

# MISSION '23

MAGAZINE

JAN-JUL

Encounter, Experience, Evangelize

**G**o into all the  
world and  
proclaim  
the good news  
to the whole Creation.

Reaching out Peripheries

Mk 16: 15







*When you choose your  
partner in life, choose one  
who has a good character  
and good manners.*

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





Mongolia seems to have no end, and its inhabitants are few, a people few in number of a great culture. I think it will do us good to understand this silence, so vast, so big. It will help us understand what it means: not intellectually but with the senses. Mongolia is to be understood with the senses.

Let me say that it would do us good perhaps to listen a to a little of Borodin's music, which was able to express what this breadth and greatness of Mongolia means.

Pope Francis' recent visit to Mongolia





# CMission '23

Featuring CMI Missions

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

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## E d i t o r i a l

Josey Thamarassery CMI

Vicar General, Chief Editor

**M**ore than anything, we thirst for love, for only love can make us happy, inspire inner assurance and allow us to savour the beauty of life...the Christian faith is the answer to this thirst...For in this thirst lies the great mystery of our humanity: it opens our hearts to the living God, the God of love, who comes to meet us and to make us his children, brothers and sisters to one another” (Pope Francis in Mongolia on 3rd September 2023). Pope Francis defines the mission of every Christian to help people find the living God, the God of love who comes to make us his children. As Pope Francis and his predecessor Pope Benedict have made it clear that this does not happen through proselytization as Christianity is often accused of, but rather by attraction. God has freely lavished His love on us and so he has asked us to be living reflections of that Love on which Christian life develops, drawing everyone to that Love and bringing life in abundance. Every Christian is challenged to communicate this message of the love of Jesus to everyone without reserving it for anyone meaningfully and making it relevant when innocent people suffer for the very reason of their faith, as we experience in different places in India like Manipur or Chhattisgarh. As Pope Francis says again in his homily during his visit to Mongolia sometimes we may feel like a 'dry and weary land where there is no water, yet it is equally true that God cares for us all the more in such situations.

Therefore, the new CMission comes to us with the story of Manipur making it the cover story of the current issue. Thus, the session **Encounter** presents Manipur violence in the last month causing the life of hundreds of innocent lives and making more than 6000 people homeless and refugees and destroying and burning more than 150 places of worship. The mysterious silence of the Government adamantly deciding not to refer to the incident even when the world

across the globe decried such incidents as clear human rights violations. Besides, we also find articles enlightening the significance of sacramental life for a secularised world as a means to orient our life towards God giving purpose and meaning to our life and on communitarian living presented as an effective means of evangelization in today's world.

In the session, **Experience** Ghana mission of the CMI Congregation and particularly of St John's Province Bijnor constitutes the leading article. A mission that was taken up in 1983 by CMI Congregation has contributed toward the integral development of the people of that region through pastoral, educational and social involvement of the missionaries. Today we have, like other African missions very vibrant communities in Ghana. As part of Frontier ministry, we are introduced to Karuna Illam of Preshitha Province Coimbatore which is a committed and dedicated initiative to care for the destitute and marginalised people in the society. The current issue presents the feature of introducing the reader to the life of rural India presenting Yelden village in the Kolar district of Karnataka. Though poor and underdeveloped region, the people are warm-hearted and welcoming.

When the new CMission reaches into your hands, it reveals the history and life of people of different places and cultures showing how the Love of God encompasses them even in the time of difficulties and tribulations. However, they are to inspire us to express our solidarity not only with the poor but also with the needy of today. Solidarity as Pope Francis advocates is more than a few sporadic acts of generosity and charity and goes to the higher level demanding a new mindset to think in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the life of a few (EG 188).





## M e s s a g e

Thomas Chathamparampil CMI  
Prior General

Who is me if I do not announce the Gospel" (I Cor 9:16). This awareness has been confirmed and reaffirmed by the Church teachings from time to time even when there were strong schools of thought of relativizing the evangelizing mission of the Church. The evangelizing mission becomes a mandate for every Christian as a natural expression of his life lived in the Kingdom of God experiencing the values of the Kingdom like love, peace, joy etc. Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* makes it very clear in the following words: "Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries," but rather that we are always "missionary disciples." (EG 120)

This evangelizing mission happens as a result of the experience of the joy of the Gospel as a reality lived and then expressed in love. The same message was communicated by Saint Pope John Paul II in his *Novo Millennio Ineunte*: "Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him." (NM 40). While proclaiming Jesus, the establishment of the Kingdom of God for which Jesus stood became the main programme for the Church. Taking Jesus as the standard, the Church turned the Christian message directly into a programme of change or conversion in the life of the people to fit into the values of the Kingdom of God. In places where people lived under the tragic clutches of underdevelopment, the mission was to work for establishing the Kingdom values and thus one of liberation from all unjust situations. The evangelizing

mission called for responding to all such situations enkindling in the people their hope for a better, fuller and more joyous way of human existence. Pope Francis advocated an active involvement of the Church in such situations: "I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out in the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security" (EG 49).

Such involvement against injustice and oppression out of the Christian experience of love, peace and justice causes threats resulting in animosity in society. The recent incidents of atrocities in Manipur, Chhattisgarh and other parts of India must be seen as a reaction to the way the Christian mission is carried out to bring total liberation to the people from every unjust social situation that exists today. Unfortunately, we find the government and the responsible people have maintained silence as gross violations of human rights happened through violent ethnic, sectarian or religious tensions. They are to be condemned and deplored as they deny the basic right of the people to live with human dignity. At the same time the urgent need is to make efforts to build bridges between communities that differ greatly along lines of ethnicity, culture or religion; and to strengthen bonds between people belonging to one nation despite the differences we bear. Those who foster divisions and hatred plant seeds of death. Let us wish and pray for peace and harmony in our nation so that people belonging to different religions, creeds and faiths live together and respect each other which is the distinguishing mark of India.

“



"We are dealing with an unprecedented magnitude of violence against women in communal and sectarian strife. We cannot justify what happened in Manipur by saying that this and this happened elsewhere. Are you saying protect all women or don't protect anyone?"

D Y Chandrachud  
Chief Justice of India



Let's face God in context and text



Encounter

Manipur  
Violence

A Glimpse  
of What is  
in Store for Christians



# Burning manipur





Jacob Peenikaparambil CMI  
Indore

**M**edia reports in India from time to time and study reports of international organizations vindicate increasing violent attacks on Muslims and Christians in India ever since the BJP government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power at the centre in 2014. The attacks are mostly carried out by the right-wing groups affiliated to the RSS-BJP combine. Prominent among them are Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal, the foot soldiers of the Sangh Parivar. Often the police remain silent spectators when the attacks take place and sometimes the attacks are taking place with the tacit support of the police and the authorities in charge of law and order.

Most of the BJP state governments amended the anti-conversion laws to make them very stringent with harsh punishments. Even conducting prayer in a place can be interpreted as a method of religious conversion, if any non-Christian happens to be a participant in it. In 2022, there were over 550 violent attacks on India's Christians, according to the United Christian Front (UCF), an Indian NGO. This is the largest number for any year on record.

In March 2022, the Archbishop of Bangalore, Peter Machado, filed a petition in the Supreme Court to look at the "sinister phenomenon of violence" and "targeted hate speech" against Christians in some parts of India. Because of the sharp rise in the number of cases of violence against Christian in recent years, Christians in India now live in a 'climate of fear', the archbishop

stated in his plea.

At the onset of 2023, over a thousand tribal Christians in Narayanpur and Kondagon districts in Chhattisgarh, were forced to flee their villages due to threats of violence by right-wing groups. Vandalizing the Catholic church in Narayanpur belonging to the diocese of Jagdalpur was widely reported in the media in the first week of January. Almost every day the media report attacks on Christian institutions or communities, especially in the north and central India. The Times of India reported on 26th June 2023 that Bajrang Dal and VHP activists put up saffron flags and wrote Jai Shri Ram on the walls of a missionary-run school in UP's Kanpur Dehat, alleging religious conversion in the school.

Filing false cases of religious conversion against Christian institutions, bishops, priests and nuns by the BJP governments or members of the Hindutva organizations is another method adopted to harass and defame Christian institutions. This process also leads to violent reactions from the right-wing groups.

The unprecedented violence and mayhem that have been taking place in Manipur since May 3, 2021 is to be viewed against the backdrop of increasing violence against Christians. The central and state government have failed to douse the fire of violence that has been burning in Manipur for more than one and half months. Many keen observers of Indian politics ask, "Is this not a rehearsal of what is to take place in 2024 or 2028?"

As per the media reports more than 100 people died, about 50000 people have been displaced after their homes have been burnt and properties worth crores of rupees have been destroyed. Different reports give different figures of the Churches burnt during the violence. According to the Archbishop of Imphal, 249 churches belonging to Meitei Christians and churches in 200 Kuki villages i.e., more than 200 churches, were destroyed during the violence. The total number of churches destroyed during

the violence is more than 400.

The reports appeared in the media indicate that the violence that started was the result of a conflict between the Meites who mainly live in the valley and Kuki tribes who live in the hills. The Meites who constitute about 52% of the population have only 10% of the land whereas the tribals, mainly Kukis, who constitute 40% of the population have 90% of land mostly in the hills. According to anthropologist Fr. Walter Fernandes, 60% of the land in the hills comes under reserve forest and hence not available for any other use. Therefore, it is a misnomer to say that the Kukis occupy 90% of the land of Manipur.

The majority Meites control politics and governance because out of the 60 MLAs, 40 are Meites. Large majority of Meites are Hindus whereas the Kukis are mostly Christians. The Meities are better off than the Kukis on different parameters.

The Meites have been demanding for a long time to be included in the list of Scheduled Tribes so that they would be able to possess land in the tribal areas. But the tribals have been opposing tooth and nail the demand of the Meites. An order of the Manipur High Court acting Chief Justice Muralidharan, advising the government of Manipur to send recommendation to the government of India to include Meitei in the ST list within four weeks, was the immediate cause of triggering the violence. All Tribal Students Union Manipur (ATSUM) organized a Solidarity Rally on 03 May 2023 to oppose the decision of the High Court. It sparked the violence that spread like a wild fire in the state.

The violence that started as an ethnic conflict between the Meites and Kukis has taken the shape of a communal conflict and riot between the Meite Hindus and the Kuki Christians. A good number of media reports and people who visited Manipur hold the view that the state government and the central government are supporting the Hindu Meites and allowing them

to loot weapons and ammunition from the government armories and police stations. According to the archbishop of Imphal, “the involvement of a Third element is visible and very much similar to the riot in Gujarat and Kandhamal (Odisha)”.

The reluctance of the Central government to impose president's rule in spite of the demand of the whole opposition and the BJP MLAs belonging to Kuki tribe, has created suspicion in the minds of people regarding the intent of the central government. The resignation by chief minister Biren Singh and later its withdrawal because of the opposition by Meitei women appears to be a drama to hoodwink the people of India.

The Prime Minister's silence ever since the violence started appears to be enigmatic. The Prime Minister in his Man ki Baat made reference to the cyclone in Gujarat, but no mention was made about a greater disaster in Manipur. Many people ask, “Is Manipur violence also a replication of the Gujarat riots of 2002 and Kandhamal violence of 2008?” “Without doubt, the BJP and their henchmen, who today rule both the Manipur State and the Central Government, are behind what is happening in Manipur today”, wrote human rights activist Fr. Cedric Prakash S J in his article, “Manipur Burning” published in the Indian Currents” (26th June 2023).

The response of the Church in India to the rise in violence against Christians could be short term and long term. As Fr. Cedric Prakash suggested the immediate responses could be the following.

Let all Christians Churches (the CBCI, the NCCI and the EFI and others) come together and hold media conference in the National capital Delhi and make the demand for the restoration of law and order immediately; facilitating the safe return of all tribals Christians to their respective places; providing adequate monetary compensation for rebuilding homes, churches and institutions and filing cases against

all responsible for the violence.

A delegation of 100 Christian leaders visiting Manipur to express solidarity with the affected people, being with them.

Organizing a National Protest Day with huge gatherings in different cities of India in order to highlight what is happening to the minorities, the Adivasis, the Dalits and the other vulnerable groups of the country. An all-denomination silent protest rally was organized in Pune on 8th July.

The long-term measures shall include educating Christians about the monstrosity of Hindutva ideology, eradicating fundamentalism from Christian groups and Churches, resuming and strengthening inter-faith dialogue, building a coalition of different churches and Christian groups to respond effectively to violence, and promoting inculcation. Christians sometimes give the impression that they have no respect for Indian culture. Christians have to take initiative to remove the perception that their allegiance is to the foreign powers. Instilling the core Indian constitutional values in the students and teachers should be a top priority of all Christian educational institutions.

What is happening in India today, particularly in Manipur, is the unfolding of an ideology that perceives Muslims and Christians as internal enemies of the nation, an ideology that aims to keep Muslims and Christians as second-class citizens, an ideology that glorifies Hitler who massacred 6 million Jews. A fitting response to this dangerous ideology is disseminating the core teachings of Jesus-love, forgiveness and compassion- and promoting the Gandhian ideals of truth and non-violence. In the words of Rahul Gandhi, “open shops of love in the market of hatred”.







Jancy Varghese CSSE  
Indore

**W**e all are familiar with the disheartening events that are going on among the people of Manipur, especially between the meities and kukis. Let me share with you what happened to David Theik as I have listened to someone from Manipur. A village of kukis was guarded by the kukies. But one night they heard the sound of the meities who were approaching their village. All of them ran away. But this boy David was caught by the meites and every part of his body was cut into pieces and at the end they beheaded him. We have seen in the social media, a man holding the head of David in his hand and walking on the road without any emotions. What an inhuman behavior? How can the human being, the crown of God's creation are coming to be so cheap in his thoughts and actions? What a fearful situation where one brother is running away on fear of the other... This is our country today.

There was a time in India where unity in diversity was experienced by all the citizens of India. Anybody could walk with everybody. There was no discrimination in the name of religion, caste or creed. Or it was negligible. But today we feel ashamed to be called as Indians. Where are these socio-political dimensions taking us? Whom shall we trust? Who is the leader who can lead India and Indians? How can a religion say that India is belonging to Hindu and trying to eradicate the other religions from our country?

Let us have a glance at the Manipur On 15th of October 1949 Manipur was merged with India. Later in

## A Christian Reflection

# Mourning Manipur



1956, it was made into a union territory, and finally in 1972, it was declared a state by the North eastern areas Act of 1971. Manipur is called “A JEWEL LAND”. Because it is surrounded by nine hills with an oval-shaped valley at the center, a naturally made Jewel. Having this in mind let us understand who are the Kukies and meities?

