



in touch with MISSION



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INE MISSIONARIES MAKING THEIR HOME AMONG PEOPLE

INE MISSION SECRETARY
INE PROVINCE, SHANTI BHAVAN
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in touch with MISSION

INE e-magazine

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Christmas is the celebration of the incarnation of Christ who made His home among people. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel (which means, God with us)" (Mt. 1:23). "He came to his own and his own received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God" (Jn 1:11-12).

SVD Constitutions No 103 states: "The Divine Word became incarnate in a particular historical situation. Jesus announced peace and salvation to all people of good will, showing special predilection for the poor. This example of Jesus determines the way in which we participate in his mission. Therefore, we try to insert ourselves into the actual situation of those among whom we work. With open mind and deep respect for the religious traditions of the people. We seek dialogue with all and present the good news of God's love to them. We show a special preference for the poor and oppressed."

As missionaries of the Word, we confreres bear the same mandate of inserting ourselves into the lives of people. INE Province has been a witness to missionaries whose manner of insertion has not only resulted in the birth, progress, and development of mission and specialised apostolates but such missionaries have become immortal in the hearts and minds of the faithful who were placed under their care. Therefore, the second issue of INE e-Magazine concentrates on how INE missionaries have made their home among people. It is a sharing on how missionaries adapted themselves for the sake of the Mission of God among the Tribals (Adivasis) and the Dalits.

In this issue we have made an attempt to present the Biblical and Theological foundations for God making his home among people and various missionary perspectives like: pastoral, justice, peace and integration of creation, tribal and dalit, cultural, spiritual, psychological, formation, education, persons with disability, leprosy patients and lay partners. It is very interesting to note that the INE missionaries involved in different ministries in the province are in one way or another are trying to make their home among the people whom they love and serve.

I sincerely thank all INE confreres and lay partners who have contributed their articles and photos for this newsletter. I am grateful to Shilanand Kamath, Francis Pereira and Donald Lobo for their help in editing this issue. I am grateful to Dixon D'Souza for his creative ideas and designing this e-newsletter in a very professional way. I hope that this mission magazine would help you to draw inspiration to make Jesus present to all people in their own mission context.

Wishing you all a Joyous Christmas and Grace-filled New Year 2021.

Fr. Luvis Ronald Pereira, SVD, INE Mission Secretary



INE PROVINCE: A HOME OF A CONFRERE

-Fr. Petrus Kullu, SVD, Provincial Superior, INE

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While many naturally associate home with a physical structure or a place, by experience we know that it is much more than that. Ideally, it is where we feel safe, where we know we care about the people we're with and they care about us, where we're fed, where we find rest, where we feel loved. Further, homes and neighbourhoods become "memory machines" that help us keep alive some of the strongest sources of what has given to our life: meaning, well-being, and happiness. Gaius Plinius Secundus, a Roman philosopher better known as Pliny the Elder (or just

Pliny to his friends) said "**Home is where the heart is.**" The phrase means that no matter who you are with or where you are in the world, your family and home always have the deepest affection and emotional pull. It is the place where you have a foundation of love, warmth, and happy memories. It might not always be the building itself, but being near your loved ones. Such is the experience of the missionaries who left their family, near and dear ones and made their home wherever the Lord called them for a cause. One such home for the missionaries is the tribal and dalit mission in India East Province (INE) about which you may learn a bit as you read the following pages.

Gangpur Mission, which began towards the beginning of last century, developed into the present India East Province (INE) of the Society of the Divine Word, has become the home for SVD missionaries from abroad and from different states of India since 1948. INE Province, consisting of Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal, gave shelter to the several missionaries who made their home among tribal and dalit communities of these states and spread the Good News through different ways and means. The INE Province is known for its typical and interior missions where Divine Word Missionaries from different countries and Indian States since 1948 dedicated their life with full commitment and dedication. It is the fruit of their hard work that till today we have good and large number of vocations to the religious and priestly life from these mission stations.

Let me now share a few things from the book 'History of the Gangpur Mission' written by Fr. Dr. Ignatius Soreng SVD. This book clearly tells about the life of Tribals in Gangpur mission and their difficulties for which the missionaries had to make their home to liberate them from various clutches. Chotanagpur had been a habitat of the tribals – especially *Mundas*, *Oraons*, and *Kharias* for centuries. They came to this land after a long migration, cleared the jungle and settled here much before anyone ventured into it. Being the first settlers in the land, they became the Adivasis, and lived their life in peace and happiness.

They weren't, however, left alone in the land for ever, as in the course of time some other people entered the land and started living there along with the tribals. History of Chotanagpur shows, that this infiltration of the '*Dikus*' (the popular name given by the Chotanagpur tribals to the outsiders in the land) resulted in tragedy for them.



They gradually lost their land to these outsiders, and were subjected to their cunning and systematic oppression. Life became increasingly difficult for them in their own land; for some of them it even became unbearable. Even today they are vulnerable groups of people who do not get their rights in the society. They are a fallen prey to the alien powers and greedy people. They are easily cheated by business men, companies and industrialists for their profit-oriented activities.

This prompted many tribals to escape from the land in search of livelihood elsewhere. Those who lived on, of course, had to face mounting oppression and subjugation of the outsiders, who wielded their oppressive power on the tribals with relentless disregard. By the middle of nineteenth century, the time, which is of concern to us presently, the intruders looked as undisputed masters of the land, and the tribals – as their subjugated servants. The British law, too, failed to protect the tribals from the tyranny of these landlords. The tribals, on their part, lived between the oppression of the landlords and the apathy of the British Government as a set of no-hopers expecting and looking for someone who would come to liberate them. In such a time, Lutheran missionaries and then Jesuit missionaries later Divine Word Missionaries made their home among these suffering people despite all odds, like Christ who was born to bring hope to a darkened world.

Besides, there are also other circumstances which made the missionaries more successful in bringing Jesus to their life. Though the history says the Christianity arrived in India in the first century, the Chotanagpur area witnessed Christ only in the middle of the 19th century. But in a short period of time the mission in Chotanagpur and Gangpur became a mighty tree because its foundation was solid and strong. Not less than sixty Jesuit missionaries of Chotanagpur toiled here for over forty years to build up the mission in Gangpur. Most of them were from Belgium. There were a few Indian Jesuits, Adivasis and the diocesan priests who laboured in the mission. In a way, the people of INE mission felt at home with the Christian faith and missionaries. That is because, their concept of God, belief in life after death, church, etc. were more or less what they experienced in their own life, society, culture, and religion. Therefore, it was not difficult for them to find joy in this religion.

Divine Word Missionaries too found a suitable place for them to make their home among these people because of the similarities in the way of life. The uniqueness of SVDs is: Interculturality, internationality, hospitality, interreligious dialogue, JPIC activities, family and youth ministries, vowed life in the Society, etc. Similarly, the life of these tribals and dalits in this mission as well was conducive for the missionaries to make their home among these people because they lived a simplicity of life, their generosity, welcoming nature, hospitality, love and care towards nature and their life among the forests, mountains, rivers, and their hardworking and community-oriented life, etc. Therefore, INE Province is a home for number of missionaries who have worked and died in the Province as well as for

have been rendering their dedicated service through various apostolates of the Province and the universal Church. At the moment we are 123 SVD Priests, 12 SVD Religious Brothers, 4 Bishops and a Deacon in the Province catering to the needs of the Tribals and Dalits and other weaker sections of the society through the following ministries.



At Present the following are the main ministries of SVDs in INE Province:

1. **Mission Animation and Pastoral Works:** Pastoral Ministry in the Province extends to 7 parishes in Rourkela diocese, 10 in Sambalpur diocese, 3 in Cuttack Bhubaneswar Archdiocese, 3 in Kolkata, 1 in Gumla Diocese and a Mission centre in Simdega Diocese. The diminishing religious values in the society and the disillusioned youth challenge the Parish Ministry. In our Pastoral Ministry, we strive to build up Parish communities by organizing youth groups, mothers' groups, men's group, sodalities, altar boys, etc. in order to strengthen their faith.

2. **Family and Youth Apostolate:** The Province has taken it up as a priority to empower the family and youth. The Province has been creating awareness among the parents, youth, and children about the importance of family life, husband wife relationship, modern problems faced by the parents in upbringing the children in the families and awareness about the root causes of alcoholism and how to detect and get rid of these issues in the family.

3. **Formal Education:** The Divine Word Missionaries in the Province have done a silent social revolution for the empowerment of the tribals and dalits through the Education Ministry. We run six English medium schools, three vernacular language schools and a Plus Two College. Approximately 2000 children both boys and girls' study in our hostels.

4. **Formation Apostolate:** INE Province has two Minor Seminaries, one for Clerical students at Vidya Jyoti, Lungai, Rourkela, and another for Brother Vocations at Jharsuguda. We also have an SVD Major Seminary: Divya Jyoti, Sason, for the theological study, which is attached to Khristo Jyoti Mohavidyalayo Regional Theologate, Sason, Sambalpur. The Regional Theologate provides ample opportunities for exposure programmes, weekend ministries and Social Action.

5. **Specialized Apostolates:** In the province we have several centres for specialized ministries:

i. **Vikas Deepti, Bargarh:** A house for the differently-abled children.

ii. **Karunalaya Leprosy Care Center, Puri:** A rehabilitation Centre with dispensary, dairy farm, Beatrix School as well as Hostel for the children of the victims of leprosy.

iii. **Ishopanathi Ashram, Puri:** A Centre for Spirituality, Dialogue and Counselling.

iv. **Sanskriti Kendra, Sundargarh:** A cultural centre aims at preserving and promoting indigenous cultures.

v. **UPAYA (United Progressive Agricultural Youth Association) Community College, Ramabahal:** Caters to the needs of the poor, marginalized and school drop-outs. Promotes Women empowerment through Self Help Groups.

vi. **SVTI (Sarvodaya Vocational Training Institute), Jujumura:** Caters to the unemployed and have vocational training programs such as Tailoring, Carpentry, Masonry and Driving.

vii. **CWS (Community Welfare Society), Rourkela:** Promotes women empowerment through Self Help Groups (SHG). Promotes Kingdom Values among the slum dwellers in Rourkela.



viii. DTVTI (Dinabandhu Technical and Vocational Training Institute), Jharsuguda: offers vocational training programs in driving, electrical and fabrication.

ix. DSS (Divya Seva Sangh) and JPIC (Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation), Jharsuguda: Conducts animation and awareness programmes for the tribals and dalits through SHGs.

x. **Biblical Apostolate:** Gives priority to the proclamation of the Word of God through different activities.

xi. **Saint Arnold's Vikas Sanchar, Jharsuguda:** Spreads good news through media related activities. It takes up the latest modern methods for the proclamation of the Word and to have dialogue with other religious communities.

Conclusion: India East Province was primarily a mission Province and the pioneering missionaries toiled hard and laid a strong foundation in the areas of faith formation, primary education, and healthcare. We can proudly say that thousands of people have benefitted and have come to the main stream of the society, especially the tribals and dalits because the missionaries put their heart and soul to make it their home. We can see tribals and dalits in all offices and in all walks of life. Much is done in the past but at the same time much more remains to be done and it is our hope that the Almighty who has made His home in our heart and mind and in the lives of people would inspire us to work together as one SVD family and make INE our home. We also pray that more and more young and zealous Missionary minded people to be motivated to help us in our missionary endeavours in **INE: A Home for All.**

MAKING HOME AMONG PEOPLE : A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Fr. Víctor Rodrigues, SVD



The story of Christmas draws our attention to the declaration of the evangelist St John – “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14a). This significant verse from the prologue could be considered as the summary statement on the doctrine of Incarnation. It is the supreme theological expression of our Christian faith which unfolds the story of Christmas. Obviously, it reveals the purpose of “Word becoming flesh” as to “make his home among people” on earth.

The concept of “making home among people” in the prologue of John’s Gospel could be better understood with the help of analysis of the important verb used in the text and its background. The proper Greek verb used here in Jn 1:14 is *skēnoō*, which literally means “to live in a tent.” The cognate noun is *skēnē*, which means tent or tabernacle. This etymological derivation does not make much sense unless we analyse this term from Jewish religious background.

In the Jewish Scriptures it is the tabernacle or tent that provided the special location for a divine dwelling. It was in this tent or tabernacle God met the people of Israel before the temple was built. The book of Exodus reveals God’s command to Moses – “let them make me a tabernacle, that I may dwell among them” (Ex 25:8). The next verse (25:9) provides us the information on how to make this tabernacle. The people were to make this ‘tabernacle’ or ‘tent’ and all its furnishings in accordance with the pattern provided by God. The Hebrew word used in this text is *miškān* which is translated in Greek as *skēnē* and this is translated in English as tabernacle or tent. These references of the Old Testament give us clear understanding of God’s choice to dwell among his people in a more personal way. He desires to make his home or dwelling place among people. The exodus event too makes this point clear that God literally was present among the people and in their wanderings in the wilderness. God was present not only in the tent or tabernacle which housed the ark of the covenant and the tablets of the commandments (Ex. 40:34-38), but also all throughout their journey in the wilderness until they reached the promised land.

In the context of Exodus event, the command of God to Moses to make a tabernacle in order to dwell among them, firstly, expresses the initiative of God to be with his people; secondly, the acceptance of God by the people and their realization of his presence among them. Both these aspects are important for an effective fellowship. Based on the dynamic response of the people, God reveals them his plans, offers continual assistance, performs miracles, and promises to teach them many things about his presence and about their lives. Yahweh’s action of making home among them in Exodus enabled the people to have liberating experience in their lives.

Another corresponding Hebrew verb for ‘to dwell’ or “to make home” is *šākan*. It is used to convey the concept of God’s ‘dwelling’ or ‘making home’ with the people of Israel (Ex 29:46; Zech 2:13). This Hebrew word *šākan* is equivalent with



the post-biblical term *šekîṇā*, a word that means “dwelling” and is used of God’s dwelling among his people. This word also most commonly refers to the glory of God who made himself present in the tabernacle and the temple. There are several references in the Old Testament to support this claim such as “the bright cloud of the presence of God settled (*šākan*) on the tabernacle, or “the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” etc. (Ex. 24:16; 40:34-35). The prophetic literature too continues to emphasize this theme. In Ezek 43:7, 9 we read that Yahweh, who “will reside among the people of Israel”, promises an unconditional divine presence. All these Biblical references emphasize an important point that Yahweh’s coming to dwell among people as the demonstration of his assertion that he is their God. People confessed, asserted and celebrated the presence of Yahweh among them. They asserted His presence and His holiness even in the nature, foodstuffs, vestments, and the altar. This gives us the understanding of God as the one who chose to make his home among his people and he wanted them to know that he is their God who will save them and lead them to eternal life.

