jesus. He was studious and brilliant. His spiritual father and Rector Fr. Palackal and his colleagues considered Chavara as a very dedicated person. His ordination took place in Arthungal on November 29, 1829. Many from his home parish Chennankari attended the function.

A DREAM FULFILLED

When Chavara celebrated his first Holy Mass at Chennankari, he prayed for a particular intention which he had always cherished from his childhood: to become a religious and lead a monastic life. Fr. Thomas Palackal, his own Rector, Fr. Thomas Porukara, his companion, though senior to him, had shared the same vision. With this intention, Fr. Thomas Palackal, and Thomas Porukara who was also the Archbishop's secretary approached the Arch bishop for permission to live in a hermitage. But the Archbishop answered them, "If both of you, who are intelligent and prudent, are going for a life of silence and solitude who will then teach the people? Instead, if you want, you can start a monastery, it will be useful for you as well as for others." They both welcomed the idea. But how were they to materialize the idea? "Here there are no kings to support us", they complained. Then the bishop said, "Do not worry; if you work with a firm decision and enthusiasm you will be able to achieve your aim. We have a lot of Christians here and if you collect contributions, it will be possible for you." To this effect the bishop gave an edict to collect money from the people. The Bishop himself contributed Rs .200/- as a gesture of his support. People too were very generous. Along with these two zealous priests, the young priest Fr. Chavara too joined. Later Br. Jacob Kaniathara, a close friend of Fr. Porukara, also joined them.

These four people worked hard to fulfill their dream for a house of prayer, the "vision house". Mannanam, on a hillock, a very suitable place was chosen for the first house. Slowly the work for the first Monastery at Mannanam was completed, in spite of the difficulties they encountered. Even then their plan for a congregation was not fulfilled until December 8, 1855. Meanwhile both the pioneering fathers Thomas Palackal (16th Jan 1841) and Thomas Porukara

(8th Jan 1846) left for their eternal reward. After the death of the pioneering fathers all the responsibilities fell on the shoulders of Fr. Chavara.

CHAVARA AND HIS COMPANIONS

The religious community at Mannanam was a power house of prayer and source of spiritual growth for the church in Malabar. Many came to Mannanam to enjoy the spiritual benefit of the new community. Many priests wanted to join the community. Bishop Bernadinos, the then Archbishop took much interest in this new community and wanted to do everything according to the request of Fr. Chavara. So, Fr. Chavara gave a copy of the timetable followed in the new community. The Archbishop sent a copy of the Constitution of the First Order Carmelites to Chavara for consideration. Chavara wanted to have a constitution suitable to the conditions of this country. But Archbishop could not agree to that, though he agreed to some changes. Chavara wanted to name the new congregation "The Servants of Immaculate Conception". They fixed a date for the first religious profession and the formal inauguration ceremony of the congregation. Archbishop delegated Fr. Marcelenos, a missionary priest, to preach a retreat before this.

During the retreat, Fr. Marcelenos made the retreatants to follow the rules and regulations of the new constitution, and then only could they realize and understand how rigorous and strict the rules of enclosure and silence were. Fifty percent of them withdrew; Chavara felt this to be a great loss. His efforts of the earlier twenty five years seemed to have failed. The retreat was over on the 8th December 1855. Twelve priests came forward to make their profession but one of them was suddenly laid up with fever. So Chavara and ten others made their first profession on 8th December 1855, the Feast of Immaculate Conception. Chavara

made his profession before Fr. Marcelenos and the others made their profession before Chavara their leader. Thus a long cherished dream was fulfilled.

CHAVARA A MISSIONARY

St. Thomas was a great Missionary, who travelled all the way to India to convert many people and establish a Church. Following in the footsteps of the great Apostle St. Thomas, Fr. Chavara, a true disciple and missionary, tried his level best to bring many to the fold of Christ. Chavara was a man filled with the Holy Spirit. A true Christian cannot but be a missionary. For Christ said, "Go throughout the whole world and preach the gospel to all mankind. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mk: 16:15-16) Chavara was a man filled with the Holy Spirit as was St. Paul, and had experience of God was always in pains and to bring everyone to the fold of Christ to share his God experience. As Chavara was a Christian to the core and a religious who followed Christ closely, he was more than a missionary. St. Paul's words, "Woe to me if I do not preach Christ" (1Cor: 9:16) seem to be the motto of Chavara too.

CATECHUMENATE

A man filled with Holy Spirit cannot but be a missionary. Chavara started the first catechumenate in Syro - Malabar Church in 1853, at Mannanam. That is the reason why in every monastery he founded, there were many catechumens. He tried his best to bring them to Christ. In our monasteries we had many labourers who were fully dependent upon us for their betterment. Every monastery had a lot of land, handed over to them by the pious people of the locality. So labourers were a must since there was practically no mechanization during that time. The work force consisted mainly of Hindus and that too, drawn from

lower strata of the community or backward classes who had little or no education. Bl. Chavara took much interest in teaching them. He also was also keen on teaching them catechism and giving them baptism on request. From the above facts, one thing is clear that through our monasteries, thousands of people were converted to Christianity. In one of the Albums published by Central Secretariat we see that we had converted about 50,000 people. Even today his vision is shared and kept well in our monasteries. Statistics from some of the Monasteries reveal to this fact. In Mannanam about 300 families were ready to receive the faith. It is true that often people come for monetary benefits. In Chetipuzha also people were gathered and took classes. Youth were taught to play band. Likewise in the old Monasteries at Kurianad, Eirur, and Kunanmmau etc we have a good number of Catechumens even today.

TOLERANCE OF CHAVARA

Chavara had a soft corner for other religions. Never would he offend others. Today we speak a lot about inter religious dialogue. After Vatican II dialogue with other religions is an important mission of the church and we stress the necessity of dialogue. When Chavara and others were searching for a suitable place for a monastery, they saw a very convenient and suitable place in Pullerikunnu near Kudamaloor. Since the fathers had already got the ecclesiastical permission, they were seeking the civil permission from the proper authority. In this connection a certain Muslim and business man named Ojanar Methar promised all the necessary helps, if they would proceed with the proposal of constructing the monastery; but Frs. Chavara and Porukara, his mentor, with other colleagues told him that they should not construct the monastery, if it would hurt the feelings of believers of any other religion. Hindu brethren had mentioned that if a church was

constructed near to Kudamaloor, then it would offend their deity. So our fathers led by Fr. Chavara left that place, though it was very convenient for the purpose. Moreover, the fathers believed that if it is the will of God, surely He would show them a suitable place. Thus, at last, they reached Mannanam, which was a very convenient place to construct their new monastery.

REUNION OF THE JACOBITES

When the Malabar Church was divided and a section of the people left the Catholic Church after the Koonan cross oath, it was a terrible blow. About 22 years later, when Chavara came on the scene he also stood for Christian unity. Chavara was a man of unity and tried his best to effect their unification. His letters clearly show how much he desired the unification. In this connection his letter dated 22nd July 1861 to the Prefect of the Propaganda, His Eminence Alexander Barbosa, says, "We should have our own bishops, which would help the Jacobites, who are our own relatives to come back to the church."

MISSIONARY ENDEAVOURS OF ST. CHAVARA

St.Chavara was a multifaceted personality. He did a lot to bring all to Christ through his various apostolates. Definitely it will enlighten us to go through some of this apostolate.

EDUCATION

Education is the best apostolate. By education we can mould the child as we wish. If we are not giving proper education for the all-round development of the child, it is our own fault and we have to blame ourselves. Very often the syllabus is too heavy and teachers find it hard to complete the portions within the stipulated time; then how can one find time to impart life values to children? The teacher should be more of a role model for the students

teaching more by example. Also we have moral Education classes; where we can impart many values to students which would be useful in their future life. If one is an apostle, a Christian to the core, one will surely be giving Christ and Christian values to all with whom one comes in contact.

The Lord has asked us to go and teach each and everyone. Teaching is one of the most important apostolate of the Church. Though Kerala is privileged to boast that it is the most literate state in India, it was not always so. It was mainly because of the farsighted- ness of Bl. Chavara and his followers that Kerala got on the track to achieve high literacy. Schools were rare in his period and only the Brahmins had access to a few Govt. Schools. Chavara understood the pathetic condition of all the down trodden, especially the Christians. So when he was made the first Vicar General of the Syro - Malabar Church in 1861 he ordered that every Church should have a school attached to it. He dared even to close down the church, if this order was not implemented effectively. Chavara said, "Palliku oru pallikudam" i.e. each church should have a school of its own. It is the foresight of Chavara and his followers that the church in Kerala is in the forefront of education. Even today his policy is followed by the Congregations founded by Chavara. They run not only schools but even colleges in Kerala and outside Kerala.

There is a relevant question very often put forward by many. We run so many schools and colleges and many eminent persons have had their studies in our schools and colleges, but some have turned against us after they have left school/college. What is the reason for this? There can be many reasons, but I think that we did not give them proper ethical education and values in life. Some have turned out to be fundamentalists. Have we been a cause for their fundamentalist views?

Why did Chavara start a Sanskrit school and not an English medium school? First of all I think Chavara did not want to offend his Latin Superiors, who were naturally against the study of English, fearing that the Catholics would become Protestants. Chavara clearly understood the importance of Sanskrit. Another important reason is that Sanskrit is an ancient language, very rich. He wanted to foster a rich Indian heritage. Thus he thought that he could bring the Christians to the forefront of Indian culture.

FAILURE OF GOVERNMENT

Why does the government fail in imparting the primary education though it is made compulsory for the children? Many countries, including China, were behind in primary education, though very vast in area and population, were very successful in giving primary education. India is far behind many countries in promoting education.

OUR EXPERIENCE

Now we are very proud of our boarding schools in Mission areas, which give quality education for thousands of children. Nowadays they rush to our boarding schools so much so that we are unable to accommodate all of them. But in the beginning, it was it not so; we found it very hard to bring the children to our boarding schools. There were many cases not only of dropouts, but also of runaway cases. But after some years, people understood the value of education; and now rush to our boarding for education.

At this juncture it would be interesting to note the experience of Fr. Jose Pariyadan, one of the pioneer missionaries in this field. He describes the initial struggle to start a girls' boarding at Bamhori. It was in 1986 that the RDSS (Rural Development Service Society) at Silwani attempted thrice to start a boarding house at Bamhori for girls. But he says that all the three attempts were

aborted due to lack of motivation of the candidates. In fact three batches of girls consisting of 13, 8 and 7, consequently failed, as they ran away during the night without informing the authorities concerned. The girls were so courageous enough to flee as into the jungles 20 kilometers away at night.

However, Fr. Jose made a fourth attempt to bring children together thinking that the residential facilities will prevent them from running away. He travelled far and wide into the villages thinking that the distance will prevent the children from running away. The journey he made to village Bareli was very interesting. On the way he had a chance to break his bike journey at the ghat Jamunia. The target-area was unknown to him. During the stop-over, he dared to make enquiries in some households in Jamunia about girl children opting for boarding house. Some parents retorted. "Are you mad?" Then he told them, that he was not mad, but that he would make them mad. So his search ended up there in Jamunia. Still he continued his journey to Bareli on foot, although the place was unknown to him.

Bareli village was situated in another four kilometers away from Jamunia. He visited many houses and presented his intention to the leaders of the village. All agreed in principle, but nobody was ready to send their girl children to Bahmori. As Fr. Jose decided to return from the village, he happened to enter another village where a woman was winnowing grain. He presented his programme and immediately she responded that it was a very good idea. "You may take my child," she said. Since the father of the child was absent, Fr. Jose said that he would take her on his next visit with the permission of the father. But the mother insisted that he could take her without any problem. There fore he agreed and took her with him to the proposed boarding where a sister was in charge. And that was the beginning of the boarding house at Bamhori.

PRINT MEDIA

Media is a very powerful weapon and Chavara understood its importance and he wanted to make use of it in spreading the "Good News". Nobody can deny the influence of good books. Since we had no press during Chavara's time we could not print any Malayalam books and there were only very few spiritual books, and those available, were in Tamil.

During the time of Chavara there were only two presses in Kerala, one run by the government and the other by the Protestants. Protestants were deadly against the Catholics and never would they allow any body to have access to their press. So Fr. Kuriakose turned to the government press to get some ideas to begin a model of a press and with his natural insight he managed to make a model. With the help of a carpenter he made a wooden press. That wooden press is still kept in Mannanam Museum. As soon as the press was ready in 1846 Chavara started printing spiritual books. He printed many spiritual books which helped the Catholics to foster their faith. Some books have had many editions and are in use even today.

FIRST BOOKS FROM MANNANAM PRESS

The first two books printed at Mannanam press were Jnanapiyusham (The Spiritual Nectar) and Divya Mathruka (The Divine Model). The author of Divine Model was Fr. Chavara himself. Afterwards he published a number of books: Jnanaprajagaram (The Vigil of Wisdom), Grahasta Dharmodyanam (A Garden of Family Moral Codes) and Jnana nava ratnam (Nine Jewels of Knowledge). Another book "Perpetual Adoration" was a great source of inspiration for thousands of people. The first edition was published in 1875. It was revised more than 32 times. Fr. Chavara's most popular book is "The words of a Dying Father." It is a great work of moral

guidance. Lakhs of copies of this book have been sold-out.It goes to the credit of CMI's that they started the first Malayalam Daily News Paper called Nazrani Deepika in 15 April 1887. Named as Deepika, it has played a very important role in the life of Kerala people both politically and socially even today.

Print media or any media, for that matter, is very well powerful. Modern man is almost led by media. Pope Benedict XVI well understood the tremendous influence of the media and he exhorts all, especially the Evangelists to make use of this powerful weapon to propagate our faith. Even some youngsters are using this powerful method to propagate the faith.

A HOUSE FOR THE DESTITUTE

St. Chavara wanted to bring the backward classes and destitute to the main stream of the society. So he established a charitable institution for the orphans at Kainakari in 1869. It was the first of its kind in this country. The idea of an orphanage was something new to India. He also started a home for the aged at Kainakari, and a new organization named, "The helpers of the dying who desire a peaceful death," for the laity (In 1869). A very notable thing is that it was managed by the laity. We are often reluctant to entrust such things to them. But Chavara was so magnanimous that he entrusted them with the management.

Chavara developed even a cadre of dedicated people to collect the alms and other contributions from parishes for free distribution of food, clothing, and stationery. Chavara wanted to make such institutions self- sufficient. So he started some core funds. He taught them to keep a handful of rice separately for the poor. The handful of rice thus collected was sufficient to feed many. This custom is still followed at least in some of the churches in Kerala. Chavara's famous dictum to the people is still valid, "The day on which you cannot do any good for others is not counted in your Book of Life".

LITURGICAL REFORMS

The quality of Christians depends upon the quality of the priests. If the priests are highly qualified, then the people also will be better people and Christians. So Chavara undertook the great task of reforming the church by starting major seminaries. He initiated liturgical and other reforms so that the priests might be better equipped to serve the church. Chavara started the first Major Seminary of the Syro-Malabar Church at Mannanam in 1833. It was none other than Fr. Chavara, who started Sunday homilies, retreat for the priests and laity, devotion to Blessed Sacrament, 40 hours Adoration, Way of the Cross and the May devotion etc. It was Chavara, who renovated the Liturgy bringing in uniformity in offering the Mass and Canonical prayers. Devotion to the Holy Family was his favourite one.

He was an apostle of the family. So he gave many instructions concerning the up keep of the families. His "Chavarul" is very famous and relevant even today after a lapse of almost two centuries his times.

AN ARDENT LOVER OF THE CHURCH

For Chavara, Mother Church was everything. He could not think of any one defiling her. When Bishop Rocos was sent to Malabar at the insistence of Fr. Anthony Kudakkachira and his companions, by the Patriarch of Babel, he was received with great enthusiasm. But he did not come to Malabar with the proper authority as Rome had forbidden the Patriarch to interfere in the matters of the Malabar Church. The Patriarch had given a letter to Bishop Rocos to study the real situation of the church in Malabar. Fr. Chavara and the Archbishop understood the gravity of the situation and therefore informed the people that Bp. Rocos had not come through proper channel. He was a sheep that had entered through the back doors.

But out of 154 Syrian Parishes in Malabar, 86 had already joined the Rocos group fully, and 30 had partially sided with him.

Realizing the grave situation, Archbishop of Verapoly wanted to appoint a Syrian Bishop. Chavara was his first choice. But Chavara was very humble and refused to accept such an honour. Therefore, the Archbishop appointed him the Vicar General of the Syrians. (Ref. the decree of the Archbishop dated June 8, 1861).

RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS

St. Chavara founded two Congregations, one for men and another for women. The CMI and CMC Congregations have flourished so well and following his legacy and are doing wonderful mission work throughout the country and also elsewhere.

Today the CMI Congregation is the largest Religious Congregation for men in the Syro-Malabar church. The CMIs are spread throughout India and abroad in 15 provinces. It has a membership of about 3000 personnel including 9 Bishops, 1750 priests, 27 Brothers and 1129 Brothers in formation. 700 of our priests are working outside Kerala, of whom 300 are outside India. Our priests are actively involved in 29 countries around the world.

It was also St. Chavara who in collaboration with Fr. Leopold Beccaro OCD founded the first Religious Congregation for women in the Syro-Malabar Church, the Congregation of Mother of Carmel (C.M.C.) in 1866. Thus St. Chavara tried to empower women by giving them education and through other means. This Sister Congregation has a membership of more than 6500 professed sisters in 20 provinces. And it is a matter of great significance that, one of its members, Mother Euphrasia CMC was declared saint on November 23, 2014.

It is true that St. Chavara is widely considered as defender of faith. But a more meaningful title or tribute would be to recognize him as a Missionary in the lineage of St. Thomas the Apostle and Francis Xavier, the second Apostle of India. St. Chavara could be called a native Apostle, for the simple reason, that the Mission work initiated by St.Thomas, the Apostle and later watered and nurtured by St. Francis Xavier, has received added impetus and direction under the inspiration and Charisma of the great Missionary Fr. Chavara. Hence he may be called the Native Apostle of India.

It is very relevant to quote Bp. Patroni S.J., the Bishop of Calicut, here. He says, "Today's Catholic Church in Kerala is what it is, only because of the work of Chavara." He continues, "Chavara lived as a true Christian and a Missionary, this was the secret of success in his life."

Some question the loyalty of St. Chavara to the Syrian Rite and his adherence to the Latin Rite. We can safely say that he wanted to save the situation. That he was always loyal to the Syrian Rite and stood for the Syrian Rite and for local Bishop is clear from his letters. St. Chavara tried to conserve the identity of Syro-Malabar Church. The European Missionaries did not know the Syriac language and considered the Syrian Catholics as Nestorians. So Chavara was demanding for native Bishops, but Rome was very reluctant to grant this.

St. Chavara proposed to remove the anomalies in the church. He said that the Arch diocese of Verapoly should be divided on the basis of Rites. The Syro-Malabar Church should be placed under another Bishop. This letter of Chavara is preserved in the archives of the Oriental Congregation.

CHAPTER 2

MISSIONARY ENDEAVOURS OF THE CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS CHRISTIANS

The church of St. Thomas Christians was and has always been missionary. St. Thomas Christians had their own unique of mode of evangelization. Keeping intact one's Christian faith bearing witness to it amidst the vast majority of followers of other religions was their missionary style. It was like sowing 'seeds of faith' in a heathen soil, which would take its own time for fruition.