On the 14th of May 1945, the popular Meitei marup was formed. The meitie people, also known as the Manipuri people, are one of the ethnic groups of Manipur in North east India. They speak meitie language, officially called Manipuri, one of the 22 official languages of the Indian Republic and the sole official language of Manipur.

The kukies are an ethnic group in the North eastern Indian state of Manipur. The kuki constitute one of several tribes within India. The first half of the 19th century was an important land mark, in the history of kukies. Missionary activity had considerable social, cultural, and political ramification while the acceptance of Christianity marked a departure from the tradition. For the last 90 years majority of kukies have embraced Christianity as their religion. The spread of English Education introduced the kuki tribe to the “modern era”.

The Meiteis vilify the kuki community as “illegal outsiders” and “narco terrorists”. The chief of Meitei Leepun, in a press interview, did not hesitate to state publically that Kukies in areas disputed by Meities would be “wiped out”. He also termed the Kuki community to be “illegal”, “outsiders”, “not part of the family”, “not indigenous to Manipur” and “tenants” in Manipur. The Wall Street Journal’s White House correspondent Sabrina was given the opportunity to ask a question to Modi on his state visit to US.” India has long prided itself as the world’s largest democracy, but there are many human rights groups who say that your government has discriminated against religious minorities and sought to silence its critics. What steps are

you and your government willing to take to improve the rights of Muslims and other minorities in your country? And uphold free speech?” She asked.

Modi replied merrily that there was no discrimination in India based on identity. “We have always proved that democracy can deliver. And when I say deliver, this is regardless of caste, creed, religion, gender. There’s absolutely no space for discrimination. And when you talk of democracy, if there are no human values and there is no humanity, there are no human rights, then it’s not a democracy.” he said. Modi’s white lie in white house is highlighted, as per the article of Arfa Khanum Sherwani. Christophe Jaffrelot in his book, “Modi’s India” has narrated with concrete examples how democratic institutions have been systematically weakened ever since Modi came to power. Our country has drifted away from the democratic and constitutional values and principles.

According to the international journalist Mr. Anto Akkara – What exactly is going on in Manipur? Hindutha agenda under the cover of the ethnic conflict. What is Hinduatha? Anything which they perceive to be opposite to Hindu nationalism is targeted. The RSS came out with the statement that this dispute is with the help of churches. Thus 247 churches were destroyed by a well-planned agenda of BJP and RSS. The kukies are Christians. So the kukies are wiped out. Is it not a well-planned attack on Christians? Even after two months of this brutal violence in Manipur, why the Prime Minister remain as rubber stamp?

The fundametalists must know, For a Christian and for the church it is not new. The church has sustained many hardships like this in history. The church has nurtured itself and grown out of it. We have the pillars of church the saints Peter and Paul who have undergone similar types of persecutions in the church. But the church will not be vanished. Because the Christian church is not one stone that we worship, it is built

with the stone of faith by all those who believe in Jesus. We are the church and our God is living in our heart. You can kill only our body; we have a soul which is united with the soul of Christ. The Christians worship, a God who is alive among his people. We consider it as a reward to die for the Lord, and proclaim his name. We are proud of our brothers and sisters in Manipur, who have lost their life for their love for Jesus. To our brothers who are the cause for the death of these innocent people in Manipur, we have only one thing to say, The Manipur Christians have entered into a new life. May your stained hands be washed in their precious blood.



Our country has drifted away from the democratic and constitutional values and principles.





Anwin Kizhakkethottam CMI  
Bhopal

# Tribal Lives

Indian tribes, also known as indigenous peoples, are an integral part of India's diverse cultural fabric and the original inhabitants of the land having unique social, cultural, and economic systems. However, despite their significant contributions to India's rich cultural heritage, Indian tribes have faced historical oppression and ongoing struggles for justice. This paper explores the issue of the exploitation of tribals in India, focusing on the Manipur massacre as a case study. The paper examines the historical context of tribal exploitation, the political dynamics that caused their marginalization, and the notion of political slavery and a pseudo renaissance.

## The exploitation of tribals in India

Indian tribes have a long history of being marginalized and oppressed by colonial powers and the Indian state. During the British colonial era, indigenous peoples were displaced from their lands and subjected to forced labour and exploitation. Tribal unrest and discontent include lethargy, indifference, and lack of sympathy from administrators, harshness of forest laws and regulations, lack of legislation to prevent the passing of tribal land into the hands of non-tribals, ineffective government measures to rehabilitate tribal population, lack of interest and dynamism among the political powers to solve tribal problems etc...

## Manipur Massacre

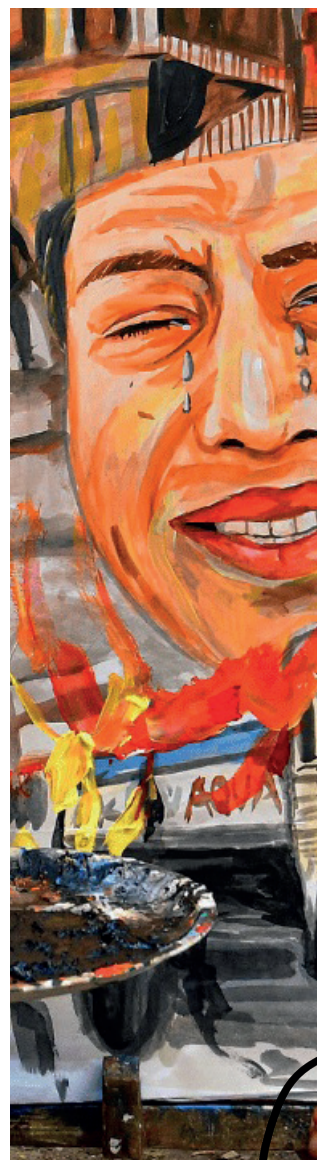
Manipur Violence erupted in the Kuki-dominated Churachandpur district of the state, where members of the Kuki tribe were protesting against the extension of hills v/s plains conflict that exists between Meiteis and them and also the demands of the Meitei community to be designated as a 'Scheduled Tribe'. "Scheduled Tribe" is that which is constitutionally recognised, and this official designation gives certain protections to tribes and communities. "It is an affirmative action to ensure marginalised

communities are represented and gives them reservations and quotas in educational institutions and government jobs."

Meiteis are the majority community in Manipur, comprising around 53% of the population, while tribal communities account for around 40% of the population. There are 34 recognised tribes in Manipur, broadly classified into Naga tribes (24%) and Kuki/Zomi tribes (16%). While the Naga and Kuki tribes are included in ST list, most of the Meitei community people have OBC status, and some of them are listed as SCs. Being classified as non-tribals, Meitei people cannot buy land in over 90% of the hilly areas where Kuki community is dominated.

## Manipur violence and involvement of political strategies

In the Manipur scenario, the issue of reservation is extremely complex as it is closely linked with control over land. The co-existence of the three dominant communities—Meitei, Kuki, and Naga—presents immense challenges on account of measures such as the tribal policy, which injuncts the Meitei from owning or enjoying property in the hilly area. Their non-tribal status has thus fenced them out of about 90 per cent of the territorial area known as the hills in the State. This deficiency motivated them to demand Scheduled Tribe status. In the peculiar context of Manipur, the tribal status is demanded more as a device intended to assert rights over the land. On the other hand, the tribes in the hills are anxious of losing their exclusive domain over the highlands. The tribal groups are alleging that Meiteis are already an advanced community, and they do not require the benefits of reservation and further 40 out of 60 MLAs are from the Meitei community. These economic reasons are linked with the revolt, which is not limited to any one community. On analysing politically, the conflict among the different communities in Manipur is a harsh reality. The unequal division of Manipur tribal communities for hidden political outcomes makes the tribal com



Indian tribes, also known as indigenous peoples, are an integral part of India's diverse cultural fabric and the original inhabitants of the land having unique social, cultural, and economic systems.



munities as political slaves. It is essentially a split based on claims for better participation in the political process and for more control over resources. It required a political solution which could have happened only by way of a purposeful process and the resultant policies. For Biren Singh, the Chief Minister, Manipur issue was a war against "narco-terrorists". In reality, it was a war on the unfortunate Kukis. The movement Meitei Leepun claims that they are fighting foreign invaders, meaning the Kukis. Repeated calls for the removal of Biren Singh reach Delhi desks. But J.P. Nadda says he will stay on. Even if he does not serve the interests of Manipur, at least he is loyal to the ideals of Nagpur. Amit Shah boasts of Modi having brought peace to the North-East. But conflicts continue. This is a kind of pseudo renaissance that the ruling party is projecting.

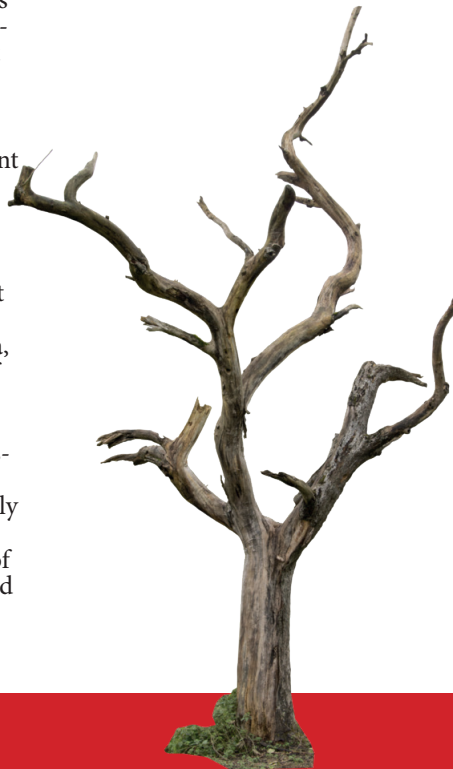
Another typical example for the pseudo renaissance can be seen when coming to the matters with the president of India Draupathi Murmu. She is from a tribal community and may be due to this reason or other the central government is showing a great disrespect to her and her position. The very issues of parliament inauguration would tell us more about the presidential segregation. Parliament is the epitome of the diversity of people's representatives, and but government did not invite the President, who is the head of the State, to inaugurate the Parliament building. The Vice-President, who is the chairman of the Rajya Sabha, too did not get the invite to one of the most solemn occasions in the history of independent India. Another incident of pseudo renaissance is that a man is seen urinating on a tribal youth, who is silently bearing the abuse he is subjected to, a video that got viral a couple of weeks back. The incident happened in the Sidhi district of Madhya Pradesh.

A man Pravesh Shukla, who is alleged to be a member of the BJP, committed the crime. Shockingly, Shukla showed no shame or remorse in his action, while deliberately targeting the youth's eyes and face. Despite the fact that Shukla was arrested, irrespective of his political connections, he displayed a relaxed attitude. It all meant that he would be given a free hand and his arrest was a mere act to fool the public. However, that was not to be, in view of the upcoming elections. So, in an act of damage control, the Chief minister of MP invited the victim to his house, apologised and washed his feet in a sign of penance thereby it may appear to be an act to appease the tribals with a larger motive of projecting the BJP as a "messiah" of the marginalized and downtrodden.

The above-mentioned realities and scenarios are expressions how the tribals are being exploited economically, politically and through all possible means. The Manipur massacre - a result of exploitation, political agendas, and also the result of ethnic cleansing made and is making the situation there worse day by day. Yet the ruling party is cunningly veiling the truth and are making the poor people to believe in their ruling for better tomorrow.

Conclusion

The exploitation of tribals in India is an ongoing issue rooted in historical injustices, political manipulation, and a pseudo renaissance. The Manipur massacre serves as a stark reminder of the urgent need to address the systemic challenges faced by tribal communities. Meaningful interventions and policies must be developed to ensure the protection of their rights, preservation of their culture, and empowerment to shape their own future. Recognizing and rectifying the exploitation of tribals is crucial for building an inclusive and just society in India.





# Sacramental Life







Jerin P Jojo  
Bengaluru

**W**e live in a world that seems rather grim, dark and filled with despair. People worldwide, especially the youth of today find themselves in problems which often more than not turn into something that's larger than themselves. With cases of depression at an all time high fueled by more issues like Substance Abuse, Social Media influence; creating an endless cycle of stress, anxiety, anger, depression and other mental health issues. People worldwide, especially the youth find themselves in problems with cases of depression at an all-time high, fueled by more issues like Substance Abuse, Social Media influence that create an endless cycle of stress, anxiety, anger, depression and other mental health issues. As a generation who faces more isolation and polarization, we tend to forget why is it that we are in this world? During my boyhood days as a Catechism student of Grade 1, I was told by my teacher that we were all made to be happy - God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world.

Much of those values we learnt during those good old days, have been lost in our encounter with the outside world. In a society that tries to remove God from itself and pull us apart from one another. We must think back about the infinite grace that God has chosen to bestow upon us because it is grace that makes us aware of our own purpose - our purpose to know, love and serve God and be happy.

Grace is the free and undeserved assistance God offers us so that we might respond to his call to share in his divine life and attain eternal life. How does God give us his grace? Ordinarily Christ chose to give us his grace through the sacraments. By ordinarily it doesn't mean that the act of God giving us his grace is an ordinary act; however by ordinary it refers to the normative way by which grace is bestowed. The sacraments are "efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us" (CCC 1131) Hence if sacraments give us grace, and grace makes us aware of our purpose, and that purpose is to be happy by knowing, loving and serving God we can understand that the sacraments are necessary for us to lead a happy life.

A common question that is asked is why are sacraments even necessary. Can't we just pray directly to God and receive grace. Why is it that usually a priest is necessary to dispense sacraments. The principal reason for a sacramental system is found in human. It is the nature of human, writes St. Thomas (III, Q. lxi, a. 1), to be led by things corporeal and sense-perceptible to things spiritual and intelligible. We perceive the world through our senses, our human nature demands that we see, feel or touch anything to understand it better. St. Thomas our Father in Faith also refused to believe the resurrection of Christ until he saw Him, Christ then further asks Thomas to touch Christ and feel his wounds. Therefore it was fitting that Divine Wisdom should provide means of salvation for men in the form of certain corporeal and sensible signs which are called sacraments. The waters of Baptism wash away our sins, the oil in anointing the sick etc help us understand the economy of salvation on a much primal level.

Even though the sacraments have natural signs, it is not solely dependant on natural or human factors. The efficacy of the action of the sacraments does not depend on anything human, but solely on the will of God as expressed by "Ex- opere

operato", i.e. by virtue of the Christ's institution and promise. action. It can be seen as the built-in efficacy of a sacrament properly conferred. Using the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist as an example we can understand this doctrine - A priest who offers Mass even in a state of mortal sin validly offers Mass, the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is confected and the bread becomes the body of Christ. The faithful who attend and serve at the Mass of this priest receive the grace of the sacrament. This has been solemnly defined in several Councils of the Church including the Council of Trent (Sess. VII, can. 12, *ibid.*, de bapt., can. 4).