Through the several Old Testament texts and through the analysis of two verbs – *skēnoō* and *šākan*, we come to know that God was ever present among the people, heard the murmuring of the people (Ex 16:12), saved them from the hand of the Egyptians (Ex 14:30), showed mercy and compassion (Ex 34:6) etc. Although invisible, Israelites experienced God’s glorious presence among them always. He had made his home among people through tabernacle or tent which provided a location of a divine dwelling. Now, with the act of incarnation, God’s presence is not limited to tabernacle or tent. By becoming flesh and taking the form of a servant, God has subjected himself to all the conditions of human existence such as the weakness, dependence, temptation, suffering and mortality. Yet, knowing the purpose of his making home with his people, he lived a real and perfect human life to teach human beings how to become divine as long as we continue to live our human life on earth.

The humanity of Jesus Christ with the purpose of making his home among people was not a mere appearance. He took on all the essential attributes of humanity and St Paul endorses this aspect in one of his letters where he writes that he was “born in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7). The author of the letter to the Hebrews explains that “he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people (Heb 2:17). Though he was sinless, he had a real human body, mind, and emotions. All the four evangelists help us to paint a picture of perfect humanity of Jesus who always gave space for others to grow and glow, especially the least and the lost.

The Gospel of Luke records the first event in which the shepherds find the rightful space in the plan of God’s salvation. God in the form of a babe in the manger draws shepherds who were despised and neglected by the society. The message of an angel – “to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord” gave them good news of hope that Jesus, the Saviour will remain with them, make home among them in order to unite them under the banner of God’s children. The synoptic Gospels present a long list of disadvantaged people such as sinners, poor, gentiles, outcast, tax collectors, sick, women, etc. who found liberating space in the life and ministry of Jesus. Making home among people is a challenging task. Jesus, while making home among his



people experiences homelessness, helplessness, powerlessness which is a way of life for all those who take up the responsibility of making home among people. He sacrificed and shared everything so that others find space to live, grow and glow.

St. Paul brings in similar teaching with different terminology to convey the message of the selflessness of Christ while making home among people. He speaks of a kenosis model (act of emptying oneself) practiced by Jesus. In a single sentence, Paul writes to the Philippians (2:7) the purpose of Incarnation as “emptying oneself” by taking the role of “a slave”. This kenosis aspect is seen not only during the birth and death of Jesus, but throughout his life and ministry. By doing this we are all given a call to involve ourselves in similar self-sacrifice for the sake of one another. At the same time, by upholding kenosis model, Jesus teaches us a supreme lesson on the divine selflessness: God is not an acquisitive, grasping and seizing being, but self-giving for the sake of others.

The prologue of the Constitutions of the Society of the Divine Word rightly emphasizes the special dedication of its members to the Divine Word and His mission. We are called to make “His life our life, His mission our mission” in order to bring fullness of life to others. It is a call basically to make home among people wherever we are sent as Divine Word missionaries. St. Joseph Freinademetz, the first missionary to China is the best and the perfect example for us to show how an ordinary human being can become an extraordinary missionary by sacrificing everything for the sake of making home among people. He literally practiced the words of St Paul and became “all things to all people” (1 Cor 9:22). His efforts of making home among people gave him success, but we should not forget the consequences and difficulties he faced from his enemies. It was a time of persecution of Christians in China; many in authority resented foreigners of any sort, and others were openly anti-Christian no matter who followed the faith. St. Joseph Freinademetz and his co-workers together with his flock were chased from place to place, arrested, routinely beaten. He was ready to face any sort of suffering for the sake of leading people to Christ by making home among them. During the time of difficulties, he relied on Christ who called him to continue His mission and thereby, experienced truth of the assuring and consoling words “my grace is sufficient for you”.

In today’s context where we are faced with the outbreak of Covid19 pandemic, making home among people is the need of the hour. Pope Francis in his recent encyclical letter on fraternity and social friendship – “*Fratelli Tutti*” emphasizes the need of being with the people and make home among them. For this, he draws inspiration from St. Francis of Assisi and says about the saint that “wherever he went, he sowed seeds of peace and walked alongside the poor, the abandoned, the infirm and the outcast, the least of his brothers and sisters”. Due to the pandemic, the world which looked like a global village has suddenly become so distant. Every aspect of human life and activity is deeply affected. Besides Covid19 pandemic, Pope Francis also expresses in a metaphor of dark clouds over a closed world, and many other dark realities which hinder the manifestation of universal fraternity. At this juncture, Pope Francis through his encyclical letter shows his genuine care for the unfortunate, the abandoned, the weak and the outcast and gives us a call to make home among them in order to bring justice, peace, love, unity, fraternity and harmony.



BIBLICAL

Following the footsteps of our founder, St. Arnold Janssen and the first missionary to China, St. Joseph Freinademetz, every Divine Word missionary is called to practice the spirituality of the “Word dwelt among us” i.e. making home among people. By being with God’s people and sharing His love, we become living instruments of God’s continual presence and accompaniment to them. We too have a responsibility to strengthen this spirituality and this new way of life. It is possible only with our constant communion with the Lord, participation in the sacraments, continual reflection on the Word of God and the attentiveness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. May God who willed to dwell among us, who made his home among us in the person of Jesus Christ continue to guide us in our every endeavour of making home among people!





MISSIONARIES MAKING HOME AMONG PEOPLE: A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Fr. Lancy Rodrigues, SVD



Divine Word Missionaries have a great legacy of taking up the mission and becoming a frontier missionary from the very beginning of the foundation of the Congregation the Society of the Divine Word. It began with our founder St. Arnold Janssen with his intense experience of the “Divine Word”, the “Word Incarnate” “and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:14), started a missionary movement, where by the missionaries were set off to

pioneer missions to different continents. Responding to the ecclesial call from different corners of the world our Congregation has moved out to 84 countries of the world preaching the Gospel where it has not been preached. St. Paul one of the great Missionaries echoes these sentiments of uniqueness of our calling, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news” (Rom 10: 14-15).

Go into the entire world is the exhortation to “Go out” which sprouts from the missionary mandate of Christ to his Apostles to “Go to the ends of the whole world and make disciples” (Mt 28:19-20). Christian mission offers us a platform to reflect the missionary mandate we have received from Jesus Christ. This mandate was reaffirmed as the essential nature of the Church by the Second Vatican Council when it stated that the “Church is missionary by nature”. “Mission revitalizes faith” (RM, 2), in the words of St. John Paul II, a Pope who considered himself as an evangelizer. In our missionary endeavours, we transmit faith, which is the heart of the mission of the Church. It happens through an infectious love for His people of which joy and enthusiasm become expressions of love for Jesus Christ and his mission. Thus, mission happens, as Pope Benedict says, through “an act of attraction” calling for hearts that are open and expanded by love. This expansion paves way for encounter, witness, proclamation etc., which are the elements of “*missio Ad gentes*” calling us to bear witness to love.

In the Old Testament, the Prophets gave the assurance of “God’s dwelling among them” in these words “I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people” (Lev. 26: 11-12). “I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians” (Ex. 6:7). This signifies that God is the source of mission and mission derives from God. Missionaries are God’s messengers, like the prophets of old. The

The unfolding of this mission is made visible and tangible with God-Incarnation. God became one with us showing the way for us to be one with and among the people. “God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten son” (Jn. 3: 16). The Christ event is a memory of the Incarnation and ministry of Jesus due to



which he was executed at the behest of religious authority but was raised by God and made Christ (Acts 2: 22-32). It is a metaphor inviting the disciples to follow his path holding his identity, his message and his mission (Cf. Jacob Kavunkal, *Extensio Dei- Mission as Divine Reaching Out*, 2020: 12).

Louis Mcneil says that Evangelization is viewed as the entire work of the Church to “proclaim the reign of God” (Mk 1:15). Evangelization is divided into three dimensions of ministries as 1) *Evangelism- proclamation of the Gospel to their own cultural society*; 2) *Missionary Activity- cross cultural proclamation of the gospel*; 3) *Pastoral Activity- nourishing and deepening the gospel among those already committed to it* (Evangelization, *New Dictionary of Theology*, 357).

In the Synoptic gospels “the preaching of Good News” is Jesus’s self-definition of his mission “Go back to John and report what you hear and see; the blind recover their sight; cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead are raised to life, and the poor have the good news preached to them” (Mt 11: 4-5; Lk 7:22;). Jesus makes his appearance as the preacher of the Good News with the message: Reform your lives, the kingdom of God is at hand (Mt 4:17), “Reform your lives and believe in the gospel” (Mk 1: 15). Proclamation of the reign of God as glad tidings have been brought to the poor (Lk 4: 18). Proclamation is also points to a new living and valuing of a disciple of Jesus (Mt 4: 23; 9:35; Lk 9:6).

01. Life is a Mission:

Emphasizing on the missionary nature of every baptized Christian, Pope Francis exhorted, “I am a mission, always; you are a mission, always; every baptized man and woman is a mission. People in love never stand still; they are drawn out of themselves; they are attracted and attract others in turn. “To be attracted” and “to be sent” are two movements that our hearts feel as interior forces of love; they hold out promise for our future and they give direction to our lives.(Message by Pope Francis for the World Mission Day 2018). Each one of us is called to reflect on this fact: I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world” (EG 273). By our baptism we have become living members of the Church; together we have received the mission to bring the Gospel to everyone. Every baptized is a missionary. St. Therese of Child Jesus, Patron of missionaries had never been to a mission, yet was a missionary by praying for the missionaries. Jesus affirms his love “I have chosen you to be with me, I will send you out to preach and you will have authority to drive out demons” (Mk 3: 13-15). Mission is the very identity of God and the Church, as the continuation of that “divine reaching out” through Jesus Christ (Jacob Kavunkal, *Extensio Dei*, 2020, i).

02. A Missionary Church:

For Pope Francis, a Church that goes forth is a community of missionary disciples, conscious of being loved by Christ, who take the initiative to seek, welcome and lead others to Christ at different crossroads of life. Such a community is ever urging to transfer the joy and mercy it has experienced. They are conscious of their calling to be his apostles in the world. They take the first step to involve, in bridging distances and embracing the suffering of Christ in others. They are characterized by patient expectations, apostolic endurance and joy.” Being conscious of one’s of own call



is the primary requirement for going forth. Pope Francis reminds us that each person is a mission on earth and all need to be ready to bear witness and communicate the love of Jesus at unexpected junctures of life.

Pope Francis says “Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us asked to obey His call to go forth from our comfort zone to reach all the “peripheries” in need of the light of the Gospel” (EG 20). Pope states that “the Church can no longer wait passively and calmly in its buildings and structures doing the ministry of conservation. It cannot wait for the faithful to come to it, but rather it has to go to them, as Jesus himself did”. Jesus’ own ministry was one of constant going forth He did not place himself in a place of comfort to proclaim the gospel, but rather went around doing good. Jesus identified that communion and mission are closely interconnected. His missionary acts always happened in the context of a community. The task of doing Christian mission is all about being with people, responding to their needs, with sensitiveness to the presence of God in cultures and other religious traditions and witnessing to the values of God’s kingdom through presence, solidarity, sharing the word, and therefore mission will mean dialogue with the poor, with its local churches, and with other religious traditions. Antonio Pernia described “mission as dialogue with people, an encounter between peoples and mission as finding a home among the people” (Pernia 2009:2)

03. Bearing Witnesses to Love:

Christian mission is the result of a deep Christ-experience the individual has had and the resultant urge to share it with others. When the disciples experienced the Risen Lord, they felt it was their duty and privilege -rather than a mandate coming from outside to share with others the experience that had totally altered their lives. St. John, the evangelist bears witness to life and love of Christ in the Gospel. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Jn. 1:1). “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn. 14:6). “Jesus said to him, have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip? he that has seen Me has seen the Father; and how say you then, Show us the Father? Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? the words that I speak to you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works’ sake” (Jn. 14:9–11). “I and My Father are one” (Jn. 10:30). The Incarnation, the call of the disciples, the missionary sending of the twelve, the seventy-two and the great commission given to them by the Master and the subsequent spread of the message to various parts of the world became one experience (Cf. Benny Thettayil, *Versatile Cross: Mission and Visions*, 2020)

04. Divine Word Missionaries: 145 Years of Making Home among People:

The Society of the Divine Word having completed 145 years of its foundation, now working in 84 countries have members who are firmly



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rooted in the dream of its founder St. Arnold Janssen, whose mission was to make Jesus known to every person in every nation, to live and work in the most neglected and remote areas of the world and to share the Gospel through a missionary life of service. Our Missionaries have brought healing, education, support and life changing situation through the person of Jesus, the Divine Word, to the people we serve. In a world that is divided by cultural, social and religious differences, Divine Word Missionaries are dedicated to encourage all people to open their hearts and share in God's love. All people in all places are included in God's plan and value their lives & diversity. As missionaries we preach the Gospel and share the word of God by living, working, teaching and sharing with others in many areas of global ministry our mission is a giving of ourselves to others. Today Divine Word Missionaries are recognized by the four characteristics dimensions: Mission Animation, the Biblical Apostolate, Communication and Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC).