From the 16th century, the Indian Church had missionary activities from the European Religious Orders and congregations like Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans and Carmelites etc. They were instrumental in developing the Latin Church in India. The mission work of St. Francis Xavier, the second apostle of India is worth mentioning. The zeal of European Missionaries might have also have influenced the individuals and communities to start various missionary activities and to begin Catechumenates in the Malabar Church. From the 19th century onwards there was direct evangelization and organizational set up to promote missionary vocations in Kerala.

From the available documents and other evidences one may conclude the following: The church was fairly widespread all along the costal lines on the west and the east. Christian communities existed, though perhaps small in numbers, on the mainland including in Central India. Christian missionaries preached the Gospel to their countrymen, in different parts of the country. Indian missionaries spread the faith to China, Maldives and other neighbouring countries.

Fr. Hambye, the famous Church Historian, in brief paragraph, summarizes the missionary history of the St. Thomas Christians

of India:, "For centuries the St, Thomas Christians expanded, thanks to their own zeal, though inspired also by the apostolic spirit of their East Syrian brethren, we know that some monks went from India to the Far East, if not China and Central Asia. The Thomas Christians during tenth and eleventh centuries tried to spread their faith in the Maldives Islands, as late as the 15th century; the Nairs in Kerala were still joining their ranks." (Ref. E.R.Hambye, Christianity in India, Alleppey, 1972, 37).

THE MISSION POLICY OF SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

The Mission policy of Syro-Malabar Church was promulgated on 19 March, 2006. In the decree of promulgation, His Beatitude Mar Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil, the then Major Archbishop of Syro-Malabar Church explained its goals "that it may serve as a guide to all those persons engaged in the apostolate of Evangelization in the mission areas as well as to those who prepare the personnel for such endeavours....."

Major orientations in the Mission policy:

The missionary vision and thrust of the Syro-Malabar Church has the following orientations. Here we mention only a few important points. As an individual Church, it is the right and duty of the Syro-Malabar Church to go out and preach the Gospel not only in India, but also universally, under the guidance of the Supreme Pontiff. The missionary activity is the task of all the members.

The ultimate goal of our Evangelization is to share our Christ-experience.

In our evangelizing mission we should take into consideration the following factors and pattern them in that light. Since we are working in multi-religious milieu with rich cultural background we should understand the importance of dialogue.

The Syro-Malabar mission should have its own characteristic approach, by not striving for an institutional embellishment, but should be localized, community oriented and bearing personal testimony with a simple life style, following the East Syrian heritage and in tune with the Indian culture.

The influence of media in all aspects of human life and society is very important. The pastoral care of the emigrants should also form part of our mission. Lay participation and ministries for mission should be promoted.

Some guide lines too are given such as the Major Archbishop should take the responsibility of sending missionaries to our missions and also to other Churches. Missionary vocations are be fostered. Our missionary orientation should be universally directed.

Reunion Movement and Syro-Malankara Catholic Church

The efforts for reunion began from the time of division itself but such efforts were fruitless until the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1869 and 1870 we see attempts from the part of St. Chavara for the cause of reunion of Jacobites as we have already mentioned. In his letters to Rome, from Jacobite priest, Mariam Kathanar Palakunnel we see the efforts he has taken in this cause. From 1920 onwards more attempts were made on the part of the Syro-Malabar Church at various levels.

The synod of Bishops of the Jacobites held at Parumala on 1 November 1926 authorized the Servant of God, Gheevarghese Mar Ivanios, and the Metropolitan of Bethany Ashram to enter into negotiations with Rome with the view of full communion. On September 20, 1930 Metropolitan Ghevarghese Mar Ivanios, and Mar Theophilos, were received into the Catholic Church by the Latin Bishop of Quilon Msgr Benzinger OCD,

forming the Syro-Malankara Church as a new Rite in the universal Church. On 11 June 1932 the Syro-Malankara Catholic Hierarchy was erected by Pope Pius XI. On 10 February 2005 Pope John Paul II elevated this Church to the status of Major Archiepiscopal Church. The present Major Archbishop Cardinal Baselios Mar Cleemis was elected on 8 February2007.

These days the Malankara Church celebrated the 83rd anniversary of its reunion. Archbishop Cardinal Mar Cleemis said that we are called to give Christ's message to all, spread the message in our society, and to have an ardent love towards all. During that time Archbishop Salvatore Penachio, the Inter Nuncio of India, reminded all that the unity in the Church is a gift of God.

Other Bishops present for the anniversary contributed much for the reunion. Archbishop Pawathil said that we had to work a lot to keep up the individuality of our Church. Further he said that thirst for unity, mutual understanding and acceptance are necessary for the union. When we face immense hurdles, union in the Church is a must. Other Bishops present also high lighted the necessity for unity.

ECUMENISM AND DIALOGUE

After Vatican II, there was a great impetus on Ecumenism and Dialogue. All Christian Churches desired the unity in the Church.

In the introduction of the document on Ecumenism of Second Vatican we see that the restoration of unity among all Christians is one of it's the principal concerns. Christ the Lord founded one Church and only one Church. But many communions present themselves as true inheritors of Jesus Christ; all profess to be followers of the Lord, but differ in mind and go in their different ways, as if Christ himself was divided. Such divisions contradict

the will of Christ, scandalize the world, and damage the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to all creatures.

Christ has been rousing divided Christians to remorse over their divisions and a longing for unity. This movement towards unity is called Ecumenism. The document gives the principles of Catholic ecumenism. Today under the inspiring grace of the H. Spirit, many efforts are being made in prayer, word and action to attain that full unity which Christ desires. Catholics should gladly acknowledge and esteem the truly Christian endowments from our common heritage which are to be found among our separated brethren. In the document there is a special mention about the Eastern Churches.

INTER- RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

After Vatican II, much importance is given to Dialogue. Vatican II has stressed the necessity of inter Religious Dialogue. In a way, the Church recognizes God's Spirit working in all the religions. Vatican II reaffirms the traditional doctrine, according to which salvation in Jesus Christ is, in a mysterious way, is a reality open to all persons of good will.

Christ has come to save all. Christ, the New Adam, is at work in each human person to bring about the interior renewal. It holds good not only for Christians, but all persons of good will. Almost all the present Popes not only approved the necessity of Dialogue, but also encourage all Catholics to have the spirit of dialogue. At this juncture it would be opportune to hear what our present Pope, Francis, has to say about dialogue. An open spirit without prejudice, I would describe as social humility, which is what favours dialogue. Only in this way we can understand the growth between cultures and religions, mutual esteem without needless precautions, in a

climate that of rights of every one. Today when we take the risk of dialogue, we risk the culture of encounter, or we all fall; thus is the path that will bear fruit.

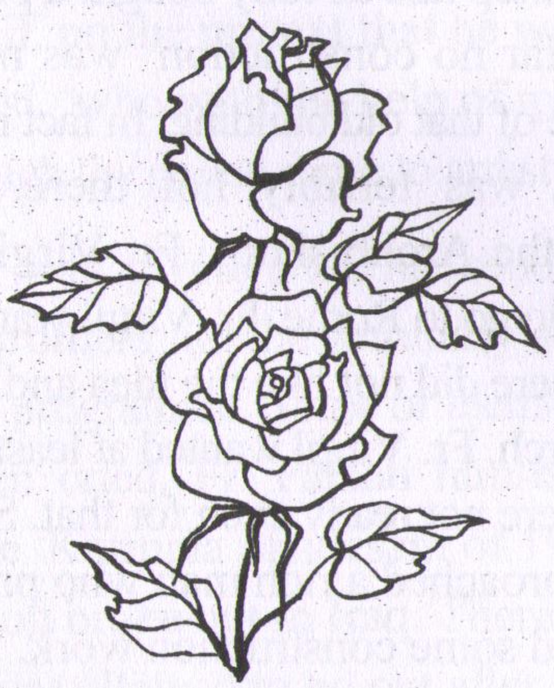
In another place he says that there should be constructive dialogue. Between selfish indifference and violent protest, there is always another possible option: that of dialogue. Dialogue between generations, dialogue within the people, the capacity to give and receive, while remaining open to the truth is the spirit of dialogue.

It is a matter of great concern for the Church that there is innumerable non-Catholic Churches even today separated from St. Thomas Christian tradition in India. Mainly they are: Malankara Othodox Syrian Church, Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church, Mar Thoma Syrian Church, Syrian Church of Malabar (Thozhiyoor Church) and the Assirian Church of the East (Surayee Church).

Here it is worth quoting from the inaugural address of Shri. Kapil Sibal, the Minister of Communication and Information Technology on 17 November, 2012 at the Constitution Club, New Delhi. He said, "Christian faith embraces humanity. The Syro-Malabar Church has a big, big heart. In no way we can call it small. What you have done for humanity, is something that is phenomenal. The way you have served the young by educating them, the way you have served the poor those who are afflicted by diseases, those who are afflicted by physical challenges, the way you have reached out to the world, we in India have to be deeply proud . India is what it is because of Churches like you. I will always stand by you. I stand for the beliefs you nurture for the good of humanity. You are rooted in this soil of Mother India which is the heart of Nation building."

RISK OF DIALOGUE AND ENCOUNTER

Pope Francis in a speech delivered by him and quoted in L'osservatore Romano says "when some asks me to give some advice my response is always the same: Dialogue, dialogue, dialogue. The only way for the individuals, families and societies to grow, the only life of peoples to progress is via a culture in which all have something to give to all, and can receive.



CHAPTER 3

PART I - CMI MISSIONS OUTSIDE KERALA

Mission work among the so called "gentiles" was something quite new for the CMIs. But God was somehow preparing them for this great task. The legacy and mission spirit of St. Chavara is still alive through his sons and daughters.

The CMIs had already gone to different countries for mission work. Before 1960s CMI missionaries were working in Iran and Iraq for many years. Frs. Virgil, Fabian and Emmanuel, who could speak the language of the land, were the first missionaries there. They were very zealous missionaries and did a lot of mission work even at the risk of their lives. Because of the odd situations there, they could not continue, and reluctantly they returned.

From the narration of Fr. Virgil we can understand the terrible situation they had to face there. He says that the Archbishop was a 90 year old man. He entrusted Fr. Virgil some money to construct a church. Archbishop had already bought a piece of land some ten years back. So far no construction was made and Mass was offered at the side of that old building. In fact it had only one door, even though it was terribly hot there. According to the instruction of the Archbishop, Fr. Virgil made a plan. The Archbishop had to go to Rome. Fr. Virgil wanted to start the work. But the fathers there did not like the idea and told Fr. Virgil not to construct the church. Fr. Virgil wanted at least to repair the church. But the priests were not ready even for that. So Fr. Virgil was in a dilemma. He approached a rich man who promised to help him. In this way he did some construction work. The Whole building was constructed with the donation of the rich man; no amount was collected from the people who were asked only to offer some offerings.

Fr. Virgil says one area was like a desert. To see a city one had to travel two hundred miles. Police always checked not only visa and passport but also the luggage. Sometimes the police thrust his gun on the chest which was terrifying. Even if anyone was killed there was nobody to question.

To go anywhere, one needed to get a permit from the police. But going to Baghdad, one must have the permission from the governor. Fr. Virgil wanted to go to Baghdad and he was not permitted. So he asked permission to go to Basra, and was permitted since he applied for it in English. Basra was in turmoil and not at all safe. "Don't travel in 3rd class," said the Station Master, as he was a Christian. But there was no ticket in the 2nd class. But Fr. Virgil was lucky to get a ticket as someone, who had ticket was not going. The next day there was war in Baghdad and Basra. Kasim took over the reins, but by 8.30 P.m. Kasim was killed. Nobody was allowed to get out of the house, due to political situation. A certain dentist Dr.Ramsi helped Fr.Virgil. But he too was put in jail, on the pretext that he was a communist. Father helped Ramsi, who with the help of many people was sent to America, though the police came to arrest him again.

In 1963 Fr.Fabian was given a tearful send off from Iraq. All the Fathers, Brothers in the seminary and others joined hands at his send off programme. Some of them could not control themselves and even cried. Fr. Fabian himself has described this incident in the Karmala Sandesam of 1963. In February that year a Revolution broke out in Iraq. There was no food for two days. Nobody was allowed to go out after 5 in the evening. Still Fr. Virgil went out for Mass and returned before 5 p.m. All praised his courage.

PART II - CMI MISSIONS IN KERALA : KANYAKUMARI MISSION

The CMI missionaries were active in Kanyakumari District from the first half of 20th century itself. They worked in collaboration with local priests to convert local people. However, CMI institutions were started only in 1970 when St. Thomas Church of Netta was entrusted to their care by the Archdiocese of Changanassery. Following this many mission stations were started in different parts of this area. The CMIs developed many mission stations too. There are about 15 priests working here and it is a sub-region under St.Joseph's Province, Trivandrum.

The CMIs were working in Southern Travancore and some parts of even Tamilnadu. Others too, especially the Changanassery Diocese, sent priests to work over there. Today the mission territory is developed so vastly that it has become a diocese- the diocese of Thakalay. We had many conversions from even Nadar community.

FR. ATHANASIUS, THE FIRST MALABAR MISSIONARY

Fr. Athanasius, Malabar's first and a great missionary, who took the initiative to start a monastery at Kadalundy, in Malabar area, was the first one to step beyond the four corners of Kerala.

The Platinum Jubilee of the Monastery at Kadalundy and also Syro-Malabar Church crossing beyond the Kerala territory was celebrated in Pavarty on Feb. 6, 2011. It was with much difficulty, Fr. Athanasius could complete the work of Monastery chapel at Pavarty, was a model of perfect Gothic chapel, perhaps first in Asia, was constructed in Portuguese style, was blessed on Sept. 26, 1926.

The spiritual needs of migrant Malayalees were met by the Jesuit and other fathers. Since these fathers were foreigners, they did not know Malayalam. So these fathers came to Pavarty to study Malayalam. Then Pavarty was in so called 'British Malabar' area. Most of the teachers of Malabar area came from Pavarty. From 1934 onwards, Fr. Athanasius started his mission work in the Latin Diocese of Kozhikode. As he was invited by the Bp. of Kozhikode, he was the first missionary to work over there. The first CMI Monastery beyond Kerala was established in Kadalundy in 1936. There some people received baptism. Fr. Athnasius already started to establish Churches and schools in this area. In 1943, the school started by him, was already a high school.

Many Syro-Malabarians came to settle in these areas and it was a tremendous work to look after their spiritual needs. Many CMI fathers came forward to help them. They laboured day and night to raise their standard, not only spiritually, but also materially. There were no proper roads. So CMI fathers started constructing roads even by giving the land for roads. People were taught handicrafts by establishing Industrial Estates, cared for their health by starting hospitals etc. Thus the CMI fathers worked for the total development of the people and area. About 50 CMI fathers were already working in this area before the establishment of Diocese of Thalassery.

The Monastery at Kadalundy was the first centre, which cared for the spiritual of needs of both Latin's and Syrians. The Platinum Jubilee of Monastery at Kadalundy was celebrated on Feb.13, 2011, and many Catholics came to Kadalundy, following the foot-steps of the great Missionary, Fr. Athanasius CMI.

MALABAR MISSION

The CMI mission began in Malabar in 1934, when Fr. Athanasius took charge as the vicar at Cheruvannur, a parish of Calicut

Diocese. Recently we celebrated the Platinum Jubilee of CMI mission in Malabar. Bishop Remigious Inchaniyil of Thamarassery thanked the CMI Congregation for their tireless service in nurturing the early Syro- Malabar Church in this region. He said that the Thamarassery diocesan area were the main recipients of "selfless service" of the members of the congregation.

St. Thomas Province, Calicut, organized a thanksgiving Mass along with a public meeting in Devagiri College as part of their celebration. Bishops from Manathavady, Thamarassery and Calicut Dioceses along with the priests, sisters and thousands of laymen took part in the celebrations.

Bp. Joseph Porunnedam of Manthavady said that the CMI congregation gave "great service" to the early Christians, who migrated to the hilly region from central Kerala. "Its contribution to the development of Malabar is tremendous," he said while inaugurating the function.

Bp. Joseph Kalathiparambil of Calicut said that within 75 years the CMI Congregation had become the pride of Syro-Malabar Church in Malabar and their contribution in the educational and pastoral field in this region was tremendous.

Their main contribution was in the field of education. Apart from starting schools, they established the St. Joseph's College in Devagiri, which became one of the best Colleges in Kerala. "The establishment of Devagiri College has transformed the destiny of Malabar," said Philip Nedumpuram, one of the Catholic teachers.

"The early Missionaries have sacrificed their lives for the well being of the people of this region," said John Panathottam, the former Provincial of the Calicut Province. Many CMI priests worked for many years to establish the Church there. Today we see that there are many dioceses in Malabar area.

PART III

CMI MISSIONS IN NORTH INDIA :

RAIGARH - AMBIAKAPUR MISSION

It was none other than Fr. Alypius, who was the first CMI to go to North India to make a thorough preliminary study of the North Indian Missions. He visited almost all the dioceses near to Raigarh- Ambikapur. After his visit to these Missions he submitted a detailed report to Fr. Maurus, the then Prior General of the CMI Congregation, in June 1954. He told how he was taken to many mission stations and so had a firsthand knowledge about the Raigarh- Ambikapur Mission. This surely paved the way for our future Raigarh- Ambikapur missionaries.

Raigarh- Ambikapur was an independent state in M.P. Before the Independence of India there were more than 600 independent States in India and some states were very reluctant to join the Indian Union. Ambikapur state was one. Fr. Livens, the great Missionary came to India and converted many Adivasis, though he worked for only a few years. In the beginning of 20th century, Raigarh-Ambikapur state was part of Chotta- Nagpur Mission.

There is an interesting story about Fr. Stanislaus Tigga, who afterwards became the Bp. of Raigarh-Ambikapur. There was a small state called 'Udaipur' with a few Catholics. But the priests were not allowed to enter there, except four times a year, and that too, for only 48 hours. But Fr. Tigga could not get back before the stipulated time because his bike failed and so he was put in jail. It was in 1948. Mr. Nehru, our Prime Minister was in London. Nehru was asked whether there was religious freedom in India. "Of course. Why do you doubt?" Then they revealed

to him that a particular priest was arrested and put jail in India because he could not get out of the place before the specified time. Nehru then said that such a thing could never happen in his country. When he enquired and found that it was true, then the priest was released.

HOW THE IDEA OF A NEW MISSION WAS FORMED

Fr. Vianney, one of the pioneer missionaries of Ambikapur writes thus in our Centenary Souvenir, that we got our first invitation to North India in 1952. He continues saying, that in 1952 they were celebrating the great Jubilee of St. Thomas' entry to India. A grand Jubilee celebration took place at Ernakulam. Most of the Bishops from India participated in this grand celebration. Of course, Bp. Severan of Ranchi (known as Missionary Bishop) was present at a conference held at the auditorium of Thevara College. Seeing many CMI priests there he asked for some priests to work in Raigarh - Ambikapur area. He had a plan to entrust the area to CMIs as a Diocese when it was developed. But there were some other problems as to the Rite etc. So Bp. Severan himself wrote to Cardinal Tisserant, the Prefect of Oriental Congregation. Cardinal Tisserant was a great visionary and a lover of Oriental Churches, especially the Syro Malabar Church. He really understood the mission potentiality of the Syro Malabar Church and took great initiatives for the growth of the Syro Malabar Church. Hence he readily allowed the CMI missionaries to go to Raigarh - Ambikapur.

Fr. Diego gives an account about the Ambikapur Mission. Several dates for its inauguration were fixed from 1952 onwards, but did not materialize. Finally they could begin in 1954.But they had to administer the Sacraments in Latin Rite. 3 priests were selected, Frs. Vianney, Cassius and Diego. Before going to the missions, they

went to meet Archbishop Kandathil, the Archbishop of Ernakulam. Archbishop asked them whether they were going to start a diocese, and the Missionaries said that was their aim.