The reason is that the sacraments have their efficacy by Divine institution and through the merits of Christ. Unworthy ministers, validly conferring the sacraments, cannot impede the efficacy of signs ordained by Christ to produce grace *ex opere operato* (cf. St. Thomas, III, Q. lxiv, aa. 5, 9). The priest in this case is the minister of the sacrament who dispenses it. His own personal state cannot reduce the value of the sacrament because it is not the priests to begin with. The priest does not own the sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ instituted the Eucharist hence the graces come from Him and not the priest. The priest can be seen as a cashier of a bank, no matter how little money the cashier has, he still has the ability to cash out a cheque of 1 Crore Rupees or even more, as it's not his money that he dispenses but the bank's money. The cashier's financial situation does not affect the dispensation of cash. It is to the Church that Christ has entrusted the abundance of grace of the sacraments. Hence judging the validity of a sacrament based on the holiness of the minister would amount to the heresy of Donatism.

Does this now mean that no matter what we do grace is communicated to us via the sacraments? With Christ's promise of grace through the sacraments, we bear a duty to receive the sacraments worthily.



The Council of Trent teaches us that there must be no obstacle to grace on the part of the recipients, who must receive them rite, i.e. rightly and worthily; and they declare it a calumny to assert that they require no previous dispositions (Sess. XIV, de poenit., cap. 4). Certain basic dispositions have to be met in order to validly receive a sacrament. In case of the sacrament of Baptism, an adult who receives it must do so with his complete free will and must believe in all dogmas of the Catholic Church without reservation. In case of the Holy Eucharist the recipient must be in a state of grace, at least be free from mortal sin as the rite of the Holy Mass does include absolution of venial sins so does the reception of the Eucharist affect the absolution of such venial sins. However, if a person receives the sacrament of Eucharist in an unworthy manner does not receive the grace that the sacrament holds in store for the faithful, St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians warns us about maintaining a worthy disposition before approaching the Sacrament of the Altar. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. 1 Corinthians 11:27-32. This disposition that is being referred to is not just a physical disposition however it is an inner disposition. . St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that the holy priest is “more readily heard” at Holy Mass Than an unholy priest. This is due to the theological principle of merit, a term that is greatly ignored in the highly Protestant culture that we live in. Consider how Padre Pio got what he asked for at Mass since the continual prayer of a just man availeth much.—St. James 5:16 whereas even average Jews in

Jesus’ day knew that God doth not hear sinners.—John 9:31. Again, we’re evaluating the efficacy of sacraments here, not the validity of such sacraments. Of course, it would be the heresy of donatism to assert that a priest in mortal sin does not confecting valid sacraments. Of course he does, provided he is saying the correct words. Donatism is denying the *ex opere operato* aspect of sacraments. But we also must consider the *ex opere operantis* aspects of the sacraments that, namely, a holy priest at Mass is “more readily heard” than an unholy priest at Mass. In a similar fashion we must prepare ourselves when we approach the sacraments - a heartfelt contrition and a firm resolution against the sins committed before approaching the sacrament of penance, faith in the Eucharist and the being in a state of grace when receiving the Eucharist is necessary. This augments us to receive the grace of the sacraments in a better way. Our disposition firstly makes us worthy to receive the sacrament and further ornaments the sacramental grace conferred. This could be understood using an analogy of a painter, the instruments of the painter and the brush enable him to paint, however the inner thoughts and ideas he has helps the painter either create a masterpiece or something which is to be discarded. This inner disposition is much needed when receiving the sacraments. Fr. Gabriel OCD in his book *Divine Intimacy*, meditates on the sacrament of extreme unction, writes: A dying person who receives this Sacrament with the proper dispositions obtains the full remission of all his sins and of the penalty due to them, so that he can go directly from this earthly exile to eternal glory without passing through Purgatory. But although this is the normal effect of Extreme Unction, very few actually receive all its fruit because very few have the proper dispositions. There is perhaps no Sacrament which is so little understood. It is often received in haste, without preparation, and in a state of complete or partial unconsciousness. The result is that its precious fruits are lost in great part.—*Divine Intimacy* #74 (p.

216.). We must prepare ourselves to worthily receive the sacrament in order to enjoy in whole the fruits of the sacrament. God's grace is like a dam filled to its maximum capacity, it is upto us to open its gates and let grace flow into our lives. We often keep them shut by committing sin. Sin is an offense against God and breaks our union with him. No amount of offerings or good deeds will repair that broken bond. Only the sacraments can.

Three sacraments, baptism, confirmation, and orders, besides grace, produce in the soul a character, i.e. an indelible spiritual mark by which some are consecrated as servants of God, some as soldiers, some as ministers. Since it is an indelible mark, the sacraments which impress a character can not be received more than once (Conc. Trid., sess. VII, can. 9;). Sacraments bestows on us sanctifying grace, forgiveness of sin infusion of supernatural virtues of faith, hope and love, gifts of the Holy Spirit. This orients our life towards God and gives our life a renewed sense of purpose and meaning which many today lack. It provides us with the actual grace we need to perform duties of the state of life that we are in, for example the Sacrament of Marriage gives the couple the grace to perform their duties as husband and wife even if the task may seem mundane or difficult. We grow in virtue which help us build our relationship with God and with fellow beings, the sacraments heal, elevate and perfect us as instruments of God.

Another important practice which is completely lost today is understanding the importance of silence. We live in a world where we are constantly bombarded with stimuli all around us be it visual, olfactory or our hearing. We are inundated with noise which comes as a result of the clutter around us in the world - the sound of traffic is the most common example for this, the noise further aggravates the already frail and impatient nature of man. As college students walk to class they are seen sporting earphones which blast music to a point where other senses are numbed.



As college students walk to class they are seen sporting earphones which blast music to a point where other senses are numbed. In this environment of noise it is important to understand the need for silence and how silence helps us grow in our spiritual life.

In this environment of noise it is important to understand the need for silence and how silence helps us grow in our spiritual life. Silence may be viewed from a threefold standpoint: (1) As an aid to the practice of good, for we keep silence with man, in order the better to speak with God, because an unguarded tongue dissipates the soul, rendering the mind almost, if not quite, incapable of prayer. The mere abstaining from speech, without this purpose, would be that "idle silence" which St. Ambrose strongly condemns. (2) As a preventative of evil. (3) The practice of silence involves much self-denial and restraint, and is therefore a wholesome penance, and as such is needed by all. Silence helps us order our senses to our higher causes - as rational beings silence enables us to think better and as spiritual beings helps us communicate with God. "In silence and quiet the devout

soul advances in virtue and learns the hidden truths of Scripture," says Thomas a Kempis. "Guard against much talking," advises St. Dorotheus of Gaza, "for it puts to flight devout thoughts and recollection in God." St. Maximilian Kolbe declares that, "Silence is necessary, and even absolutely necessary. If silence is lacking, then grace is lacking." In our daily lives we can practice such pious silences in little ways, like turning off TV or radio or playing music while doing chores, driving etc. Using that time to reflect on the activity that is at hand or even use the time to pray ejaculatory prayer. Silent adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is another way to open ourselves to prayers, to be still and let us listen to what God speaks to us.

Sacramentals to play an important role in the Christian life - the use of Holy Medals, Holy Water or

devotions like the Brown Scapular help us maintain the grace we receive in the sacrament. However like the sacraments they do not produce sanctifying grace *ex opere operato*, by virtue of the rite or substance employed. The power of the sacramentals is directly correlated to the inner disposition of the one using the sacramental. The special virtue recognized by the Church and experienced by Christians in the sacramentals should consist in the official prayers whereby we implore God to pour forth special graces on those who make use of the sacramentals. These prayers move God to give graces which He would not otherwise give. Christ has mercifully granted his salvation, it now up to us to make sure that we reap its fruits as He intended, thus becoming worthy children of God and Sharers in his Eternal Kingdom.

# IDENTITY AND MISSION



Communitarian Living as the Effective Method in Evangelization



Joshy Pazhukkathara CMI  
Bhopal

**T**he concept of mission has undergone a radical shift in our modern times. The greatest challenge that we face today is “the idolatry of the self” (George Kulangara, “Community Living as Evangelization Proper to our Times,” in CMI Prior General’s House, Communitarian Witnessing (2023-2024), Kochi, Viani Press, 2023: 82), which has turned our mission unproductive. In the past, preaching the Good News was a matter primarily of intellect and will; but today it has become a task of the heart rather than that of the intellect and will. Lack of life-witness, therefore, is the greatest challenge in terms of effectiveness in evangelization. People around us are not listeners to what we preach, but they are more viewers. Observation is considered to be the key to any admonitions of a moral or spiritual nature. People prefer learning from sight, and therefore, perception is the method of learning. They believe in what they see, not in what they hear.

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Social media platforms and aliother modern techniques in communication are propagators of the authenticity of speech and life. Before listening to what one speaks, these mediums make an evaluation of one’s lifestyle. Therefore, life-witness is the sole norm of the genuineness of one’s words. The one who does not walk-the-talk is mocked at his/her own words. It is in this context, that this article speaks of the communitarian living in the life of a consecrated person as the perfect and effective means of evangelization, as it is the apt medium of assuring validity of talk complimented through deeds. If community life is an identity marker, evangelization is the flipside of his/her identity. They go hand-in-hand. In other words, if the mission or task of a consecrated person is evangelization, community living is the identity revealer. Any separation between them would be a dangerous attempt for us CMIs; as we cannot take up mission away from our identity as consecrated persons.

## **Idolatry of the Self: Disruption of Mission**

The evolution of human consciousness is an accepted hypothesis among psychologists. However, evolution or development of consciousness seems to be at stake when it comes to the tendencies of self-glorification and self-gratification. As days go by, the selfish self has become more and more selfish to the extent that one becomes exclusively concerned about one’s own convenience, comforts; and one’s own name and fame, which is termed “the idolatry of the self;” one of the greatest challenges that we need to address in our present times. The concerns of the other are no concern for the one suffering the Idolatry of the self. Instead, we do find the self in an inflated state where others’ concerns are obscured from sight. In such a state one works for and aims at the name and fame of one’s own ego.





In our world, idolatry of the self” has become the greatest challenge for evangelization and mission. If and when one is able to free oneself from idolatry of the self, one’s preaching would be substantiated by convincing living witness. Therefore, the most effective means of evangelization would be the witness of a community; in a world where individualism has engulfed the value system. As Pope Francis observes, “one can observe in many agents of evangelization, even though they pray, a heightened individualism, a crisis of identity and a cooling fervour” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 78). Idolatry stands against God, and in reality, idols are not statues or figures in the worship places, but humans with an inflated self. Idolatry of the self for that matter may be the highest form of idol worship. If we categorize, all other forms such as idolatry of money, power, pleasures, etc. come under the idolatry of self. This is the greatest enemy that has

enslaved the community aspect of our consecrated life. Therefore, one needs to do all that is possible in a mode of urgency to get rid of this great danger.

### **Communitarian Living as the Antidote for Idolatry of the Self**

To be a Christian is to be a missionary; with the task to evangelize (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 120). However, evangelization today, for reasons of egoistic elements mentioned above, may not be effective from an individual effort; rather it should be a communitarian act; and for this reason, a religious community would be the ideal mold for evangelization for our times. Because it is in the religious communities, we find alternatives to the ideologies and idols that drive our contemporary egoistic culture. It is for this reason that we claim that communitarian living is the antidote for the idolatry of self. In *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis identified

the contemporary trends such as (i) a false cult of youth and appearance, (ii) spirituality without God, (iii) affectivity without community or concern for others, (iv) a fear of the poor, (v) offer of a future paradise that nonetheless seems increasingly distant, etc., as the ills that bleed people’s lives (*Christus Vivit*, 184). The instant linctus for all these problems as Pope Francis views is the consecrated community in the world. According to him, the community living of the consecrated persons has the power to heal. So, he calls upon the religious communities “throughout the world to offer a radiant and attractive witness of fraternal communion. Let everyone admire how you care for one another, and how you encourage and accompany one another” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 99). Therefore, as Pope Francis envisaged, the community living in consecrated life has the potential to heal this wounded world of egoism.

As the CMI Constitution admonishes we are to be “living witness,” and “living testimony” (CMI Constitution, 57) which alone can proffer effect in our apostolate.

### **The First Christian Community as Model for Consecrated Life**

The first Christian community is the model of community living for every consecrated community. “All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need” (Acts 2:44-45). Thus, we find that the tapestry of the early Christian community was based on two fundamental dynamics: (i) selling the personal properties, and (ii) sharing everything in common. In this sense, their very life was evangelization that attracted others into these communities.

For the first community personal property meant their material wealth and possession. But today the greatest hindrance to communitarian living is what we termed as the idolatry of self, which seems to be the critical personal property of an individual in modernity. Relinquishing it is the most difficult of all renunciation. As Kulangara observes, “The continued ‘sharing everything in common’ ensures that the discarded idolatry of the self does not bounce back in new garbs and camouflages.” (Kulangara, “Community Living as Evangelization Proper to our Times”: 90). Ananias and Sapphiras (Acts 5:1-11) can transpire in any consecrated community if persons are affected by a tint of the idolatry of self.

### **Communitarian Charism of Our Founders**

The founding fathers were very much saddened by the struggles of the people and all the more the injustices that prevailed in the Church and the society. It was a passionate love for the people and for God that guided them to work for the upliftment of the people and against the social injustices of society. It was this concern for the

people that brought them together. As Fr Kochumuttom notes, these priests already had a reputed position in the heart of the people for their holy and zealous life. “For all practical purposes, they were already leading consecrated life. With regard to the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience they were already practicing them. As priests, they were celibates, hardworking, satisfied with the minimum facilities and comforts of life, and obedient to their ecclesiastical superiors. They were also deeply prayerful and zealous pastors. Therefore, by the establishment of the new congregation what was newly added to their life was the communitarian dimension” (Spirituality of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara, p. 49).