SHEPHERDS AMONG THEIR PEOPLE: DIVINE WORD BISHOPS IN INE

+John Barwa, SVD

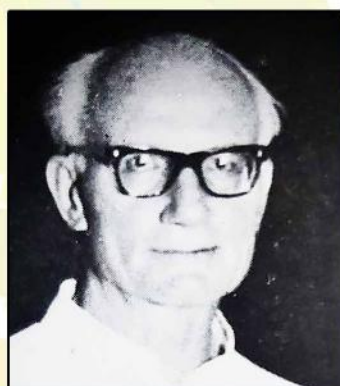
Archbishop of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar

The Adivasis of Chotanagpur responded to the call of Fr. Constant Lievens SJ and the successful mission among the Adivasis began. Gangpur (princely kingdom) was the part of this mission. According to the historical notes the first missionary to step into land of Gangpur was Fr. Fierens SJ, in 1884. He was chaplain at the British military Garrison in Sambalpur who made an extensive visit of the Gangpur area. The Jesuit missionaries opened five mission stations in Gangpur

before they handed over the mission to the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD): Kesramal (1908), Hamirpur (1919), Gaibira (1922), Jhunmur (1924) and Kusumdegi (1929).



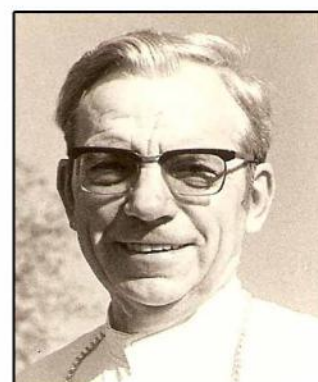
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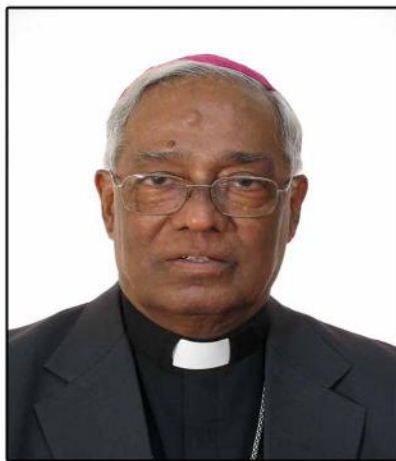
Fr. Stanislaus Wald SVD was the first Divine Word Missionary (SVD) to arrive at Gangpur Mission on July 11, 1948. This was the marking of a new beginning of the SVD Mission in the history of Gangpur Mission later to be known as 'SVD India East (INE)'. When the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) took it over in 1948 from the Jesuits, the number of Catholics was 65,000. In June 1951, some areas from the Archdioceses of Calcutta, Ranchi and Nagpur were culled out and a new diocese was officially created. The new diocese

comprised of four civil districts of Odisha i.e. Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Balangir and Dhenkanal and had an area of 46964 Sq. kms known as 'Catholic Diocese of Sambalpur' with the Bishop's House at Rourkela, the growing steel city in Odisha. The Catholics consisted mainly of four tribal groups of Khadias, Kisans, Mundas, and Oraons.

Mgr. Herman Westermann SVD was appointed the first bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Sambalpur and was consecrated on July 22, 1951. Bishop Herman started his task of building up the diocese with five parishes with 65,000 Catholics, 20 SVD priests and 23 Sisters. He followed the golden rule of expansion, establishment and evangelization. He established several new parishes in the tribal and Dalit areas. On a priority basis, he started several new primary and High schools with hostel facilities, under the able leadership of Fr. Marian



Zelazek, SVD. He took steps to promote local vocations to priesthood and Religious life and training of catechists. The first ever formation house for priests, an Apostolic school, in Gangpur, was opened in Hamirpur. A Number of laymen and women were sent for catechists' training. He brought up the Congregations of the Handmaids of Mary from its infancy. After 23 years of tireless work, when he retired there were 1, 33,000 faithful in 30 parishes and in 312 outstations. He laid a strong foundation for the Local Church.



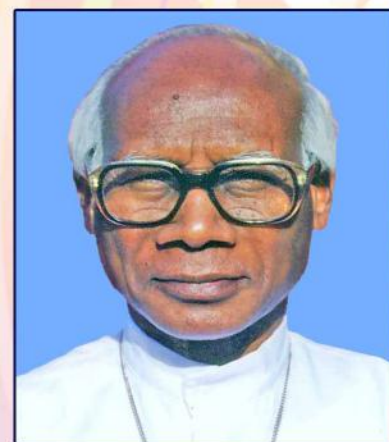
Mgr. Raphael Cheenath SVD took over the pastoral responsibilities of the diocese on May 18, 1974. He faithfully carried forward the mission. In five years he established four new parishes and stabilized the educational set up. In 1979 he got the diocese of Sambalpur bifurcated into Sambalpur and Rourkela and handed over the charge of the new diocese of Rourkela, comprising just the civil district of

Sundargarh, into local hands of Bishop Alphonse Bilung, SVD on November 3, 1979.

Bishop Raphael Cheenath moved in to Sambalpur and established the headquarters of the new/old diocese there. He extended the mission to the 'Hos' of Pal Lahara area, and opened new parishes and schools. He strengthened the diocese with more catechists, Religious Sisters and Priests. Within short span of five years, he established the Regional Pastoral centre and the Regional Communication centre in his diocese. On July 25, 1985 he was appointed the Archbishop of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar. He was also instrumental in the establishment of Regional Theologate in 1987 at Sambalpur.

He guided the Archdiocese for 26 years with full commitment to evangelization and pastoral work. He established 13 new parishes and several English medium schools and hostels for Odiya medium students and other institutions. He invited several new Religious congregations to join the missionary endeavours. He built up new churches, presbyteries and hostels. He paid special attention to faith formation and lay leadership training. He also endured the persecutions in Kandhamal in 2007 and 2008. The victimization of innocent people and the calculated destruction of the Churches broke the heart of the good Shepherd. He fought for justice to the victims and assisted the victims to resettle their lives by providing basic necessities like food, medicine and new houses. Most probably the wounds created by suffering and losses of his people never got healed and he retired on April 2, 2009 after being a bishop of three dioceses of Odisha for 37 years.

Bishop Alphonse Bilung SVD, the first bishop of Rourkela, inherited a thriving local Church with about one hundred and sixteen thousand faithful in 24 parishes. As a good pastor, he concentrated on strengthening the faith life of the people, special care for youth and women, proper management of schools. For laity formation and promotion of lay leadership he opened 'NavJagriti', the laity formation centre. For better pastoral care of the faithful he established 16 new parishes and invited seven men Religious Congregations and ten women Religious congregations during the first 25 years of his administration.



He paid special attention to the formation of local clergy by starting a



separate Minor Seminary and an Apostolic School for Rourkela diocese. He reorganized the school administration and with much effort got full grant in aid for the Church run schools from the Government. In spite of all the administrative responsibilities, he paid regular pastoral visits to the parishes and institutions. In order to strengthen the pastoral care and administration he got Mgr. John Barwa SVD as his Co-adjutor Bishop in 2006. He handed over the responsibilities of the diocese to Bishop John Barwa in 2009 and retired.



Mgr. Lucas Kerketta SVD was consecrated as Bishop of Sambalpur to fill the sede vacante on November 17, 1986. His motto 'Journeying together in God's love', expresses his spirit and his leadership style. He promoted participative leadership. He tried to be with the people in the parishes as much as possible. He paid special attention to faith formation and community building. So he introduced 'Small Christian Communities' (SCC) or 'Basic Christian Communities' (BCC) in the whole diocese. He made wholehearted efforts to transform the diocese with the

help of SCC. He organized several training sessions to equip the priests and sisters and to train leaders of SCC to start SCC groups in every village. He opened Sambalpur Social Service Society (SSSS) and through it promoted various programs for the socio-economic development of the people, like community health, Human Resource Development, Co-operatives, Self Help groups. In a very unassuming and gentle way he led the diocese for 26 years and retired on July 26, 2013.

Bishop John Barwa SVD was consecrated on April 19, 2006 as co-adjutor Bishop of Rourkela. He took full charge of the diocese on April 2, 2009. He is a liturgist trained in Rome, and a polyglot. With his experience in administration as SVD Provincial Superior and his pastoral experience in parishes and Regional Pastoral Centre, he rendered a great service to the diocese. Thanks to his good public relations, he maintained good relationship with the Government officials and the public in general. He realized the importance of English medium schools for the tribal children and established two English medium Schools in the diocese. He fostered ecumenical collaboration with the other churches. He was in dialogue with other faith communities. As he was fully involved in the pastoral and administrative matters of the diocese, on April 2, 2011, he was appointed Archbishop of the Cuttack-Bhubaneswar.

He started his mission in the Archdiocese concentrating on the pastoral care of the people, especially the persecuted people of Kandhamal. His priorities are faith formation, evangelization, socio-economic development, self-sufficiency of the diocese. He continued his priority of establishing English Medium Schools in the Archdiocese for the dalit and children. In a short span of time he established five English medium schools and one 'Community College' for the skill development training of the unprivileged youth of Kandhamal



and one legal aid centre to assist and accompany people in legal matters. He established different income generating centres to make the Archdiocese self-reliant. As the Metropolitan Archbishop he is also coordinating and organizing programs for the Regional Bishops' Council and of the dioceses.

Mgr. Telesphore Bilung SVD was consecrated the Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Ranchi, Jharkhand on August 30, 2014. He is a missionary to the mother church, of which Gangpur and Sambalpur mission was once a part. He was given the special responsibility of the pastoral care of the faithful and the clergy. In the midst of his busy pastoral activities, he was appointed as the Apostolic Administrator of the Catholic Diocese of Jamshedpur, Jharkhand on June 20, 2019.



These six Divine Word Missionary church leaders have played a key role in giving effective leadership to the churches they have served. They have given the much-needed leadership to the Gangpur Mission and to the neighbouring churches. As shepherds of mission dioceses, they have given priority to evangelization and faith formation. They have also paid special attention to develop local leadership among the clergy and the laity. They introduced participative leadership in their respective dioceses through parish and diocesan councils and Diocesan Assemblies and missionary meetings with the participation of people from all sections of the faithful. Due attention has been given to promote youth and women. They have effectively got the participation of the Religious communities in the building up of the local churches. Thanks to their charismatic and committed leadership the local churches have taken roots and are steadily growing. Archbishop John Barwa and Bishop Telesphore Bilung continue to serve their churches with enthusiasm and energy, while Bishop Westermann and Archbishop Cheenath have been called for their eternal reward and Bishop Bilung and Bishop Lucas are retired.





MAKING HOME AMONG PEOPLE: AN ELEMENT OF JUSTICE

-Fr. Rasal Xess, SVD

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Introduction: Is the mystery of Incarnation an act of justice? Yes, it is. Because God made His home among us when we were still sinners. God sent his only begotten son to save us. The mystery of incarnation, God becoming human person is a powerful act of justice, love, mercy and restoration of life. God created each one of us according to His image and likeness (Gen 1:27), however, we lost that image and likeness of God due to sin. The Word of God, “I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly,” (Jn 10:10) is to restore that image and

likeness of God in the human beings. As Divine Word Missionaries, Holy Scripture mandates us that God first revealed himself to his chosen people as the God who hears the cry of the oppressed and has decided to come and set them free from their oppressions (Ex 3:7-12). Exploitation, oppression and class distinction in the time of the prophets showed how deeply sin had permeated the social, political and economic relationships among people. The prophets, often see things with anger, unmasked the social and political structures of Israel as abominable and sinful in the eyes of Yahweh (Is 1:11-17; Jr 22:13-17; Am 5:10-14; Mi 3:9-12). Jesus right at the start of the public ministry expressed his mission statement saying, “I have come to bring good news to the poor, release to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed,” (Lk 4:18). All these works of Jesus speak of the act of justice.

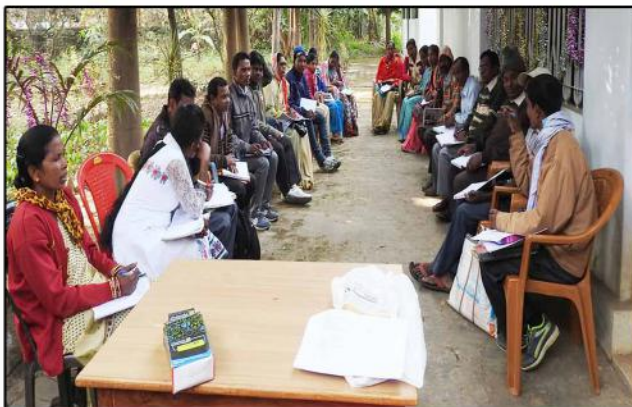
SVD Founding Generation and act of Justice: Act of justice is the integral part of SVD Mission since the time of our foundation. From its beginning Arnoldus family has been facing and responding to the serious social problems of the times. The Founder father, saint Arnold Janssen along with founding generation responded in word and deed to that social context. They helped the poor, wrote letter to Government and Vatican for justice and found love of God in creation. Action on behalf of justice, peace and the integrity of creation (JPIC) in solidarity with the poor and the marginalized is a demand of our common religious missionary calling. JPIC is both our way of life (*ad intra*) and way of mission (*ad extra*) for each and every confrere as it is a characteristic dimension of the society. Therefore, as the 12th General Chapter reaffirmed, “all of us should manifest a definite commitment to promote justice and peace in whatever kind of apostolate we may find ourselves engaged in” (*Nuntius XI*, p. 583, 1). The SVD Constitution 112 mandates on all members of the Society of the Divine Word to show a more determined commitment to the promotion of justice and peace in solidarity with the poor and oppressed.

SVD INE Mission at the service of the Justice: The people in India East Province are multicultural, multi-racial, multi-linguistic and multi-religious. The poorest and the marginalized in this region are tribals and dalits and INE



Province makes a preferential missionary option for them. India East Province (INE) is at work in four states of Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal. India East Province has 9 established centres and about 26 confreres are working directly for the empowerment of the people in the province.

They are CWS Roukela, Adivasi SangathanTangerpalli, UPAYA Ramabahal, Vikas Bhawan Bargarh, KarunalayaPuri, Dinabandhu Technical and Vocational Training Institute (DTVTI) Jharsuguda, Sarvodaya Vocational Training Institute (SVTI) Jujumura, Sanskruti Kendra Sundargarh, Dialogue Centre Puri, Gonpada Welfare Trust, West Bengal and Divya Seva Sangh (DSS) Jharsuguda and specialized apostolate such as Family and De-addiction, Awareness building on unsafe migration and human trafficking , slum ministry and communication ministry. The skill training programmes are given in the area of driving, tailoring, computer, teachers training, nursing assistance, welding and the empowerment programmes are realized through formation of women SHG, Youth SHG, Farmers Club, Village Committee and local leadership promotions. The major area of commitment of Divine Word Society in India East Province is bringing transformation through education, pastoral animation, Formation and socio-developmental works.