While inquiring about the Mission area where they were expected to go, and about the people, they came to know that the people were adivasis, who are man - eaters, and almost naked. Fr. Januarius, who took some classes for them, told them that the European Fathers were working there in that area. They must always be serviceable, but should not become their slaves. The Missionaries were getting ready to go to the unknown land with all necessary things.

Fr. Diego writes thus about their journey. They bid farewell to all near and dear ones as they were going to an unknown area. During those days there was no reservation system in the railway, so they had sent some one ahead to occupy the seats. Thus, 3CMI missionaries ventured into Raigarh-Ambikapur Mission in North India in 1955. It was the first step of CMIs into North India. A grand farewell was arranged for them. At 2.30 in the afternoon the three missionaries were ready at the South Railway station at Ernakulam. Fr. Prior General himself and others including a photographer from Deepika were ready for the send off. On the way they got royal send off at Alwaye as Fr. Rector and the Aspirants from there and Fr. Dismas and the Aspirants from Irinjalakuda garlanded them. At 8.30 p.m. they reached Coimbatore and had their dinner. All were seated on the floor. Dinner was served on the banana leaves. Our Fathers were in their woolen cassocks. The next day when they reached Madras station, Father says people gathered as if it was a 'pooram' (large crowd).

IN THE VINEYARD OF THE LORD

After a long journey the young, energetic, zealous missionaries landed at the "Promised Land" on 26 January 1955. Fr. Diego was introduced as a Brahmin Priest. He was sent to Lureg, a particular mission station. Hear his own words, "there the ladies received him, washing his hands, and presented him bunches of flowers saying, 'Jai Jesu'." Fr. Diego started the first Government recognized school in Raigarh- Ambikapur. He also started a boarding house there. Today one will not see any parish without a boarding house. The people admired the zeal of the CMI missionaries. Every year hundreds of people came to them to become Christians. In 1970s when I landed in Ambikapur that was one of the most flourishing missions in India. The people were very eager to become Christians. Though many were converted in those days, there was no proper follow up and many left their faith in later years.

Fr. Diego has written many interesting articles about Ambikapur Mission in Karmala Sandesm, C Mission etc. A few instances from that will certainly enlighten us. The Brahmins of the locality had 'pig tail' on their heads, so Father too kept one, saying that he is a high caste Brahmin from Kerala. He said that he would not take even water from their families. It was a miracle formula by which he could convert many from that particular sect where the European missionaries were not allowed to step even near to their houses.

Fr. Diego could do wonders there and cure many by his simple medicines. Once a lady who was about to die was brought to his house and he put his thermometer to her mouth. What a wonder! At once she got up and the father's needle was so powerful that she was cured instantaneously. Likewise he did many miracles there so much so that they had absolute confidence in him.

Some years back I met a priest from Raigarh and he asked about Fr. Diego. I told him that Fr. Diego was no more. He died a few years ago. He was from a Hindu family and he was the only one who had received baptism from his family. Fr.Diego was a wonderful missionary. People there owe their respect to him even today. Our Fathers did so much there in Ambikapur that it has become a full-fledged diocese today. We have offered even our religious house to the Diocese. They speak about our generosity even today.

I think a few words about Fr. Cassius, one of the pioneer missionaries of Ambikapur mission will not be out of place here. As a young priest he was a zealous missionary. He made use of every opportunity to bring everyone to the fold of Christ. When he got a chance to go to Ambikapur, his sole aim was to bring the people to the Church. Once when he was in Ambikapur, people told him that they were seeing pigs everywhere and that they were afraid. Fr. Cassius told them not to worry. If they became Catholics he could get rid of the pigs. They came along with the head of the village and promised they would. There were 25 families. Father said, nobody should go to work those days. He would provide their maintenance. He taught them catechism and all were baptized. Then he offered the Mass, blessed the houses, all abominable articles were removed, medals of St. Benedict were given to them to wear, water was purified. Thus all were cleansed and there was no trouble of 'pigs' again. Fr. Cassius says that he has converted more than 10,000 people in Ambikapur, 100 people in Bijnor and more than 120 people in Kerala itself. Thus we see that our CMI zealous missionaries, 10/12 in number, had converted thousands of people over there.

Now hear another interesting story that happened in Raigarh-Ambikapur. To construct a new house, some 120- cubic feet wood was necessary. We showed the S.D.O the registration of 3 acres of land and he gave us the permission to cut the wood. But unfortunately our servant cut the wood from the reserve forest. So a case was put up against him. Fr. Cassius went to the S.D.O and told him that the servant did that unknowingly. The SDO told him that he would see to it and helped Father by simply charging a nominal fine.

Let us hear about the veteran Missionary Fr. Roumouald. When he came to Ambikapur he did not know much Hindi. But he constructed many buildings with his' toota- foota' (not proper) Hindi. He too was a zealous missionary and did a lot of work in the vineyard of the Lord.

There are hundreds of stories every missionary could share. Here we have narrated only a few. In short we have to say that our missionaries did a very commendable work in Ambikapur.



CHAPTER 4

CMI DIOCESES IN NORTH INDIA

By way of preliminary preparation, the CMIs were working inside and outside of Kerala as we have mentioned in our previous chapter. Their wonderful mission work saw its results in the formation of many North Indian Dioceses. In this chapter we will try to highlight some features about the North Indian Dioceses.

MISSIONARY EXPANSION BEYOND KERALA

In the growth of our Church, we faced many adversities due to foreign domination. The division among the St. Thomas Christians and the confinement of her territory to Kerala has affected her growth and missionary activities adversely. It was due to these reasons our Church could not contribute much in the mission field till the 18th century. The founding of the CMI Congregation in the 19th century was a milestone in the missionary endeavours of the Syro-Malabar Church.

With the establishment of Syro-Malabar hierarchy in 1923, the growth and progress of our church became rapid. Chanda was the first mission territory of Syro- Malabar Church outside Kerala, entrusted to CMIs in 1962. Within a span of 50 years, Chanda had a tremendous development; the number of Catholic population had gone up from 3000 to 30000. We celebrated the Golden Jubilee of Chanda Mission as Mission Year in the whole of Syro- Malabar Church. Also the growth of Chanda led to the formation of many new dioceses in North India, as Sagar(1968), Ujjain(1968), Satna(1968), Jagdalpur(1977), Bijnor(1977), Rajkot(1977), Gorakpur(1984), Adilabad(1999) (bifurcated from Chanda) and Faridabad(2012); all flourished under the leadership of various Religious Congregations such as CMI, Vincentian, CST, and the apostolic society of MST.

It was in 1962 that the Apostolic See entrusted the Chanda mission in Maharashtra as a separate ecclesiastical unit to the Syro-Malabar Church through the CMI Congregation, which was working in the mission from 1955 onwards. From 1962 onwards a group of zealous missionaries under the leadership of Msgr.Januarius Palathuruthy CMI initiated a concerted and energetic and enthuastic Evangelization work in collaboration with other religious communities of the Syro- Malabar Church. This missionary enthusiasm enabled His Grace Eugine D'Souza, Archbishop of Nagpur, to recommend the establishment of Chanda, the first Syro-Malabar 'Ad Gentes Mission', conceding a portion of his own territory. Thanks to the magnanimity of Archbishop Eugene D'Souza the mission activity of the Syro-Malabar Church was extended beyond the confines of Kerala.

CHANDA EXARCHATE

The erection of Chanda Mission on August 15 1962 was the beginning of a spring time for the mission ad gentes of the Syro-Malabar Church, says Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church,, in the decree of promulgation of the Mission Year in the Syro-Malabar Church during the Golden Jubilee of Chanda Mission.

On 3 July, we commemorate the Dukhrana of St. Thomas, our Father in faith. Dukhrana is the commemoration of the martyrdom of St. Thomas who through his words, "My Lord and My God", proclaimed his faith in Jesus and in the salvation he brought to us. Therefore we celebrate Dukhrana as the 'Sabadinam' (day of the Church) of the Syro-Malabar Church, said George Cardinal Alencherry, the Major Archbishop of Syro-Malabar Church on the occasion of his Pastoral Letter on Mission Year. He further continues saying that whenever the Pope meets the bishops His Holiness first words are often regarding the missionary zeal of

the Syro-Malabar Church.

In his Pastoral letter he shares some of his intimate thoughts on vocation and mission of the Syro Malabar Church. It is a great providence that we could receive the light of faith through the ministry of St. Thomas the Apostle during the same period when the church had its beginning in Rome and Antioch. It is the firm resolve of St.Thomas "to go and die with him" that led him to India. It is the same missionary zeal of our Father of faith that should guide us in the present age.

SOME IMPORTANT PERSONALITIES CONNECTED TO CHANDA FR. PLACID J. PODIPARA CMI (1899-1985)

Fr. Placid J. Podipara CMI was a pioneer in Syro-Malabar Ecclesiology. He was the consulter of the Oriental Churches, member of Liturgical Commission for Restoration, Consulter of the Pontifical Commission for preparing the Agenda of Vatican II, and Professor at the Pontifical Oriental Institute, was instrumental in the expansion of the Syro-Malabar territory to the North of Kerala (Archieparchy of Tellissery) and the establishment of Chanda mission in North India.

EUGENE CARDINAL TISSERANT (1884-1972)

Here was a great visionary and lover of Oriental Churches, especially the Syro-Malabar Church; He was the Prefect of Eastern Churches. He understood the potentialities of the Syro-Malabar Church and took great interest and initiative for the growth of the Syro-Malabar Church beyond its proper territory. The Raigarh-Ambikapur Mission was started with his permission and blessing.

ARCHBISHOP EUGENE D'SOUZA (1917-2003)

The far sightedness and generosity of Archbishop Eugene paved the way for the Syro- Malabar Church to expand beyond the river Pampa and Bharatpuzha. He ceded some of the portion of his own territory for starting the new Mission area in Chanda. The CMI congregation owes very much to Archbishop Eugene for his magnanimity. Pope John XXIII erected the Ecclesiastical unit of Chanda. Pope did it by separating three districts - Wardha, Chanda and Adilabad from the Archdiocese of Nagpur on March 31, 1962. Bp. Januarius was appointed on June 12, 1962 as its Ecclesiastical superior with duties, privileges and faculties of an Apostolic Exarch. On August 15, 1962, the new ecclesiastical unit of Chanda was formally and canonically erected. It was raised to the status of Apostolic Exarchate on July 29, 1968. On February 26, 1977, Pope Paul VI established Chanda as a diocese, and Bp. Januarius was appointed as its first Bishop. He was ordained Bishop on May 3, 1977. The Archbishop was speaking on the occasion of a luncheon hosted on Aug. 23, 1962 by Bp. Januarius CMI, the superior of the newly erected Chanda Mission. "East is East and West is West; the twain shall never meet" is the famous saying of Rudyard Kipling, yet like every rule I suppose, this one has its exception. Today marks the meeting in a real sense of the East and the West; today the Church of the Orient with its rich and ancient Liturgy comes to take its rightful place as the vanguard of the Church in the apostolate for the evangelization of this country."

THE FIRST CMI MISSIONARIES IN CHANDA

Along with Bp. Januarius, the Mission Superior, the first group of the CMI Missionaries to work in Chanda included Rev. Fathers Silas Vadakkel, Eugene Kizhakethala, Felician Vadakumcherry, Joseph Velamparambil, Zacheus Edakkalathur and Joseph

Manjaly. These pioneering missionaries had no previous knowledge of the mission. Bp. Januarius' policy was 'from the periphery to the centre'. Pioneers and other missionaries were sent out to even jungles. Their zeal and enthusiasm worked wonders and could bring many to the fold of Christ. Even the great Cardinal Gracios of Bombay was wonderstruck seeing the great progress made within a short period. That is why Eugene D'Souza, the Archbishop, exclaimed at the Silver Jubilee of Chanda, that the "desert has bloomed!".

Bp. JANUARIUS, THE ARCHITECT AND HIS TEAM

For the scholar-philosopher- formator, stepping into the shoes of a pioneering missionary proved natural. He struck a chord with the people and the ground realities in the new place. His vision was put in a sutra form in Sanskrit "sambhajemah divyani", meaning 'let us share everything that is dynamically divine.' The story of the origin and growth of the first indigenous Syro-Malabar community outside its proper territory is truly the saga of a people who shared the Good News by a band of missionaries, whose friend, guide and philosopher was none than Bp. Januarius. In his own words: "We did not imitate or compete, rather, Chanda was a challenge to the time" This speaks volumes about his vision, mission and the methodology of the architect and first Bishop of Chanda.

SEVEN POINT PROGRAMME OF BISHOP JANUARIUS

Bp. Januarius planned and executed a seven point programme to enliven the faith of the Christian community in Chanda. The seven- point of the Chanda mission is a unique method of evangelizing people, which is symbolic of a real celebration of life in Christ in the context of the community.

The seven- point programme consists of the following elements of

Christian identity, charity and solidarity:

1. The Cross
2. The Image of Christ
3. The Holy Bible
4. The Lamp
5. The Daily Evening Prayer
6. The Practice of unconditional forgiveness and love
7. The caring and sharing for their needy neighbours

This seven- point programme has two faces: first, symbols of Christian family; second, symbols of Christian behaviour. The first four elements constitute the symbols of Christian family life and the latter three, symbols of Christian behaviour.

THE ROLE OF CATECHISTS IN THE MISSIONS

In the beginning when missionaries came to the mission they did not know the language, tradition, culture and other aspects of the village people. In order to help them Bp.Januarius appointed Catechists, who were the first contact people for the villagers, since they knew the villagers very well. This is true in almost all the missions in North India. Without Catechists, it was almost impossible for the missionaries to penetrate into the unknown territories of the villagers.

Usually the Catechist is selected from the same village of the mission, if possible. They knew the language, culture, tradition and other aspects of the village people. They are sent for special training in studies in Bible, History and other teachings of the church. The Catechists go ahead of the missionaries and start preaching the Gospel in the villages. Usually they go in the afternoon

and visit each house and inform them about the Liturgy and other services to be held later in the evening. They also start Bhajan services before the Mass and prepare the people for prayer. There are many catechists in Chanda and other mission territories. Their service helps the priests and the religious to visit the villages.

SOME EXPERIENCE OF CMI MISSIONARIES IN CHANDA

In the village mission, whenever it is possible, especially in summer, the missionaries visit and stay in the village. Two or three people take the luggage and go to the village at about 3 p.m. Along with the priest the head catechist will also go. As soon as the Father reaches, there will be a reception for him in the traditional way, such as washing the hands, garlanding etc., it was done in a dance form. At 4 p.m. confessions begin. This may go up to 8 p.m. After dinner he conducts meetings for all the children, the youth and the old. The next day at 5.30 a.m. there will be Holy Mass. The Father concerned speaks in Hindi, which is translated into Uraon by the catechist. At the meetings all the problems are discussed. After that the people disperse. If there is a Baptism, it is administered followed by a meeting of the heads of the families. After the midday meal there will be the blessing of houses, wells, anointing of the sick etc. Then, the priest proceeds to the next village. Due to these elaborate programmes some times a village visit will takes more than two days.

Fr. Christine, one of the pioneering missionaries, shares his experience. Bhamargarh, a border area of both Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh, some 100 kilometers away from Bellarshah, was populated by 'Hill Marica', people living in hill areas. These people do not usually stay at a place for more than two years. Mainly they cultivate paddy and often they get very good crop. It is a jungle area and often adults are attacked and killed by wild animals. So

people we usually see over there are mostly children. The Eastern side of Brahma Puri is purely an Adivasi area. The people say that they were in darkness, but after the arrival of missionaries they came to know about the true God and are in light.

Shankar, a Hindu boy aged 17 hailing from Babupet heard about Christ and Christianity and wanted to become a Christian. Though his family was Hindu, he became a Christian. People were ready to accept Christ, but when someone becomes a Christian, people created all kinds of problems. This did not dishearten the missionaries who went on giving Baptism to at least one or two families in each place they visited.

In Indravalli on April 1, 1972, Bp. Januarius came there solemnly on a rath with 20 pairs of bullocks in procession. 51 people were ready to receive Baptism on that day and he baptized them all. Likewise 27 families too were ready to receive baptism from Lakaram, Kondagudam and Gadapuram villages.

Once a man said that he would become a Christian provided the missionary gave him Rs.3000/ for his marriage. In some missions they came asking not only for money, but also for girls for the marriage.

The' Mantra' of **Fr. Philip Neri** is famous. One person of a village was becoming weaker and weaker. He tried many medicines, without relief. He asked the Father for a mantra. Father gave him some tonic. Then again he asked for a mantra. So Fr. Philip told him to come to the church daily for 15 days and attend the Mass. After that he was given a medal; then he was miraculously cured.

Another shepherd lost the sheep. He needed Rs.1000/ to buy sheep. Father could give him only Rs. 500/ and with this he flourished in his business. The Father told him to offer 5 coconuts to Christ. He should bring them to the Church, break them in

the church and distribute to the people.

Fr. Joseph Manjaly shares his experience in 'Kadki' village. It is in a very interior area. There were 21 families of Gonds. At the sound of the Dolak people came in good numbers. They made a temporary shed for the priest with blankets, mats etc. Songs were sung in Gondi and in Telugu followed by prayer and Bible reading. Though they had made a temporary bath- room, the Patel's son (important person in a village) came and took the Father to his residence. The Mass was celebrated more or less like the Gondi Puja. That day Father gave baptism for 34 people.

Fr. Canisius, one of the veteran missionaries of Chanda. In 1982, he was in one of the remote areas of Manilgadh Hills on the Maharashtra-Andhra Pradesh boarder. Some sisters and catechists accompanied him. In spite of opposition from the high caste, the response of the ordinary people, who mainly belonged to the neglected SC and ST groups gathered. In a few years the missionaries were able to form a nucleus of Christian communities in a number of villages. They also started Bhalbhavan, Schools, and farmer's credit society. This did not please the high castes.

Some of them approached the new Christians and asked them to return to their old religion. Some of the new Christians answered: "so far we were experiencing rejection and oppression. Though we were with you for a long time, this is the first time you are visiting us! On the contrary these missionaries regularly visit us, dine with us sharing our difficulties. They gave us dignity and self respect too, teaching us that we all are the children of God the loving Father....so now there is no question of deserting the Lord and His Missionaries."

The missionary wanted to buy a plot of land in that area, but the

high caste people prevented him from getting the land. This time too the new Christians came to the help of the perplexed missionary and saved the situation. So that later they were able to construct a Primary school.

These are only a few stories of the missionaries to make us understand the precarious situations they faced in their missionary life. We hope and pray that Chanda Diocese will flourish in all aspects under the new Bishop Mar Ephrem Narikulam.

SAGAR DIOCESE

The tremendous development in Chanda surprised everybody so much so that the Holy See was pleased to hand over some more places to the Syro-Malabar Church for the Evangelization in North India. In 1968, three more Ecclesiastical units, namely Sagar, Satna and Ujjain were entrusted to it.

