

2020/04  
72<sup>ND</sup> YEAR



April 2020



# Ganga Lahar



Patna Jesuits  
News letter



## OFFICIAL.....

### FR. GENERAL HAS APPOINTED



**Fr. Ajit Kumar Xess, SJ** – Provincial, Ranchi.

He has been the principal of St. Xavier's, Ranchi since 2006 and a province consultor from 2017.

### FR. PROVINCIAL HAS APPOINTED



Albert Abraham – Acting Director, KRCH, Bettiah  
Gabriel Michael – St. Michael's, personal health care

Thanks to **Frs. Prakash Louis and Johnson Kelakath** for undertaking an evaluation of our candidate houses - Xavier Nilaya, Bangalore, and KRCH, Bettiah, as directed by Fr. Provincial

## MEN IN FORMATION

### Diaconate Ministry

Rajesh Somepalli – Kurji Parish, Patna

### Theology

Amul Jacob T. - Vidyajyoti, Delhi  
Punit Antony Ranjan - Vidyajyoti, Delhi  
Savriayappan M - Vidyajyoti, Delhi

### Philosophy

Richard Lakra - SN, Chennai

### Special Studies

Ashish Paul Kumar - MSW  
Ravi Bhushan - M.Sc. Physics,  
Robert Razeem - M.Sc. Botany  
Pramod Kumar - B.Ed.

### College

Arockia Nelson - B.Com,  
St. Aloysius, Mangalore  
Sanjeev N. Tirkey - B.Com,  
St. Xavier's, Ahmedabad

### Regency

Arockiasamy P. – READ, Bettiah, Yr 2  
Anuj Toppo - KRCH, Bettiah, Yr1  
Cyprian Minj - Sasaram, Yr1  
Dilip Kumar - Prabhat, Sakri, Yr1

### Tertianship

Antonymsamy Joseph - Shembaganur, TN  
Anil Minz - Shembaganur, TN  
Dominic Francis Xavier - Sitagarha, Hazaribag  
Manish Osta - Sitagarha, Hazaribag

## PROVINCIAL'S PROGRAMME

### April – May 2020

**Provincial** will be in office and visit our houses in Patna area.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**A Meeting for the Discernment of Province Apostolic Planning** at Atmadarshan is rescheduled to 01-04 May, 2020. However, the proposed meeting depends on the pandemic situation and lockdown.

**PROVINCE DAYS 2020:** Fr. Provincial has called for **the Province Days on 28, 29 and 30 May 2020 at XTII, Patna**, inaugurating the Centenary of the Patna Jesuit Mission. The theme of the Province Days will be “Apostolic Planning and Re-orientation for Mission”

**Second Year Novice Illuri Lurdu Reddy** left the Novitiate at Loyola Sadan, Lucknow, on 12 March 2020

## LOCAL REPORTS

**Ashadeep Muzaffarpur:** The month of March was hectic with many preparations and celebrations. We started the month with Holi. Some of the trainees went home and some others remained at Asha deep and celebrated. Ms. Africa and Ms. Maria, the team members from Manos Unidas with **Fr. Joseph Sebastian**, visited us and saw the newly built boys' residence.

They interacted with the trainees and staff and encouraged the trainees to make use of the training to improve their lives. The trainees staged a marvelous programme on the occasion. **Fr. Provincial blessed** and inaugurated the newly built boys' residence and the new website [www.ashadeeptech.com](http://www.ashadeeptech.com) on 19 March 2020. Rt. Rev. Bishop Cajetan Francis, Diocese of Muzaffarpur, celebrated the Holy Eucharist on this special occasion. **Fr. Dominic** thanked all those who contributed towards the construction of the new building and to those who participated in the inaugural ceremony. Due to Covid-19, all trainees left for their homes. **Frs. Joseph Srampickal and Deepak Lakra** are busy gardening and cleaning the house with the coworkers. We are helping some of the Mahadalit (Musahar) families by way of visiting and giving them food to cope with the lockdown.



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- Dominic Xavier

**Barbigha:** On 01 March, 2020, we had the first meeting of the new born CRI Magadh unit at Barbigha. **Fr. Peter Ignatius** was elected as its first President. **Fr. Prakash Antony** is recuperating at home. He has informed us that he is waiting to come to Patna as soon as the lockdown is over. **Fr. K. P. Dominic** and team managed to conduct the annual examination for all the major subjects before the lockdown. The campus looks empty and silent since the school, the hostel, and the liturgy for the public are closed. We have regular community mass in the morning and holy hour in the evening specially offering the pandemic emergency into the Lord's hands. Each one of us is trying to find different ways to spend time during this lockdown.