Education at the service of Justice: SVD INE missionaries have done a social revolution for the empowerment of tribals and dalits through Education Ministry. There are about 29 confreres involved in education ministry. The mission statement of the province gives priority to dalit and tribals and province is rightly and concretely committed towards them by educating more than

7000 tribals and dalit students in our SVD schools and hostels. Apart from the academic excellence, students are taught to love humanity, care for ecology and promote peace and brotherhood. All our education institutions have mechanisms to safe guard the well-being of the students, teachers and domestic-staff by introducing Divine Word Education Policy.

Justice through Pastoral Animation and Formation: About 38 confreres are directly engaged in pastoral care, in 23 different parishes, baptizing and preaching the word of God, animating and guiding children, youth, adults and families. More than 40,000 faithful are given spiritual nourishment through the presence of SVDs in 23 different parishes.



The parishes also address issues of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, environmental care and migration concerns. As SVDs we have contributed tremendously in the field of formation. We teach and promote social justice and JPIC concerns in the Formation houses.



Justice through work for Migrants, care for environment and promotion of peace: As SVDs in the province we promote safe migration through awareness programmes and public events. Unsafe migration and illicit human trafficking is a concern in the context. The less privileged, the tribals and the dalits become the target. As part of

the integrity of creation, confreres have planted trees and inspired others to do the same, observed environmental day, consciously included awareness on pollution and environmental care through their preaching,



seminars and retreats. Dialogue Centre at Puri and Sanskruti Kendra at Sundargarh are actively engaged in interreligious dialogue and peace building in various ways. The Centres conduct inter-religious prayer services on special occasions like Utkal Divas (Odisha day), Gandhi Jayanti (Birth day of Mahatma Gandhi) and Christmas. Many eminent persons of various religions participate in it. It is a great attempt to bring together 'people from every nation, people and language' - an initiative in communal harmony and peaceful co-existence and cooperation.

Justice through Care, Services and Charitable Programmes:

Care and services is another way to reach out to people in need in the province. Health care concern is responded well by Community Welfare Society Hospital in the province. Thousands of



poor from interior villages do benefit from free health check-up camps and hundreds of poor patients are given treatment at concessional charges at CWSH. It is a specific contribution in line of health care by SVDs in the province. Province also has two other care centres, such as, Leprosy Colony at Puri and care for the physically challenged persons at Vikas Bhavan, Bargarh.

Conclusion: Today, the society has the capacity to heal herself from her sinfulness, eliminate poverty, hunger and establish collective peace to heal the exploited ecology yet millions of people still live in brokenness, slavery, poverty, die of hunger, experience injustice and the environment is exploited to the maximum. Therefore, work of justice is not an optional choice rather integral missionary task. As God made His home among us when we were still sinners, we must make our homes with the poor, less privileged and deprived. May the mystery of incarnation as an act of justice be fulfilled through us.



MAKING HOME AMONG PEOPLE : A PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

- *Dn. Binit Kumar Barla, SVD*
Fr. Remejjus Soreng, SVD
Fr. Herman Minj, SVD



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One of the most significant highlights of the Second Vatican Council's Decree on the Church's missionary activity, *Ad Gentes*, influentially propounds that Church is missionary by its very nature and is called to continue God's mission manifested in Jesus through the Spirit. Therefore, all of us as Christians and as the members of the Church through our Baptism are called upon to be part and parcel of the missionary activity of the Church. Irrespective of the Orders or the Missionary Congregations we belong to, all are to committedly contribute towards God's mission through different apostolates and ministries. Particularly as the members of the missionary congregation of the Society of the Divine Word, we identify ourselves as the Divine Word missionaries. This entails our radical call to be Missionaries, for faithful and passionate carrying out of God's mission and the Church, through various apostolates and ministries that we are involved in and entrusted with.

The fact of the matter is unlike other years the on-going year has encountered with a very challenging and perplexing phase due to nearly a year long constraint of the Covid 19 pandemic across the globe. Like never before, with the onset and the alarming increasing of Covid cases, India and most other countries have sadly witnessed lengthy lockdowns and other socio-political restraints confining most of the people in their homes, many in quarantine centres, some in the hospitals and even taking away the lives of innumerable others. Needless to say, this unprecedented havoc has been vehemently yet silently affecting the lives of the people in different spheres. Even in such circumstances of uncertainties and anxieties Church as a mother has been endlessly caring for its believers in all the possible ways and means to support, guide, direct and persuade them with faith, hope and charity for making a better home to live in and to live with.

In this context it is worth considering the words of Alexander Graham Bell, a great scientist, inventor and engineer who said, "When one door closes, another door opens; but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us." During the pandemic times, though the doors of the world are seemingly closed, however not the door of our hearts and though the door of our homes may have remained shut but not the heart of the Church which is missionary by its very nature.

Therefore as the faithful members of the Missionary Church, shifting our attention from the closed doors to the open ones, we the Missionaries of the Society of the Divine Word at Bondamunda Parish have been, in our own humble and little ways carrying out our missionary endeavours towards making our home among the



to our care through our pastoral ministries in various ways, some of which could be characterized as follows:

i) Deriving motivation from the most quoted proverb which says, 'Where there is will there is way' and trusting upon the profound and loving Providence of God as our guiding light we are regularly able to herald the message of Christ; the Good news, to the faithful of our Parish through contextual reflections based on the readings of Sundays. Though the most unfortunate part of the story has been that the faithful are unable to partake in the Holy Eucharist in the Parish church, we reach them out through judicious utilization of YouTube and WhatsApp for breaking the Word and sharing our reflections which are relevant and understandable for them for a good Christian life and thus helping them establish a caring family in a loving home in the light of the Gospel. Over and above, in order to facilitate their participation in various prayer services and novenas, solemnity and feasts we committedly worked out the entire programs in a manner in which it could be communicable and reachable to the faithful. Towards this end, we were able to persuade them for their devout participation through the ways and means possible in such programs by making the best use of the media.



ii) Considering the importance of the spiritual and sacramental needs of the faithful, taking a daring step forward, we reached them out for Holy Eucharist, sacrament of Baptism, sacrament of Reconciliation, sacrament of Holy communion, sacrament of the anointing of the sick, funeral services, blessings of the houses and visiting the sick in almost all substations and nearby villages while strictly adhering to and assuring of the social distancing norms, usage of masks and sanitizers. Without doubt, the lengthy lockdown could have deprived them of the sacraments and other pastoral cares; however, by God's grace we made the presence of Jesus and ours felt amidst them. It was quite obvious that they truly longed, waited and looked for an opportunity to partake in the Holy Eucharist. We are witnesses to this fact that their participation in the Holy Eucharist has greatly contributed towards their spiritual wellbeing. With special consideration for many of those who had been waiting for the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Matrimony arrangements were made as per the possibilities and conveniences. In other words, understanding the significance and the needs of those to be prepared for various sacraments different classes and a few meetings pertaining to various matters of the parish were carefully and prudently organized in collaboration with *dehat* catechists and the parish team as it seemed possible for us. We believe that all such efforts, not in vain but in gain have been very beneficial for the families of the faithful in the entire parish. Encouraging and motivating them through our reflections and talks we have aptly emphasized upon the importance of the role of



the family as the most fundamental unit of the Church in carrying out her mission particularly in this context of the pandemic. These genuinely reflect a gesture of compassion and love towards them on behalf of the Missionary Church through us the missionaries.

iii) In our missionary effort, towards the youth of our parish our contribution for them and among them can be seen in organizing talks on career guidance, motivation, skill and ways for income-generating investment, music practice, training for mushroom cultivation etc. In fact, due to the lockdown the participation of the youth in the parish has suffered much yet during this period with a view to keep them occupied and motivated such programs have been of paramount importance to help them come up in life.



iv) When across our country almost everyone is panicked of the aggressive phases of Corona, resulting in the great struggle for all to commute from a temporary place of work to the place of one's own, many generous hearts risking their lives were out on the roads and streets distributing food packages, drinking water, fruits and other necessary items, without forgetting to show the love for the humanity cutting across all boundaries of culture and religion.



We too were privileged to be involved in such activities in collaboration with different NGOs and Charitable groups. We found ourselves, if not much but in our own loving and little ways, distributing masks, rations and sanitizers among the people in need. We also worked with Rourkela Diocesan Migration Cell for the safe return of stranded migrants at different parts India during lockdown periods. As saint Mother Teresa would rightly say, "It is not how much we give but how much love we put into giving".



v) When, all in and around us were surrounded with terror, hopelessness and fearfulness due to the pandemic, we found the opportune time to implore the strength, healing, protection and intervention of God for all those who suffered, those who lost their lives and all those who were troubled being affected by the virus. In our daily



prayers and through the celebration of Holy Eucharist we invisibly yet authentically supported the faithful and all those in need, enthused with the same missionary zeal as that of the responsible Church which itself is missionary by its very nature.

We believe, during this year, through our Pastoral missionary endeavours, in the above-mentioned manner, we have certainly been able to touch the lives of our faithful through our presence, spiritual assistance, guidance and compassionate approach. This compassionate approach made it possible for us to be available and approachable for the service of the faithful. The situation created by the pandemic would have surely been a big hindrance towards carrying out our pastoral ministries, however even in such circumstance without turning a blind eye to the opportunities, we found ourselves in a setting to proclaim the Good news of Jesus socially, pastorally, spiritually and in all the ways and means which ensured us of the possibilities of making our home among the people in our missionary situations, as committed Missionaries of the Society of the Divine Word and as the faithful members of the Missionary Church.





MAKING HOME AMONG PEOPLE: A DALIT PERSPECTIVE

- Fr. Sunder Tandi, SVD



The global pandemic has created panic and fear among the people. It has shattered the economy of various countries. Unemployment is on its rise. Religious places are closed down. People from different caste and class are homeless. In this time of suffering, uncertainty, and sickness one can ask a question; How the INE missionaries have made their home among the people? The title of this article “Making home among people: A Dalit perspective” clearly reflects a deep and personal relationship of the INE missionaries with the Dalits of Western Odisha, to live together as members of “one global family.”

Dalits of Western Odisha have suffered social, political, and economic backwardness in the society, added to these “the stigma of untouchability,” have retarded their development in life. Most Dalits of this zone live in poverty, misery, fear, and have less access to health care, education or employment, participation in public functions. They experience higher rates of violence, seclusion, exploitation, and live among the crisis-affected community. Dalits have been living in a world of insecurity and despair. The INE missionaries have been persistently working with the Dalits to help them to come up in life, and empower this least, lost, and last of the society to celebrate the divine gift of dignity as co-human with others.

The ray of hope was shone in the life of the Dalit after the arrival of missionaries. The Baptist missionaries had started their mission work in 1892 in Western Odisha. In 1953 Fr. Aloysius Kanski initiated the Catholic mission work among the Dalit of Western Odisha. Fr. Peter Speicher, Fr. William Dohmann, Fr. Frederick Maesing, Fr. John Weingart, Fr. Joseph Perumbil, Fr. Richard Vaz, Fr. Edward Sequeira, and many more SVD missionaries have played a significant role to build home among the Dalits. They worked sincerely in transforming the lives of thousands of Dalit Christians, and non-Christians alike. They have emphasized social values such as accepting people as they are and diminished the social stigma of untouchability. Their priority on education, development and empowerment has turned the tables for Dalits. Most Dalits have given up their traditional trades and occupations over the years from musicians, messengers, and weavers to unorganized daily labourers and a few of them have come up in life and improved their socio-economic conditions to some extent. They engage in farming and small technical job for their daily survival. The women have taken the lead in forming self-help groups and have transformed the community through income-generating activities.

As Jesus identifies himself with the Dalits of today, just as he became one with the Dalits of his time, He has also called the INE missionaries to engage with his live-giving mission and healing ministry. The active participation of the missionaries to help the poor and marginalized in this time of the Covid-19 global



pandemic is praiseworthy. The INE missionaries have provided immediate special relief package, health services, face masks, and social protection to the most disadvantaged Dalit community who are in dire need of relief due to continuous lockdown in several Dalit areas.

The sharing reality reveals the greatness and the immeasurable value of the INE missionaries in the life of the Dalits. The INE missionaries have succeeded in building home among the Dalits to a certain extent and led them from sickness to good health, from darkness to light, from despair to hope, and from misery to fullness of life.

I consider that the INE missionaries are the sign of God's presence, and a trace of God's glory not only for a particular caste or class but also for the whole world. They are called through the love of the Father, and each one of them bears "an indelible imprint of God." By sharing their lives with the Dalits of the society, Christ invites them to share in his divinity that they might dwell with Him for eternity. I also believe that the INE missionaries do the mission of God out of gratefulness and love for the spread of the Good News. They are rooted in the Word of God and compelled by the Gospel to share the Good News with others. They invest their time and energy sincerely to lead the people to God and God to the people. Thus, by rendering selfless service, the INE missionaries have not only made home among the Dalits but also lived among the Dalits and the oppressed peoples.

The key feature of every INE missionary is to make a home and live among the oppressed people today and continue to live every day until they feel God's hand is wiping the tears from the eyes of the people. The empty rhetoric with theological slogans and material wealth can never heal the wounded psyche and the battered consciousness of the Dalits. Therefore, the need of the hour for the INE missionaries is to genuinely walk with the Dalits, stay with the Dalits, and make home among the Dalits as Jesus has taught us to live in communion.

This article is an attempt to look for a clear understanding of what the INE missionaries have contributed to make home among the people and have presented Jesus in a situation of helplessness, and exploitation in the lives of Dalits who continue to struggle in the society.

MAKING HOME AMONG THE PEOPLE: A TRIBAL CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

- Fr. Ignatius Soreng, SVD



The tribal people love and value immensely the sound of nature around them – the sound of the forest, animals, birds, insects, wind and water. These sounds form their mind and heart, character and personality in harmony with the nature and the maker of the nature. The tribal people love not just the sound of silence, they love silence. The substance of these sounds are deep assurance of life, love, sharing, happiness and peace. These subtle sounds are the basis of their thought, words and action. These sounds are not just those that come in touch with their hearing, but they penetrate their life and find expression in their behaviour and culture.