It was this added dimension of community life that distinguished them from other priests of the time. The effectiveness of their apostolate was a natural outcome of this added element in their priestly life. In other words, it was this newly added identity that doubled the effectiveness of their mission. According to the founding fathers, selfishness and the egoistic attitudes of the people aggravated the miseries of the people, so they decided to form a community that could be a healing agent in the community that had been ruptured by societal problems. It is “Becoming a community where egos will be chastised and idols of the self will be smashed was how they became a cure for the society and the Church” (Kulangara, “Community Living as Evangelization Proper to our Times”: 91). To be holy in loneliness and isolation is not worth, because, our egoistic tendencies do not have space to pop up in isolation. Whereas in communities, where convenience is not the norm, renunciation of the self is not so easy. It is for this reason, that we say consecrated community is the antidote for idolatry of self, where one gets all opportunities to disavow the problem of selfishness. One may be a successful member with many followers on social media, because no chopping of one’s ego happens there, which is not the case in the



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actual communities. This is the reason why we propose communitarian living as foundational in evangelization. In other words, in a culture where individual interests and gains are the only criteria or norm of morality evangelizing is possible only through a life of witnessing in the community. Therefore, all our mission centers and centers of evangelization, be it with any apostolate, should be places of communitarian living, where people can observe life examples of renunciation of individualism and lives with genuine concern for others, which was the unique feature of our founding fathers.

### **Formation for Communitarian Living as Preparation for Evangelization**

Formation for mission in the mission” was the leading caption in our formative strategies in the past. But in our changed context the foundational element is not formation in mission but formation in community. This task should start from the time of initial formation. The candidates we accept are more vulnerable as they are from nuclear families, unlike the old times. The first lesson that they need to learn is to live in the community. Formators should understand that these students are from such a background where all their individual interests were cared for, and met with. A transfer from such a context to the context of a community should be the first aim of every formator in the initial stages. Therefore, the greatest criterion for promotion in these stages must be the degree of adaptation to communitarian living by the candidate. As the years pass by in formation, this element of communitarian living must be taken seriously before one is promoted for the first and all the more for perpetual profession, and ordination. Promotion should not be an automatic procedure if found immature in this phase, as it promotes an undesired and unsolicited mode of evangelization in the future.

Candidates must be given opportunities to free themselves from the idolatry of the self. Formators must invent strategies and methods to uncover these tendencies in the candidates and allow them to get rid of this innate predisposition that hinders effective evangelization in the future. Therefore, along with intellectual, human, spiritual and pastoral formation, community formation must be the fundamental and normative element in the formation. Learning to be a gentle member of the community is more of an element of transformation in formation.

### **A Paradigm Shift for Mission**

Formation for community should not be limited to the realms of initial formation, but it should be made an integral part of ongoing formation. Wherever our members stay, communitarian living should be made the basic structure and prerequisite for evangelization; whether it be in the global mission or in our missions in the North or South of our country. This should be the greatest and the immediate task that the provincials must be entrusted with. In case some find it difficult to live in the community there should be opportunities to make them trained for this, before we carry on with the evangelization process. Because undertaking evangelization at the cost of communitarian living is allowing the process to happen at the cost of sacrificing our identity as consecrated people. Hence, in this year of communitarian living, if we cannot make a paradigm shift in training our people for communitarian living then, our observatory year would be ineffective and ostensible. In some cases, the superiors may have to chop out those elements that hinder communitarian living; it could be the responsibility that one is entrusted with, or the position one holds, etc. In such cases, those hyphenated identities must be removed so that we can serve the individual for the sake of our primary call of evangelization through the community. In conclusion, I would like to em-

phasize that as consecrated people our mission is clear and precise, that is, to evangelize through communitarian living. Away from our community evangelization has no meaning in the life of a consecrated person. Only evangelization through community keeps the identity of a consecrated person without rupture as it keeps his/her identity intact with his/her task or mission. In most of the cases, these two are apart, either the mission, which takes away our identity or safeguarding our identity without carrying out the mission. In both these instances, a radical shift should occur so that our evangelizing mission may be effective and fruitful in modern times.





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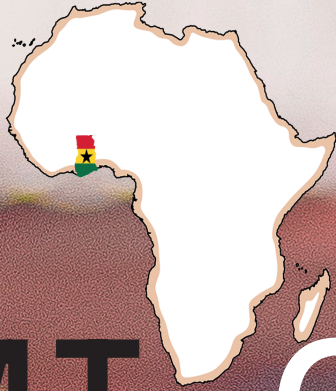
Our Catholic schools exist to help young people attain holiness in their lives, that is, to become saints.

Salvatore Joseph  
American prelate of the Catholic Church and  
the archbishop of Archdiocese of San Francisco

Experience is shared and transmitted  
to the next generation in Mission

Experience





# CMI Ghana Mission

CMI Congregation also has contributed to the growth of Christianity in Africa through her zealous and passionate missionaries in Kenya, Madagascar, Ghana, South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Tanzania and Uganda. In this article we shall focus specifically on the contributions of CMI missionaries in Ghana for the last almost 40 years.









Shibu Mandaly CMI  
Ghana Mission

**T**he origins of Christianity in Africa go back to the times of the Apostles and are traditionally associated with the name and teaching of Mark the Evangelist. The evangelization of the continent began with Egypt and North Africa in the first century, the regions of Sub-Saharan Africa which includes the present-day Benin, Sao Tome, Angola, Mozambique and Madagascar in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and an extraordinary missionary effort in Africa in the nineteenth century. Africa has responded with great generosity to Christ's call and witnessed a period of rapid growth in number. African continent is blessed with countless Saints, Martyrs, Confessors and Virgins. Some of the great figures of Africa are Origen, Saint Athanasius, Saint Cyril, Tertullian, Saint Cyprian, Saint Augustine and so on. Saint John Paul II attributed the splendid growth and achievements of the Church in Africa to the heroic and selfless dedication of the generation of missionaries (EA 35).

### Christianity in Ghana

Ghana is one of the five English speaking countries situated on the West Coast of Africa. It shares boundaries with Togo to the east, la Cote d'Ivoire to the west, Burkina Faso to the north and the Gulf of Guinea, to the south. All these bordering countries are French speaking. A country covering an

area of 238,500 square kilometres (India is 13 times bigger than Ghana), Ghana has an estimated population of 32,978,487 (June 2023), drawn from more than one hundred ethnic groups - each with its unique dialects. English, however, is the official language, a legacy of British colonial rule. Ghana was called "Gold Coast" because of gold in this area. In 1957, Ghana became the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to attain independence. Accra is its capital and is politically divided into sixteen regions.

Ghana is a democratic and a Christian country. The religion wise population of Ghana consists of Christians 71.2% (Pentecostal/Charismatic 28.3%, Protestant 18.4%, Catholic 13.1%, others 11.4%), Muslim 17.6%, traditional 5.2%, other 0.8%, none 5.2% (as of December 2019).

It is generally accepted by scholars that, 20 January, 1482 was the date on which Christianity was first introduced to West Africa in modern times because on that particular day Don Diego d'Azambuja led an expedition of 600 men to Elmina, near Cape Coast in Ghana and Holy Mass was offered for the first time on the sandy beach of Elmina. After negotiation with the chief, they were given a site where they built a chapel and dedicated it to St. George. In every fort the Portuguese kings built in West Africa, they stationed a Chaplain to serve the spiritual needs of the soldiers and European merchants. Despite this primary responsibility of the Chaplains they rendered some services to some local Africans. By 1554, the king of Portugal had realised that Chaplains could not establish the Catholic Church in the Gold Coast. The loose lives of the soldiers and merchants in the forts hindered effective evangelization. Thus Propaganda Fide assigned the Gold Coast to the Society of African Mission (SMA) as their new mission territory in the later part of 1879. On 18 May 1880, two SMA missionaries, August Moreau and Eugene Murat came to Elmina. Thus the Catholic faith was planted in the Ghanaian soil around 1880 and its centenary jubilee was cele-

brated in 1980 with Pope John Paul II as the principal celebrant at the sports stadium in Kumasi, Ghana.

The history of Catholicism among the Asante dates back to 1878, when Fr. Louis Charles Gommenginger (a Holy Ghost Priest) visited Kumasi. The Ashanti Kingdom was the largest empire on the Gold Coast. The kingdom was comprised of the Twi-speaking members of the Akan people. The apostolic vicariate of Kumasi came into existence on 2 February 1932 and promoted to the status of Diocese in 1950 and to metropolitan Archdiocese of Kumasi in 2001. Most Rev. Peter Kwasi Sarpong was consecrated Bishop of Kumasi on 8 March 1970 as the fourth bishop of the diocese, second among Ghanaian, and first ever Asante bishop (1970 - 2008). The area covered by Kumasi diocese at that time was that of Ashanti and Brong - Ahafo Regions (states).

### CMIs in Ghana

The arrival of CMIs in Ghana mission resulted from a friendship of two priests: Fr Thomas Anicetus Aykara CMI and Fr. Joe Amoako - Adusei, a Ghanaian Priest. They met in Oxford, while doing their higher studies. Since they were classmates, Fr Joe Amoako - Adusei came to know rather well about the CMI congregation, its spirituality, and the different apostolate. After their studies they returned to their respective countries. Fr. Thomas Aykara later became the Prior General of the CMI congregation from 1978 to 1984 and Fr. Joe became the vicar general of the diocese of Kumasi. He informed the bishop of Kumasi about CMI congregation in 1980.

On 21 August 1981, Bishop Peter Kwasi Sarpong wrote a letter to Fr. Thomas Aykara, then Prior General of the CMI Congregation, requesting CMI priests for pastoral assistance in the diocese of Kumasi. On 13 September 1981, Fr. Prior General replied positively and the bishop kept in touch with him over two years.



## Saint Thomas Province, Kozhikode

On 11 March 1983, Fr Prior General wrote a letter to bishop of Kumasi to inform him that one of the nine provinces of CMI congregation, namely, St. Thomas province, Kozhikode has agreed to send three priests. On 14 February 1983, Fr. Sebastian Poonoly, Provincial Superior of Kozhikode province informed Bishop Sarpong about the willingness of three priests, namely, Rev. Fr. Caesarius Nalpathamkalam, Fr. Joseph Pullatt and Fr. Joseph Uppumackal, to do pastoral ministry in Ghana.

The three pioneering missionaries were supposed to land in Accra, the capital of Ghana on Saturday 3 December 1983 but due to delay of flight, they arrived on Sunday 4 December. Fr. Caesarius Nalpathamkalam was appointed as the Superior of the CMI community in Ghana.

One of the three missionaries, Fr. Joseph Uppumackal, had a 'cultural shock' and wanted to return home. After many consultations, bishop and the other two CMI priests sent him back to India on 13 December 1983. Bishop sent a letter to the Provincial Superior of Kozhikode informing about his plan to appoint Fr. Caesarius Nalpathamkalam and Fr. Joseph Pullatt, after completing the language and cultural classes, in the parish of Holy Rosary Church, Suame.

Recognizing the excellent pastoral work done by CMI Fathers in the diocese, Bishop requested for more such priests from the congregation but God's way was something different. Fr. Joseph Pullatt wrote a letter to bishop on 26 February 1984 that due to personal reasons, he would like to leave Ghana and he returned to India on 6 March 1984. Then Bishop wrote a letter to the Provincial Superior on 29 February 1984 requesting for a priest to replace Fr. Joseph Pullatt out of his concern for Fr. Caesarius who was left alone in Ghana.

On 30 August 1984, Fr. Sebastian



Provincial Superior, decided to send Fr. Thomas Purappanthanam to Ghana. After completing all formalities of the documents, Fr. Thomas arrived in Ghana on 24 March 1985. But on 15 October 1985, Fr. Thomas returned to India due to health problems. Fr. Caesarius continued to work in Kumasi. On November 1986, Provincial Superior informed bishop about his difficulty to find a suitable replacement for Fr. Caesarius Nalpathamkalam and therefore Calicut province was unable to renew the contract with the diocese. After three years of remarkable pastoral ministry in Ghana, Fr. Caesarius Nalpathamkalam returned to India. It should be remembered that those early part of eighties Ghana was passing through great economic crunch due to a fire outbreak all over Ghana. Most of the Cocoa farms went in flames because of the hot summer. People were queuing up for a loaf of bread in the markets.

On 25 June 1987, bishop wrote a letter to Fr. Vijayanand Nedumpuram, then Prior General, appreciating the pastoral work of the CMI Fathers and its impact on the Kumasi diocese and requesting him to send priests from other provinces. On 28 August 1987, Fr Prior General replied positively informing him that 'he would appeal to the other provinces and do his best to help him'. On 27 February 1988, Fr Prior General wrote again informing Bishop of Kumasi about the willingness of Sacred Heart Province, Kalamassery, to send priests.

On 27 February 1988, Fr Mathew Bassus, Provincial Superior of S.H. Province, informed the bishop that he would renew the contract with the diocese and would send three priests. Fr Provincial superior visited Ghana mission from 11 to 15 November 1988 and met bishop. According to their agreement, three priests, Fr John Thekkekara, Fr Yesudas Thaliyan and Fr T.A. Antony, boarded domestic flight to Bombay from naval airbase at Kochi on 17 February 1989 and at the wee

hours of 18 February, they boarded Zurich bound Swiss air flight and reached early morning hours of 18 in Zurich to board Accra bound Swiss flight that after noon. Accra is the capital of Ghana.

They were welcomed by the MC Brothers and another missionary sister from Kumasi at Kotoka International airport in Accra. After spending the night at Peace Villa, the Kumasi Diocesan guest house in Accra, the new comers left for Kumasi by road and reached Kumasi by noon and had lunch with MC Sisters at Kumasi. Sr. Evet MC, the Superior, and Sisters gave a warm welcome to the fathers. They were put up with MC Brothers at Pankrono, a suburb of Kumasi Metropolis, for a period of three months for language training and introduction to local culture. After language and cultural preparations, Fr. John and Fr. T.A. Antony were appointed Parish Priest and co-pastor respectively at Holy Rosary Parish, Suame and Fr. Jesudas was appointed the Parish Priest of St. Agnes Parish, Offinso – Maase, 30 km away from Kumasi city. On March 14 1990, Provincial approved a request from bishop to appoint Fr T. A. Antony as manager of the Catholic printing press and Catholic bookshop.

### **St John's Province, Bijnor**

When the Sacred Heart Province, Kalamassery was divided and St John's Vice Province, Bijnor was erected in 1991, Fr John Thekkekkara joined Carmel Province, Muvattupuzha and Fr Jesudas Thaliyan and T.A Antony joined St John's Vice-Province, Bijnor. Seeing the impressive, dedicated pastoral works of the CMI missionaries of the past and present in the diocese of Kumasi, Bishop Sarpong wrote a letter on 24 May 1991 requesting both S.H Province and St. John's Vice Province, Bijnor to renew the 1989 contract and to send more priests. For Bishop Peter Sarpong held the view that the person who tells the message after studying the situation is probably the most important point of departure in evangelisation. He is the agent, the evangeliser, the person who pro-

claims the Good News. Realizing the importance of the personnel in evangelization, he expressed in the letter about his desire to enter into a permanent contract with the CMI Congregation.