- Raneesh Jose

**Gyanoday, Juniorate:** The month of March brought a lot of joys as well as sorrows. On 01 March, all the juniors including **Fr. Edward Dungdung** went to Ara to help out in the entrance exams for the students. It was the first experience for all of us to be examiners and correct the exams papers. From 02-04 March, **Fr. Martin Poras** gave us a course on research methodology. His course was very helpful as we move out for college studies. Soon after the course, we started doing research on different topics under the guidance of our staff. XISR provided books for our research. We were excited on 10 March as we wrote the assistancy exam. On 16 March, **Fr. Donald Miranda**, the Provincial, came on a visitation of our community. On the same day, **Fr. Tony Mattapallil** returned from Pune after a two month long course on Ignatian Spirituality. On 20 March, we were saddened by the sudden death of Fr. Dominic Muthedath at Danapur. Now, we are very cautious of Corona virus and doing what is expected from us in order to protect ourselves from this contagious disease.

- Sanjeev N Tirkey

**K. R. Campus, Bettiah:** In the month of March, we had a number of events, beginning with board exams of CBSE. On 01 March, KR Community bid farewell to Sr. Gladis HC from the MJK hospital who cared for our Jesuits and candidates in their times of sickness. On the same day, **Fr. Joseph Maripuram**, the Rector, along with other community members, went to St. Xavier's School, Gaunaha, for the Second Annual Sports Day. On 03 March, the community went to Ratanpurwa to participate in the Silver Jubilee celebration of St. Thomas School. On 04 March, Provincial and team were at KR Community for the Budget meeting. To mark the festival of Holi, the candidates went to READ for a special dinner. On 20 March, we were glad as **Fr. Provincial** inaugurated the Pre-primary building of St. Xavier's H S School. All the teaching as well supporting staff of KREA was present on the occasion. We had a short prayer service, refreshments and meal for all the workers engaged in the construction of the building. **Fr. Joseph Maripuram**, the Rector, thanked **Fr. Paul Varickamthotty** for completing the building work with dedication. The K.R. Community congratulated KR Higher S School for 100% result in intermediate. All the 49 students (Science) passed out with flying colours. Due to the pandemic, we are confined to our campus. All the liturgical celebrations are suspended. On the one hand, the present condition of lockdown has affected our lives but on the other hand, all the community members are involved in gardening, cooking, cultivation and harvesting of crops. We are able to spend quality time with God and oneself. On 31 March, we bid farewell to **Fr. Gabriel Michael**, who served as the Director of the Candidate House since 2016. He has moved to KR Community from the Candidates House. On the same evening, we welcomed **Fr. Albert Abraham** as the acting director of KR Candidates House.

- Ashish Paul

**Kurji Parish:** The first Sunday of Lent saw more faithful for prayer and Eucharist. **Frs. Prashant Pius and Junas Kujur** attended the budget meeting in SXCE on 05 March. On the same day, we participated in the triple celebration at Navjyoti Niketan namely, the 75th birthday of **Archbishop William D'Souza, S.J.**, Bishop Cajetan assuming office as the chairperson of BRBC and opening of the golden jubilee year of Navjyoti Niketan. **Fr. Junas Kujur** went to Khunti for vocation camp. In preparation for the Holy Week, the Parish Council meeting was held on 15 March. All of a sudden, every preparation for the Holy Week and routine liturgical services were brought to a complete stop, with the alarming spread of Covid 19. Fr. James Shekhar, the secretary to Archbishop William D'Souza, SJ, sent an e-message to **Fr. Prashant Pius**





on 20 March to cancel all liturgical services, prayers and Stations of the Cross indefinitely. Following the directives of the Archbishop, official information was sent out to all people of the Kurji parish. A few printed copies of the information are still placed on the entry gates and on the pillars in the portico of the church. The parishioners were advised to make Stations of the Cross and to read the Passion Narratives reflectively from their home itself. On 22 March following the 'Janata Curfew', the church bell was rung at 5:00 pm as an expression of gratitude to all doctors, nurses, police and corporation workers. Concerning the spiritual needs of the people the Archbishop had sent a letter regarding the live-streaming of the Holy Week Services as a complete 21-day lockdown is declared in the country. In the midst of the lockdown, there were six funeral services in the last week of March alone. The prevailing silence and peaceful atmosphere in the parish campus is being tuned to the chirping of different birds who visit us every day. Let us continue to pray that God may redeem all the people from this pandemic.