The Eparchy of Sagar was erected as an Apostolic Exarchate by a Papal bull 'Quo Aptius' dated 29 July 1968, carving out from the Archdiocese of Bhopal, the civil districts of Sagar, Vidisha and Raisen. The Exarchate was entrusted to the CMI Congregation for Mission work. The District of Guna was added to the Exarchate of Sagar on April 2, 1973. The district of Guna, which belonged to the Diocese of Ajmer and Jaipur, was further bifurcated to form the district of Ashoknagar. By the decree' Divina Verba' on 26 February 1977 Sagar was raised from an Apostolic Exarchate to the status of a proper Eparchy and Mar Clemens Thottungal CMI was appointed as the first Bishop of Sagar. Mar Joseph Neelankavil CMI succeeded him in 1986 and Mar Anthony Chirayath was appointed Bishop in 2006. At present the Eparchy of Sagar consists of five districts of Sagar, Vidisha, Raisen, Guna and Ashoknagar, in Madhya Pradesh.

THE FIRST MISSIONARIES OF SAGAR

Msgr. Clemens Thottungal and **Fr. Paul Kozhipat** reached first in Bhopal in 1968. Msgr. Clemens remained in the Bishop's house, in Bhopal for a while. Fr. Kozhipat proceeded to Sagar. St. Joseph sisters and others had come to the railway station to receive the Exarch. Fr. Kozhipat told them that he was not the person they had in their mind! The Exarch had not come he was still in Bhopal. Eight priests were selected to start the mission work in Sagar. Frs. Simon Stock, Vadaparambil, Papias, Antony Ettickal, Raymond, Basil, Prosper and Thuruthumali. Fr. Ettickal was sent to Intkheri to construct a Church there, which he managed to construct within 28 days in spite of tremendous opposition from Nairs and others of the place. Archbishop Eugene D'Souza, Inter Nuncio and Msgr. Clemens went to Intkheri to bless the newly constructed Church there. Later, all of them proceeded to Sagar for the formal Inauguration of the new Exarchate of Sagar on January 6, 1969.

Bp. Clemens Thottungal, CMI was the first Exarch and Bishop of Sagar diocese. When he took up the new mission in Sagar, he had a handful of zealous missionaries. Really Bp. Clemens did wonders in this part of the country. With his magnanimous heart, noble character and above all his fatherly figure, he could attract anyone however high or low. By his great zeal for souls he did whatever he could to expand the kingdom of God.

His main motto was to start from centre and then penetrate to periphery. He established mission stations at the centre. Then, he said that we will be able to move to villages. If we first establish in the villages, we may meet with opposition and there may not be anyone to support us. Since we started with the centres often the people are with us and definitely would help us in case of any problem. Thus Bp. Clemens did not start mission stations in the

villages in the beginning. After ten long years, Bp. Clemens said that now we should "launch into the deep", by establishing mission stations in the villages. Thus we could cover not only cities, but even the villages. There was tremendous progress in the number of mission stations, schools, boarding houses and crèches. Bp. Clemens policy was, thus, very successful.

Fr. Diego, the first pioneer and veteran Missionary of North India came to Sagar in 1970. Fr. Diego was a zealous missionary filled with mission spirit. He had always one thing in his mind- evangelization by preaching the Word of God. His very presence added much enthusiasm to the young missionaries, who had hardly any knowledge about the missions and the mission work. Fr.Diego under took all efforts to start a mission station at Silwani, which was far away from Sagar, the head- quarters. Fr. John Paul too helped Fr. Diego in establishing a mission station at Silwani. Fr. Diego, a 'Pacca' Missionary could not only start a mission station at Silwani, but do a lot of contacts in many villages of Silwani Tahasil through his human contacts and social and other development projects.

R.D.S.S. (Rural Development Service Society), at Silwani:

R.D.S.S was a dream project and the brain-child of Fr. Werner, CMI. Many have contributed to the wonderful success of Silwani Project. R.D.S.S. was co-sponsored by Sagar Diocese, KESS (Kuriakose Elias Service Society), in Trissur and the CMI Mission Region of Sagar. R.D.S.S. of Silwani had name and fame all over North India that Government of India was sending their IAS and IPS candidates for the training. CMI Fathers and others, especially some sister congregations put all their might for the holistic development of the whole area.

Lakhs and crores of rupees were pumped into the project by the Government, non government NGOs and German Government and Karl Kuble Foundation in Germany. We could start Schools, boarding, non- formal schools, crèches all over the area.

Story of Schools in North India:

In North India, we find primary schools in almost all the villages. But usually all the primary schools have only one teacher, who has to teach all the students of 5 classes. He/ she teaches one subject in a class, and then goes to another and another. Definitely teachers cannot do justice to all in his/ her teaching. Often the parents are not ready to send the children to schools, and children too not interested to attend the class or study. Often teachers are absent and the students are asked to do all kinds of work not only in schools, but also in teachers' house. When we started schools we too faced the same problems. But slowly sisters managed to bring the children to schools.

Boarding: When we started the boarding we too had to face some difficulties. Often the children were not ready to remain with us. Even small girls would run away at night and go to their houses without informing us. It took almost one or two years to dispel the prejudices. Now they not only are ready to send their wards, but there is so much rush to the Boarding that we cannot accommodate all.

Sagar Bishop Mar Anthony Chirayath

The Eparchy of Sagar is looking forward to its Golden Jubilee in the year 2018. It has grown from three mission stations and three priests in 1968 to 41 mission stations in 2012 and 65 priests of whom 56 are diocesan, 220 sisters from 17 Religious Congregations. The mission work is spread out to all the 5 districts

of Eparchy. Education, health care and social welfare are main fields of our activity. Our vision is to joyfully respond to Christ's call more fully to the people of God. Our mission is to reach out to all people to announce the gospel of Jesus. We commit ourselves to becoming a prayerful and faith-filled Church that truly reflects the glory of God.

As we have mentioned earlier, the Church was in a dormant state in this part of the country. The pioneering missionaries have laboured day and night to build up the church here. Today, the existence of the Church is recognized by all. The number of the faithful has not increased much, especially because of the opposition of the majority. Here in M.P. we are not allowed to convert anyone and we need special permission to baptize someone from outside of our community. There are instances of arresting the priests for the simple reason they gave baptism for someone.

Here I remember a case of one of my workers, who was a Hindu and wanted to become a Christian. He was an ordinary worker who earned his livelihood from the daily work. He approached me to receive baptism. At that time the anti conversion bill in M.P. was in force. So I told him to get permission from the Collector. As far as I remember he went to the collectorate at least 15 times, leaving not only his daily job, but also spending a good amount for his travel. Permission was not given to him he was driven out and told that he should never change his faith.

Some Experiences of our Missionaries

Though there are not much anti - Christian activities in M.P., we too had some bitter experiences. Here we share the experience **Fr. Sebastian Pereppadan,** who had gone to Ranchi Archdiocese for his practical training before going to work in M.P.

Fr. Sebastian says that very often they had to go through jungles filled with wild animals, even at odd times, sometimes all alone, sleeping at night under the trees, these were all regular experience. He was in a place called 'Garu'. Fr. Sebastian was quite new to the place and could speak little Hindi. The Collector had put an order to dismantle the Priest House. A certain Fr. Zacharias, knowing this had come to help Fr. Sebastian. When Fr. Zacharias also came they organized the people with different kinds of programmes. On the day meant for dismantling the house, nobody turned up. Fr. Sebastian was supposed to be there till the end of July. So he thought he could see Kunkuri, the Bishop's house. He reached Ranchi on the feast of our Lady of Mount Carmel and renewed his vows, and then proceeded for Kunkri. Some 15 kilometers away from Gumla there was the famous 'Sanku' river, which they had to cross. Motor Cycle was kept in the boat while crossing the river. They asked for money Rs.30/ and it was too much. So Fr. Zacharias talked to their leader, but they threw away the bike when they reached the other side. The Fathers got out of the boat. The leader and others were beating Fr. Zacharias. Fr. Sebastian tried to save him. He showed the purse and told them to take as much money as they want, but not to hurt them. They did not listen, but continued to beat him and Fr. Zacharias finally fell down tired. Then they turned to Fr. Sebastian and slapped him on his cheek. Again they struck him on the eye with their chappals. They beat him continuously and with a tyre struck him on his back so that he fell down on his face. Fr. Sebastian says that even after many years when he remembers this incident, he trembles. Some adivasis came to console them but they could not do anything. Then a Bengali gentle man came. He too was threatened. A few days ago they had even murdered a Jesuit Priest.

Fr. Sebastian was in great pain, his dress was torn, body was smeared in mud, and face was disfigured. Even then the group of 15 was not satisfied, because they understood the people were Christians because of the cross they were wearing on their shirts. Then they were forced to sign a paper stating that there was an accident and local people helped us.

After a week Fr. Sebastian went to all the places to say good bye to all. They were going to Mayapur village through the jungle. They had to travel some 35 kilometers. After a few kilometers, they heard the noise of wild elephants. After 60 feet or so, they saw one big wild elephant on the road. Slowly they turned the bike backward. After some time the elephant went inside the jungle and thus they escaped.

I would like to share some of my experiences in Sagar. For some time I was in the Bishop's house. Then I was sent to Majooskala, a very interior area in Raisen District, where the Malayalee settlers from Kerala were living. They were brought from Kerala so that they might teach agriculture to the local people. Though the Central government scheme was marvelous, since it was not properly managed and executed due to the non-cooperation of the people selected, it ended in failure. The selection of the farmers also was not done in a proper manner. Most of the people were not even farmers. Of course, there were a few farmers, but they were not happy with the situation, and so moved out.

I was living in Majooskala, where I had a small cottage. A man came to me saying that I should offer mass for the intention that the previous parish priest should not come back alive, as they had some petty quarel. See the intention of the people how they abuse even the holy Eucharist for their malpractices!

I was the director of the Boarding at Shampura. Then Bishop Joseph Pastor Neelankavil, the Bishop of Sagar, asked me to bifurcate the boarding by separating both boys and girls and also the youngsters from the seniors. Even senior boys above the 8th standard were to be separated and taken to some other place. So I was trying to execute his order. Then a rumour spread that the CMIs had come to destroy the boarding, which was existing for more than a century. I received more than 3 life threatening letters. In this connection they had sent even a famous Gunda with a pistol. God protected me and they did not hurt or attack me.

The Time of marriages is a time of problems. Often we could not get formal permission or even information about the marriages, because many parties came from very interior villages, and communication was difficult. Once it so happened that there were no proper documents for the marriage though the priest had told them without documents he would not solemnize the marriage. Once one of our priests was compelled to bless such a marriage to which the priest had said a definite 'no'. You can just imagine the consequences.

Fr. Mathachan was the Parish Priest in Shampura. It was the marriage of an important person. Several people including the military officers had come for the marriage, some people opposed saying that the marriage should not be blessed. If it was blessed, there would be blood-shed. Anyhow Fr. Mathachan dared to bless the marriage and offered the Mass in spite of the opposition. Thank God nothing adverse happened on that day.

When Fr. Paschal was the Parish Priest of Shampura parish, one evening someone came to him to ask for the sacrament of anointing for a sick person. At once the Father set out along with a boy.

They reached home. Immediately somebody came and told the priest that the house was sick and needed repair and not the person. It should be repaired. Now you promise, otherwise you will not be allowed to go back. It was a very precarious situation. Somehow the Father managed to get out. Afterwards the same family met with a series of accidents.

In Prathapgarh, a very interior Adivasi area in Raisen District, there was a certain man called Yadaram. He was a notorious man. He had a big house at Prathapgarh, and his large family was living there. There was a marriage in his house. He demanded some money for the marriage and he was ready to hand over the entire house after the marriage. We just believed him and gave the money. Some rooms he had already given to us and we were running our dispensary there. It was a big blessing for the local people as there was not even a primary health centre there. Fr. Paul Perumbully was staying there. On a fine morning Yadaram appeared and threw out all the belongings of the priest and told him to leave the place at once or else he would shoot him. The priest informed other priests and they rushed to the place and put up some cases in the police station. But the Police did not help, for they were taking money from both the sides. Another time there was Fr. George Philip CMI in that area and some Sisters were looking after the dispensary. At night there was a knock at the door and somebody was pushing the door which was not at all strong. Somehow Sisters managed to hold the door for some time. Thank God he left after some time.

At present Sagar Diocese prepares for the Golden Mahajubilee of the diocese in 2018. Preparations have already been in full swing from 2013 onwards.

JAGADALPUR MISSION

Jagadalpur Diocese comprises the present Bastar revenue division, the southern most districts of Chattishgarh -Kanker, Narayanpur, Bastar, Dantewada, and Bijapur. Jagadalpur Mission had a long history. At first it was the part of Mylapur diocese, then part of the vicariate of Madras, and later part of Apostolic Vicariate of Vizhakapattanam. Later in1966 it was added to the Apostolic Prefecture of Raipur. Pope Paul VI separated Bastar area on March 23, 1972 from the prefecture Apostolic of Raipur, as the Exarchate of Jagadalpur, under the missionary care of CMI congregation. Msgr. Paulinus Jeerakath was appointed the first Exarch on May 11, 1977. The Exarchate was raised to the status of a diocese on February 26, 1977 and Msgr. Jeerakath was ordained as its first Bishop.

Previously the Pillar Fathers were working there, but as they had less personnel it was entrusted to CMI Fathers. Frs. Simonstock, Kurian Machery, Joseph Puthenpura, and Abraham Thuruthumali were the first CMI Fathers to reach this mission in July 1972.

Fr. Abraham Thuruthumaly, one of the pioneering missionaries, wrote thus about Jagadalpur Mission. Madan Mohan Joshi described about Bastar as "the sleeping giant of India". Bastar comes from Hindi Vastra and "Band Thari" means a place under the bamboos. It is definitely one of the biggest districts in India. In 1948, Bastar and Kanker, two small states, joined the Indian Union. The People are mainly Adivasis of whom famous are the" Maria tribes" The River Indravathi passess through and more than 5000 miles are covered with thick forests. There are more than 4000 villages. More than 99% of the population are Hindus and only 4% Muslims, Christians and the Sikhs. On the inauguration

day of the Exarchate about 500 Adivasis came for the function, even though there were only less than 300 Catholics there.

Life style of the Pioneering Missionaries

The life style of almost all pioneering missionaries was more or less that of the local Adivasis both in living conditions as well as their houses. Most of them lived in huts. Such enculturation won the hearts of Adivasis. They simply loved the missionary priests and sisters. They were their teachers, physicians etc. People trusted them. In short, the missionary was their sole redeemer. Thus the missionary could penetrate the villages, even though the villages were not open to outsiders.

Once I visited Jagadalpur Mission, some ten years after its erection. I went to Naranyanpur. I could visit the villages along with the Fathers, who came from Kerala and some other mission areas, because the Sisters working there accompanied us. People there were like pure Dravidians. There were no medical facilities. No doctors or even primary health centres were available there. The area was famous for witch- craft and they were the only doctors taking care of their health.

I also visited the Exarch Msgr. Paulinus Jeerakath, who was lamenting that there were few conversions. I told Msgr. that we would have to wait for some time and also that we should not convert individual families, which would make their life miserable, only hen the people are ready and come in bulk, we should receive them. Then they would be happy and can lead a good Christian life.

God experience of a Missionary

Fr. Jaiswom, one of the missionaries in Jagadalpur shares some of his experiences. These days he lives in a mission station called

Hathidarga, all alone with 5/6 workers. There they own 20 acres of land. All of them live under a shed, share their meals together. The Father goes to Dhrampura, the Provincial house, every Saturdays and stays there. On Sundays he goes for the mass to a place some 55 kilometers away from there. He rides the bike and takes someone along with him. One day he reached the place and slept for the night. But the very next day when he got up he had no memory, and felt total weakness. He had to go back riding the bike. There was a land phone some 25 kilometers away. The Father prayed for a while. His companion a convert boy, though illiterate, was asked to pray over the Father. So the boy prayed in his broken Hindi keeping the hand over the head of the Father. He prayed thus" Dear lord, Father is not well. Cure him. Let him be well again." He prayed for only one minute. And what happened? A miracle! He was totally cured. The Father says again never a such problem. He could ride his bike without any problem.

Fr. Jaiswom's father had cancer and in the last stages. The Father prayed and he was cured. He lived for another 26 years more. Fr. Jaiswom's sister- in- law was seriously ill, with a heart problem. Doctor said she would live for only 48 hours; but all prayed for her and the result was that after 48 hours, she was half cured and she lives even today after many years, though with medication.

Present Story

Mar Joseph Kollamparambil CMI was appointed as the third bishop of Jagdalpur and was ordained a bishop on September 17, 2013. At the able hands of two former bishops and at the hands of the new bishop, the Diocese makes tremendous progress in all fields.

BIJNOR DIOCESE

His Holiness Paul VI constituted the Exarchate of Bijnor by the Papal Bull" Beatorum Apostolorum " on March 23, 1972 and entrusted it to the CMI Congregation. Msgr. Gratian Mundadan was appointed as its first Exarch. The new Exarchate was previously partially a part of the diocese of Meerut. It consists of the districts of Bijnor except Dhampur division in Utter Pradesh, and the five districts of Pauri, Garhwal, Tehri, Chamoli and Uttar Kashi in Uttarakhand State. Pope Paul VI raised the apostolic Exarchate to the status of a diocese by the Papal Bull "Quae cum Romano", on 26 February 1977 and the Apostolic Exarch Msgr. Gratian was appointed as its first Bishop.

The present Bishop, **Mar John Vadakel CMI** speaks thus about the diocese of Bijnor. The Bijnor mission started from scratch. There was nothing of the Church. The Missionaries started off by living in rented rooms in this new land of a different culture and terrain. They came to this

'Land of God' and worked untiringly under the protection of the Lord and the Eparchy of Bijnor was formed as a miracle wrought by the Almighty. The Eparchy as we see it today is simply a gift of God with 3705 Catholics,45 mission stations, 26 schools,16 medical centres, 5 centres for differently abled etc. Now there are 56 diocesan priests, 19 religious priests and 174 religious sisters, who serve the people.

Bijnor is the heartland of Hinduism. There are very many important places of Hindus in this area like Rishi Kesh, Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri etc. Here people are staunch Hindus and it is not easy to convert them. There are hundreds of famous Hindu Ashrams and thousand of Sanyasis live here. Some Ashrams are very rich, like five star hotels, meant for foreigners. Among the sanyasis you can

find all kinds of people. In most of the Ashrams, you are always welcome and can live there for many days without paying any paisa, but sharing their food and 'Ashram Seva.' So conversion to other religions is unthinkable here. Even then in Bijnor area, some Protestants have already entered and converted a few here and there. We have converted some from these Protestants groups Hence the number of Catholics among this area has not gone high.

Now it would be relevant to hear Fr. Kochumuttam, an Acharya in one of our Ashrams. He has written thus in one of the articles he published in the' Herald of the East' in 1993. Fr. Kochumuttam starts with Geetha, the famous book of Hindus in which Krishna advises Arjuna to fight in the battle. Seeing his own relatives in the opposite side Arjuna was disheartened to fight. Then Krishna spoke about Karma-Yoga and says that selfish karma brings disaster, not all karmas. Niskama karma is a not samsara sadhana, but a moksha sadhana. Likewise he says that a missionary should be a karma-yogi, a contemplative in action. This is needed to work in north India and never should we forget it.

The Religious are prophets. Their duty is to inspire others. The Prophets gave God's message to the people and our duty lies in doing the same. Ashram life is to be recognized as a powerful way of apostolate for evangelization. It is more so in the Indian context. Therefore big structures are not welcome. No one can be a missionary, unless he has the personal experience of Jesus in prayer. To be a prophetic missionary is to be a contemplative in action, a karma-yogi skilled in action.

Now hear from the letter written by famous **Acharya Abhishiktananda** to the CMIs. When he heard that the CMIs were going to have new Missions entrusted to them in the North. He spoke in favour of a contemplative life. He said Centres of

Prayer and Contemplative life would be very suitable for the new mission. Such chances should not be lost at the beginning of the mission. The CMI mission should be different, When Msgr. Januarius was sent to Chanda, he said the same. Contemplative life will surely yield fruits. It could be a very effective means of evangelization.