The Word of God is basically spoken in silence – through silent life, expressions and actions. Psalm 19:2-4 confirms, “Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.” And, Is.42:1-3 says, “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.”

The tribal people love this approach taken by the Lord; it suits their life, personality and community. A word spoken in soft tone, accompanied by assuring offer of love, care, compassion, sharing, forgiveness, benevolence, friendship etc. not only resounds in their ears, but reaches their inner core of life. The sound makes its home in their life, and in their heart. The tribal believe it, and eventually respond to it with commitment.

When the European missionaries entered the tribal region of Bengal-Bihar-Odisha, particularly Chotanagpur plateau and encountered the Oraons, Mundas, and Kharias, the words of the missionaries that reached the tribal people are not their words of mouth, but their words of heart; or one can say – the words of mouth that spoke the words of heart. This they saw in their lives, words and actions. They were touched by it, and they believed and eventually they owned. The simple tribal people who expertise themselves in the language of love were skilled enough to distinguish the difference between the words of mind and words of heart. And, they surrendered themselves to the later.

Secondly, the tribal people already lived similar principles in their life and community as those that are found in the Gospels. The principles of love, sharing, unity, community, charity, forgiveness, sacrifice, spirituality etc. were already firm in their system of life and belief. They knew it, believed it and lived it. Christianity offered them a deeper and clearer reality of the same that they themselves had. So, it was not a big paradigm shift for them; it was rather deepening or clarifying of the same. God the Father, Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit were the names of all that they knew and believed under



different names. And, through his life, teachings, actions, and above all the sacrifice, Jesus Christ had demonstrated all these beyond doubt.

Christianity was a new experience in life and faith of the tribal people of the Gangpur Mission, which has, for the SVD, grown into the shape of the India East Province. Therefore, with adherence to Christianity, there was joy and excitement among them. As if they had just washed their eyes and seen everything clearly from a point-blank range. There was no doubt that Jesus was the one they were worshipping without knowing. This was the name that they had mistaken for many other names. Finally, they had found the one they were searching. They had reached their goal, and they were happy.

This is about Jesus, Christianity, and the Bible. Let us talk a bit about how the SVD INE fits in this reality of the Mission, and whether it is successful in the enterprise to the extent expected of it.

The SVD arrived in the Gangpur Mission in 1948 and took over a large Mission field created by the Jesuits of the Belgian Province of Ranchi. Starting the Mission in 1908, the Jesuits had established a wide-ranging mission network with pastoral, educational and social activities. They had ventured into three adjacent Feudatory States, i.e. Gangpur, Bonai and Bamra and contacted four tribal groups – Oraon, Munda, Kharia and Kisan. Their Mission period in the Gangpur Mission was strewn with two World Wars – I and II, and Belgium being a party to it in Europe, they struggled for men and money to carry on the Mission as they would have liked. And, SVD was their chosen and trusted Congregation that could take adequate care of the Mission and develop it.

The SVD took to the task with all earnest. Her honest intentions and commitment to the mission was clear through their priority of simple living, simple enterprise, and learning of people's language. The SVD deliberated on a common language of the Mission and settled for Sadri as the main language, supplemented by Hindi and Odiya. This was a



massive statement of intent as they really wanted to come close to the people, and reach their heart. Every SVD was mandated to learning of the Sadri and Hindi language within six months of arrival before one would be appointed to the proper task. The SVDs did this superbly. It was simply amazing to see overseas and south Indian SVDs speaking fluently the language of the people, and being part of their life. Odia language was taken only by those who were or would be involved in educational apostolate. In due time, the mission among the Dalits, Hindus, and the tribes of Hos and Santals was taken up, and the same basic principle was followed everywhere.

SVD opted for pastoral ministry without neglecting the primary education of the children, motivation of the youth, accompanying the men and women, and indulging in some social concerns. These were the ministries that were close to



people's heart, the ones that offered wholesome service, and these were the approaches that made the missionaries very own of the people. We also have respected their food, cloth, behavior and culture. We have rejoiced being with them not as saviors among them, but their own members of family and community.

The SVD has always been the major Religious Congregation in the Mission, and thus we are known by people widely. In 2013, I, as a member of the Core Committee of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan of the diocese of Rourkela diocese, headed the diocese level study on the topic of Religion that included all aspects of spiritual life of the people. A frank opinion was sought of the people through a long questionnaire as to their impression about priests and religious of the diocese. One remarkable statement that came from the faithful is – “We have taken you as the second God in our life. We love you, respect you, and look up to you for many things.”

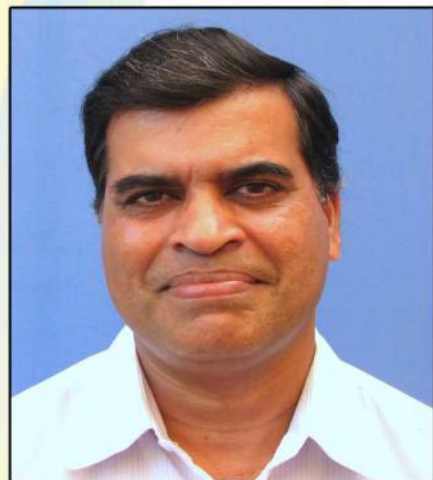
Being an SVD who have dominated the mission with our example of life and service all these years, we feel proud and happy to have created such an impression among the people. We have spoken to the people more through our example of life and actions than our words of mouth. We have spoken the language of heart to them, and thus we have been able to create a home in their heart. But at the same time, the responsibility stays – that we keep up our spirit, deepen and widen our concern for the people and live in their heart more than we live in our houses.





MAKING HOME AMONG TRIBALS: A MISSIONARY PERSPECTIVE

-Fr. Francis Pereira, SVD



My first contact with the tribal people was in 1974 at Catholic Ashram Palda when I went there with my companions from Mangalore, Karnataka after completing +2 (Pre-University Course) from the minor seminary for SIS Course. There I met students from tribal background from Madhya Pradesh and Odisha. After coping-up with a little cultural shock while interacting with students from other cultural background, the simple and friendly nature of tribal people touched me. It was then I thought of working among tribal people in future as a missionary

preferably in Odisha or Madhya Pradesh. My wish came true when I got my first assignment to Eastern Indian Province (INE) and came to work in Odisha as newly ordained priest in July 1985.

After a few months of Odia study and mission exposure to predominantly Dalit mission of Titlagarh in Sambalpur diocese in 1985, I was appointed as an assistant parish priest in a tribal parish of Rourkela diocese at Jalda. It is there and later at Kiralaga that I learnt to love the tribal people and try to find a home among them. The local tribals Uraons, Mundas, Kharias and Kisans used Sadri as a link language and in order to make a home among the tribals of Chotanagpur I had to learn their language first. That time a tribal religious Sr. Scholastica, HM, a good catechist and animator in that parish became my guide especially to learn the local Sadri language and to introduce me to the tribal culture. My subsequent exposure to tribals of Sundargarh parish and Kiralaga parish helped me to understand them better. It was at Kiralaga as an Acting Parish Priest in 1987-1988 that I struggled successfully to understand and love tribal people and to some extent found a place in their hearts. There were no sisters in the parish then but tribal catechists were there to help me in my pastoral outreach to the people.

Majority of the Catholics in INE are tribal people. The Belgian Jesuits who handed over the tribal mission to the Divine Word Missionaries had found very good response from the tribal people. They learnt the language and culture of the people and preached the good news. Divine Word Missionaries continued the good work as many missionaries learnt the language and culture of the tribal people and found a place in their hearts through their committed missionary work.

Because of my cultural background while appreciating the goodness of the people, as a missionary in the initial years I was not able to understand some of their attitudes and limitations. However, love for the mission and people overcame those obstacles. A year after I completed my Licentiate in Rome in Sacred Theology, I was appointed as a resident formator and lecturer at Khristo Jyoti Regional



Theologate at Sason, Sambalpur. The Regional Theologate gave emphasis to contextual theology especially to Dalit and Tribal Theology. It is during my stay at the Theologate that I was able to participate in a number of seminars on tribal reality and when the opportunity came for my higher studies, I opted to do research on the religion of one of the tribes – Kurukhar (Uraons). During my research I was inspired by words of M.A. C. Warren, “Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on men’s dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was there before our arrival” (M.A.C. Warren, *An Introduction to The Primal Vision: Christian Presence Amid African Religion* by John V. Taylor, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1963, 10). In the year 2013-2014, I also got an opportunity to promote the cause of tribal people and tribal culture as Director of Sanskruti - Tribal Cultural and Research Centre at Sundargarh.



Tribals do have values of the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached. They believe in unity and fellowship. They are for sharing and against hoarding. They are loving, caring and community centred. Hence, love and fellowship/communitarian

life is much cherished value among tribals. All the celebrations are communitarian. Even the dances and songs are communitarian. Tribals do not have solo dances or solo singing. They love their community and family members. They have a keen sense of justice. Each person is valued and if any injustice is done to any person, he or she can complain to the Council of Elders and can seek justice. Their sense of justice will not allow human beings to exploit the earth more than needed. Hence, one can plough the land only after their priest prays and ploughs his fields first. Tribals are egalitarian by nature. They are eco-friendly and close to the nature. For them children, both male and female, are blessings and gifts from God. All distinctions of haves and have-nots, rich and poor, literate and ill-literate disappear on a dancing floor. Dance and music rejuvenates them while facing hardships and problems.





Tribals are known for their simplicity, sincerity, honesty, truthfulness, equality, fraternity and hospitality. They have great respect for elders. They are very good at hospitality. For them *athithi devo bhava* is not a slogan or a theory but a praxis, a way of practical life. They are known for their unity and fellowship. Tribal people do have their own limitations and shadows. I believe missionaries and people of good will need to help them to overcome them. Missionaries have found tribal people to be very



responsive to Christian faith. Most of the simple tribal people love to enjoy the present. But the competitive and exploitative forces do take advantage of their simplicity. Jesus was both divine and human. As a human being Jesus was born and brought up in a tribal family belonging to the tribe of Judah in Israel. The vision and mission of Jesus was not confined to Jewish tribals but embraced all of humanity. As Christians and as Divine Word Missionaries may we be able to make a home in the hearts of all the people we serve.





MAKING HOME THROUGH SPIRITUAL DIRECTION IN THE LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

- Fr. Rudolph Crasta, SVD

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

In the heart of every individual there is a deep longing for God. We are not just a body made of flesh, blood, bones and nerves, but also have spirit /soul. As we satisfy the needs of our body, we need to take care of our soul too. St. Augustine of Hippo said ‘Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee.’ Normally we try to satisfy this spiritual need through prayer, meditations, sacraments, reading of Scripture etc. But in order to have a real deeper experience of God one needs to take the help of a Guru/ a spiritual director, a spiritual guide. He /she will help the person at every stage of the spiritual journey to go deeper into the mystery of God. Spiritual direction helps one to become familiar with God and get rooted in Him. One begins to imbibe God’s life and teachings and begins to reflect Him through his/her life, words and actions. In other words, you become one like Him and you truly re-present Him to the world and you are able to say - ‘I am in Him and He is in me’.



As a Divine Word missionary, I consider it is my privilege more than a responsibility to guide people in their spiritual life. Initially, my long hours of prayer and meditation led me to pray intensely in my ‘prayer ministry’. After a while I felt the need to share this God experience with others and that led me to preach retreats to different groups like Children, youth, men and women, candidates, seminarians, deacons, priests and religious men and women. God provided me opportunities to impart spiritual guidance and counselling to individuals and couples. I am sure all these years of my preaching and guiding different people has helped them to grow in their spiritual life and walk a little closer to God. In my guiding individual candidates, Seminarians, priests and nuns I have tried to help them to discern their vocation, answer their questions, clarify their doubts and strengthen them in their vocation. I have been able to help a number of religious in their vocation crisis. All of them except one, after meeting me a few times have returned back to their communities / congregations with greater conviction, commitment, and enthusiasm.

In my spiritual direction and accompaniment, Jesus is my model. Jesus was successful in everything he did and said because of his total reliance on his Father. Scripture says Jesus spent long hours with his Father in deep prayer and communion, either early in morning before he began his work or late in the evening after a whole day’s work. As per my understanding Jesus spent every day a few hours with his Father in deep prayer. That drew a large number of people came to him to listen, to get healed and transform their lives. Many believed in him and were transformed after listening to him. Many were surprised at his teaching and said, ‘Where did this man get this wisdom and deeds of power? Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and



Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this?' (Mt 13:55-56). Pope Benedict XVI said that not everyone who came to Jesus was sick. Yes, some were sick and they were healed but many came to listen to him and their lives were transformed.

Today people are faced with many difficulties and problems. In the midst of a deluge of unfiltered information on everything under the sun, conflicting views, ideas and ideologies they look for clarifications and answers for their critical questions including those of faith and religion. They come with questions on the importance of religion in one's life, the existence of God, usefulness of different religious practices, meaning of prayer etc. Here the spiritual leaders have a very important role to play as only they can help them to find answers to their quest. By our Ordination and religious profession, we are called to be the spiritual *Gurus*/ animators of our people. People look for spiritual help, guidance and assistance from us. They take us as spiritual leaders, having deep knowledge and personal experience of God.

In spiritual guidance, our rootedness in God is what matters. The prayer life of the guide takes precedence over the intellectual knowledge acquired through readings, attending different training programs, seminars etc. A deep communion with God through personal prayer and contemplation alone makes one a real spiritual guide. One has to spend long hours with the Lord asking for his grace, inspiration and presence. It is our God experience that matters a lot in guiding people in their spiritual quest. Only when the guide is inspired and is led by the Spirit, will he be able to provide satisfactory answers, solutions and guidance to the person in crisis when he approaches him with many questions, doubts, disappointments and reservations. People who come to us as spiritual leaders should be able see the face of the compassionate God in us. As spiritual guides we are called to make the invisible God visible through of life, words and actions. Hence, a deep personal experience of God is the primary requirement for the Guide in spiritual accompaniment.