The Provincial of St. John's vice-Province, after consultations with Fr Prior General and the Provincial of S.H. Province, agreed to continue the mission of CMI Fathers in the diocese of Kumasi, Ghana. Fr T.A. Antony and Fr Jesudas continued their service there. Fr John Thekkekkara continued until he was called back by his Provincial. The Provincial of St John's Vice-Province and the diocese of Kumasi entered into an agreement on January 15 1992 for pastoral and missionary cooperation in Kumasi. In January 1995, Fr Thomas Podimattam was sent to replace Fr Jesudas and in November 1996, Fr Varghese Koikara was sent to replace Fr John Thekkekkara. In July 1998, the agreement of Bijnor Province with the diocese of Kumasi was renewed for an indefinite period. In March 2001 Fr Varghese Koikara returned to India due to health problems. In August 2003, Fr Thomas Mulangasseril and Fr Shaji Amphzhathinal were sent to Kumasi and served as assistant parish priests. In September 2004, Fr Thomas Podimattam returned to India. Fr T.A. Antony continued his service in the diocese of Kumasi as in charge of parish and outstations and manager of the Catholic press, Kumasi.

### **CMI Centres in Ghana Mission**

Bijnor province had decided to have a CMI house in Ghana in 1994 and the Bishop of Kumasi decreed on giving land to CMIs on 21 October 1996. CMIs have been looking for a piece of land from then to start a house. Bishop Peter K. Atuahene invited CMIs to his diocese i.e. Diocese of Goaso in 2007 and entrusted 33 acres of land. He was so enthusiastic to invite the CMIs because there were no men religious in his diocese and he was well known about the pastoral commitments of the CMIs in Kumasi Archdiocese. After acquiring the land, Fr Jose Mundadan started staying

in the house of Mr. Paul Atuahene, the younger brother of Bishop Peter Atuahene, at Brosankro, four kilometres from the acquired land, from August 2007 and involved in giving spiritual assistance to the catholic community there.

The foundation stone for the first CMI house and formation house was laid on 16 July 2008 by Most Rev. Peter K. Atuahene, the Catholic Bishop of Goaso and blessed on 8 December 2009 at Bechem and it was named after our Lady of Mount Carmel as 'Carmel House'. It was raised to the status of a Centre of the Province, as per the CMI Constitutions, in 2010 by Rev. Fr. Varghese Vithayathil CMI, Provincial Superior, St. John's Province, Bijnor and Fr. Jose Mundadan was appointed as the Director of the Centre and the Coordinator of CMIs in Ghana. Fr. Jose Mundadan left Ghana in June, 2020 due to illness. Fr. Shibu Mandaly was appointed as Coordinator in October, 2020 and the director of the centre from September, 2020 to June, 2023. Fr. Sebastian Chowaran is the present director from June, 2023.

The second CMI Centre is established in the diocese of Konongo-Mampong, the adjacent diocese of Kumasi Archdiocese. The entry of CMI Fathers to Konongo Mampong diocese was through the instrumentality of Madam Nana Akua and her generous contribution of 10 acres of land to CMI Fathers through the Diocese. She was a member of St. Michael's Parish Ahodwo, Kumasi and in January 2015, after visiting CMI Carmel School at Carmelkrom, Bechem, she informed Fr Benoj Makkollil, the parish priest at Ahodwo, her desire to donate 10 acres of land at Kwamang, her native place, to CMI Fathers. Her desire was that the CMI Fathers should start a school in the land and name it 'Marriet' School.

After much discussions and formalities, the land was finally handed over to CMI Fathers through the catholic diocese of Konongo-Mampong in 2018. A house was built





Chale Wote, the annual street art festival of Ghana, unsplash images

The arrival of CMI in Ghana mission resulted from a friendship of two priests: Fr Thomas Anicetus Aykara CMI and Fr. Joe Amoako - Adusei, a Ghanaian Priest. They met in Oxford, while doing their higher studies. Since they were classmates, Fr Joe Amoako - Adusei came to know rather well about the CMI congregation, its spirituality, and the different apostolate.





and Fr. Benoj Makkollil started staying in the house on 4 August 2019. The house was officially blessed by Fr Davis Varayilan, Vicar Provincial of Bijnor Province, on 23 September 2019. The place was named 'Maryland' and the house was given the name St. Mary's CMI House. It was raised to the status of a Centre of the Province on 15 February 2020 by Fr Biju Vadakkel CMI, the Provincial Superior, and Fr Benoj was appointed as the Director of the Centre. After completing his pastoral ministry at Yamfo in the diocese of Goaso, Fr. Lijin Chakkanat joined to form the third CMI community of Ghana in May 2020. Fr. Anoop Antony is the present director from June, 2023.

### Ministries in Ghana Mission

The source of inspiration for a CMI in any part of the world is the charism and vision of the founding fathers of the congregation. They found a happy blending of a life of solitude for the experience of the love of God and the need to work for the salvation of their fellow human beings. Their religious life was also "a life of total availability urging them to undertake with zeal for the sake of the Church and according to the needs of the time, the preaching of the gospel to the faithful, catechizing the new Christians, evangelizing the non-Christians... and labouring for the all-round building up of Christ's body, the Church." Drawing inspiration from the founding fathers of the Congregation, the CMIs involved in different ministries like priestly ministry, apostolate of theological training, education, media of communication, social apostolate and socio-cultural activities. The CMIs in Ghana mission also continued this legacy of the CMI congregation and involved in pastoral ministry, education and media of communication.

### Pastoral Ministry

The CMIs have been involved in the pastoral ministry from the very beginning of the Congregation. The CMI Constitutions highlight that the priestly ministry shall always take the first place among the fields



of apostolate (C.71). The CMIs in Ghana began with priestly ministry, first in different parishes of Archdiocese of Kumasi and then the diocese of Goaso, Konongo-Mampong and Archdiocese of Accra.

### **Pastoral Ministry in the Archdiocese of Kumasi**

The CMIs began their pastoral ministry in 1983 in the parish of Holy Rosary, Suame in the archdiocese of Kumasi. They were given a second parish of St. Agnes at Offinso-Maase in 1989 where Fr. Jesudas Thaliyan was appointed Parish Priest. Fr John Thekkekara and Fr T. A. Antony were appointed in the parish of Holy Rosary, Suame. In 1992, Bishop entrusted to CMIs a third parish, St. Anthony's Church at Buokrum where Fr T. A. Antony was appointed as Rector. Fr. Antony was also appointed as the parish priest at Kwadaso from 1999 to 2005. Fr. Thomas Podimattom was parish priest at Nkenkasu and Fr. Varghese Koikara at Akomadan.

In 2005, Archbishop Sarpong bifurcated three outstations, St. Michael's Church, Ahodwo, St. Joseph's Church, Apraman, and St. John's Church, Sokoban, from Ahinsan parish in 2005 and entrusted to the CMIs to form a CMI community at Ahodwo and to give pastoral care and develop the structure of these three churches. St. Michael's Church, Ahodwo was inaugurated on 18 June 2006 and Fr Jesudas Thaliyan was appointed as the first Rector and later first Parish Priest of Ahodwo Parish. Fr Benoj Makkolil was appointed Parish Priest at Ahodwo from 2007 to 2018 and during this period, Fr. Shibu Mandaly served as assistant parish priest from August 2009 to March 2011, Fr T.A. Antony stayed as a resident priest from March, 2011 to 2015 along with his assignment at the Catholic press and book shop and Fr Jomi Pathikulangara served as the assistant parish priest from 2014 to 2017. Fr Tomy Kappiarukudy replaced Fr Benoj as the Parish Priest of Saint Michael's Church on September 2018 and Fr Jomat John assisted him in the parish from 2017 to 2020. Fr. Sebastian

Chowaran became the assistant parish priest in 2022. In September, 2013, St. Joseph's Church, Apraman, one of the three outstations of Ahodwo parish, got elevated as a rectorate.

From 1983 to 2018, CMIs managed and developed seven parishes and their outstations in Kumasi Archdiocese: Suame, Offinso – Maase, Buokrom, Nkenkensu, Akomadan, Kwadaso and Ahodwo. Fr John Thekkekara of blessed memory was the mastermind and inspiration for the beginning of the perpetual adoration in Kumasi diocese. Fr. Jesudas organised people and financed for building the outstations of the Catholic communities in Offinso - Maase and Ahodwo Parish. In all these parishes, CMIs have touched the hearts of the faithful and left behind a unique CMI imprint on developing the Church spiritually and structurally and managing them with transparency and accountability.

### **Pastoral Ministry in the Diocese of Goaso**

In the diocese of Goaso, the CMIs are involved in the pastoral ministries at Bechem, Goaso, Sankore, Adugyama and Yamfo parishes and three outstations of Bechem parish. Fr. Austin Thenkudam served the parish at Bechem as Assistant Parish priest from 21 September 2008 to 25 October 2009. Fr Francis Kottekarotte was appointed as the Assistant Parish priest at the Cathedral Church, Goaso from September 2008 to May 2009 and later Parish priest at Sankore from May 2009 to May 2011. Fr. Jomi Pathikulangara did his pastoral ministry at Adugyama parish from January 2014 to July 2014. Fr. Jomat Kalapurakal did his pastoral ministry at the Cathedral Church, Goaso from July 2016 to July 2017. Fr. Lijin Chakkanatt, the new missionary in Ghana did his pastoral ministry at St. Anthony of Padua parish, Yamfo from October 2019 to April 2020.

Bishop Peter K. Atuahene bifurcated four outstations of Bechem Parish in 2018 and entrusted to the CMIs for the pastoral care and

structural developments. St. John of God, quasi Parish, Brosankro was inaugurated on 11 February 2018 and Fr Jomi Antony Pathikulangara is appointed as the first Parish priest.

### **Pastoral Ministry in the Archdiocese of Accra**

It was a long-cherished desire of CMI Fathers to have CMI presence in the archdiocese as Accra is the capital city of Ghana. We expressed our desire to Most Rev. Bonaventure Kwofie the Archbishop, through a letter and he was ready to accept the presence of CMIs in the Archdiocese. He has allowed CMIs to be incharge of one of the outstations of the Archdiocese called Mary Seat of Wisdom Catholic Church, Manhean. The place is one hour drive from the airport and closer to Accra - Kumasi high way. Fr. Jomat Kalapurackal is the priest incharge there.

### **Formation in Ghana Mission**

As per the request of the Bijnor province, Bishop of Kumasi by a letter dated 21 January 1996 authorized St John's Vice-Province to open CMI religious houses and formation house in Kumasi and to recruit candidates for CMI congregation. In October 1997, two scholastics Cyriac Thomas and Benoj Makkolil were sent to Ghana as regents and later they joined St Peter's Regional Seminary, Cape Coast for their theological studies. In April 1999, Bro Cyriac returned to India due to health problems. Bro Benoj Makkolil completed his theological studies in Cape Coast and was ordained a priest on 15 October 2002. He began his pastoral ministry in Ghana from 2005.

In August 2003, Bros Francis Kottekarotte, Shibu Mandaly, Austin Thenkudam and Moses Vazhayil were sent to Ghana to study theology at St Peter's Regional Seminary, Cape Coast. A study house was opened in September, 2003 in a rented building in Cape Coast where Fr Josin Kaithakulam was in-charge of the brothers. Fr. Jose Mundadan replaced Fr. Josin in 2005. The scholastics completed



their theological studies successfully, received diaconate ordination in Kumasi in February 2007 and received priestly ordination in Kerala. Three of them returned to Ghana for priestly ministry.

In 2018, two seminarians, Bros. Lijo Mathew and Tephin Mathew joined the CMI community Carmelkrom for regency. They assisted the Fathers in the pastoral ministry at different Churches and in the school by guiding the students in developing skills. They completed their regency in June 2020 and returned back to India for their theological studies.

The CMIs ventured into recruiting the local candidates in 1990s but could not continue due to various reasons. Again we began the “Come and See” programmes and formal aspirancy in 2016. Bro. Julius Harrison was the first aspirant and Fr Jesudas Thaliyan CMI was his Rector. He made his first profession on 8 December 2020 and started his philosophical studies at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore. Unfortunately, he had to leave the congregation in 2023.

### **Communication Media**

The media, especially in their most modern forms, have a wide-ranging impact. It is the duty of the Church to make the best possible use of them in order to spread the message of salvation. Accepting the challenge, Fr T.A. Antony took initiative to use the media of publication to bring the Good News to more people. The bishop of Kumasi appointed Fr T. A. Antony as manager of the Catholic printing press and Catholic bookshop and he served it for two consecutive terms 1990-1997 and 2009- 2015. He organised and financed people to translate the Deutero-canonical books into the local language Asante Twi. He published Deutero-canonical books, catechism books, and daily guides (pocket Ordo) for liturgical use. He had run successfully a bi-monthly with daily biblical reflections, the matter was supplied by Good Shepherd ministries in USA. He was doing the reproduction and distribution. It began with

minimum of 500 copies and it ran up to 8000 copies. It is still continued by charismatic group in Ghana. He has rendered yeomen service to the Church in Ghana by publishing Bible and related literature.

### **Educational Institutions**

Realizing that schools are very essential for evangelization and the only means to have access to the families and villages, the foundation stone for a CMI school at Carmelkrom, Bechem was laid by Fr. Varghese Vithayathil, Provincial Superior, October, 2010 and blessed on 22 October 2011 by Most. Rev. Peter K. Atuahene, and it was named ‘CMI Carmel School’. Fr. Jose Mundadan was the proprietor of the School from 2011 to 2020. Fr. Austin Thenkudam was the administrator of the house and the school from 2009 to 2015. Fr Shibu Mandaly was the headmaster of the school from 2011 to 2015. He was replaced by Fr. Tomy Kappiarukudy in 2015 and served until 2018 and again Fr Shibu Mandaly took over the post of headmaster in 2018. Fr. JomiPathikulangara was the financial administrator of the school from September 2014 to June, 2022. Fr. Anoop Antony became the financial administrator in July, 2022. Fr. Sebastian Chowran is the proprietor of the school from June, 2023.

The construction of the second CMI School in Ghana was started in August, 2019. It was a divine providence that Fr. Francis Kottekarotte who was a missionary in Ghana and at present doing his pastoral ministry in the diocese of Passau in Germany got a generous donor in the person of Madam Therese Furst to contribute Euro 100,000.00 for the school construction. CMI Marriet School was blessed on 15 February 2020 by Bishop Joseph Osei-Bonsu. Fr. Lijin is the headmaster of the CMI Marriet School. Along with the educational apostolate, the CMI community also serves the nearby outstations of Ahenkro, Bomang and Offinso parishes. Fr. Benoj was the proprietor of the school from 2020 to June, 2023. Fr. Anonty Anotny is the new Proprietor.