Mission work in Bijnor is not easy as it is the nerve centre of Hinduism. Conversion is unthinkable here. As you know some states have passed anti-conversion bill. Nobody could be converted from one religion to another without the prior permission of the officers concerned which as I mentioned earlier, has never been given. There are instances where the missionaries were put behind bars for the simple reason that they baptized someone. Even though we find it very hard to penetrate into the Hindu heart land we have made our presence felt strongly by means of education, health and social works. It was not easy to construct structures in the hills. In spite of this we come to see many schools, chapels and a huge Cathedral constructed over there. One wonders how the missionaries managed to construct such mansions at the top of these high hills.

Recent Calamities and the part played by the Diocese

In June 2013, a cloudburst centered on the North Indian state of Uttarakand, caused devastating floods and landslides in the country's worst natural disaster, since 2004 Tsunami. 95 % of casualties occurred in Uttrakand. According to the details given by the state government more than 5700 people were "presumed to be dead ", though in fact the number could go to thousands and nobody knows or can know the exact number. From 14 to 17 June 2013 Uttarakand and the adjoining places got more than 375 percent rain fall.

The upper Himalayan territories of Himachal Pradesh and Uttrakand are full of forests and snow covered mountains and thus remain relatively inaccessible. Here we see the most important Temples for both for Hindus and the Sikhs and every year hundreds and thousands of pilgrims visit these places in summer. Innumerable pilgrims, many hotels, rest houses and shops around the temple were destroyed. Bijnor Diocese rushed to the area and they were the first to do rescue work there. They tried to help hundreds of people with food, warm clothes and other necessary materials. Government and other agencies came later. Thus they saved the lives of many.

Satpuli Accident

18th May 1981, was the saddest day in the history of the diocese of Bijnor. The Satpuli accident was one of the biggest accidents not only in the diocese of Bijnor but for also the whole of the CMI congregation. The congregation and the people of Kerala heard about that accident with a shock. For it was the first time that many CMI members, 3 priests and a senior brother and 6 aspirants and the driver lost their lives in that accident. Only one aspirant survived. Nobody knows exactly what happened on that fateful day. There was a sharp curve on the road. Perhaps the driver slept for a moment. It was a terrible accident, and the jeep had gone down more than 1500 feet below. It happened a few kilometers away from Satpuli Station As soon as people heard the noise and news they rushed to the area, though it was almost impossible to reach the area and some of them had a little of life even at that moment. Satpuli Convent was not far away. They rushed to the spot. We could save only one life. It was a terrible shock not only for the Bishop Gratian but also the whole of the CMI Congregation.

Some Experiences

There was a Christmas celebration in Bijnor. They made a beautiful crib with the title'manvu ki Mukthi' means Liberation for humanity. Jesus Christ was born as a human being for the liberation of man. During the Christmas, blankets were supplied to the needy and the poor. Sisters are' Devis', real angels sent by God. Sisters used keep visiting the houses. In one of the houses they met an old lady of 101years, who was left to herself abandoned by all, and waiting for death. The Sisters were very kind to her. They gave her a good bath and a new set of clothes. Then she said that the sisters are real devis or angels.

Once, some people brought 2 dying patients, a boy and an old man to Shanti Bhavan Dispensary in Bijnor. The Sister took care of them and miraculously both of them survived. In 1972, some of our missionaries from Sagar had visited Bijnor mission. At that time, as we mentioned earlier, the Exarchate had nothing to boast about. The Exarch had no place to lay his head on. He and some other missionaries were living in a rented building. It was a pathetic scene. But now, we know that the diocese has flourished so well, something nobody could have dared to dream at that time.

Present Situation of Bijnor Diocese

Blessing and inauguration of the new St. Joseph's Cathedral named Mrityunjaya Masih Mandir on 31-10-2011 was a land- mark in the development of Diocese. Diocese is progressing in all levels at the able hands of the new Bishop. Bp. Mar John Vadakkel CMI was ordained Bishop on 22nd October, 2009.

RAJKOT DIOCESE

The territory of the Diocese of Rajkot spread over more than a half of Gujarat, it comprises 8 districts: Rajkot, Jamnagar,

Surendranagar, Kutch, Bhavnagar, Amreli, Junegarh and Porbandar. The territory as a whole is known as Saurastra and Kutch. The seven districts other than Kutch are known as Saurastra.

The Rajkot Diocese came into existence on February 25, 1977, when the diocese of Ahmedbad was bifurcated. Mar Jonas Thaliyath was appointed as the first bishop on March 22, 1977 and was installed on June 19, 1977. As soon as Bishop Jonas was appointed, the mission was entrusted to the Sacred Heart Province of Kalamassery.

Gujarat is famous for its Patels, Ghir forests, and sanyasis; above all, it is the land of Gandhiji, the father of the nation. As a whole the people are business people, famous for making money, rich in many ways. Sometimes, especially if it favours them, they are very generous.

They lack nothing but education. So if you ask money for education, they are ready to donate any amount of money. Thus we could start some schools. Though Bishop Jonas was at the helm of the diocese for only four years, he did make a master plan for the whole of Gujarat and it is said that he submitted this master plan to some funding agency and it agreed saying that never did they have had such a project. His insight was so amazing, and Kutch is the best example for that. When some one was convicted and going to the jail, he was ready to sell his land at a throw away price. It was an opportunity and Bishop Jonas made use of it and bought the land then and there. Now you see the developments in Kutch. Thanks to the tremendous work done by Fr. George Kunnath and his team, one could see the enormous amount of development he brought forth there through various apostolates.

Bishop Gregory says that he is a simple man, but his missionaries were very enthusiastic and he gave full freedom for them. And it worked miracles in the diocese of Rajkot. It is said that Rajkot is one of the most flourishing dioceses in North India.

Mission Policy of Rajkot Diocese

The mission policy of Rajkot diocese may be summarized thus: by education, reach out to the people, by social work, uplift the condition of the poor and the marginalized and preach the gospel to the poor. I think Rajkot diocese has advanced in this direction and has succeeded in this policy to a great extent.

The Gujarati people were not so well educated, especially in English. So the diocese started a number of educational institutions, not only did it start High Schools but even a First grade college. The college has become one of the most prestigious colleges in Gujarat.

In social work also, the diocese has shown its mettle. They have started many projects in different parts of Gujarat. Funding agencies came forward in helping the diocese, as the diocese was ready to implement and execute the projects. In most of the places, money is a problem and funding agencies are reluctant to invest. I think it is not so with Rajkot as the agencies were ready to implement the projects in all details.

A few remarks concerning conversion may not be out of place here. As soon as we hear about Gujarat we remember Mr. Modi, once the Chief Minister of that state and currently the Prime Minister of India. Mr. Modi has many faces and some dread hearing his name. But I personally saw the wonderful mission work done by a humble CMI priest in the person of Fr. Joseph, who took initiative to teach the down trodden people and converted many in some interior

villages of Gujarat. Definitely it shows that conversion is not impossible even in Gujarat.

Hospitality and generosity

Our Missionaries are famous for their hospitality and generosity. This I have enjoyed in almost all our missions. But in Gujarat, I saw it in a special way. That may be one reason why I have visited Rajkot mission more than any other missions. One has to see for oneself the enthusiasm they show to each and everyone reaching there. Always they are very eager to take us to all the mission stations, though some of them were in distant places.

Ashram Style life

One sister lives in a hermitage, all alone in the Ghir forest. As you know the Ghir forest is famous for its lions. There are not only lions, but also other wild animals. Seeing the sister living all alone in the forest, the people were happy to build her a small hut with some fencing. She was in a convent for some time, but having heard an inner call, like Mother Teresa she too left the convent and was a wanderer for some years, then came to settle in this forest. When I visited her some years back, she told me that she has seen wild animals coming to drink water, where she would go for fetching water. She leads a contemplative life. Any one can go over there for prayer, counseling etc. Very many people, especially the VIPs visit her to get her blessings. Many people come to her with fruits and other things mainly during Christmas and Deewali. I too had the privilege to offer Mass there. Many years back, there were other hermits also, but slowly all of them left. It is said that there are more than 10,000 Hindu Sanyasis are over there even today.

Disasters in Gujarat Diocese

There was a terrible disaster in Morvi. It was a beautiful city and our Sisters and one of our Fathers were living there. On August 11, 1979, there was a torrential rain at 3 p.m. lasting for 36 hours and the Machu dam, a mud dam broke out about 400 feet wide and the whole city was flooded in no time. Water rose some 30 feet and washed away everything that came on its way. Hundreds of people and cattle died, while buildings were destroyed. Some people rushed to the 1st floor to save themselves. But really many lost their lives and their belongings. Some people entered the house and shut the door. But they perished there. Hundreds of cattle were seen perished on the terrace of buildings. Many dead bodies sent out foul smell.even after a few days. There was a loss of more than 100 crores of rupees. Fr. Sebastian and the Sisters were safe and they did whatever they could to save the lives of the people.

Earth- quake in Gujarat

There was a dreadful earth quake shaking the State of Gujarat on the Republic day 26th January 2001. It was felt almost throughout North India. The magnitude of the earth- quake was 6.9 on Richter's scale. The epicenter was in Anjar near Kutch district. It is said to be one of the worst earth- quakes recorded in 180 years. The worst affected areas were: Bhuj, Anjar, and Bachau, Ahmadbad, Morvi, Gandhidam, and Ahmedbad city. Total death recorded was 21,357. In the earth- quake more than 20000 people were killed; 166,836 were injured, and approximately 339,000 buildings destroyed. 783,000 buildings were damaged in Bhuj, Ahamadbad, Rajkot area and other parts of Gujarat. Also many bridges and roads were destroyed. On the whole it was a terrible disaster. But the Diocese and other national and international agencies came forward to rebuild the whole of Gujarat. I had

visited the place after some time and could see how they rebuilt the area, constructing better, stronger and more beautiful buildings, though some buildings which were totally damaged had to be abandoned.

There is a very famous Cathedral in Rajkot. Many people, even Hindus come daily to the Church to spend some time there, especially during 'Aarathi" which is daily conducted solemnly. Many people like to come to enjoy the serene atmosphere of the Church and the area has almost become a picnic spot.

Now hear what the bishop has to say about his diocese. "The mission year of the Syro - Malabar Church and the proclamation of "New Evangelization" by Pope Benedict XVI gave a new momentum to the Eparchy of Rajkot in its mission activities. Evangelization is the main thrust of the Eparchy. The Eparchy is trying its level best to proclaim the Gospel of Christ and to extend the Christian presence to the villages and towns of Saurastra and Kutch in Gujarat, through its personnel, institutions and activities. The Eparchy is also providing pastoral care to the faithful with special emphasis for faith formation of the neo- Christians. The missionaries are engaged in establishing the kingdom of God through social transformation activities such as empowerment of the poor and marginalized, quality education, health care, environmental protection, communal harmony etc."

Present Situation of the Rajkot Diocese

Perhaps the diocese of Rajkot has developed more than many other CMI Dioceses. Bp. Gregory Karottembrel CMI once said that he is not so talented or a genius, but " I give full support to the priests." The new Bishop Mar Jose Chittuparambil CMI is following the same path and the Diocese is making tremendous progress now.

ADILABAD DIOCESE

The Eparchy of Adilabad comprises the civil district of Adilabad, the northern district of Andhra Pradesh. Until 1999 July, the area was under the jurisdiction of Chanda Eparchy. It was constituted as a new Eparchy by Pope John Paul II through the Papal Bull *"Ad aptius consulendum"* dated 23 July 1999. The first Bishop was Mar Joseph Kunnath CMI, appointed by His Holiness John Paul II through the Papal Bull *"Quoniam Oportet"* of the same date. He was consecrated on 6 October 1999, and the same day the Eparchy came into existence. The CMI Congregation was mainly involved in the development of the Eparchy.

The Bishop speaks

The CMI Congregation started its evangelization in this area when the Exarchate of Chanda was started in 1962. Prior to 1962, there were only two centers in Adilabad; one at Sirpur Kagaznagar with a residential priest and another at Bellampalli with a priest visiting from Nagpur. The Catholic population was limited to a few employees in the railway and the local factories. Under Bishop Januarius and Bishop Vijayanand, communities were formed in different parts of Adilabad, especially in the interior villages.. At present there are 32 mission centres with resident priests and about15,000 faithful. Twenty Religious Congregations and the diocese of Pala are actively involved in evangelization today.

Present Situation

There are not many Priests or Religious involved in this rather new Diocese. Besides CMI Priests, the priests from Pala Diocese are helping the bishop for the Mission work. Mission work has not progressed much because of the shortage of personnel and fund

needed for the Mission work.Here we have presented mainly the dioceses where CMIs were or are working. There are some other dioceses managed by some other congregations or societies. These dioceses also have developed well. But here we are not giving the details of such dioceses.

Now from the statistics of North Indian Dioceses, we will be able to see the progress we made within this short period of our Mission work. In fact we had many conversions during these last years. Almost all dioceses had at least a few conversions and baptisms. We can be proud that we were able give Christ to some thousands of people. This was possible only because of the hard work of the missionaries in these areas; otherwise the people here would have never known Christ.

Present population of Catholics in North Indian Dioceses of Syro-Malabar Church*

	Diocese	**Catholics**
1.	Adilabad	12800
2.	Bijnor	3705
3.	Chanda	12839
4.	Gorakpur	3232
5.	Jagadalpur	7655
6.	Rajkot	8733
7.	Sagar	3345
8.	Satna	3030
9.	Ujjain	2858

*Reference: Catholic Directory 2013

CMI PRESENCE IN SOME OTHER DIOCESES

KOLKOTA MISSION

In 1988 CMIs started a new centre called 'CMI Dharmaniketan' in the town of Kolkota. In 1993 Kuriokose Elias Carmel School was opened there; along with a boarding house. Later a branch of this school was started in at Diamond Harbour. CMI Dharmaniketan is a parish of the Syro- Malabar Rite recognized by the Archdiocese of Kolkota. Thanks to the vision, efforts and social activities of Fr. Ludovic Pathikal. today Kolkota mission is a sub-region of St.Joseph province, Trivandrum. The mission has 5 centres with pastoral, educational and social activities.

CHAVARA MISSION, DHULE

Chavara Mission comprising civil districts of Dhule, Jalgaon, and Nandurbagh within the territory of Kalyan diocese, was formally inaugurated by Mar Paul Chittilappilly, the then Bishop of Kalyan, on 2 February 1993. The first missionary to work here was Fr. Sebastian Vazhappilly, followed by Fr. Francis John. Fr. Sebastian invited the CMC Sisters from Ernakulam to start an English Medium school, which was opened in 1990. Later the care of this area was entrusted to Devamatha Province, Trissur. Fr. Diego Kodankandath, a veteran missionary and Fr. Raphael Kurian were the pioneers of this mission. First they were staying in a rented building at Jalgaon. The present regional house in Dhule was erected in 1994. Chavara English medium school was started at Walwadi village, Dhule. A rural health centre was started in view of extending our help to the poor and Adivasis. Later the following institutions were also added: St. Mary's Parish Church, constructed in 2002 through the efforts of Fr. Jerome Cherussery and with the help of Syro-Malabar faithful of the locality. Chavara Nivas, Walwadi, a house for the CMI members, was

completed in June 2002. Chavara Hospital was started in 1995 in view of helping the poor and Adivasis in and around Dhule. A home for the aged was also started in 2005.

JAMMU-KASHMIR MISSION

Bp. Hippolitus Kunnumkal of Jammu-Kashmir invited the CMI Congregation to work in his diocese and entrusted Poonch and Rajouri districts to CMI St. Thomas Province, Kozhikode, for mission work in1989. The CMI Fathers started their mission work in collaboration with CMC Sisters and Nazareth Sisters of Thalassery. Now the CMIs have 6 Mission stations there. The pioneering missionaries started their work among the converts from Valmiki community in Poonch, some 240 kilometers from Jammu. The establishment of a parish and Christ school paved the way for their integral development. Similar activities were undertaken in other areas too. In Jammu, there is a special school for the mentally challenged. In Sunderbani, there is an Ashram, where inter religious and spiritual services are conducted.



CHAPTER 5

CMC SISTERS IN NORTH INDIA

It is very interesting to hear what Msgr. John E. Kozar, the president of CNEWA, New York, says about the sisters. He says, they are the "foot soldiers" and "the front line" evangelizers of the Eastern Catholic Churches. Sometimes they are the first evangelizers who share the Good News of Jesus; sometimes they are the mother figure a child has never known; sometimes they are a nurse at a clinic, not only dispensing medicine and bandages, but a healthy measure of tender loving care; sometimes they offer a cup of rice to a starving mother and child; sometimes they welcome a refugee. And always, they are present, in the midst of war, famine, insurrection, terrorism, ignorance, abandonment or any form of persecution or oppression, offering their heroic witness. Make no mistake; they are heroes.

CMC SISTERS IN CHANDA

Naturally Exarch Januarius turned to CMC Sisters, who were his own sisters, because this congregation too was founded by St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara. Though everything was new and unknown to them, they took up the challenge and reached Chanda and worked miracles in the areas wherever they were. It does not mean they had no hurdles. They had many challenges, but they rose to the situation and faced them boldly.

Four CMC sisters were the first religious community to reach Chanda for Evangelization. They started their mission in 1962 by teaching in a military school at Pulgaon.The pioneering sisters were Sisters Rita, Pulcheria, Joshua and Euphamia. Now CMC Sisters are well established in Chanda diocese. Carmelodaya Province at Sewangi Meghe in Wardha is their head- quarters with many

professed and non-professed Sisters, candidates etc. They work in many centres with various apostolate such as education, social work and parish care. Their main activity is in Education. They have famous and prestigious schools in different parts of the diocese of Chanda. They pay more attention to the uplift of women, children and the marginalized.

Some experiences of the CMC Sisters in the mission

This is an experience shared by Sr. Gracil Teresa of Mancherial. It was in 1984. The Sisters usually went out for the Holy Mass, but one or two, remained in the convent, if they were sick. Whenever they went for Mass someone came and took away their belongings. The thieves knew their timings very well. An elderly Sister said that she would remain that day and would frighten the thief with a knife. So she was ready with a knife and waited for the thief to come in. There was continuous barking of dogs and she saw someone walking on the veranda. Fortunately she recognized the thief, one of the 10th class students. At once she chased him with her knife. The boy could not open the bolt. So the Sister gave him a dig with the handle of the knife. Horrified, the boy wanted to jump over the fence but in doing so, got injured. Then he was handed over to the police. As a punishment the S.I. appointed him a helper in the convent, there he was helped to appear for his 10th exam and later became a police. He was very friendly with the Sisters and remained grateful to them.

Before the Dacoits

Once a sister went to Venkitapuram in Adilabad diocese and bought some groceries and vegetables from Mandamari market. She rested for some time and started her return journey by 2'o clock in the afternoon. Suddenly a man appeared and soon disappeared. Then four men came to the Sister with knife, sticks

and stones and asked her to get down from the Jeep. They asked for money, but she had no money with her. She begged them not to hurt her, but take away whatever they wanted. She was praying the whole time and she says she had no fear at all. Again they started the journey and reached safely.