The source/basis of our spiritual guidance is our openness to the divine inspiration. God has to guide; the Spirit has to inspire. He alone knows the reasons for the inner sufferings the person is going through. He alone knows what is happening in the mind and the heart of the person. The questions, doubts, blocks, shocks, fears, and the thoughts of the person seeking help of the Spiritual guide are known to Him alone. It is the SPIRIT that guides both the director and the one being directed. Therefore, in spiritual direction, the role of the guide is secondary. He is only an instrument in the hand of God to assist the person who has come with his problems, difficulties and questions to seek the answers. He is only a voice giving expression to what has been revealed to him. The person in crisis, as he /she listens to the spiritual director, begins to see the hand of God leading, guiding, helping and assuring His assistance in his /her life. He begins to feel the compassion and forgiving love of God, begins to feel the companionship, warmth and support of God through the instrumentality of the enlightened guide. That is why in spiritual direction, God takes his rightful place in the heart/life of the people and not the director.



SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

In all these years of my accompaniment, my life of prayer has been my only qualification in guiding different groups and individuals to be open to the Spirit and experience God. I feel happy that the Lord has been using me as his instrument in leading people to Him. I have also realized that in the consumerist world that we are living today the intervention of an enlightened spiritual guide helps one to grow in the knowledge and love of God. Many a crisis among religious and clergy could be avoided if they were to seek spiritual guidance in good time. By accompanying the directed person in his/her search for life's quest, the guide journeys along, offering the comfort and safety of a trusted friend.





MISSION AS HOME: A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

- Fr. Joseph Daniel, SVD



Introduction:

More than 30 years ago when I arrived in the then ‘Sambalpur’ mission, I heard the description of an altercation between two confreres regarding providing better food in the community. This is what confrere B shared with me (abridged version):

Confrere A: *We work so hard here and we need to eat well. You are the procurator and it's your duty to provide us with good food.*

Confrere B: *I agree with you. I am trying my best. However, this is a small town and I can only provide the food that is available here. So let's go to the market and you buy whatever you want. What do you want to buy?*

Confrere A: *Let's go to the fish market. I want to get some good fish. I am tired of eating the fish that you buy.*

(In the fish market)

Confrere B: *Please go and buy whichever fish you want. Here is some money.*

Confrere A: *It is your duty to buy. I will not go. You should go and buy.*

Confrere B: *But it is you who wants to buy a different type of fish and so you should go and select.*

Confrere A: *No, it is your duty. I will not go to buy.*

(An argument erupts between the two in the market and they return to the house without buying any fish. Upon arrival, another hot argument ensues.)

Confrere A: *If you cannot provide what the other confrere needs then better go back to your home.*

Confrere B: *Where shall I go? This is my home!*

Dramatic though this might be and look silly as well as funny, this is a true episode from the lives of our confreres. Confrere B had made a significant point by stating, “Where shall I go? This is my home”. I am sure both the confreres had made the mission their home; though only one of them was able to articulate it.

Home and its Understanding:

So, what makes the mission ‘home’ for a missionary? To understand this we must first look at what a home is and how it is different from any other place we might live in.

‘Home’ is a place where one belongs. Home is the sum total of our experiences, recollections, imagination and aspirations. Therefore, we say - “I felt at home”, “It's nice to be home again”, “I'm going home tomorrow”, “I want to have a home of my own”, “He is homesick”, and so on. Thus, home provides one with



a sense of identity, security, and a point of centering and orientation in relation to messy experiences one might have in the outside world. It is also a place where we feel comfortable, in control and where we find laughter and contentment in a non-judgmental atmosphere of acceptance.

Psychologically, home includes cognitive, affective and behavioral components. According to Signon et al. (2002), “Creating a psychological home offers a psychological refuge that provides security, safety, protection and assurance. An individual’s home can come to represent a haven from the stresses of the external world. Such a home can reduce anxiety and help us cope with change”. In short home is the primary connection between you and the rest of the world.

Mission as Home:

Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs theory proposes that the need for belonging is one of the main needs of human person. One’s home satisfies this need of belonging much more than any other place or relationship. Most of us have a sense of belonging with our family members. So per se, home is not just a place to reside but a memory as well as a relationship. This belongingness happens with our family members because we need not pretend to be anyone else when we are with them. With many other relationships lots of pretence could go on and we might try to show just the best part of ourselves hiding behind masks and concealing our real identify. Masks though ultimately, deter belongingness and hence feeling of being at home.

However, a sense of belongingness cannot be created by a single person’s effort. I cannot feel at home if my family members don’t make me feel wanted and accepted. A sense of belongingness is created because of the acceptance by the other family members; it’s a two-way process. It has been noted that children not accepted in the family because of whatever reason, exhibit behavioral and relational problems. The same could happen to anyone if they feel unwanted and unaccepted. Therefore, for us as missionaries, when a new member joins the mission family, there is a need to make the missionary feel welcome. It has to come from others first. Of course, the missionary should have that disposition too.

Related to this is the second aspect of home which is to provide growth promoting freedom. The person can be himself or herself in his/her home. At home we can dress as we want, we can eat what we want, and we can do whatever pleases us, of course within a permissible limit. This is not possible when we are not at our home; we have to adjust to others’ expectations when we are out of our homes. As a missionary, one should be provided sufficient avenues to exercise his/her freedom to grow as an individual. The missionary should also be accepted as he/she is without judgment or bias due to the origin or the background of the person. Lack of freedom will not permit a feeling of being at home.

American author Rick Warren in his best seller, ‘Purpose Driven Life’ writes that each person has a special gift. When a missionary comes to the mission with this understanding that not only does he bring gifts but he himself is a gift to share and the people to whom he is sent are gifts and also have their own gifts, then there will



a mutual sharing of gifts as equals. This would lead to humility and mutual appreciation. With this understanding there will be no mistrust and unnecessary competition. This is an important element of a home.

Shared responsibility and privilege is another important aspect of a home.

At home everyone has some responsibility. Even a little baby perhaps has the responsibility to entertain other family members with its antics and innocent chatter. And in return it gets support and sustenance. So, everyone has some responsibility at home. There are privileges too. For example, all efforts are made to provide and cater to the needs of all the members in a collaborative and just way, even if at times the family has to make sacrifices for this purpose. If missionaries have to feel at home then they should have enough avenues open to them to share responsibilities as well as enjoy privileges.

Attitudes and behaviours which impede feeling of home:

At home, direct mentoring is provided to the family members. So, a farmer's child acquires techniques and knowledge of farming. This idea of mentoring is much more common in the corporate world which provides direct 'hands-on' and practical training to the newbie. Somehow, this is missing in the mission field. There is a tendency to keep many aspects of mission work a secret, especially when finances are involved so that the other is kept out of the loop of information.

Many of the senior confreres are assigned to the 'prayer ministry'. This looks very practical so that they are provided the best medical facility and proper care in their sunset years. But it also deprives the mission of the vast experiences these people have in handling different situations. By keeping them at one place, without any active involvement, the mission is the loser. A way should be found where those who are still fit could be consulted and encouraged to be in the active mission field.

Sometimes there is also a tendency to allow on the one hand small fiefdoms to be created in the mission or on the other, to micro-manage everything from the top. When there are fiefdoms, everything is managed by an individual as if that person is the sole authority and no one else matters. When we talk about the micro-management, no freedom is provided to the individual to innovate and be creative. Both these styles of management discourage people from feeling at home. We also get the feeling in the congregations where a 'god-father' is needed to enjoy the privileges. This aspect could be looked into to avoid feeling of not being at home.

Conclusion:

Thus, we see that from the psychological perspective home is not just a geographical tag on the map or the postal address of a person. But it is a place of security and growth. When we talk about mission becoming a home, then just like home, mission should provide an atmosphere of security and growth to the missionaries. The missionary in return has to contribute his/her share in making the mission a home. If the process of making mission a home has to be successful contribute his/her share in making the mission a home. If the process of making mission a home has to be successful then missionaries could also ask the following questions: 1. which is the place in my heart which I consider my home? 2. Do I consider the place where I was born and raised as my home? 3. Do I consider the place that I live now as my home?

MAKING HOME AMONG PEOPLE: A FORMATIVE VALUE

- Fr. Ajay Kerketta, SVD



Formation is a dynamic process of journey of faith to become genuine disciples for the mission of Jesus. Formation is transformation... reshaping and re-moulding into the image and likeness of the Master who graciously grants the divine gift of Holy Vocation. "And he went up on the mountain, and called to him those whom he desired and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, to be with him and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons" (Mk 3: 13-15).

Jesus called his disciples to be with him refers to Jesus' accompanying the apostles for the sake of their vocation. After calling them, in order to be able to send them out to preach, Jesus asks them to set aside a period of time for formation. The aim of this time is to develop a relationship of deep communion and friendship with himself. The first program for priestly formation was all of three years: Jesus walked with his apostles, taught them and ordained them at the last supper.

Four Pillars of Formation:

The seminary forms future priests by attending to their human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation.

Human Formation: The aim of Human Formation is to assist the seminarian in his task of becoming a man who reflects in himself as far as possible, the human perfection which shines forth in the incarnate son of God, Jesus Christ. A seminarian must grow in his humanity in such a way that he is well-oriented to the truth, respectful of every person, compassionate, just and balanced in judgment and behaviour.

Spiritual Formation: The basic principle of Spiritual Formation is to live in intimate and unceasing union with God the Father through his Son, Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. The spirituality of a priestly way of life is characterized by prayer, celibate chastity, mature obedience, simplicity of life and social justice in imitation of Jesus Christ. Spiritual Formation includes having a spiritual director, a priest, with whom each seminarian meets on a regular basis. It also includes a life of prayer manifest through daily liturgy of the hours, devotional prayer, regular confession, devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, regular retreats and days of personal reflection and meditation.

Intellectual Formation: The main principle of seminary Intellectual Formation is that the seminarian is formed to seek an ever-deeper knowledge of the divine mysteries for the benefit of the salvation of those he will serve. As a disciple of Christ, a seminarian is one who learns not only about Christ, but about all things that will assist him in bringing Christ to others.

Pastoral Formation: The Pastoral Formation program aims to assist students to have suitable confidence and skills for pastoral ministry that provides practical experience, reflection and participative learning. The ultimate result of the entire



formation process is to imbibe and acquire the values, principles and teachings of Jesus so that one gets immersed in the ministry one is asked to do.

The formator, in order to make home among his formees has to have certain qualities like he should be deeply rooted in the person of Jesus, capable of being a guide on the spiritual journey, a good listener, a good communicator, capable of relating and working as a member of a team, a true missionary etc. A positive relationship between the formator and formee is very important for healthy and mature growth of the formee who along with his own spiritual search looks for a mentor to get rooted in his commitment and call. The formators act as role models for the formees so that they are able to discern their vocation in the subsequent formative years. The concept of personal accompaniment needs to be given a serious consideration in our formation program. The formators need to sketch out their own ways of accompanying the students through regular meetings, through involvement in the community activities like prayer, faith sharing, games, work and recreation. It is highly desirable that the formators be always available to the students and actively accompany them all through their formation.





BECOMING HOME: CALL TO BE A MISSIONARY TEACHER

- Fr. Francis Jos SVD



When I was a teacher at St Lawrence, Tentoloi, I was also in charge of the kindergarten section. One day, one of the class teachers brought two kids from her class. She told me, “Father, they want to give you pappi.” I did not understand. I asked her, “What do you mean?” With a bit of shyness she told me plainly, “Father, they want to give you a kiss.” I burst into laughter. I felt so happy and humbled that day to realize that I was worthy of those innocent kisses.

There was another group of class VI students who would trick their subject teachers telling them that I had called them and they would come to my office and tell me that teacher had finished teaching and gave permission to come to my office. They just wanted to spend some time with me. It was pure mischief but from a different point of view they have found someone to whom they can run to at any time.

We missionaries have left our homes for the sake of the Kingdom of God; for making a home for God in the hearts of the people we serve. I believe that you too have similar experiences in your ministry as well where those whom you minister have found a home in you. When you make a home for yourself at the place of your mission, they too will find a home in you, and thus you become a home for them.

In our Indian tradition, a young person sets out of his home in search of a **Guru** and when he finds one, he accepts him as guru and stays with him in the ashram to be trained in knowledge, wisdom and life skills. No one becomes a guru without being accepted by the disciple. If the disciple recognizes the light of the guru and welcomes his light in his heart, only then a guru is born. Yes, the guru finds a home in the heart of his disciple.

Education ministry is an important mission that we have in our province. We have been running Odia, Hindi and English medium schools. There is no doubt that our schools have been instrumental in bringing up the less privileged ones through quality education. Many of our missionaries have been teaching in the schools. Our schools are a point of contact with the young generation especially who profess a different faith than ours. To them the missionary teachers are of



different category. They see in these teachers, persons with dedication and commitment, who are singularly devoted to the progress of the student. The influence and impact of such a teacher will definitely leave an indelible mark on the hearts of his students. Such a teacher will find a home in the hearts of his students.



A teacher is not so much remembered for the subjects he taught or the information he passed on but how he taught them, especially the lessons of life; how he made them feel and how much the students felt at home with them. If they felt at home with us, then we have found a home in their hearts. Finding a home would mean becoming a part of the family, becoming a part of someone's life.

It is evident from the fact that the old students come back to you later reminiscing their time with you with gratitude. Someone told me that you can be sure that you have made an impact in the life of your students if they come back to you with their wedding cards. That means the student remembers you because you have found a home in his heart and that you are part of his family.



In the gospel of St Mark, Jesus tells us the parable of the mustard seed. "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." (Mk 4: 31 – 32) The small seed grows into a tree and the birds of the air find a home in its branches. Kingdom of God is love, peace, acceptance, care, security, trust, etc. When the students

experience these in a teacher, the teacher becomes a home for them. Then it becomes clear that the teacher has found a home in the hearts of the students.

Being God, Jesus identified himself with the human beings. He understood them and accepted them as they are and presented to them a God who loves them unconditionally. He motivated them to live a life of values, a life pleasing to God, a life of compassion and mercy. He lived his life as an example. People experienced something divine in Jesus; they saw God in Jesus. What do our students see in us? The youth of today is looking for idols and models to imitate and be inspired. As a missionary teacher, when we make our home among our students, when we reflect the divine to our students, they get inspired by our life and teaching, and we become a HOME for our students and that is the reward for being a missionary teacher.