### **5. Present Situation of CMIs in Ghana**


St John’s Province, Bijnor has two Centres, two Parishes and an outstation in Ghana and eight priests are serving at present in the mission

### **Unrealized Dreams of Ghana Mission**

To start a CMI house in the archdiocese of Kumasi where we began our mission. To recruit local candidates and give formation in the mission to continue the CMI mission in Ghana. To expand our presence and mission to other dioceses like Sunyani and Techiman, the adjacent dioceses of Kumasi and Goaso. To raise Ghana mission to a sub-region and later to a region so that the mission would grow faster, lasting and effective.

To venture into new ministries like taking up the renewal centre of the diocese or establishing a centre for renewal of priests, religious and laity, youth animation, media and publication and so on. To have more CMI members in the mission to realize these dreams. Unfortunately, the mission in Ghana began with three priests in 1983 has just increased to eight (8) in number of priests even after 38 years.

CMI mission in Ghana had to face many challenges in the initial stage but it is these challenges that kept the Ghana mission strong and vibrant and move forward by trusting in the Lord. The history of CMI mission in Ghana had ups and downs but by the providence of God it is moving in the right direction. The founding fathers of CMI congregation depended entirely on the loving providence of God. This continuing accompaniment of divine providence can be seen throughout the history of our Congregation. The CMI Constitutions begin with the sentence “God, in His loving providence has called us, Carmelites of Mary Immaculate, to a community of love in the Church” (C. 1). Therefore, trusting in the Providence of God is the distinguishing mark of a CMI. We the missionaries in Ghana could experience the providence of God

A young boy is swimming in a body of water, looking directly at the camera. In the background, there are several multi-story buildings, some with red and yellow facades. A large orange circle is overlaid on the image, containing text. A black arrow points from the top of the circle to the buildings in the background.

CMI mission in Ghana had to face many challenges in the initial stage but it is these challenges that kept the Ghana mission strong and vibrant and move forward by trusting in the Lord. The history of CMI mission in Ghana had ups and downs but by the providence of God it is moving in the right direction.

in its growth and development, especially in getting a parish, a land for CMI house, in constructing a school, etc. There are still many challenges that we face with regard to the recruitment and the formation of local candidates, personnel and financial resources but we move on trusting in the providence of God and in the generous and supportive hands of the Province.

The CMI Mission has made its impact on the Church in Ghana. The bishops and the priests are well pleased with CMI missionaries and

their apostolate in their respective dioceses. The simple life style, availability, commitment to the ministry, hard work and the team Spirit of the CMI fathers are well appreciated by the bishops and the priests. The letters written by Bishop Sarpong during 1987, 1988 to Calicut province, and to the Prior General prove that CMIs excelled in their pastoral ministry. It was because of the excellent commitment of the CMI missionaries that bishop requested for more CMI priests and reminded to renew contract regularly and indefinitely. The invitation

of Bishop Peter to the diocese of Goaso and offering 32 acres of land at Bechem is another proof of the acceptance of the CMI missionaries in Ghana. The offering of 10 acres of land in the diocese of Konongo Mampong by Madam Nana Akua to the CMI missionaries to start a school is the recognition of our efficiency and effectiveness of running educational institution in Ghana mission. Acceptance and recognition should not lead the missionaries to complacency but to commit themselves in the mission with more vigour and passion.





*the experience  
of a missionary priest  
in ghana*





Tomy Kappiarukudy CMI  
Ghana Mission

**T**he priest is a man after the heart of God. He acts in the person of Christ and represents him everywhere he finds himself. The unique element about the priesthood is the offering of Sacrifice. It is said therefore when priests are not able to exercise the duty that makes them priests of God and servants of the people. In a world wrapped in a cluster of rituals and worship, the life of the priest sometimes become challenging when the faithful people are being swayed from their faith. At times, there are internal conflicts within the Christian sects involving doctrinal issues and of course marital issues that do not permit some Christians to partake in the Eucharistic meal. This article aims at summarizing my entire priestly life.

### Life in Northern India

The life of a missionary priest is extraordinary. It takes on the form of making disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19ff). For twenty-eight (28) years, I have been in the field of education in Northern India. Most of my priestly life have been spent in forming young ones in schools. Northern part of India is situated in an area where there is no proper exercise of the priestly ministry. Most of my priestly life was spent with non-Christians or with a few Christians. At North India, what missionaries can do is to serve in education and provide health care to the people. It is therefore understandable that I had to work as an educationist. There were no public Masses and reception of the sacraments. Things

were very tough because the receptivity of the Christian way of worship was not the best at all. In all doom and gloom, school children were introduced in a very special way to accepting some Christian prayers and abiding by Christian standards. They were taught the Catholic way.

Afterwards, I got an opportunity to come to Africa, Ghana.

### Africa

Africa is a continent which has a firm belief in the Supreme Being. The Supreme Being is the apex of their worship after which the lesser gods, ancestors and other spirit beings come. There is a reverential fear for the Supreme Being and lesser gods through whom they pray. For the African, worship and culture are intertwined; they cannot be separated. In every activity involves, the Supreme Being is the point of reference.

### Ghana

Ghana is a very welcoming country in Africa. It has a population of about 31 million people. There are three major religions in Ghana; Christianity, Islam and Traditionalists. In Christianity, there are many denominations which make up Christians in general. Pentecostalism is on the rise in Ghana and many people flock to these Pentecostal churches to seek urgent solutions to their present predicaments. The triumphant entry of Pentecostalism, charismatism, even esotericism, Spiritism, occultism and Satanism are in our midst. Before the advent of Christianity, most of the cultures had their own traditions and their respective gods. These gods inhabited the various water bodies, forests and shrines and there were some belief systems that shaped the average Ghanaian. Indeed, even now, there is still the existence of such belief systems. There is the belief in witchcraft, sorcery and magic. These are also backed by traditional beliefs and taboos like resting on Tuesdays without going to the farm, fishing or hunting. Most of the time, the elderly women are known as witches; they are mostly poor and widows.

In fact, the belief in witchcraft has necessitated the establishment of a witch camp in the Northern region of Ghana. In the Ghanaian thinking, there are two main types of witches, black and white witches. As their names suggest, the white is for doing something good like protecting the family from harm and the black on the other hand used for doing evil.

In the Ghanaian rite of passage (the processes one passes from birth to death), there are significant symbolisms that really portray spirit of the Ghanaian and how he attaches importance to life and even death. When one is born, the child is out-doored on the eighth day. This outdoor program gives the child a privilege of getting a name and being incorporated into the family as a lawful member. The child then receives primary training which includes greeting, language, formation of one's attitude and other manners. As the child grows, he/she reaches the puberty stage where they are ushered into adulthood. In the case of girls and depending on the tribe, the Akan people of Ghana call it, "bragor". This rite gives one the ability to marry lawfully. Most Ghanaian tribes approve of polygamy and that becomes very difficult when it comes to Christian marriage. They are interconnected by family units and these family units grow into a community and eventually a society.

### Death

Death is an occasion when a deceased person sets out on a journey to the underworld or spirit world to which his ancestors have already gone, a place where he must settle any account he or she has with those who have gone before him. Death is the only truly universal aspect of the human experience; one that invites a diversity of responses across cultures.

Death is perceived by the Ghanaian to be unsympathetic, callous, sadist and unforgiving inter alia. Death respects no one and spares none. The universality of death is expressed in several metaphorical Ghanaian maxims such as; "owu adar nndow baako", meaning



one individual. Every ethnic group in Ghana has a way of burying the dead. Most of the essential aspect is the unity it brings among family and friends and the roles each individual plays in the burial custom.

## The Sacraments

Having seen the Ghanaian way of life, let us now look at how the Ghanaian perceives of the sacraments.

The Sacrament of Baptism is for the Ghanaian a way of making one a part of the family. Indeed, baptism is not far away from the Ghanaian at all. Christians readily accept baptism because it is the sure way of accepting Christ into one's life and it gives one the right to become the child of God. Many people would want to be baptized. Infant baptism is very important to the Ghanaian. At times, for proper documentation, parents want their children to be baptized while they are infants even though many people prefer the adult baptism.

Confirmation is well received by Catholics. It helps them to receive the Holy Spirit. In the Ghanaian society, one is confirmed using various means and depending on the social group one belongs, the fellow receives approval from the society. It is therefore not out of place that Catholics want to receive confirmation after baptism. This is done for candidates who are 13 years and above. Before marriage or sacred order, every one receives the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The Holy Eucharist which is a very important part in Catholicism is very important to Ghanaians. Those who receive it do so worthily. Indeed, there are some instances where because of marriage and other related things such as grace offense, one may not decide to receive communion at all. In this case, one can say that a majority of Ghanaian Catholics receive Holy Communion piously. Music and dance is very much emphasized here to make the active participation in the Holy Eucharist so real. The intentions for the Mass and

offertory are part of the Eucharistic celebration and almost everyone involves themselves.

The sacrament of Reconciliation is not so much frequented. Formally, it was but now the standard has dropped significantly. Most people do not see the need to go for confession when they can actually pray to God directly. I believe it is due to inadequate catechesis and formation.

The sacrament of Anointing of the sick is seldom administered. A few people ask for this sacrament after which they are given the Holy Communion. There is an erroneous ideology that once one is anointed, the fellow would not live again, death rather awaits the fellow. Again, this is a matter of formation of the conscience. There is more room for improvement.

The sacrament of Marriage plays a very vital role in the life of the Ghanaian. Inasmuch as it is a blessing for many, it is also a bane for others. In Ghana, there are two types of marriages, the traditional and the church marriage. Most women, for no fault of theirs, are part of the many wives of their husbands. In this case, receiving communion becomes very problematic. Sometimes too, their husbands are not willing to bless their marriage in Church. This is because the traditional way of marriage is considered as valid among Ghanaians. In such a dicey situation, most of them, especially women are very desperate in receiving communion. Some even feel ashamed of coming to church because they would be left behind when people are going for communion. Some husbands have a wrong take on marrying in Church because they think by that, they cannot marry again. However, most of the couples in Ghana first give birth to their children before they bless their marriage.

There is a lot of vocation in Ghana. Many people enter the priestly and religious life. Even though the number keeps increasing, more priests are needed to serve the Church in various ways.

Having had the above background of the African continent, Christianity has thrived in Africa, especially in Ghana. The Catholic Church is very strong here and things seem to be moving very well for me. Indeed, I now have the opportunity to celebrate the word and sacraments in a more profound manner. We have been able to secure a number of parishes in Ghana and I am blessed to be a pastor to one of the parishes in the Archdiocese of Kumasi, St Michael Parish, Ahodwo. The faithful are very good and welcoming. The celebration is much alive than ever before and everyone does something for the betterment and growth of the Church. In Ghana, I find more fulfilment in my pastoral activities and I am more involved in the everyday life of the Church. We celebrate Mass every day with a number of the faithful attending. However, there is a problem with language barrier since I cannot speak the local dialect. I contact the local priests to help in the celebration of the Mass especially with the second Mass which is normally said in the local language. Notwithstanding these, I have also taken the pain to learn to read Asante Twi with the help of my able catechists and seminarians who come for pastorals.

Apart from the Holy Eucharist, there are other para liturgical activities like catechesis, revivals, and rosary prayers. Devotional societies have also been formed to help the individual membership and the full realization of the Church's goals. There are several opportunities to celebrate all the sacraments in this parish. The population is about 800 people in the main parish and about 500 in the outstation. The Holy Eucharist is the most attractive and spiritual nourishment for me because of the active participation of the congregation. There are different societies who help in all liturgical activities. The associations help in cleaning the church and bring offertory in turns. They also lead the bidding prayers. There are many welfare associations also who assist me in the various occasions the church must reach out to the poor, or the bereaved.



My priestly life in both India and Africa has taught me a great deal of lesson and this proves that there is more room for improvement. I believe that the missionary zeal is emphasized above all else, the Church and Christianity in general will grow to the heights we all desire. I always ask the people to pray for me as I do same for them so that together, we may attain eternal bliss with God.

There is a lot of vocation in Ghana. Many people enter the priestly and religious life. Even though the number keeps increasing, more priests are needed to serve the Church in various ways.





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



Dear,

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

Those who wish to join,

## One Family One Missionary Prayer Programme

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The minute you walk outside  
of your church on Sunday  
you're in mission territory.

**Bishop Robert Barron**

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



Evangelize





Mission

Meditation

Ashram Experience

Swami Ved Bharati, following the Swami Rama of Himalayan tradition, founded the Swami Rama Grama Ashram a 'village' for the spiritual seekers. The mission of the Ashram is to teach and make available the knowledge of Yoga for a better meditation and a simple living. SRSB does not aim at any special religion. But understand every religion as means of union with God. They promote all religions and adopt whatever good comes from them. This is reflected in the premises of the Ashram where the statues of different deities from different religions are given prominence.

The statue of Mother Mary is a great attraction. They value the tradition of Swami Rama and Swami Veda Bharati. They bow before their portraits after each session whether it be class, meditation or yoga. This expresses their great appreciation for the tradition. The visitors come to the ashram mainly for a peaceful stay seeking God through Yoga and meditation. And they go back with a rich spiritual experience. The duration of the stay can be different from five days to three years. Mainly foreigners are attracted to this ashram. The inmates of the ashram are always cheerful and joyous. Their way of treating people is appreciable. They keep smiling faces which ignite a unique feeling of joy in the visitors. It is sure that the joy we see outside is the joy of their heart. I felt the spiritual vibration when I interacted with them. They are great masters, not only of yoga and meditation, but also of humility and simplicity as well. I did not have much difficulty in following their strict schedule except the early morning rising at 4:30 am.

Sometimes the long hours of yoga sessions also were tiresome for me. The meditation which lasted one hour was a bit uncomfortable because of the body pain. The four day stay in the ashram has contributed much to my spiritual life. What touched me most is their open mindedness towards all the religions. Swami Rama and Swami Veda Bharati were able to give med-

itations and talks based on the scriptures of all the religions. This surprised me. Another thing I benefited is the practice of pranayama. The science of breath has a great deal to play in leading a healthy life. The practice of yoga and meditation leads to a disciplined life. Folding of the blankets quietly is the beginning of Yoga, they said. The disciplined life inspired me to a great extent. The Indian ashram model can be a means of evangelization because this is something connected with inner joy and which people seek.