Another Breath taking Encounter

In some of our dioceses the Naxalites are a menace, though they may not attack us very often, for the simple reason that we too are uplifting the poor and the marginalized. But there are cases when we were attacked. They often come to us when they are in need of something as food, medicine or money. We have to provide and fulfill their demands. Otherwise we have to face dire consequences. They come at night. Their uniform is deep green pants and shirt. They come with rifles and make use of them if necessary. They kill people like anything. If they suspect some body or if you report to the police, it is not only you, but the whole family that will be annihilated.

Once, it so happened that some people came at midnight and introduced themselves as Naxalites. They were wearing masks and asked for money. They sat down and began to talk. They put the knife to the priest's neck demanding Rs.100, 000/. The Father gave them the keys and they got only Rs.10, 000/ and they also took away Father's watch. They continued demanding more money, but Father had nothing. Then they demanded the money from the dispensary. Father replied that the keys were with the Sisters. The Father was asked to proceed to the dispensary. The Dogs were barking. "It is me, Fr. Philip Neri". The door of the dispensary was opened. 12 people entered. Keeping the knife on the neck of Sisters they threatened. "Don't utter a word. We will kill you." Then the priest told them to give the keys, but they got

hardly anything, except a few coins. Again they were giving trouble to the Father demanding one lakh. They compelled the Father to take an oath that he would give rupees one lakh within a week. "Don't tell anyone, otherwise your heads will be off", they threatened.

The next day the real Naxalites came to know about this incident and they came at night and called the Sisters. It was biting cold and the Sisters did not know what to do? In spite of great fear, the Sisters came out. It was a terrible sight. The whole Church campus was filled with the Naxalites all bearing guns. They came to tell the Sisters that the so called Naxalites, who had come at night, were not real Naxalites. The Sisters say that often such things happen, but they are not discouraged. The Bible, Holy Eucharist and the Rosary are their weapons to fight the evil.

CMC SISTERS IN SAGAR DIOCESE

When Sagar in Madhya Pradesh was made an Exarchate in 1968, naturally Msgr. Clemens turned to the CMC Sisters, for the simple reason that he had been their Novice Master for many batches. Besides, he had many Sisters related to him. So they were only too happy to go to this unknown land. In 1970 the CMC Sisters came to serve the Sagar Exarchate. The first batch of CMC Sisters with Sisters Mary Zacharia, Climacus, Rogellus, Jessintha and Vivian came and settled in Bina in Sagar district. There is a major railway station, where we had a church already. The convent was inaugurated on 21st January 1970. They started to stay near the church, where there was an old outer house. They stayed there for many years and only recently has a convent been built for them. There they started a dispensary and helped the parish priest in parish activities .Guest reception of the guest was one of their main missions. Most of the missionaries would come over

there, and then only they proceed to Sagar or to any other mission station.

At that time, in Sagar there were some Christians scattered here and there and had only 3 parishes in Sagar mission looked after by Fathers coming from Bhopal or Jabalpur; therefore the parishioners were not able to lead a proper Christian life. The Sisters often visited the houses to enkindle their Christian life. Also they started a Kindergarten School, so that they could form the future generation and also contact many parents through them. Now the Provincial House of the CMC Sisters is in Bina and they run 2 famous Higher Secondary Schools, one in Bina and the other at Ashok Nagar. As a whole there are not many problems from either RSS or the Government.

IN RAJKOT DIOCESE

Vimal Jyothi Region is an offshoot of Pavanatma province Kothamangalam. The CMC sisters started their mission work in Rajkot Diocese in the year 1979 at the request of Bishop Jonas Thaliath, the first bishop of Rajkot. Sisters give more emphasis on education, social work, healing ministry, pastoral work, boarding houses etc. Gujarat is a fertile land for the missionaries, but the percentage of Christians is only 0.56%. Sisters say that they are happy that they could touch the hearts of many people by their self- less service. They have many prestigious schools and they also serve in Kutch Vikas Trust, where there are a number of institutions.

IN JAGADALPUR DIOCESE

The Sisters of Jaya Matha Province, Pala started their mission work in Jagdalpur; the new Exarchate on 23rd June 1972 at the invitation of Msgr. Paulinus Jeerakath, the then Exarch. The

pioneering sisters started their first convent in Kirandul. They were like leaven in the small parish community there. From Kirandul they extended their activities and they became a region in 1968 with 6 convents. Their main activities were parish work, village development programme, dispensary, clinics, boarding ministry, vocational training centres and schools. They say their main intention in whatever they do is to impart the love of Jesus to all people, who come in contact with them.

IN BIJNOR DIOCESE

Bijnor diocesan area as a whole is a hilly place with hardly any plain land. So construction work, traveling and other activities are very difficult. The CMC Sisters are rendering their services in different parts of the diocese. They are engaged in education, social work, medical help etc. Bijnor is the strong- hold of the Hindus and direct evangelization is almost impossible here. Hence through indirect means the sisters try to spread the gospel message. The Sisters share their love of Jesus through dedicated service.

IN ADILABAD DIOCESE

Adilabad diocese is bifurcated from the Chanda diocese. It is natural that CMC sisters from Jaya Matha Province Pala who were working there from June 1963 onwards continued their service in the newly formed diocese. To tackle the problems and uplift the people from the down- trodden level various schemes and projects such as Mahila mandal, self help programme, low cost houses, construction of toilets, HIV/AIDS care centre, irrigation wells and special schools etc were undertaken by the Sisters. The Sisters say that the seedlings planted there are producing good fruits.

CMC SISTERS IN SOME OTHER NORTH INDIAN DIOCESES

Here it will almost be impossible to elaborate the activities of the CMC Sisters in all North Indian dioceses. Hence we will try to depict the dioceses where their presence is felt more.

ARCHDIOCESE OF BHOPAL

Holy Queens Province, Changanassery, started its first mission in the Arch diocese of Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh, in 1968. They started their ministry in a humble way in a rented house at Piplani in Bhopal town. Their main apostolate was Christian formation through Education, Teaching Catechism, Helping the parish priest in administering the Sacraments, organizing seminars and camps etc.

Later more convents were set up in different parts of the Archdiocese and in other dioceses and States. Sisters have undertaken parish animation, family apostolate, social works, HIV/AIDS centres, village development programmes, counseling, above all imparting Christian formation through education. Nirmal Jyoti Province of Bina has flourished so well that now they have 117 sisters, 16 convents and they serve in 5 dioceses.

The Experience of a Missionary

Sr.Maggi CMC a social worker in Bhopal says that they are dedicated to the voiceless. Often the local people suffer bitter experiences from all corners. So people were not ready to accept or believe them she says, because never before had they experienced such an atmosphere. She continued saying that she had to face animosity of certain fundamentalists, only because of their jealousy on seeing the success of their work. Once she got a phone call from the CBI asking her how many people she had

already converted? How many were punished for not being Christians? Since they could not believe her, she was taken to the villages. Then one man complained that he wanted to become a Christian, but she had always refused him. Later she was taken to self help group and they too said that never had sister asked them to be Christians. Another villager said that they had been always fighting before the arrival of the Sisters. But now there was a complete change in the villagers.

On June 6, 2005, the Bajrangdal fundamentalists came to their office with "trissul" and weapons to hit and kill us, says Sister Maggi. They asked for the Bible and Catechism books with which she was converting the people. Then they asked for the list of staff members. They harassed them for two and a half hours. At last they came out of the office and began to destroy their trees and plucked their fruits. As it was time for tea, the Sisters invited them for tea, says the Sister. Is it the cow milk? They asked. When it was verified they drank the tea. Sister asked him for his I.D. Then he showed his I.D. and said that Hanuman is his god and that he would burn her as Hanuman burned Sri Lanka. Sister replied that she was not afraid of any god as she was not displeasing any god. Then he said that he would see her when she would be waiting for the bus. Then the Sister said to him "thank you, my brother and I pray for you sincerely". Then the leader and his group left.

Sister informed both the Archbishop and her Provincial Superior. Archbishop sent Fr. Muttumgal as he was the PRO of the Arch-diocese. He took the Sister at night itself to the police station to file an FIR the very next day itself the rural S.P. sent a battalion of police for the protection of the Sisters. The Town Inspector Mrs. Safia Khan was also very helpful. The Bajrangdal group came the next day too. But seeing the police, they left.

Afterwards the leader of Bajrangdal, Mr.Kamaleash asked pardon of the Sister, whose reply was that she had already forgiven him. Next day the Sister left for Kerala, leaving behind two Sisters, but God protected them from the fanatics. After some time the Archbishop took the Sister to Chief Minister and explained the whole story. Meanwhile Mr. Kamelesh, the leader got a job in Bombay and left after seeking the blessings of the Sister.

DIOCESE OF DIBRUGARH

Sanjoe Province, Dimapur which is an offshoot of Jaya Matha Province, Pala, is very unique in many respects. Into this land of North East a band of zealous CMC sisters landed at Imphal, the capital of Manipur. They started their mission work in North East in collaboration with the Salesian Fathers.

Education is an integral part of the evangelization of the church. The Sisters gave their service in the schools owned by the Salesians and opened boarding in convents to give quality education for girls. For the upliftment of girls they also started Grihini centres in almost all the convents. Medical facilities were bare minimum in most of the villages. Sisters took care of the sick in their dispensaries. The Sisters supplied medicines whenever they went to villages. Through Chavara Home, a care and support centre was opened for HIV/AIDS patients the least accepted people in the society so that they get enough love and care. Touring programme is unique in North East. Sisters together with the Catechist tour the far away villages, stay 10-15 days in the village and instruct the people for receiving the Sacraments. Here, there is the chance for the direct evangelization. The Sisters say that they are happy that can give Christ to so many and that there are many local vocations for the Priesthood and Sisterhood.

CHAPTER 6

CMI PRIESTS AND CMC SISTERS IN GLOBAL MISSION

A good number of CMI Priests and CMC Sisters are rendering their service in foreign countries, especially in Africa and the third world countries.

In this chapter we will see how many Priests and Sisters are working there and how they are working.

CMI MISSIONS ABROAD PERU MISSION

The CMI Peru Mission was started in 1975 when the three CMI priests (Mathew Alphonse, Jose Mundackal, and Joseph Malayampuram) went to work in the Prelature of Chuquibamba, at the invitation of Bishop Redento M. Gauci O.S.B. In 1987 the mission was entrusted to St. Joseph province, Kottayam. A new team of Missionaries under the leadership of Fr. Mathew Alphonse was sent to the mission in 1989. During the period of 1990-2003 a few more priests were sent to various parishes in different dioceses of Peru. At present 14 priests work in three dioceses, and are very actively involved in pastoral and social ministry. In 2003 the mission was erected as a region (San Mateo sub Region) which has got legal identity in Peru.

GHANA MISSION

In 1991, the members of St.John's province, Bijnor started to work in the diocese of Kumasi in Ghana. They were involved in pastoral, social and educational activities. Later their services were extended to the neighbouring diocese of Goaso. A CMI house and a school were established in Bechem in 2010. Today there are 6 priests working in the Ghana mission.

MADAGASCAR MISSION

Madagascar mission started in1987 when the 3 Priests from Devamatha province, Thrissur, Frs. Kuriakose Cheeran, Paul Moses Chakalackal and Fr. Davis Kolengadan, were sent to the Diocese of Morondava for pastoral work in two parishes of Mahaboo and Ankilzato. The first missionaries focused their attention to education, pastoral care, social work, medical care and a boarding school in Ankilzato. Now there are 6 priests working in this area. A new centre was started in the capital city, Antananarivo in 2009. Last year Madagascar mission celebrated its Silver Jubilee. Fr. Paul Moses writes thus in the CMission in 2011 where he says that the church of Madagascar recognized the special method of evangelization of the CMIs. He continues that they were able to convert their concepts to explain the fundamentals of our religion. In the beginning the natives were opposing the foreign missionaries because they were condemning their gods and their methods of veneration. Slowly these missionaries by dialogue tried to convince the people of the truth and the local people had no objection to receiving the new concepts.

KENYAN MISSION

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all seeds, when full grown it is the largest of all plants. It becomes a large bush, and the birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches," (Mt.13: 31, 32). We stand in wonder as we trace the marvels of God's goodness and providential care in bringing the missionary efforts of our Fathers and Brothers to search remarkable fruition in these few short years. We hope, by the presentation of these historical events we may all come to a deeper appreciation of our common mission and global

interdependence as members of the Body of Christ. The African pastures may be geographically distant, but the work of our Brothers in Africa is shared by all of us called to be in the mission of Jesus. May our response to this call be made visible in our total commitment to God's people, especially the poorest and the neediest. A land of rapid growth, expansive vistas, magnificent mountains, clear skies, exotic flora and fauna and an incredible potpourri of peoples, cultures, and climates, Africa stands as one of the most colourful and fascinating places on earth. Only in the 20th century its glories began to yield harvest, in the form of an amazing growth of the Catholic Church within its borders. According to John Allen Jr., Africa's Catholic population has multiplied 6.708 percent since 1900! Many generations of African people have drawn their existence from the land. Whether moving from place to place with their cattle in search of grazing grounds, or tending fields of their own, Africans are almost totally dependent on the soil where the miracle of life and growth springs from seed to harvest. Kenya is one of the beautiful countries in this rich soil of Africa.

The planting and miraculous growth of some of the CMI mission stations in Kenya traces back to 1981. From tiny seeds embedded in Mbiuni, Kenya, the missionary outreach of the Fathers of CMI Congregation has proliferated in four dioceses with promises of expansion. Even more impressive is the more mysterious flowering of grace in schools and parishes especially in the lives of the young men called to join CMI's in their labours in God's vineyards in Africa.

OUR VISION

Our vision is 'Christ praying on the mountain and proclaiming God's kingdom to the multitudes, identifying himself with the poor and

always obeying the will of the Father'. The members are trying to carry on these apostolic and mission activities in the same spirit as the founding Fathers were guided by their fervent and recollected life.

OUR MISSION

The CMIs participate in the mission of Jesus as CMI religious Priests and Brothers. A good number of CMI missionaries are working in Africa, Australia, Europe, Latin America, and U.S.A. In Africa, our priests are working in Kenya, Madagascar, Ghana, Namibia, South Africa and Tanzania.

WE SERVE GOD'S PEOPLE THROUGH :

- Pastoral ministry
- Catechesis
- Education
- Social work
- Youth ministry
- Medical care
- Ecumenism
- Inter-religious dialogue
- Mass media & communication

KENYA

Kenya is located in Eastern Africa on the eastern seacoast with more than 38 million people. It is bordered by Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda. Formerly ruled by the British, Kenya gained its independence in 1963 after a long fight. Almost all of Kenya's people are black Africans. Corn is the basic food,

and beer is a popular beverage. Dancing is a favourite form of recreation throughout the country, and Kenyans have created highly artistic dances that are performed during ceremonies such as Holy Masses, celebrations, marriages, and funerals. Catholicism in Kenya is 100 years old in 1990. According to the official estimates there are 0.4% Catholics, 7% Muslim, 36% Traditional religions, and 37 % others in Kenya. Kenya has many priests, religious, involved laity, foreign and national missionaries.

CMI FATHERS IN KENYA

"Put your sickle in and cut all the bunches of the vine of the earth; all its grapes are ripe," (Rev.14:18, Jerusalem Bible). "You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future, where the spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things." It was Fr. Edward Padickala CMI who was the first CMI missionary to come to Kenya to spread the Good News through the pastoral and educational apostolate. On 11th November, 1981, he came to Machakos Diocese, Kenya. He stayed in the Cathedral Church. Later he was transferred to Kabaa High School where he was the pastor and teacher for 11 years. Then he was appointed as an acting parish priest at Mitaboni parish for six months. Later the Bishop transferred him to Kola parish where he served for six years. During the period of ministry in Kola parish our Fathers constructed six churches and a polytechnic school for girls for the development of the society. People over there still remember him with immense love and respect.

In 1983 Fr. Jose Kallely CMI came to Kenya and was appointed as the parish priest of Mbiuni Catholic parish. It was the first parish entrusted to CMI Fathers. Even after putting in 31 years of service, he continues to be a vibrant parish priest and a source of inspiration

for all the CMI Fathers. More than that, for the people, he is a caring pastor whom they can approach for their any need.

The next year, in 1984, the third CMI missionary, Fr. Joy Kalaparambath, stepped on this land. He is a dedicated and respected CMI missionary who is always available to the people. He is a living example of who a missionary priest should be. Indeed, he continues to inspire us even after 30 years of his service in this land. We firmly believe they are the three pillars on which the CMI mission effort is built in Kenya. We are highly proud of them and are highly inspired by them. Of course, Kenya is blessed to be served by many zealous and spirited CMI missionaries.

CATHOLIC MISSION MBIUNI

Actually the Kenyan Catholic mission in Mbiuni was started in 1913 by the foreign missionaries, but it could not flourish well. After many years only, the Catholic Church could spread at least in some areas. In the beginning there was much opposition from many sides, so the Church could not deepen its roots there. By the middle of 20th century, the Church was growing in many parts of Kenya.

THE COMING OF DAWN

The 11th April 1983 will always be an auspicious day in the minds of the Mbiuni people. The natives may not have anticipated this to be the time when the wave of deliverance would eventually sweep the region bringing along the rain of hope and the wind of salvation - a plan that had been unfurled by Rt. Rev. Urbanus Joseph Kioko, the Bishop of Machakos Diocese through what we can term better as the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

This was the day when a young zealous man all the way from India reforming with ambition and overflowing with dreams first set in his foot in Kenya all the way from India. He was none other than Fr

Jose Kallely of the CMI congregation who like the Biblical Joseph was unexpectedly sent all the way from his home in Asia to Kenya in Africa and particularly to Mbiuni to sow the seeds of hope and to set spiritual fire in their dark hearts. This was very much part of God's calculated plan for him and for the people of Mbiuni Parish.

Fr. Jose Kallely was appointed as the parish priest of Mbiuni in June. It was the dawn of a new era in the history of the Mbiuni parish. He began his work slowly but steadily. He committed himself to the all round development of the parish. He was successful in getting the whole- hearted co-operation of the parishioners. Impressed by the hard work and zeal of Fr. Jose Kallely the Bishop of Machakos, His Excellency Urbanus J. Kioko invited more priests from India, belonging to the same congregation.

On 12th December 1984, Fr. Joy Kalaparambath CMI came to assist Fr. Kallely and to serve in the Mbiuni parish. Fr. Joy was true to his name, always spreading joy and happiness together with the Gospel. Fr. Jose and Fr. Joy are great friends and they worked hand in hand for the development of Mbiuni parish.

From their initial days at Mbiuni, the CMI Fathers fell in love with the place. Then, their urgent desire was to do just the essential things of bringing Light into the region with the Bible as their main lodestar in all sectors. The CMI Fathers proved themselves able by successfully changing the face of this local environment from the barren desert to a green vineyard where happiness and peace prevail today.

DEVELOPMENT AND PROJECTS

Ever since their coming to Mbiuni, over two decades ago, the CMI Fathers have never been idle either physically or even mentally

but have proved they to be busy both in mind and soul as dedicated Fathers. They, have surely excelled where many have failed by taking a road less travelled in life. Never at any one time have they been selfish but have always been supportive and concerned about the people's welfare. As a matter of fact, the CMI Fathers have been visionary not only in Christian values but also in other life sustaining projects.

When they were in this region, they managed to initiate many projects aiming at improving the living standards of Mbiuni residents. With considerable diversity, CMI Fathers have been so keen to ensure that their long arm of grace is extended to all spheres of life and this was realized when they went ahead in initiating projects of various standards and necessities depending on the environmental hazards of various parts of the region.