MAKING HOME AMONG PERSONS WITH DISABILITY/CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

- Fr. Anuranjan Ddungdung, SVD

MINISTRY AMONG THE DIFFERENTLY-ABLED



“WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US” (Jn 1:14). This is what we celebrate at Christmas. Jesus became one with us, one among us. We, as Divine Word Missionaries are called to be the same, commissioned to do the same, that is to be with the people we serve, to dwell among them, to make home in their hearts and lives. This is what Vikas Deepti has been striving to do for the last 25 years through our programs, activities, reach out and awareness programs among the persons with disabilities and children with

disabilities. Before Vikas Deepti came into being, there were hundreds of children with disabilities who were neglected by their own family members, by society and by government at large.

Vikas Bhavan (Home for the differently abled children) was opened in the year 1995 with 10 polio affected children for their care, education and rehabilitation. The children with disabilities found a home away from home. These children with disabilities received love, care and support for their psychological and emotional growth. These children who were neglected by the family and society found a Home which provided them with all support and encouragement that they needed in their lives. They felt accepted and appreciated, they found friends and fellowship among their classmates in schools, discovered dignity and their dreams.





To a great extent, Vikas Deepti has succeeded in fulfilling and achieving its vision and mission. The Vision of Vikas Deepti is, “A Society where all children and persons with disabilities live their life with dignity without any discrimination”; and Mission is, “Mainstreaming CWDs/PWDs by giving equal opportunities through creating mass awareness, providing services and promoting people’s organisations to raise their voices for their rights and entitlements.” During the past 25 years nearly 600 children with disabilities have gone through rehabilitation program at Vikas Bhavan. Moreover, we have been serving children with disabilities and persons with disabilities in the 5 blocks of Bargarh district. So far, we have been able to reach out to more than 8952 children and persons with disabilities and their families. Vikas Deepti has played a vital role in transforming the lives of these less privileged children and persons. Those who were not able to walk are able to walk today; those not able to move are able to move around, those who thought that their life was meaningless have found meaning in their lives and those who thought their life was worthless have discovered their worth today. This is how Vikas Deepti has helped these children and persons with disabilities by empowering, enlightening and enabling them to live a life of dignity and respect in their own families and in the society. Many of these children thought that they would never get opportunity to go to school but with the help of Vikas Deepti they were educated, thereby showing



others and the world that they are no less than others. Vikas Deepti has always advocated inclusive education from the very beginning of its inception. A couple of boys who went through Vikas Deepti are serving the society as Medical Doctors. Another boy is pursuing his PhD in Economics in one of the Universities in Kerala. There are many more success stories which can inspire other disabled people to come up in life. Through 116 SHGs about 770 PWDs have been able to enhance their livelihood and nearly 400 persons with disabilities are able to sustain themselves and their families through income generating activities. This is how we; the Divine Word missionaries are able to touch and transform the lives of these children and persons with disabilities. Through our words, deeds, actions and service we are able to make home in their hearts, lives, families and society at large.





MAKING HOME OF A MISSIONARY AMONG THE LEPROSY PATIENTS

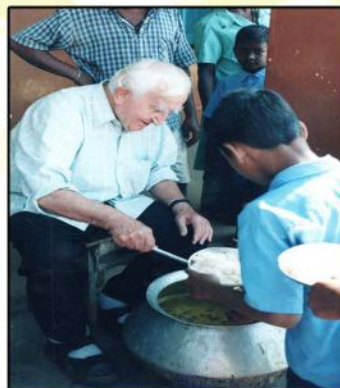
- Fr. Baptist D'Souza, SVD

LEPROSY CARE



'..... but for FATHER I would have gone to Swarg Dwar (crematorium) long ago'; 'Since FATHER came here we are alive, or else, most of us would have died with our wounds unattended' - these expressions from 2 victims of leprosy sum up the impact of a Divine Word Missionary on their lives at Puri, Odisha. "According to World Health Organization's latest data, India has 57% of the global caseload with 114,451 new cases detected in 2019. The sad part is that children are getting affected by leprosy" (The

Leprosy Mission Trust, India). A sizable number of victims live in and around Puri. Though their economic condition today with a number of government schemes and programs has improved, they are eternally grateful to FATHER MARIAN ZELAZEK, SVD for accepting them as they are and for giving them a sense of dignity and social acceptance in the society.



Servant of God Father Marian was born in Poland in 1918, ordained a priest in 1948 came to India (INE – Sambalpur Mission) in 1950 and worked as a missionary until his death on 30th April 2006, about 25 years he served the tribal people in Rourkela and 31 years served the poor and leprosy patients in Puri. Engaged in pastoral care in his newly assigned mission at Puri Catholic Church, Father Marian was moved with pity when he saw leprosy victims lying on the street corners with mutilated limbs looking for alms from the pilgrims and tourists that passed by. With festering wounds, shabby looks they would cry for mercy from passers-by to make a living.

The experience of a loss of human dignity among these victims living on the mercy of others was a painful realization for a person who had survived the torments of the Nazi concentration camp during the 5 years of incarceration during World War II. Extreme Compassion coupled with firm determination to restore their human dignity drew him to action. Thus, began the long sojourn of Father Marian with leprosy victims – a people he owned up and loved till he breathed his last.



The desire to give the victims relief from their painful ulcers pushed him on his knees attending to their wounds at street corners and later in the vicinity of the Catholic Church. The sight of this ‘white man’ on his knees cleaning the wounds of the victims, lifting them with his own hands into his vehicle was a powerful statement. He was not a medical doctor. Yet he donned the doctor’s attire to give the victims the confidence that they were in safe hands. In collaboration of Sisters of Charity, professional medical treatment was initiated at Jeebaramjee Colony that existed on the outskirts of the city. Armed with dressing materials and medicines, he became a foot soldier visiting the victims in their huts, cleaning and dressing their wounds. While healthy people kept away from the colony of lepers and their own kith and kin shied away from them, the victims found it strange that this ‘white man’ dared to clean their wounds with his own hands. This service on the knees in their miserable huts endeared him to the victims, that they began calling him BAPA – FATHER.

This humble beginning eventually came to be known as KARUNALAYA LEPROSY CARE CENTRE with rehabilitation works providing livelihood opportunities to the healed victims, educating the children of the victims who had no entry in the nearby schools through BEATRIX SCHOOL, providing free and wholesome diet for those who were too old to earn a living, who were either single or abandoned by their children to stop them from begging. Providing the victims a roof over their head to protect them from the vagaries of nature was an ambitious project. Little by little help trickled in and as and when help was available, little huts were replaced with moderate houses with asbestos sheet roofs. Owning a house of one’s own, brought in a sense of security and pride among the victims.



During these long 31 years of association, the victims knew that there is someone who cared for them and they could pour out their heart’s pain to him anytime they wished. The chemistry between the victims and the missionary in Father Marian was so strong that they were inseparable. It was not just the material benefits that he provided them with. He provided them with dignity and self-worth more than anything. He was with them in their life struggles, they could count on him in their needs, and they could trust him with their worries and seek his sound advice. He opened up a new world for them, an experience of being ‘children of God’ – free from the stigma attached to their ailment. This bond that grew over the years made him repeatedly say ‘I want to die among my people’; ‘I want to die with my shoes on’. And the good Lord



granted him his heart's desire of a death in the caring hands of the people he loved when he collapsed into their hands while walking to his car after a festive meal with the people he loved, on his last day on the earth.

This 'at home among the people' was not an easy cake walk. It demanded self-denial and self-dying. Coming from a traditional catholic country as a Missionary 'to preach Christ and his message where it has not been preached', and to live among a people shunned by the public necessitated a passing over. The Missionary had to give up his inherent idea of the traditional mission, he had to adapt to a new culture and new language, learn to be poor like the poor victims he chose to serve so that they would be comfortable in his company. These transitions or passing over came as a result of his deep communion with the Lord in whom he trusted. Long hours in prayer were the springboard from which he could launch into action.



The Mission that he has left behind is being carried on by the Society of the Divine Word, drawing inspiration from his 'service on the knees' and hours of prayer. For me today, it means letting go of my plans and being one with them and allowing them to lean on my shoulders in their hard times. It means getting used to their ways of dealings;



yet sincerely accept them for what they are – a people struggling with their painful past - of hurt, of rejection and humiliation. Someone rightly expressed it 'in you we find someone who listens and accepts us'. It is through this kind of acceptance that a missionary finds a home in the hearts of leprosy patients and their families.



MAKING HOME AMONG PEOPLE: INITIAL STRUGGLES OF A NEWLY ORDAINED PRIEST

- Fr. Avinash Jadhav, SVD

The joy of service and ministering to the people remains a primordial thrust as a newly ordained priest. Freshly ordained, filled with great ideas, energy and passion from the seminary, remain my greatest zeal. Some might say, "Oh! Challenges are meant only for foreigners or missionary priests." That's not true, for remember what happened to Jesus when he returned to his people, his own home town in Nazareth! He was rejected as the son of a carpenter and a young man who grew up with them in their neighborhood (Mt 13:57). How many young priests have been rejected even by their own people, family members and friends on the basis that they grew up together, they know their weaknesses and ignore their strength? Exercise of priestly ministry on the eve of the Christmas season calls us to give ourselves fully to the people who are entrusted to us. In Mt 7:24-27 Jesus asks each one of us to build our faith on the rock so that all who approach us may feel that we are strong in our faith and show the same in action. It would be proper to express our joys and immediate difficulties as we begin our priestly ministry.



As Christ incarnated and made a home among the people, we too must strive for that intention of making a home for Christ among the people with whom we live. Christ proved by His way of life that he was the one who was testified in the Old Testament. He is the Emmanuel that the prophet spoke of and invites me to become Emmanuel to the people wherever I am sent. Christ who came to make us loving children of God and saved us from the bondage of sin expects us to be receptive to his words and deeds. Christ became a person of love, peace, and harmony in making a home among people.

As newly ordained priests we have our own struggles and difficulties in making a home among people. As a young priest especially being a curate, it becomes difficult to present my ideas and implement them in the pastoral setup with the cooperation of other elderly or experienced priests. It has been a challenge when I prepare my homilies relevant to the simple tribals. The words of Pope Francis in 2015 to newly ordained priest to always deliver a simplified and contextualized homily, challenges me each time I prepare a homily.

Will the people accept me? Indeed, this has been a serious challenge going to a place where the culture and language is different from mine. I might have a lovely idea or suggestion, but the question remains: HOW DO I COMMUNICATE IT ACROSS? I remember how my first few months without any knowledge of the language left me frustrated and lost in thoughts. It naturally follows that without the mastery of the language, even the culture becomes a hard nut to crack. As a newly ordained priest, I got to understand that Culture and the language remains two important tools to break barriers, understand the people, bring them closer and enjoy a fruitful ministry.



The pandemic COVID 19 has affected my pastoral life. Having no direct contact with the parishioners over the last few months has in some cases led to a feeling of isolation and purposelessness among priests. It's really frustrating having the zeal to go for home visits, ministering sacraments, engaging with the youths, etc., but due to this pandemic, one cannot do much.

It is quite challenging for a new priest to work with a senior priest. It is a blessing if the newly ordained priest is placed with his contemporaries where it is easier for him to grow, enjoy his activities and explore new ways of doing things through his ideas. Indeed, this is a digital age, mission is changing, and we need new ways of doing things especially as *Ad Gentes 7* exhorts us to explore new means of mission in a digital age. Like it or not, mission has taken a new phase where we need to use WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and our gadgets to evangelize.

May this Christmas enable us to make others know that Christ is born within us through our response of joy, kindness, love, and peace. May infant Jesus help us to make a home among the people with whom we live.

“May the heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all people.”





MAKING HOME AMONG PEOPLE: LAY PARTNER'S PERSPECTIVE

*- Patrick Toppo, DGM, Rourkela Steel Plant
(Working President and a member ALMA group)*



The season of Christmas is approaching while the whole world is eagerly waiting to celebrate it, in its own way, yes in its own way, may be quite different than ever before due to COVID pandemic.

The incarnation of God as an infant in the human form made home among people and redeemed us from sin.

This article is a small attempt to focus and reflect on the challenges and opportunities for the lay missionaries to make home among people. ALMA (Arnolds Lay Missionaries Association) is a group of like-minded

people in INE province. As the name suggests itself it is a group of similar ideology and formed out of those who discontinued the SVD society for one or the other reasons and living a laity life. The group aims at extending helping hands and contributes in the mission activity in its own way. The time to time guidance by SVD missionaries instill new zeal and rejuvenate the members to cherish the old memories of monarchy.

ALMA is privileged to have intellectuals of various professions and full of ideas. But it has always been inspired by the missionaries and seeks the guidance, for any sort of project to be undertaken. It is continuously extending its support towards educational, social, spiritual upliftment of the people around. Education, as is the back bone of any civil society it has focused in organizing various educational activities, in supporting and steering the right direction of the tribal students. It has extended its helping hand in providing the basic infrastructure in the form of furniture for the underprivileged students of a primary school at Pallahara in Sambalpur District of Odisha.

The pandemic of COVID19 followed by nationwide lock down left many people starved in the recent past. At the nick of time ALMA came forward and extended its support for such people under the guidance of Fr. Bennyhen SVD for the destitutes in slum area of Rourkela.

This year Jyoti Bhawan minor seminary in Sambalpur Diocese celebrated its 50 years of its foundation. It was an opportunity for us to come forward and celebrate the golden moments of the alma mater. The ALMA members came forward to help economically and participate themselves to cherish their memories of stay at some point of time. Alma wishes its best to the divine institution in bringing up further more laurels in the missionary formation in the years to come.

The key objective of the ALMA is to stand by the people and make a home among people. The home it envisages is a place where there is a little bit of help in missionary activity. The vision of the lay association is to take up at least two projects in a year...



But the challenges towards making home among people is immense. The tribal society and the catholic community is facing various social, economical, and political challenges. At this juncture it becomes our moral responsibility as lay missionary to come out clean to these challenges. This is the time to exhibit our virtues that we have inculcated during the formation periods of our one's seminary life.