But only those who are really motivated can do this. Otherwise it may become a mockery. The attitude of openness towards other religions is a must in such ashrams which we Christians lack. If one can do these, it is a great means of evangelization. Their method of meditation is very useful in the life of a pastor than in pastoral ministry. These kinds of methods of meditation and breathing exercises help one to improve patience in listening and to have more control over one's emotion. Jesus accepted everyone to his life. We did not despise anyone on account of his socio-religious or economic status. Treating everyone equal is the best way of leading a Christian life. We make lot of studies on scriptures of other religions. But why are we not open to their practices and take what is good? Is it because of the feeling of superiority? Serve humanity and take inspiration from whatever goodness that leads to salvation. Manav Seva evam Prabhu Seva. As I left SRSB, I had a feeling that the time spent there was too short. It takes three days to adjust with the sitting postures and exercises and getting the body flexible. The bodily difficulties prevent concentration. Mostly people seek God at the time of crisis. The experience at SRSB enabled me/us to create a generous heart to seek God at the time of tribulations as well as happiness. It is time that we think of a common ground where everyone can experience Jesus and learn his teaching instead of fighting in the name of divisions.



Libin Thekkumkattil CMI  
Bengaluru



# vinayasadhana village programme



**Village Contextual Formation programme  
DVK, Vinayasadhana, Bengaluru**

# Mission Villages

**T**he First Year MA and Diploma students of Formative Spirituality and Counselling went to Yeldur, in Kolar district of Karnataka for the Village Contextual Formation programme. The focus of the trip was experiential learning. The five-day trip from 12th to 16th December 2022, was organised by Rev. Fr. Jobi Thurackal, the director of Vinayasadhana, in collaboration with Mr Nagaraj. Mr Nagaraj is the local coordinator of the Centre for Social Activities (CSA), a project of Christ (deemed to be) University, in Yeldur. Dr. Victor Paul, HoD of the department of Social Science, Christ University, and the director of CSA gave us a preparatory talk. He pointed out that in the current socio-political-economic-cultural scenario, we live in a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, anarchy) world. Transformation of the world begins with our self. Dr Victor was assisted by Ms Catherine Naratha, the CSA coordinator from Christ University.

The days before the trip were busy with preparations – practices for action songs, street plays, preparation of placard and other aids, shopping for prizes, and so on. The excitement was indeed mounting. On the day of departure, after a short time of prayer in the Vinayasadhana chapel, we were ready to depart. The bus journey to the village was spent with singing and games. We were upbeat! On arrival at the CSA in Yeldur, we had the orientation, during which we learnt of the initiatives by the CSA in some of the villages during the last 10 years. We also got to know about some of the ground reality of the people.

### **Programme in the Villages**

Overall, our scheduled programme consisted of various activities in five different villages over the five days. Day 1 was set aside for the Chintamankhalli village. On account of heavy rains, the school had a holiday. So, the plan to visit the school had to be dropped, and we settled instead for a village transect. Going through the village, we visited houses and met the families

for a first-hand experience of the life they lived, and to create an awareness on health and hygiene. On Day 2, we made our way to the Laxmisagar village. We spent quality time with the children in the Primary School, teaching and interacting with them. The children were smart, eager to learn, talented in dancing, and showed a good sense of responsibility in the school. Since the local panchayat had its office in this village, a meeting with the Panchayat members was arranged. We addressed the health and hygiene concerns in the village to one of the members, who heard us patiently and was polite in his response. It was a learning experience, as well as a great feeling of achievement over the endeavour.

Nachanhalli village was scheduled for Day 3. We visited the Anganwadi and the Lower Primary School. Once again it was an opportunity for some creative teaching, interacting with the children and some fun time with them. The highlight of the day was the Shramadaan, in the form of a cleanliness drive around the school campus together with the children. It was a way of teaching by example the importance of keeping their environment clean. We also had a rally through the village and a street play on health and hygiene before calling it a day. We visited Ballupalli village on Day 4. There again we spent time at the ECC (Anganwadi) and the Lower Primary School teaching and conducting some games. Amid the social visits, as a community of priests and religious, we had the opportunity to pray for Mr Nagaraj's family for some special intentions. Later in the day, we returned to the Laxmisagar village and held a rally there with the school children, ending with street plays. This was the first time a rally was held in this village. As a result, it was well attended. At the Mahamadpur village on Day 5, we had a meeting with the CSA aided Self-Help Group ladies. It was an eye opener at what these simple yet empowered women were capable of. Fr Joshy, one of the students expressed it well: "The encounter with the self-help group was a fascinating and motivating event.

The self-help organisation, founded ten years ago and exclusively composed of women, discusses topics including budgeting, assisting children in need of education, planning cultural festivals, and offering the resources needed for high-quality development. The group were a motivating example for many villagers to put in significant effort, practise self-discipline, and support the village." The schedule included a village transect. Visiting families and interacting with them was a unique experience during this entire trip. We also made time to visit the Primary School and spend some time with the children. Although there were only three children in the school, the teacher was dedicated to her teaching without compromising on their education.

### **Community Life**

As a group of priests and religious sisters, there was the aspect of community life during this trip. It was an important aspect for us. Our day began with a time of prayer together, followed by Holy Eucharist celebrated by one of our professors who had stayed the night with us.

We had our meals together as one family. We spontaneously took care of each other, some taking it on to warm up water for baths, sharing our belongings when any had a need, looking after those who felt unwell, etc. On most evenings we enjoyed time in recreation, playing games, sharing jokes and riddles and relaxing. It was a lot of fun while bonding with each other. Even though it was just five days, we got to know each other better. In a way, it felt like we were naturally living the spirituality of the early Christians, being of one heart and mind and living a common life. The presence of one of our professors with us added to the joy and family spirit. While we thank our beloved professors for their able organising, coordination, assistance and personally accompanying us on this trip, the assistance of Mr Nagaraj requires a special mention. He was all out to provide us with anything that was needed to make our stay comfortable within the village circumstances.



We reminisce this memorable trip giving thanks to God almighty. To Him be the highest glory! Experiential Learning Undoubtedly all of us had a wonderful experience during this Village Exposure Programme (VEP). The sharing of experiences from some of the Priests and Sisters highlights this fact.

✓ The best part of my experience is the unity and togetherness of our team members. All were very much cooperative, working together with one heart and mind. It was simply wonderful and truly a Tabor experience. (Sr Nancy).

✓ Our consecrated life is in itself a witness. When we approached the Hindu and Muslim families they were welcoming. Therefore, we have the obligation to go out of our way beyond our Christian communities to bear witness with our lives by listening to them. (Fr Vijay)

All of us have problems in life and each one of us tackle the problems differently. Though the people and especially farmers had plenty of problems they seemed to be happy. The VEP taught me that I should face my problems not by grumbling but with a smile. (Fr Robert).

✓ The question, "how many ways are there to God?" was answered with, "There are as many billions of ways as there are billions of people on this earth." These days I was inspired by the thought that I should treat all people and all cultures with respect. (Sr Anjali)

✓ The VEP in Kolar was a unique experience for me. A happy life is possible even amid lifelong uncertainties. We (27) students of Vinayasadhana could live happily despite many inconveniences, such as, cold nights, common dormitory, floor as a bed, scarcity of water, traveling by goods carrier etc. Each of us learned to sacrifice little things for others to make our stay comfortable. (Fr Vijay)

I journeyed from classroom to the real field. I saw the real faces of the father and mother of the house, the

face of the children, and the elderly. Being with the people boosted my mission spirit. I learned to give and take. I learned to be more grateful in life. Looking at the people I learned to live here and now. (Sr Grace).

✓ For me it was a personal encounter with God. As I encountered the people I encountered God. It was like seeing the faces of the people as Jesus saw the face of humanity. (Sr Alphonse).

The people are happy despite many hardships. It made me reflect that though I receive things freely, at times I am unhappy and grumble.

✓ I am very grateful and thankful to God for giving me this opportunity to see the face of God in Kolar district in the poverty of the people. (Fr Sudhakar)

✓ To me the village was like heaven. I saw true human relationships,

true love, care and sharing; people dedicating their lives for others. (Sr Soumya).

The people of the village are the happiest people. Even though they live in small houses, their hearts are very big to receive the people. (Sr Reena).

✓ Street play is one of the most powerful means to communicate social values. I feel proud of being part of the street play, it was a maiden experience to act out in the streets to promote values. (Fr Vijay).

✓ The kindness and generosity of the farmers was touching, considering the huge loss they suffered in their fields due to the heavy rains. The magnanimity of their hearts was divine! They remain positive even in adversity and find happiness in little things. They inspired me that 'no trial is so great that it can take my happiness from me.' (Sr Benilda).



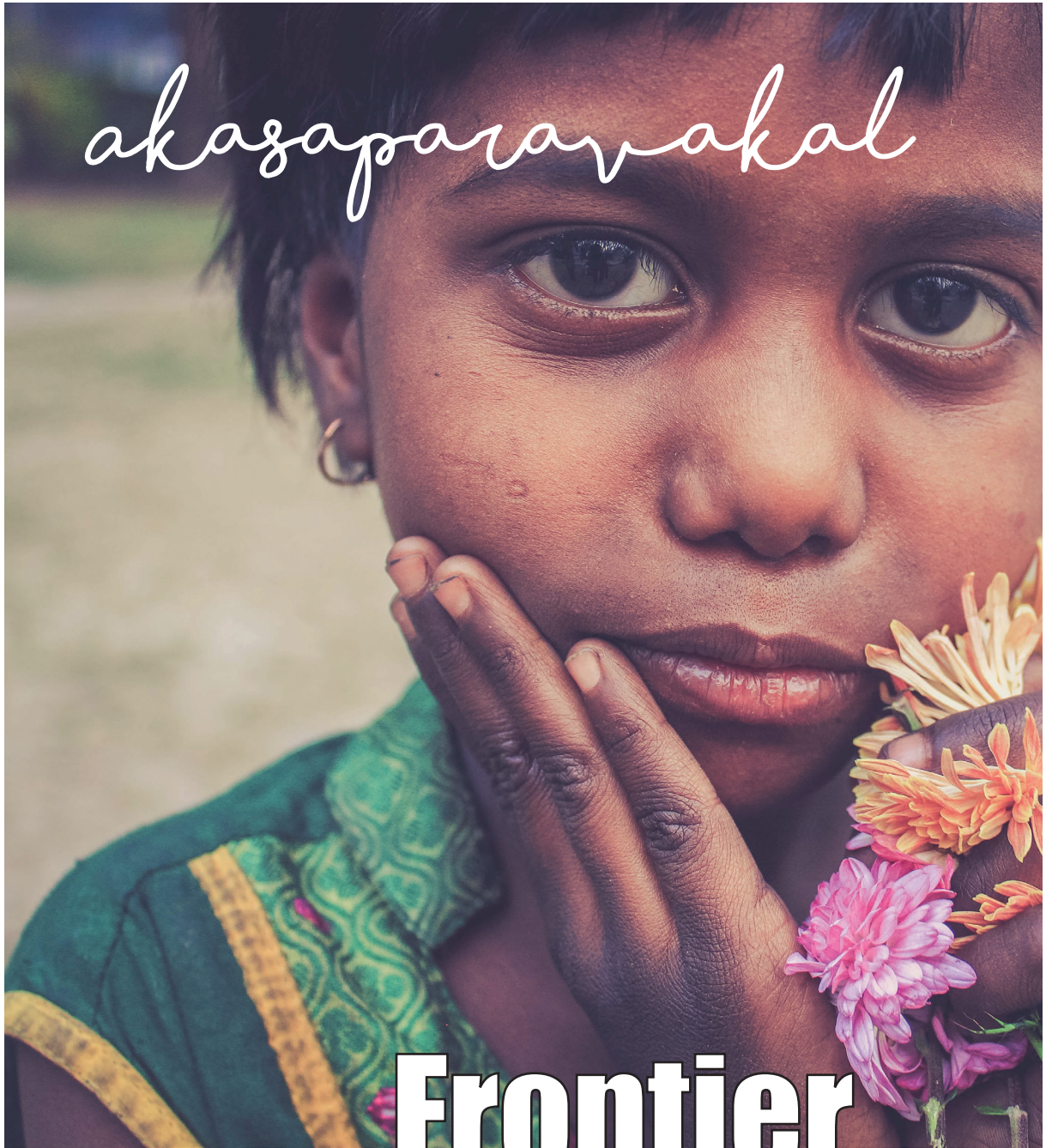


Our consecrated life is in itself a witness. When we approached the Hindu and Muslim families they were welcoming. Therefore, we have the obligation to go out of our way beyond our Christian communities to bear witness with our lives by listening to them.  
(Fr Vijay)





akaparakal



# Frontier Missionary



Franklin Edassery CMI  
Coimbatore



**M**ercy to the needy is a loan to God and God pays back those loans in full.' (Proverbs 19:17) These words of God ring in my heart when I pen down this article about our home Karunai Illam. Social work is the most important foundation of all our activities through our immediate and merciful response. It will make a great impact on the people. The members of the Preshitha Province show special interest in extending support to the needy in varied ways and some of our institutions are directly involved in such challenging activities especially through Akasaparakal under the leadership of Late Fr Sunny Ukkann CMI. He was given the new face to the Preshitha Province by starting Akasaparakal, a home for the destitute at Karimba, Palakkad. It is a remarkable service for the society. It helps us to reach out to the destitute, the economically backward and the downtrodden. Many people realised their call through this activity and thirst fully opted and served as social workers. Pope Francis always invites everyone to extend the support for the poor and the needy. He says "Those who are most wounded, oppressed and even crushed are the poor, the weakest lines in the chain. By focusing on the poor, the church asks us not to turn aside, not to be afraid to take close look at the suffering of the most vulnerable." At present, there are 3 destitute homes including Threethasharam (Aakasaparakal) at Karimba, Alphonsa Bhavan at Vettathur and Karunai Illam, Coimbatore

Karunai Illam, is a centre for the defeated and marginalized, started in the year 2010 by the CMI Fathers of Preshitha Province, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. We dare to care for the sons of God – Destitutes and Alcoholics. Here the wandering destitute especially the aged people on the street, homeless people who resort to begging and the physically and mentally challenged people are given shelter. They are loved, cared for, cured, supported, empowered and embraced. Here they live together as a family. They are provided food, shelter, clothing, medicine and other basic necessities.

ties. It was a great dream of giving new life to those destitute who are differently abled became a reality in the same year. Karunai Illam currently cares for 31 adults who are homeless and poor individuals with mental and physical health issues. We also are providing treatments for alcoholism at Karunai Rehabilitation Centre.