For instance, many schools, rehabilitation centres, the dispensary and probably also the churches, all these are different sectors at work with the general objective of improving people's lives. Immediately on their settling in the region, the priests were more than eager to unveil many beneficial projects apart from the church activities. For instance, in the year 1997, they volunteered themselves to build the Kavoke River drift for the benefit of the whole Mbiuni residents after it had been dismantled by the el-Niño rains. It may be recalled with appreciation that CMI Fathers were also instrumental in the resolution of a perennial water shortage that existed in Mbiuni. It was a very noble and humane act of their when they welcomed a plea from the natives to assist in bringing into compound the rarest of all the commodities in the region those days i.e., 'water'. This project was, however, not easy to achieve but the CMI Fathers were willing to pay the whole price it would cost together with others for the

inauguration of the Kanzalu Hills Water Project to alleviate the severe water shortage in the region those days. CMI Fathers had committed themselves tirelessly to the efforts of bringing into reality this fabulous dream and in 1993 clean water was running in taps.

Significantly, the water project played a strategic role in changing the lives of the natives. Now people could be certain of getting water without much toil. CMI Fathers, however, had many more projects in their dreams for the betterment of Mbiuni community.

ST. MARY'S REHABILITATION CENTRE

The institution provides proper education, medical care like physiotherapy and occupational therapy, protection, food and accommodation to the physically and the mentally disabled children. It also provides schooling facilities to the physically handicapped children from the nearby Mbiuni Primary School while they reside at the centre. For the mentally disabled children the school provides special classes and gives them vocational trainings in works like stitching, netting, herding, agriculture, etc. The institution also conducts awareness programme to the parents on how to take care of their mentally and physically disabled children.

The objectives of the institution were to provide opportunities to grow rather than just have sympathy towards the children with disabilities, i.e. to offer proper education, medical care, protection, food and accommodation, to send them back home when they reach the age of 25 years, enabling them to be independent with self employment.

Mbiuni Catholic mission has become a big tree where a varieties of birds rest. Right from its beginning Fr. Jose Kallely CMI with his fellow CMIs led the people to faith. We cannot deny the support

and co-operation of many people who helped in different ways to the nurturing of Mbiuni Catholic Mission. The local community leaders like church officials supported them in many ways.

FRANCISCAN CLARIST CONGREGATION (FCC) SISTERS

The Franciscan Clarist Congregation (FCC) was started on 4th July 1888 in Kerala, India. Their missionary activities started first in North India in 1960. Now it has spread to all the continents.12th November 1989 was a remarkable day in the history of FCC Congregation. For the first time, the FCC tree was planted in Kenya when the pioneer group of F.C.C. Sisters landed on the soil of Kenya.

In Kenya, they are engaged in apostolic activities in various regions like Mbiuni, Katangi, Donyo Sabuk, Meru, Nairobi, Machakos, and Kasinga. They focus their activities on education, vocational training, health care, pastoral and social work. The CMI Congregation thanks them for their support and co-operation in their missionary work in Kenya. In fact, F.C. C. Congregation was instrumental in starting many institutions in various dioceses of Kenya.

PIOUS ASSOCIATIONS IN KENYA

Pious Associations play a very important role in making the Catholics more vibrant in Kenya. The Catholic Men Association (CMA) and Catholic Women Association (CWA), Legion of Mary, Parish Council, Youth Activities, Sunday Catechism Association, Altar Boys Association, Charismatic Prayer Groups etc. are very active in the Parish. Small Christian Communities are the basic units of the church hierarchy. They are very dynamic in the Church. They make the liturgy very devotional and active. The choir is the other

element in the church that helps the people to actively participate in liturgy in the church All churches have catechists and some churches have even two catechists. They meet on the first Monday of every month and share the readings of the Sundays of the month to guide people in liturgy, especially when there is no Holy Mass. There will be special classes for them on that day.

The sick are cared for and visited and given communion very often. Once in a year, especially in August, there will be retreats on zonal basis. For the youth there are cultural competitions and games programmes in every vacation. The same way competitions are arranged for Sunday Catechism children in zonal and in parish levels during vacations. There are various charitable programmes for the people of this area. About 100 old people are cared for by the help of Help Age International (UK). About 50 poor children are being helped every year for their Primary and Higher School education.

PEOPLE OF THE AREA

In this area 80% of the people are Christians and out of that 35% are Catholics. Ngunga is semi arid and consists of hills and valleys with several coffee plantations. One of the biggest coffee plantations in Kenya belongs to this area. But it is almost ruined because of the lack of efficient management and corruption. Only one plantation out of five is operative now.

Here the Primary education is free and compulsory. Lack of food and starvation causes the children to leave the school before completing their education. The population mainly depends on agriculture for their survival. Many of them also work in pineapple plantations that belong to "Delmonte". Most of the farming depends on rain so when the rain; fails there is no food and other necessities of life.

CARMEL SEMINARY

The starting of the seminary in 2001 at Donyo Sabuk was like a great dream come true. It was the Second Pan African Conference in Madagascar in 2000 that took the challenging decision to start the formation programme in Kenya. The Carmel Seminary was built in 2000 and was blessed by the late Urbanos Kioko, the bishop of Machakos Diocese on 14th July, 2001.

The Period of Turmoil

The Second World War and the Mau-Mau uprising brought about a great turmoil in the development of Nyeri-Muranga Diocese. When the Italians joined the Germans fighting against the British, seventy five Italian missionaries were declared war prisoners here in Kenya. The Nairobi Apostolic Delegate's attempt to intervene was in vain; hence they had to be deported in concentration camps in South Africa. This made the Holy Ghost Fathers become once again the care-takers of Nyeri. In 1943 Consolata Fathers and Brothers returned to continue their mission, however, the government detained them in Kabete for another year.

The emergence of Mau-Mau Movement of 1950 at Kiandu, only 10 miles away from Episcopal residence, was another blow to Consolata mission work. They heavily criticized the movement whose pledge involved traditional cultism and lack of respect for human lives. The members though stood on their ground and readily denounced Christianity and fully supported the new movement without any turning back. The Nyeri-Muranga mission really collapsed as majority of the converts joined the freedom movement to fight and to get back their rich land and their rights from the inhuman British colonial rule.

The war led to the murder of catechists, Consolata missionaries, both Fathers and Sisters. When the war slowed down in between

1956 to 1958, the Consolata missionaries made a comeback by orienting their mission to charitable crusades to bring back the mass faithful who had joined the movement. The crusades did great in attracting majority and by 1958, the number of catholic faithful had highly increased.

Nyeri-Muranga Diocese under an African Bishop.

In 1960, September at a diocesan conference, the missionaries came to the conclusion that a change of mentality was needed to do justice to the new age of independence, specifically, the readiness to hand over leadership to Africans. This saw Bishop Cavellera spearheading the appointment as the first black Bishop in the name of Ceasar Gatimu as auxiliary Bishop of the larger Nyeri in 1961 and afterwards he was officially enthroned as the first African Bishop of the larger Nyeri Diocese on 28th February, 1965.

The Creation of Muranga Diocese

In 1983, we see Nyeri with a population of 6, 00,000 catholic faithful, and the greatest in Kenya, a subdivision for the sake of better pastoral care. Hence the creation of the new Muranga Diocese took place on 28th March 1983. Msgr. Peter Kairo was appointed as its first Bishop and ordained for the same cause on 21st May 1983.

ST. TERESA'S PARISH AND CMI NOVITIATE.

St. Teresa's Catholic Parish is situated in the Muranga Diocese. The parish has about 50 acres of land. This plot of land belonged to the Government. During the period of freedom fight a prison was opened here in 1953. After the independence in 1963, this plot was given to catholic mission on 17th may, 1968. The first priest for this mission reached on 22nd June, 1968. The parish was

established in 1973 under the Diocese of Nyeri and in 1983came under Muranga Diocese and the parish was entrusted to CMI Fathers by Rt. Rev. Bp. Peter Kihara in 2003 and on Sundays parishioners actively take part in the Holy Eucharist and all other activities. There are nine out- stations. Each out-station has more than 150 families. Each year more than 1000 people receive baptism. There are various pious associations here, who are very active in parish and other activities.

The CMIs started their Novitiate in the Parish premises in 2003 with due permission from the Bishop. Fr. Paul Arackal was the first Novice Master. Our first novices recruited from Kenya were Bro. Christopher Makau, Bro. Peter Mutinda, and Bro. Julius Kamuti. They made their First Religious Profession on 8th September, 2005. Our novices are actively involved in pastoral activities of the parish.

STUDY HOUSE AT ST. THOMAS CMI REGIONAL HOUSE, SYOKIMAU

After Novitiate, the formees are provided with philosophical and theological training. They do their philosophy and theology while staying at St. Thomas CMI regional house, Syokimau, which started functioning in the year 2005. The Rector is responsible for their religious and priestly formation.

The students in Philosophy do their studies at Consolata Philosophical Institute where they get integral vision of reality: the nature of the world, man and God, in an African perspective. After two/three years of Philosophy, they go for one- year long regency so that they can get concrete experience with the people before they start theological studies. For theology, they go to Hekima College run by the Jesuit Fathers. During three years of theological training they get a holistic orientation of education that promotes a

holistic formation inclusive of spiritual values based on multi cultural environment without neglecting the specific context in Africa (inculturation).

Moreover, they go for regular apostolate activities on weekends, like teaching catechism, visiting the sick in the hospitals and at homes, pastoral help in the neighbouring parishes, homes for the disabled, prisons etc. It is a fact that very often Kenyan Missionaries, were kidnapped, tortured, harassed by the robbers and others, still they persist in their mission despite these odd situations to establish God's Kingdom and are really successful in their endeavours.

Papua New Guinea

In 1991 St.Joseph Province Kottayam, took up a new mission in the diocese of Vanimo in Papua New Guinea and sent some missionaries there. Some other missionaries followed. The missionaries worked hard in the challenging and difficult fields for some years. However, the mission was discontinued in 2011.

Nepal Mission

Nepal was a forbidden land for the Christian missionaries until the country became a democratic republic in 2005. Since then the missionaries have been working there freely. The CMI mission was started in 2010 in Tribuvan Nagar in Mahendra Nagar district of Nepal, which is 700 kilometers from the capital city, Kathmandu. There were a few Christians already there without any pastor. The presence of the CMI missionaries was a boost to the small Christian community in Mahendra Nagar and a number of people showed interest in receiving the message of Christ. The mission is progressing well under the leadership of Fr. Gerald CMI, a missionary of Bijnor mission and with the blessing and support of Msgr. Antony Sharma, the Bishop of Nepal.

There are also many CMI missionaries working in developed countries like America and Germany etc.

CMC MISSIONS ABROAD

Africa

Africa is the birthplace of the human race. Modern man lived there thousands of years before. Ancient Egypt, one of the world's great civilizations arose in northeastern Africa more than 5000 years ago. Subsequently other cultures and cities rose and fell in Africa. Responding to the clarion call of the Lord to preach the good news, CMC set her foot on the soil of Africa through the instrumentality of the Archbishop Mihayo, the then Bishop of Thabora in Tanzania. In the beginning the African mission was under the administration of the Mother General. Later it was decided that the mission should be under a special region. The African mission was raised to the status of Region on August 15, 2008.Though the Sisters tried their best to start the missions in different countries; it was not so successful owing to political situations. Hence they started their mission in a certain place in a humble way with a tailoring and knitting centre, which was near to the immigration office; there they could help many missionaries.

Power House

No mission can indefinitely depend upon foreign missionaries for good. To form and foster local vocations, the Sisters started recruiting girls from the locality to the CMC Congregation. And they were very successful. The first batch of 3 African CMC Sisters made their Profession on 13th Feb. 2005. Then slowly other batches followed. Some of these new African missionaries had their theology course in Jnanodaya, Bangalore, India.

The CMC sisters started their work in a seminary and a hospital in Kigoma diocese and also a programme for the street children,

because many street children were wandering in markets and such other places. In 1998 Bishop of Musoma invited the Sisters to teach in secondary school.

God arranges everything for His children, sometimes in a mysterious way. From 1997 onwards the Sisters started working in Morogoro. The Sisters rendered their services for the future priests for 10 years and then withdrew. Meanwhile they bought a plot of land there, and a Convent was constructed and blessed. They wanted to start a school there on 13th Feb. 2006, but some bandits attacked the Sisters at night and they had to change the plan. But they did start the school on 27th Feb. 2006 with 3 children, the class room being the verandah of the convent. The Lord never fails to provide. A good school was ready within a year. Along with the school, Sisters are engaged in visiting houses, coaching the dropouts etc.

The first enterprising entrance of the daughters of CMC Udaya Province was in 1980. The zealous missionaries flew to Somalia, an African country, in the east of Africa. The local Bishop asked the Sisters to take up the charge of a medical College. Almost the entire hospital was taken care of by the Sisters and they served there for 10 years. Then there was a political unrest and all foreigners were forced to get out of the country. The Bishop was shot dead in his own house. Thank God that the Sisters could come off without much problem. Again they waited for ten years to restart the evangelical work there, but that too did not last long. The Sisters had to withdraw. Another door was opened; and the Sisters of Udaya province started a community and apostolic centre in the Archdiocese of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, East Africa. The birth of the CMC in Africa was a dream of the Almighty. Though it was a leap into the dark, the Sisters were ready to take up the challenge and started on 14th April 1977 to Tabora. They had to face many hardships especially from thieves. Though they say that

they had to say goodbye to their maiden land in 2000, after a lapse of 10 years, again they started there. Another region was initiated there.

Fr. Christi, the Provincial of the Capuchin Fathers, requested the help of the Sisters to work in Malawi. The Sisters readily took up the matter and they were sent there on 12th Oct. 2001. There they are helping the Fathers in school as well as in health care. A good number of Malawians are infected with HIV/AIDS; so the Sisters started a project, a Home based care unit which provides all kinds of care for the HIV- affected people. Thus we see that many CMC Sisters are working in different parts of Africa where they are well settled in Africa with many houses.

America

In response to the divine call and to fulfill Christ's salvific message the CMC Sisters have undertaken this Mission in America. Since the country is becoming more and more non-Catholic, it really needs missionaries to bring them back to the faith.

As the Sisters look back, they say that the life and apostolate of the CMC is a gradual growth, in spite of tremendous struggles and problems, but all are very much under the shadow of the providence of God and her timely intervention. It is an experience of relentless effort and perseverance to get settled down in a country of altogether different culture and life situations, while trying to safeguard the identity of CMC. It is the history of the diverse experiences of the courageous CMC Sisters. The humble beginning in April 1975 has blossomed and flourished today, with 8 houses and 33 sisters. The Sisters are overwhelmed with gratitude for the abundant blessings showered on each and every one of them.

The Sisters are in charge of teaching Catechism (700 students) in the St. Thomas Cathedral Church in Chicago for the Syro-

Malabar diocese. They also coordinate the Mission League, prepare non Christians for the sacraments, help with the Bible camps in different parishes, prepare kids and adults for Holy Communion and Confirmation, prepare students to serve at the altar, visit the sick and so on. The Sisters who work in the hospitals witness to the love and compassion of the Lord through their healing ministry and help the dying to die peacefully. Their first and foremost ministry is to witness to the Catholic faith wherever they are.

Germany

At the close of the Mission Year they raise hearts in gratitude to God, for it was a sign of grace and divine providence that they were able to serve the Lord in the soil of Europe too. Though they started their work in Germany in one of the hospitals in 1970, they had to withdraw their services after 5 years. Then the V. G. of Bamberg diocese took the responsibility of the Sisters and sent them for nurses training. At present, they have 14 houses where the sisters extend their self less services to the people there.

The main responsibility of the Sisters here is to take care of the elderly people and prepare them for a peaceful death. In all their communities they go for house visiting and they give necessary spiritual guidance and counseling to the people. The Sisters help them to receive Sacraments regularly, lead them in prayers, and thus help them to grow in faith. Whenever the elderly are admitted in the hospitals the Sisters find time to visit them. The Sisters say that they have been faithful to their call and have succeeded as witnesses to the Lord, by becoming the messengers of the Good News to all who have come in contact with them.

Italy

The call to CMC is a call to service in the church. The CMC daughters are called to this mandate. Glowing with

deep faith in Jesus, the Superior General Mother Silvia, took a courageous step and sent some Sisters for nurses' training in 1977. Later a couple of Sisters more were sent. After the training, 5 of them started working in a hospital as staff nurses. The following year more Sisters joined hands with them.

It is heartening to note that they desired to have their own house in the eternal city. God was so gracious that their desire was fulfilled on 5 June 1994 and the house was blessed on that day. Some other convents too were established in different localities. Villa Carmel community renders their service in a hospital in diverse departments. Besides physical care they provide spiritual and psychological help not only to the patients but also to their relatives. Through their active listening and prayer they help the patients to experience the love and peace of Christ. Also they assist in their Sacramental needs.

The Sisters strive to keep up good relationship with their neighbouring families and promote every year the annual gathering of the families. Besides this, in preparation for Christmas they arrange the Holy Eucharist and share their meals with other families.

Along with medicine they offer God's unconditional love, love and care to the patients. They bring the patients to attend Holy Mass and to recite Rosary. They prepare them for making confession and all arrangements for the reception of the Sacraments. Also they help them to receive the Sacrament of Anointing, when they are seriously ill. The Sisters say that being aware of their call, they make use of all their energy and strength to help the brethren. They listen to their joys and sorrows, pains and the ailments of their life. Often the people consider them as their own Sisters and they call them "Angels". They say they do their best to witness to Christ's unconditional love thorough their words and deeds. They have

many convents of their own in this Holy Land. Among them one is worth mentioning. It is near to the Monastery founded in 1889, by Fr. Leopold, one of the founders of CMC Congregation. It is a pilgrim centre and many pilgrims come and are helped by the Sisters who also help out in the activities of the centre. The Sisters also teach in the Minor Seminary. Thus the Sisters are true witnesses to the Lord in this land. It goes to the credit of the CMC Sisters that many of their members are working in different parts of the world as true witnesses of Christ.

INDIAN MISSIONARIES ABROAD

Fr. Belthazar of Paris Foreign Mission Society who presented the report of the Indian Missionaries working abroad in the joint meeting of CBCI-CRI, held at CRI Brothers Institute of Theology, says that even though many did not respond the result he got was something amazing. He gave the figures thus: 6543 religious Sisters, 1940 religious priests, 226 diocesan priests and 159 religious Brothers working in 166 countries is an indication how mission minded India is. An estimate of about 15000 is not an exaggeration. He says it is a miracle of the last 3 decades! 214 religious congregations are sending Indian members to the mission outside India, and some of them are taking full responsibilities to develop the area they are working in.

The revelation included the fact that one third of the missionaries are present among the very poor people of the southern hemisphere as against the common belief that many are in Europe and America. The trends are that the number of missionaries to Africa, South America and Asia Pacific region are going to increase in the near future. Also an appeal was made to send missionaries to Nepal and the neighboring countries.

Cardinal Oswald Gracias, the president of CBCI said that he would carry the revelations and insights of this Consultation to the universal Church. The participants really appreciated this initiation of the Indian Church. "I expect another one of this kind within a year," said Archbishop Albert, the Secretary General of CBCI, who was present throughout the Consultation, "and I will be happy to be part of it." The awakening of the Indian dioceses and even parishes to this missionary dimension is a matter of priority. A missionary Church is a strong community of faithful sharing their faith life far and wide. The Indian Church can legitimately be proud of this statistics - phenomenal The organizers of this first consultation of the theme Indian Missionaries abroad, are convinced that India, a long considered a mission territory, has been transforming itself, in the post Vatican II era, into a land of Missionaries who look beyond its own boarders.