A great deal of coordination between the lay partners and missionaries is required for the effective outcome of the result. We need to shift the paradigm from the conventional direction to give a new dimension as of the need of present era. For this we need to work as a team and be bound together like nuclear force of attraction between nucleus and electrons in an atom. Jesus Christ is to be the nucleus and we, like electrons. Missionaries, as have given up their life for the sake of Christ and are one in Him, like protons as embedded in nucleus. Our life is to be like chemistry where there is always a new chemical compound by the affinity of different atoms. We every individual should act like an atom in making home among people This way it will further strengthen the foundation of the home where there is peace and harmony. Prayerful life needs to act like a catalyst in building up faith among us and bridge the gap of differences. Unity in diversity should be the motto of our life.

There will be ups and downs at times but we need to be united together for the cause of our society. We need to make home where it is not lonely, no despair but always a ray of hope. May this Christmas bring the joy and happiness and infant Jesus be the Head of the family, a home among people we are looking for.

This year COVID pandemic has shattered the livelihood of many people. The people of all ages starting from students to elderly citizens have been adversely affected. There are many poor and needy struggling for their daily bread and butter, clothing and shelter. If we can bring smiles on these gloomy faces by doing some kind of favour in any form, that would give us the joy within us in true sense of celebrating Christmas.





MAKING HOME AMONG PEOPLE : A MEDICAL DOCTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

- *Dr. Sushma Soreng*



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Christmas is a beautiful occasion where we meditate the love of God for us. To save us from the bondage of sin, Lord Jesus came into this world, taking the form of a Human. He lived among ordinary people, touched them physically, mentally & spiritually. Here on earth, we also have some purpose in our life. Through our work, we can touch the lives of people and share the love of God, thus fulfil the will of God through our life.

The profession of a doctor is such that we can connect directly with people, providing them with best possible treatment. "I will restore your health and I will heal your wounds", declares the Lord (Jeremiah 30:17). Thus, healing comes only from Lord, we are only his instruments. While attending to the patients we need to be kind, patience and supportive which is a process of touching lives of patients and making home among them to understand their sickness and give them a correct diagnostic and treatment. As a Christian doctor we have to surrender all our work in the loving hand of Jesus & to have access to the healing power available through Christ.

COVID-19 pandemic is a great challenge for us. When I was posted for COVID-19 duty, there was a bit of apprehension in my mind working among COVID positive patients. But through Philippians 2:14, Lord spoke "Do everything without complaining or arguing". Philippians 2:13 "For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose". Lord gave me the strength to my COVID duty. One thing that was coming in my mind, that how Jesus would have treated those patients if he were present physically. In that place, Lord taught me how to treat those patients with care and love. During and after COVID duty we have to stay in isolation, which is quite painful because we are away from our family members. But through this experience we can understand the mental trauma and loneliness the COVID patients are going through. In this situation we can provide a source for healing by our kind words as Proverbs 16:14 says "Pleasant words are a honeycomb sweet to the soul and healing to the bones".

It needs a great patience while explaining and clarifying all queries about the patient's condition to the patient's relative, because many times in spite of best medicines patients' condition doesn't improve. At that time, we can do only prayer. Miraculously patients get healed, which is quite beyond our imagination. Sometimes financial help, medicines free of cost are offered to patients who come from poor family. It gives a great satisfaction when sick is getting healed through prayers and physical act of our service. At the same time, we have to take care of our family. 1 Timothy 5:8 says to take care of your own household first. Family members also need time and care. The Lord only gives us the grace to balance between family and work. Though we are not perfect but our sincere work leaves an imprint among people and also in our colleagues. Through this service we can experience the presence and love of God in our work. Everyday Lord teaches us something new. As a doctor we are serving God by serving humanity.

THAT CHRISTMAS OF MY INFANCY

- Dr. Ajit Kumar Kullu,
Sambalpur University, Odisha, India



During my childhood, Christmas was different in both colour and taste. My village used to gear up for the celebrations the way a bride waits to get married. Harvesting season would be at its fag end. The mounds of golden grains of rice on the threshing floors used to punctuate the entire village. That testified to the divine providence. The new grains would find their way to the barns. The white and grey stubble in the fields would be surrendering to the dews at night and the tender sun during the day. And the Season of Advent would be announced to us on one of the Sundays in our village church, a mission station. In our catechism classes, we would be told that the baby Jesus was coming. I would often ask my mother, “How far is JanamParab (Christmas)?” She would smile and say, “My boy, it’s around the corner.”



My mother always began to prepare for Christmas with house cleaning. From the just harvested fields, she would bring fresh soil, mix it with water and cow dung, prepare a nice strong paste and plaster the mud walls of our enormous house. She would then polish the walls with a watery combination of cow dung and black soot of dried straw. My older sisters helped her beautify the house.

My father was busy arranging for the family some money so that the kids could at least have a shirt or pants for the occasion. We would ask him to buy us the best of *taadphatka* (firecrackers made with dried palm leaves) for the revelries. *Chini roti* (Sugared Sweets) was the favorite of every single tribal child. Without the delight, we could not picture Christmas. Invariably, *JanamParab* meant *chini roti* to us all. The families exchanged the delicacies they had made and the entire village relished them. Every child knew what whose mother had prepared during those celebrations.

I have a very fond recollection of my childhood Christmas festivities. My insistence on attending the Midnight Mass in my parish, ten kilometers from my village, is the brightest and most beautiful flower in the landscape of my memory. My older siblings were permitted to walk with other villagers to the parish. Due to the distance and the cold; my mother would generally forbid me. One Christmas, I insisted on going with my brothers and sisters. My elder sisters made a pledge to my mother to take care of me. My mother gave in. I was pleased and joined them for mass at midnight. It was a tiresome journey and I fell asleep in my eldest sister’s lap the moment the mass began. My sisters left me asleep there when the Holy Communion was distributed and entered the queue.



That was the moment I woke up and dashed to the beautiful crib straight away. My sisters had a hard time identifying me in a massive crowd of believers. They found me standing before the crib staring at the massive statue of the baby Jesus put between Mary and Joseph when the mass was over. I had no warm clothes on my body. I forgot that I was far from my village, and that was the excitement. My sisters chided me for upsetting them, but I must admit that it was the best Christmas I have ever celebrated.

I am a father of two boys now. I drive to a nearby church with my family every Christmas. I am trying to restore the innocence that I celebrated Christmas as a kid with. I try to relive the moment in my children's excitement. That one Christmas has made me celebrate in more meaningful ways every Christmas that I am blessed with.





ALL ABOUT CONTRIBUTORS

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DR. AJIT KUMAR KULLU is an Assistant Professor of English at Sambalpur University. Translation Studies, Literature, Culture Studies and Tribal Literature are his fields of focus. He hails from Amko village of Jhunmur Parish in Sundargarh district of Odisha. Currently he, along with his wife, Pratima Mukta Soreng, and two sons, Marvyn and Abhin, reside in Burla.

FR. ANURANJAN DUNGDUNG, SVD was ordained in the year 1999. During the past years he has rendered services in the field of pastoral work, communication, and formation. Presently, he is the director of Vikas Deepti, Bargarh, Odisha, a centre for differently-abled children. For the past three years he has been involved in social work inclusive of rehabilitation and empowerment of children with disability and Persons with Disability (PwD), eradication of leprosy, rehabilitation of leprosy victims and education of children from the leprosy affected families in the District of Bargarh.

FR. AVINASH JADHAV, SVD is a newly ordained Divine Word Missionary assigned to India-East Province (INE). At present he renders his services as an assistant pastor at Catholic Church, Pallahara and also takes care of the primary school children at Pallahara, Odisha.

FR. BAPTIST D'SOUZA, SVD is a member of the India-East Province (INE) of the Society of the Divine Word. Most of his missionary life he served as a pastor among the Ho tribal parishes. He also served as the Provincial Superior of INE Province (1996-1999) and also as the mission secretary for INE and for the SVD India Subzone. Currently he is the Director of Karunalaya Leprosy Care Centre and Ishopanthe Ashram, Puri, Odisha.

DN. BINIT KUMAR BARLA, SVD made his final profession on 2 January 2020 and was Ordained as Deacon on 3 January 2020. Currently he is doing his Deaconate ministry in Good shepherd Catholic Church, Bondamunda. His priestly ordination is scheduled on February 5, 2021 and is assigned to SVD mission in Zimbabwe.



ALL ABOUT CONTRIBUTORS

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FR. FRANCIS PEREIRA, SVD was ordained as a missionary priest of the Society of the Divine Word on 4th May 1985. He received his first mission appointment to INE in 1985 and since 1986 has been working with the tribal of Odisha. He has a doctorate in Sacred Theology (Contextual - Tribal Theology). Since 1993, he has not only been teaching theology at Khristo Jyoti Regional Theologate (KJM), Sason, but has served the institute as the rector for three terms. Currently, he is the manager of St. Arnold's School, Remed Chowk, Sambalpur and a visiting professor at KJM Tribal Theology and many other seminaries in India.

FR. HERMAN MINJ, SVD is a part of India-East Province ever since 1996. Most of his missionary life he served as a pastor in different parishes of Rourkela Diocese. For five years he was in charge of the print media ministry, i.e., editing and publishing a monthly Tabloid in Sadri, called *GANGPUR HAAL-CHAAL*. Currently, along with being the Parish Priest of Good Shepherd Church, Bondamunda, he is also the Regional Secretary of ST Commission for Odisha and the Rourkela Diocesan Secretary of ST Commission.

FR. IGNATIUS SORENG, SVD has been serving SVD mission in India-East province for over thirty years. His contribution to the field of education for almost nineteen years is noteworthy. Currently he is the Director of the Sanskruti Kendra: Tribal Cultural and Research Centre, Sundargarh, Odisha, India. He holds a Ph.D. in Odiya and M.A. in Odiya and English literature.

ARCHBISHOP JOHN BARWA, SVD is a Divine Word Missionary belonging to INE province. He has a Licentiate in Sacred Liturgy from Anselmo, Rome. He served as the provincial superior of INE province during the years 1999 to 2005. He was consecrated as the co-adjutor Bishop of Rourkela on April 19, 2006 and took charge as the Bishop of Rourkela on April 2, 2009. On April 2, 2011 he was appointed Archbishop of the Cuttack-Bhubaneswar.

FR. JOSEPH DANIEL, SVD has contributed to the field of education for the last 30 years. He has a Ph.D in clinical psychology. He has served as the programme coordinator of Ishopanathi Ashram (the centre for retreats, counselling, inter-religious dialogue, and ecumenism), Puri, Odisha. Currently he is the counsellor at St. Paul's School, Rourkela. He is a visiting professor of psychology and counselling at Khristo Jyoti Mohavidyaloyo and is an often-sought-after resource person for retreats.



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FR. LANCY RODRIGUES, SVD holds Licentiate & Doctorate in Moral Theology under the Lateran University at the Academy of Alfonsiana, Rome. In the field of administration, he has contributed as the treasurer of the Dioceses of Sambalpur & Cuttack- Bhubaneswar. In the pastoral field, he has served Catholic Church, Sundargarh; Sambalpur Cathedral parish, and St. Mary's Church, Burla as the parish priest. In the area of formation, he has served Divya Jyoti SVD Seminary, Sason, as the rector and moderator. Currently he is the rector of Khristo Jyothi Mohavidyaloyo (KJM), the inter-diocesan regional theologate for Odisha.

MR. PATRICK TOPPO is the DGM of Rourkela Steel Plant and the working president and a member of Arnolds Lay Missionaries Association (ALMA). He hails from Salangabahal Parish in the Catholic Diocese of Rourkela. He was in the SVD seminary between 1983-1986 as a candidate for SVD. Having discontinued the priestly formation, he pursued Bachelors of Engineering from NIT (then called as REC), Rourkela.

FR. PETRUS KULLU, SVD is member of the India-East Province (INE) of the Society of the Divine Word. He has done a short formation and counselling course at Atma Dashan, Patna. Most of his missionary life, he has worked in the Mission Parishes and Formation House. He served the province as the provincial councillor (2014-2017), as Vice Provincial (2017-2020) and is currently the Provincial Superior of the INE Province of the Society of the Divine word.

FR. RASAL XESS, SVD is a Divine Word Missionary working in India-East province (INE). He is the JPIC Coordinator of INE as well as National JPIC Coordinator for the SVD India subzone. He completed his Masters of Social Work from Assam Don Bosco University that earned him a gold medal. He also pursued M.A. in Human Rights Studies from Delhi Institute of Human Rights. His areas of specialisation are Community Development, management of non-governmental organization, Environmental care and Disaster management, conflict management and Peace Building. Presently, he is coordinating socio-economic and developmental works of the province in collaboration with Provincial council, confreres, coordinators, animators and lay leaders in public sphere.

FR. REMEJIUS SORENG, SVD was ordained on January 13, 2019 and assigned to India-East Province (INE). His first appointment is as an assistant priest at Good Shepherd Church, Bondamunda. He is also the youth director of INE province and is very enthusiastic with regard to accompanying youth in their holistic growth.



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FR. RUDOLPH CRASTA, SVD, a Divine Word Missionary in India-East Province, worked initially in the pastoral field. He also rendered nine years of service at Archbishop's house, Bhubaneswar: one year as archbishop's secretary and the next eight years as the treasure of the archdiocese of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar. He also been a professor of cultural anthropology and religious life at Khristo Jyothi Mohavidyaloyo, Sason. As a retreat preacher and spiritual director for more than fifteen years, he has been resourceful in shaping the minds and hearts of people of all ages. Currently, he organises retreats and renewal programmes at Divya Dham (SVD retreat center), Katapali, Jharsuguda.

FR. SUNDER TANDI, SVD was ordained as a Divine Word Missionary on December 30, 1995. He served the Catholic diocese of Sambalpur as the Diocesan Youth director and as the programme coordinator at Utkal Jyoti, the regional pastoral centre. He was also the formator of the SVD Seminarians at Vidya Jyoti, Lungai and at Khristo Jyothi Mohavidyaloyo, Sason. He also served SVD Provincial House, Shanti Bhavan, as the rector. He has completed his Licentiate in Biblical Theology from Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum), Rome and is currently a doctoral student at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore.

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Christmas
is the miracle of Making Home



Merry Christmas
& A Blessed New Year 2021