When we look at the history of Karunai Illam, it was a seminary for the aspirants for many years and later we shifted the seminary to Pollachi and we started this house as a social work centre like HIV treatment programme, Lebara project centre for children, TB project, Tailoring centre for the Transgenders and mentally retarded home for the adults. Now we have two programs mentally retarded home and De-addiction centre. Karunai Illam is especially for mentally retarded people which is really trust on the benevolence of God. And it is happening day by day. We call the inmates as Vanathuparavaikal in Tamil which is based on the bible quotation Mt 6: 26, 'Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.' Our basic concept and idea about our centre is relying on this words. We completely trust on the Lord without any savings for tomorrow. God who created us is protecting and fulfilling His promise without any compromise. If karunai illam is a Drama, God is the writer of this drama. We the priest are just directors only managing the things. Karunai Illam inmates are the actors in this drama. And many well-wishers are coming as the guest role without any information. Each day we see the miracle of God and rewriting the story. Eternal God provides the daily requirement each and every day with different and unknown people. It proves that God cares everyone with their needs. Sometimes I see the miraculous act of God in karunai Illam. When I see the things happening in this house through the God, I deepened in my faith with my own life experiences. God provides the necessary things with apt person. Prayer and complete faith are the





spiritual nourishment of our life apart from the physical nourishment.

Karunai Illam prioritizes the safety and security of their residents. Trained staff members ensure that the environment is free from potential hazards and risks. This includes implementing safety measures such as secure entrances, emergency response systems, eco-friendly campus and regular monitoring to prevent accidents or incidents. By providing a secure living space, Karunai Illam offers peace of mind to inmates.

One of the primary advantages of mentally challenged home is the provision of personalized care and support. This includes various aspects like medical care, therapy, social activities, and assistance with daily living tasks. This approach ensures that inmates receive the appropriate level of support, helping them enhance their quality of life and overall well-being. Mentally challenged homes foster social interaction and community integration, which are crucial for individuals with mental disabilities. By living in a supportive community, inmates have opportunities to engage in activities and form meaningful connections with their peers. Regular social events, group outings, and recreational activities are organized to promote socialization and reduce feelings of isolation. This sense of belonging helps individuals develop essential social skills, boost self-confidence, and enhance their overall emotional and mental well-being.

Mentally challenged homes focus on empowering inmates by fostering skill development and promoting independence. Through various programs and activities, individuals are encouraged to acquire new skills by vocational training with suitable persons. This enables them to become more self-reliant and enhances their ability to integrate

into society. Furthermore, mentally challenged homes often collaborate with vocational training centres or provide employment opportunities, enabling residents to gain meaningful employment and contribute to their community.

I strongly believe that this generous gesture of caring the poor and needy people in their dire need will undoubtedly be recompensed by our God. Every penny that is given by different people will be constructively and appropriately used in our center for the good of all our inmates. I have experienced the eternal providence of God throughout my life how He cares even the least through His own agents in different forms and means. We have another project that is Karunai Maru Vayvu Maiyam, De-addiction center. Founder of our CMI congregation St. Kuria-kose Elias Chavara focus the family development. So we have this center to save the families from the drug and alcoholic addictions. More than the addiction, it is a disease. It cannot be curable forever. But the continuous effort will save the family. If we affected with fever, we will consult with doctor, and will take the proper medicines, then we will be ok. But we cannot say that fever will not affect us again. Likewise, we should take the medicine by consulting doctor and recover from it. It will help us the entire family to be happy. We are conducting one month program for the patients.

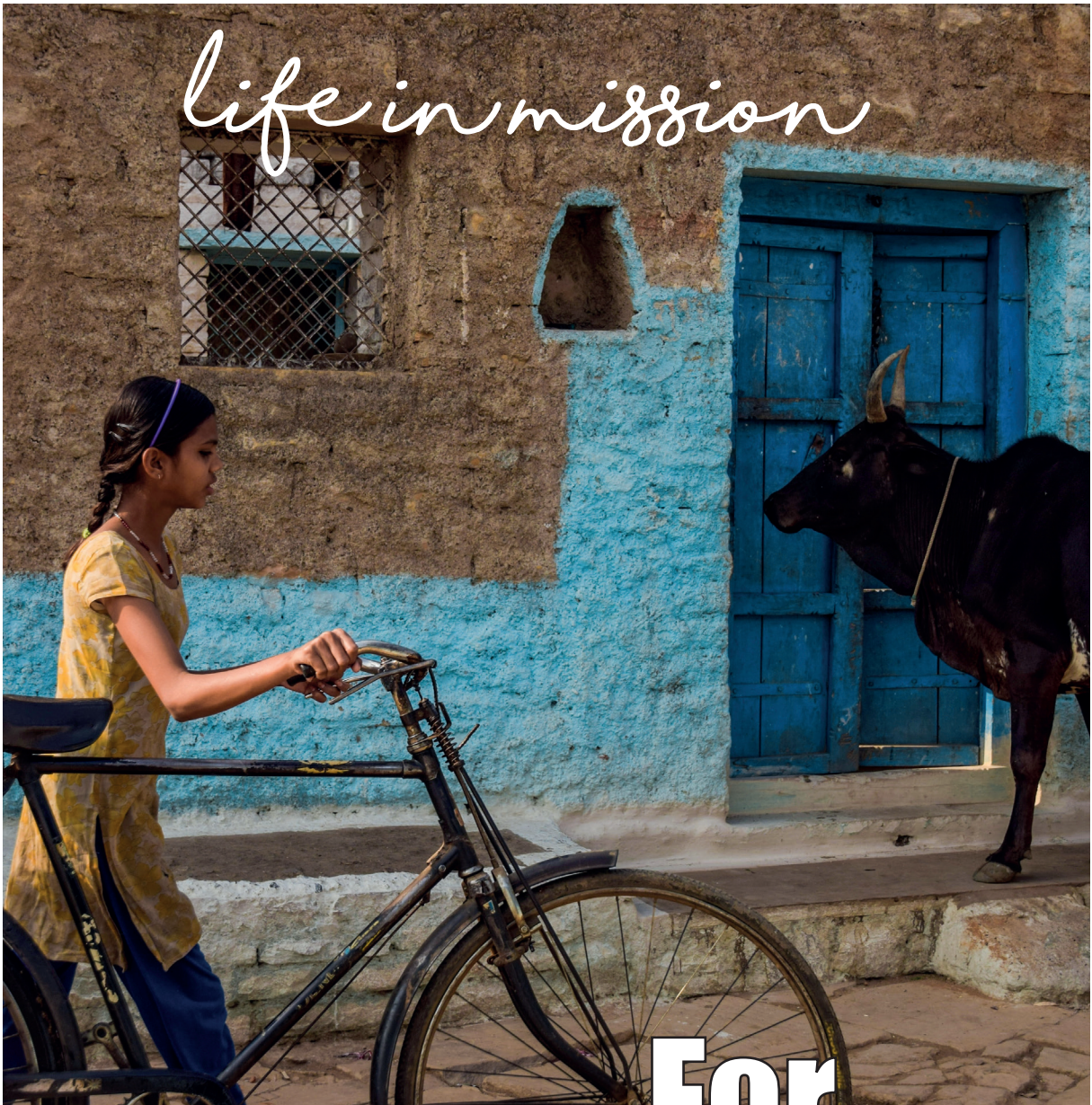
All are created in the image and likeness of God. As a priest our duty is that we should help everyone to find out the 'likeness' through our lovable approach. It is our responsibility. Here we are trying to help each and every person who come over here for their needs spiritual and physical needs like individual and family counselling, prayer services and also possible physical needs. We all have the image of God. On the different developmental stages, we lost our divineness. So as priest we should help them to realize it and regain their proper image and to reach into the likeness of God.





One of the primary advantages of mentally challenged home is the provision of personalized care and support. This includes various aspects like medical care, therapy, social activities, and assistance with daily living tasks. This approach ensures that inmates receive the appropriate level of support, helping them enhance their quality of life and overall well-being.





# For Mission



Jibin Manakuzhiyil CMI  
Rajkot

The family in which I stayed is having a good social status in all that village. The village is also in a good condition of having good social status with each other as found in the system. The family members are very loving, kind and caring. Aaj I was in the house I do engaged with them for each of the activities that I made myself as a member in the family. And I could find at the end or asked days fast they to her that kind of attachment considering me as one of the members in that family. I used to go with them for their work and for grazing the cattle. I was a familiar face within 2 week for the entire village. The language was little tough to learn. They all speak gondi or hulby. But the middle aged members and the youngsters specially the children who study in the schools are able to understand Hindi well. So it help to me to make good friendship and converting to them in an easy manner. I found the witchcraft practiced in the village as a very trouble some aspect for them to live many of them who got converted to Christianity where under the practice of the witchcraft and even now they are very much afraid of it. It has an influence and effect in the daily life.

I had a different schedule in the house as a state. It was something different for me to accept in the initial stages where I stayed. But slowly I was able to pick up and get used with what I was doing since the facilities for toilet was a difficult task for me in the initial stages. For washing the clothes and the water facilities they used on troubled me just stay fresh and half a good type with family in the initial period. But also you got used to with this it was easy and comfortable in the latest status stages. I used to get up early in the morning and get into the household activities as they were doing in the family. Since it was now the season of any special cultivation or due to the change of the weather the time for the harvesting most slowly approaching. They also have the harvesting as a great feast and it contribute to their sustenance. My only trouble to stay

up in the village was thinking of the facilities of my staying at home and getting comfortable with the . But I found it was one of the easiest task as I succeeded. Often we used to half the comparison of the people in village and in the City as I found they also wear so much interested to hear to listen from me the same we use to discuss about different cultures and things they practiced in the village. They also used to take me around to see the different cultural activities that were practiced in the village full stop one of the interesting thing that I found in the village was the cock fight. Many people gather around and they bring the cock to fight keeping money. They also have some special drinks like Idea and mahua as their seasonal drinks. My spiritual act is were totally different in the village as I enjoyed and experienced many things. I could teach them the rosary and interpretations of the Bible biblical stories as I found they also wear so much interested into lamp. They also wear so much interested in learning the budgets and other songs full stop and I found it was one of the interesting task to how some music in talents to get the people in the hands easily.

I had a great full chat with the man sukram with whom I talked a lot. He was the father in the family. Basically there Hindus and where into the practice of which craft for quite sometime and they had ruined their life as they confused and had found much trouble for the relief in the daily life. It was a particular person and experience that brought the man to have trust and faith in Christianity. They were having some great troubles or diseases as they believe it was the after effect of the practice of the which craft. From someone about Jesus Christ and after long time they tried to see whether they would be getting out of the trouble if they are able to go to the church and the priest free download and I found it was a great success and Jesus really heal the. They have that faith and trust kept in Jesus Christ and it remains the never and failing task for unwilling curtain of their life they are ready to broccoli Jesus Christ anywhere

and great anyone with je issue. They have real trust in God and in the creation. They believe and proclaim the Jesus Christ is ask the only God who save themselves and he still saving themselves.

It was a wonderful and marvelous experience for me personally to have this village to stay for 2 weeks. I experience a total different life away from The seminary. I could feel the need of the people and they were really supporting me and considering me as one among them full stop as we live in the village we experience as we get close to them we to become part of them and the consider and share all the problems and difficulties as considering as us spiritual person. They are in need of US and they experience the power of prayer and get the spiritual benefits from us. They are people who pray so we do our expected to become. The philosophy and theology that we learn and if that take us to a different alarm of life we would find that in the village it's simple faith that works and it works alone. The people need of US the need of spiritual support and the expect to support the spiritually we are called for prayer in each families the lovers and invite us to their homes I found they are happy to share their problems and difficulties and see as we pray the get heel and they have experienced is portuguler elements in their life. It's the real love of God and how changed their life from there and healthy practices and trouble some and life. The lack of education and proper understanding of the things are bit lacking in the villages in stuff a result of that they do you have great trouble experienced in their particular life of their daily life. They also get into troubles like which craft and healthy practices and fall into crisis since do not have the proper understanding of the things. I feel I felt that though in the initial stages I was hesitated to remain the family and talk to them but as days past I too hard become a member in the family and I couldn't games in each activities that they were engaged in do.



### Major Superiors Advisory Council

The Major Superiors' Advisory Council meeting was held at the Prior General's House on 2 and 3 May, 2023. A warm welcome was accorded to the newly elected Provincials. Rev Fr Prior General expressed confidence in their ability to guide and serve the community with wisdom and grace.



### Prior General's Day

On 1st July, Prior General's day was celebrated. The event was filled with gratitude towards the Lord for the abundant blessings bestowed upon us through our beloved Fr. Prior General. The celebration featured a variety of cultural programs, showcasing the diversity and talent within our congregation. Fr. Prior General was felicitated for his exemplary leadership and guidance, as we expressed our heartfelt appreciation for his dedicated service to the congregation.



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### Get together of Parish Priests

CMI Parish Priests gathered for a one-day program on 13th June at CMI Prior General's House to discuss the latest trends in pastoral ministry. The event focused on their crucial role within the parish community. Engaging discussions explored emerging trends in pastoral care, evangelization, and community engagement, fostering collaboration and enhancing the priests' effectiveness in serving the faithful.



### Quinquennial 2023

From 23 to 25 June, a Renewal Program was organized for the young priests of the congregation. The program revolved around the theme of communitarian witnessing, aligning with the congregation's celebration of this year as the Year of "Communitarian Witnessing." The participants reflected on their past years of ministry, assessing their spiritual growth and the impact of their witness within their communities. The program aimed to strengthen their commitment to communal living, authentic witness, and deepening their spiritual journey as they continue their priestly service.



### Orientation for Youth Animators

Youth animators participated in a workshop from 15 to 17 June, aimed at refreshing their ministry. Led by experienced youth ministers, the program provided orientation and practical guidance for members of the congregation who will serve as youth animators and directors. Through interactive sessions, the workshop equipped animators with new insights and renewed passion for accompanying and empowering the youth on their faith journey.



### General Council - Provincial Council Meeting

From 12 to 14 May, the GCPC meetings were held, focusing on the introduction of key principles of leadership. During these meetings, discussions centered around effective leadership strategies and the cultivation of essential skills for guiding religious communities. The sessions emphasized the importance of servant leadership, fostering collaboration, and empowering others to fulfill their potential.



Get-Together of the newly Professed of 2023



UTSAH 2023-Regents' Meet



## Image Gallery



Blessing Foundation Stone of New Block of PGH



Mar Cyril Vasil, Apostolic Delegate at PGH



CMI Communitarian Witnessing Animation Programme











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