CHAPTER 7

MISSIONARIES FOR TODAY

Here is the touching story of Fr. Thomas Vetticat and his companions which happened in our own land. Fr. Thomas explains how he and his companions were tortured by an Inspector, like a mad man.

Here Fr. Thomas explains the story of 2 Sisters, 4 lay people and his own story. 20 kilometers away from Biradnagar, there is a village called Sissic near Indo-Nepal boarder? There were some Santhal Christians there. In Nepal, Christians were not legally allowed to live. Fr. Thomas and others had gone there to preach a retreat during the Easter period. They informed the Bishop and he assured his prayers for them. "If I am put in the jail, will you not visit me," Fr. Thomas asked the Bishop.

The two Sisters and he walked till they reached the village. It was already dark. All the people were gathered at a certain Paul's house. The Anti-Christian group was strong and they were carrying out some plans. On the last day of the retreat something happened there and the police was in search. Fr. Thomas says that they too were hiding. C.I.D. came in search of them. Some people were pressing the police to arrest all Christians. The police was using abusive words as usual and took them to the police station. They walked 2 miles and were very hungry and thirsty. Some Christians followed them. Father told the Sisters that they were being taken for crucifixion.

The D.S.P came to the spot and told them that he is the D.S.P. the top official. He beat them and the Christians who followed them. Then they were praying. They were forced to sit on the floor. Mr. Paul asked for some water and a police man spat out the water

he had drunk. Again he used abusive words and told them, " now you lick and drink water." We want to go to bathroom, please allow us, Sr. Gracy asked him. As a mad man he laughed at the Sisters. Don't ask any thing. I will kill you. All were in a precarious condition. When will we be able visit India? Will we see India again? They were praying silently for the strength.

The Inspector brought 8 new Christians- seven women and one man. All were beaten up. There was a beautiful girl called Pratibha. He asked to call her. He asked them if she was a Christian and why did she become a Christian? She did not answer him. Again he beat her .Her dress was torn. The Sisters were bound by a rope and it was tied to the roof of the house. Pratibha was terrified. FIR was written, but it did not carry what she had said. Anyhow she was forced to sign that paper. The man too was beaten up and inspector thrashed him by his boots. He fell down and was rolling on the floor. Are you ready to forsake your religion? Suddenly he says that he is ready. So he was given new dress and allowed to go. Meanwhile some had brought some coffee and snacks. Shall we give them, they asked the inspector? Don't give them. If you give, I will kill you.

Again the Sister asked for going to toilet. They were told to go outside. Their chains were removed. Some food was given as they had given some money to the police. The Constable was not dealing with them in a decent way. Nobody could sleep at night. In the morning they were taken to river for their ablutions.

The next day again they were taken to the police station in chains. This time the Sisters were not chained as they had given some money to the constable. Again they were taken to Viradnagar, some 20 kms away. They crossed a river. "Please call a rickshaw", they said, "we are ready to pay". No rickshaw. Then the police drank water from the river and they too were allowed to drink water.

Harmony in the Jail

A tin was kept to urinate in the jail. But it was leaking and the urine leaked out. They had no drinking water; though there was plenty of water everywhere. They were asked to sit down in the jail and not allowed to lie down. Father told Dadaji (a leader) that he was a Christian. Then Dadaji asked the priest," What is meant by Christianity and Christ?" The Father asked him " have you ever seen a Crucifix?". Dadaji said that he had never seen a Crucifix. Father explained to him the things he was doing in Nepal. Dadaji said to the Sister to move from the place where she was sitting and said "let the Setji (father) sit". The Sisters were taken to the dormitory. Father was very anxious concerning the Sisters. Dadaji too was taken away. Now the Father became the Dadaji. Father was preaching the Gospel in the jail. He became a good friend to others. Toilets were so dirty that they had to go out at 3 a.m. to ease their natural calls. After 6 days they were released from the jail and thus they could go to India.

There is another story about a C.S.T. Brother and his companion. It was on Feb.14, 1994 that two C.S.T. Brothers were brutally tortured. A Brother was sleeping in his quarters. He heard a knock at the door. The Brother was in his night clothes and came out to see who was knocking. They said "We want you only for 2 minutes. Give us Rs. 5000/ or give your life", they said. But the Brother went inside and locked the door. The same Brother called the other Brother. Then the miscreants began to break the glasses and the door. At once the Brother opened the door and came out. Then showing a knife, they caught hold of his neck. Both the Brothers were tortured. The Brothers gave whatever they had with them. Again they demanded money and took them to the bush and tortured. Then they opened a bottle and began to booze. It

continued up to I a.m. The Brothers were shivering in the biting cold, as their dresses were torn. Again putting the knife to their neck, they demanded money. They would count up to 3 and the Brothers were asked to repeat. Now they began to throw knives at the Brothers. Also they increased the counting of the numbers. The effect was horrible. Then they would lash them with their boots

They put two bullets into their gun. The Brothers were asked which one they wanted. Meanwhile one of the Brothers tried to escape. But he could not and fell down. Again they were tortured with the handle of the gun. Their both hands were tied at the back. They asked the Brothers to get up. They could not, so again they were tortured.

Next, they were asked to dig a pit with their hands. The miscreants said that they would be buried there. If the pit was not dug properly, they would be beaten up. Bro. Mathew, one of the Brothers, was put in the pit and was told to pray. Bro. Mathew prayed 'Our Father and Hail Mary'. Miscreants too prayed. Mean while the other Brother said " doesn't be afraid. They will not kill you. Are you not a Christian? Why do you disturb us during prayer? Both are to be killed together". They were asked to get up and were taken to Ashram. Reaching there, again they demanded money. They started their vehicle; even then, they did not forget to torture them. They opened the file and checked them all. Then the Brothers were asked to make some coffee for them and also were asked to hand over Rs. 1000/ the next day and entrust the same to the village chair- person. If it was not done, they would kill them without any prick of conscience. The Brothers were forced to sign an agreement. "If any information is given to the police, we will kill both of you" said the miscreants. Then they left on their motorbike, and it was 3 O'clock in the morning.

MIRACLES HAPPEN EVEN TO DAY

When Christ came to the world, he worked miracles of raising the dead, healing the sick, casting out demons etc. When the disciples of John came to Jesus asking whether he was the Messiah, he did not give a direct answer, but told them to go and tell John what they witnessed, the miracles he had performed. Jesus gave more power to the disciples saying that they would be able to do even greater miracles. What is surprisingly true is the fact that Jesus never fails. He was, He is and He will be the same for all times.

Aji Isai Baba (Fr. Aji Sebastian, CMI) cures a CMI Scholastic:

Bro. Pauly CMI who belongs to St. John's Bijnor Province, was ill after a village exposure programme in Chatisghat area. He had spent 3 weeks in a village substation in the diocese of Jagdalpur. When he came back he was not well for a week. Then he was treated at the village health centre. Tests showed some negative results. So he was treated for viral fever. He was taken to a hospital and he was in a delirium. Tests showed that he was suffering from cerebral malaria and jaundice. His condition was critical. Then he was moved to a Medical College in Raipur as it was the nearest best hospital and reached there on 27th Nov., 2010. His condition was highly critical, had convulsions and was sedated.

He had multi- organ failure, as in kidney, lungs, liver etc. He had undergone dialysis, platelets and plasma was transfused. Aji Baba was contacted and his desi medicines were given and the Brother showed positive signs. He was in ventilator; he was taken out of the ventilator. But unfortunately his condition became worse, because his lungs had got infection. So again he was put in ventilator. Thus he was in the hospital for forty days.

Doctors in Raipur were very positive and usually they do not allow giving any other medicine as long as the patient is with them. Many hands helped the Brother. Many prayed for him. Though he was in a good hospital, the doctors could hardly do anything for the patient. Hence Pauly's provincial Fr. Varghese Vithayathil contacted Aji Baba. Then Aji Baba had a talk with the doctor. As the doctor was impressed by the talk he allowed Aji Baba to administer his medicines. After 2 days his kidneys, lungs began to work. The brain too was functioning. So he was taken out of the ventilator. A few days there was a relapse. Aji flew from the South, as he was in the South. Again he was allowed to administer his medicines. Then onwards he began to recover. Aji Baba was always in contact even when he was in a foreign country. Bro.Pauly was completely cured. Though Pauly was in the hospital for X'mas that time, Pauly was a definitely a X'mas gift for all of us.

Miracle at Daya Sagar:

Daya Sagar is a centre in Sagar Diocese in M.P. Sagar is at the centre of Central India. A few years back Bishop of Sagar Mar Anthony Chirayath and some others had a vision of Divine Mercy of the Lord. Already devotion to Divine Mercy was famous in America and when the Bishop was in America the Bishop and some others had the same vision to start the devotion to Divine Mercy in Sagar Diocese. Now miracles happen after erecting the Statue of Divine mercy in Sagar. Nowadays even Hindus come to this centre and receive many blessings and healings. Here we present one or two healings people had here.

This is a public testimony given by a Brahmin family on the occasion of the blessing of Divine Mercy. Their only son Aswani was studying in one of our convent schools. But he had once typhoid, some

2 years back and after that he could neither walk nor talk and he had no interest even in eating. Aswani was taken to all local and district hospitals and even to famous hospitals in Nagpur and elsewhere. But his condition was not at all better. They had gone to all the temples and prayed; even then his condition remained the same. Parents lost all hope even after spending a lot of money. Then they went and told Sr.Jhancy, who was the Principal of the school where Aswani was studying. Sister told them to take the child to Faridabad, a charismatic centre. But somehow, the family was not in a position to go to Faridabad. Then Sr. Jhancy asked Fr. Vincent, the Rector of Divine Mercy centre whether the boy could be taken to Khajuria and it was in Khajuria that the blessing of the statue would be taking place shortly. The boy was brought to Khajuria and Fr. Vincent prayed over him for one or two hours. The boy showed some improvement. Father asked them to continue to pray and have faith in Jesus and asked them whether they would publicly proclaim if the boy was healed. They were ready and the boy was completely cured on the very next day. Early morning what they saw was something very surprising; the boy was riding his bicycle. In fact they could not believe their eyes. But that was the reality.

On the day of the blessing of Daya Sagar, the whole family was there and they solemnly and publicly proclaimed the name of Jesus for the wonderful and miraculous cure of their only child, Aswin. Now he is studying and so far he has had no problems at all .and the boy is very strong in every sense.

A sister with kidney failure cured

This is the story of one of the Sisters of the O.S.F. Congregation in Kerala. It happened some 4/5 years back. At that time she was the junior most Sister of their Province, and had her vestition only

that year. She was working somewhere in Tamilnadu and was bitten by a viper. They applied some desi medicines, but it was of no use. Then she was admitted in an other hospital and laid up for about 10 days. Her condition kept on worsening. So the Doctors said to them to take her to some other hospital. Thus she was admitted in the Jubilee Mission Hospital in Trissur, Kerala, where Frs. Prosper and George met her. But there too her condition was not at all good as her both kidneys failed and therefore they started dialysis. We had gone to the hospital as we got some information and prayed for her. Her mother was looking after her. Again we went to the hospital, but she was not in bed as she was taken for the dialysis. Any how we prayed for her. After one or two days we again visited her. We were surprised to see her sitting and taking 'kanji '. She was far better and talked to us. After a few days, she left the hospital fully recovered. It was the prayers of many that brought her to life again

Mr. Reji's (our contractor) wife gets new life:

It was usually Mr. Reji who used to take his wife from the Kasturba Hospital in Bhopal, where she was a staff nurse. On that fateful day, Mr. Reji was a little late to reach the hospital. So Mrs. Reji thought that she could take her scooter herself to go. She had just started and might have gone a hundred meters from the hospital, when she fell down and had a severe head injury.

Luckily someone heard the noise and ran to the spot and at once she was taken to the hospital. Meanwhile Mr. Reji too arrived and she was immediately operated. But the Doctors were not sure, whether she would survive in a safe and sound condition. Many started to pray for her. But her condition was getting worse and it seemed there was no hope. In spite of all that, many were praying for her and the family. Mr. Reji was almost the whole time there

attending to her. Since she was not in a good condition she was kept on ventilator for many days. On and off they removed the ventilator as her condition improved. Doctors from Bombay were also called in. They said that she would improve. After 40 days or so in ventilator she was improving little bit almost daily. Slowly she could take some liquids. After some time she was moved to the ICU and then to the room. After many days he could walk a bit and was discharged. The Treatment was continued. Many months later she could resume duties. Thank God since then she had no problem either mentally or physically. It took 8/9 months to be perfectly alright. We believe that all this was due to a great miracle and the prayers of so many people.

Kidney problem solved without operation:

Here is the story of Rajja Bhaiya, who hails from village Hannoutha, in Sagar District. He met with an accident and his leg was seriously damaged; he could hardly walk. After some time he could walk slowly, but with pain. Pain persisted and so he could not walk; the pain was so severe at times that he would become even unconscious and was almost dying. So he was taken to Nagpur and had some tests and they showed that one of his kidneys was fully damaged. After that, the date for an operation was fixed He came home in his village. At that time a certain relative named Prabhu Singh told him that he was taking part in the prayer of Divine Mercy conducted in Khajuria and asked him too to attend the same. Then Fr. Vincent, the Rector of the shrine, prayed over him for some time. Afterwards he went back to his village. After a few days he again went to Nagpur for his operation. He was not sure as to who was the Doctor who had told him about the operation. Hence, again one more x-ray was taken. To his utter surprise, Doctor told him that there was no need of any

operation, as his kidney was functioning properly.

Mr. Rajja Bhaiya gave a testimony saying that he is perfectly cured by the touch of Jesus Christ. Here we can relate/ give hundreds of such miracles, but we have narrated a few to show that miracles happen even today not only for Christians, but even for non-Christians and peoples of other denominations . The Lord has asked us only to believe and the result will follow.

CHRIST SHOULD BE INCARNATED IN INDIA

A missionary should speak a language that is understandable to the local people. If he speaks a language that is foreign to them definitely he will be out of place there. Why Christianity remains foreign to the Indian people? In a way the Church in India is foreign in all respects- dress, culture, language etc. Very often our dress reveals us, often our language is English and culturally we look alien to the people. In olden days we were using a foreign language for our liturgical functions. Such dealings have created an impression among the people that we are foreigners. But it was not the method followed by St. Thomas, the Apostle and our Father in faith. It would be interesting if we have a glance as to the method followed by St. Thomas.

Special features of St.Thomas'Missionary activites:

St. Thomas preaching welled up from his unique personal experience of Jesus Christ. He revealed Jesus as the Light, Life and Way. In fact his proclamation was the imparting of his resurrection experience of Jesus as "Lord and God". He could transmit this Resurrection experience to his new converts. This Christological confession was the core of his faith. He gave instructions to the people in such a way that they no longer would go back to their old faith. He appointed local Bishops and lay leaders.

St. Thomas took into consideration the socio-political and cultural context of India into which the Good News had been sown. The Word of God which he proclaimed incarnated in India taking flesh and blood from this soil. It sprouted here with vigour and vitality, absorbing its cultural and religious values. These communities freely mingled with other local people, and in no way were they different from other people except in their faith.

Why Hindus and others are against conversion

This is a question often asked, why in India many are against conversion. We see that some states have already enacted the law - the anti-conversion bill. Because of this law it is very difficult to preach or convert some one from one religion to another, though the preaching and professing and propagating the faith are guaranteed by the Constitution. I think the main problem is that if one is converted, people think that they have to change totally. It is a wrong notion. Nobody has to change anything but his/her belief. Conversion is in the mind and not in anything externals. We have to insist on the fundamentals and essential matters. Usually Christianity imbibes what is in other religions and does not insist on changing their culture and customs, or even their language. So we need an incarnation theology suitable for each nation and country. This also applies to India. Unless and until we have an incarnation theology suitable for India, Christianity cannot and will not have strong roots in the country.

CMI Charism and CMI Missions

What is charism? If you refer to the English dictionary, you may not find such a word. It is rather a word coined by Christian ecclesiologists. Actually the word is coined from Charisma which in use in English. So what does Charism really mean? Charism

may more or less be seen as the sum and total of what the founding Fathers/Mothers had in their mind when they started a congregation. It is very much connected to the history, living conditions of the people etc. Each congregation had its beginning from a felt need. So each congregation or society has its uniqueness. This uniqueness comprising all these into one idea and handed over to posterity, may be said to be the charism of any congregation. We the CMIs too have our own charism and we should adhere to this special charism.

CONCLUSION

From some of the chapters given above we can more or less understand and conclude that St. Chavara was a Missionary to the core and how his legacy is carried out by his sons and daughters today in different parts of the world.

St.Chavara, a man filled with the Holy Spirit, who experienced God, cannot but be a good missionary. Definitely a true Christian cannot be anything but a missionary. Though Chavara could not go far beyond the four corners of Kerala, and convert many, he did so in Kerala itself. He could not also fulfill his dream of bringing back the Jacobites to the fold of the Church; this was realized later by his own sons. Thousands of Jacobites along with their shepherds came back to the Church and thus we have the Catholic Malankara Diocese with many Bishops, even a Cardinal. We are very proud that the Malankara Church is flourishing well.

St. Chavara's own sons and daughters are doing wonderful mission work not only in North India, but also in many countries of the world. We are very happy and proud to tell that the canonization process of Bl. Chavara was completed by the signing by Pope the miracle attributed to Chavara. The date of Canonization

was announced as 23rd November, 2014 and Bl. Chavara was solemnly canonized on that day by His Holiness Pope Francis in the assembly of millions of people including many Indians and especially Malayalees. All the CMIs with the entire Church are happy. Definitely it was a proud moment for all, especially the Syro-Malabar Church. In Rajagiri valley, Kakkanad, Cochin, the Kerala church offered a Thanking giving Mass attended by more than half a million Catholics to thank the Lord for the wonderful gift of two saints. For, the Lord was so gracious to hear the prayers of all. Now it is the bounden duty of all the CMIs to rise to the occasion following the footsteps of our Founding Father St. Chavara as a Missionary and a Man of Prayer.



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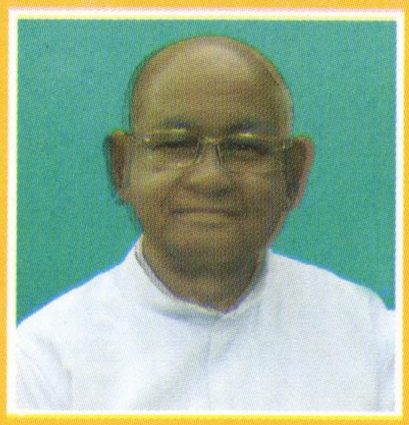
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MISSION LEGACY OF ST. CHAVARA

Fr. George Therooparmpil CMI

"Chavara was a pioneer in many respects: today the CMIs are trying to imitate him in various fields. Whatever be the apostolate, they have undertaken and fulfilled, I must say it was seminally started by Chavara. He was a man of mission and vision. This is may humble attempt to project Chavara as a missionary and how he has inspired his sons and daughters to be good missionaries".

From the Introduction

Rev. Fr. George Therooparampil CMI is one of the pioneering missionaries of Sagar Mission of the Syro-Malabar Church in North India. He has celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his Priestly Ordination in 2014. He has penned about his Sagar Mission Experience in his earlier work titled Sagar Smaranakal. He is a man of rich mission experience who is ever ready to take daring steps and initiatives in his missionary and priestly life like St. Chavara who is his inspiration. At present he is busy at Carmel Ashram, Sagar. M. P. forming the young missionaries of CMI St. Paul Province, Bhopal and renders spiritual guidance to the priests and sisters around.

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