- Nicholas

**Manthan, Khagaul:** There is a saying that "When God closes one door, He opens four and more". This is what I am witnessing during this time of Corona crisis and lock down. The most important thing is that "our hearts are opened" to the reality and to the least and the last. As the corona pandemic crisis started and lock down was declared, we did not know what to do and where to begin. This crisis was unlike any other one, 'Social distancing' was the only way to protect ourselves from the virus. This did not stop us from reaching out to the most marginalized and the poor. Manthan and Bihar Dalit Vikas Samiti (BDVS) together planned to survey the situations in the villages where we are working. This survey results showed us that many people in the villages are not having enough food to eat because all of them are daily wage labours and they could not go for work last one week. On 04 April, we reached out to the poorest of the poor, those staying on the side of canal, roads, musahars, etc. We distributed Khichadi to more than 1000 people in Gulariya Tola, Ban Sathi, Roopaspur, Abhimanyu Nagar and Jalalpur Nahar Musahari,. People were really hungry and most of them said that since they don't have ration cards, they have not got ration from the Government yet. We got cooked food from the Indian Railway Catering Department (IRCTC). We thank Amithji, the head of IRCTC who went out of his way to help the needy. There are thousands of poor people in the villages needing help. Our hearts are open to the reality and the mystery of suffering, we are confident of reaching out to them in the coming days.

- Juno Sebastian

**Prabhat, Sakri:** We were able to conduct some activities during the first two weeks of March. We had evaluation of the previous month for all the SECs (supplementary Education Centers) and CRCs (child resource centers) of Manos project. **Fr. Anand Kerketta** was busy writing the annual report of Caritas project as it was completed in March. On 06 March, we celebrated International Women's Day on a grand scale on the fields of Lohat Sugar Mill. Nearly 1200 women and adolescent girls from different villages made Women's' Day celebration a success. Women and girls were made aware of their dignity and role in the progress of their community. Cultural programmes aimed at inspiring local women leadership were performed and the audience applauded the programmes. We were fortunate to go for a day long picnic with our staff to Janakpur, Nepal, before the lockdown. A two day training on baseline survey was given by Miss Sharmistha on 19 and 20 March. She had to rush back on 21 March as the Janata



curfew was announced. We had to close down all the centers due to the lockdown. The situation here is not as alarming as in other parts of the State. Yet, people are staying inside their houses. The police is patrolling and alerting people to stay at home. We are praying and hoping that the situation improves soon.

- Ravibhushan Kumar

**St. Michael's, Patna:** On 02 March, **Frs. Thomas Perumalil and Mathew Chemplany** went to Ratanpurwa to attend the Silver Jubilee celebration of St. Thomas Hr. Sec. School and returned on the next day. We had the budget meeting of St. Michael's Zone on 05 March 2020. **Fr. Johnson Kelakath** along with **Fr. Prakash Louis** left for Xavier Nilaya, Bangaluru, to evaluate the Candidate House on 07 March 2020. In the school, the Annual exams for nursery to Class IX and Class XI got over on 09 March 2020. We had two days of holidays for the Holi festival on 10 and 11 March. On 14 March, we had a Thanksgiving Eucharistic Celebration in the community on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the priestly ordination of **Fr. Mathew Chemplany**. As he was unwell, the celebration was postponed. Fr. Kalyanus Minj went to make his annual retreat in Matri Dham Ashram, Varanasi and returned to the community on 19 March. **Br. Francis Thattaparambil** came for the funeral of **Fr. Dominic** and for a few official works. Due to the lock down, he could not go back. He is enjoying his stay with us and we too are happy with his presence. The CBSE board exams continued and the teachers were also kept busy in preparing the report cards to be given on 21 March 2020. Due to the global pandemic, the school was asked to be closed on 18 March. So the report cards were sent online to the parents and students. As scheduled, we were supposed to reopen the school for the new session 2020-2021 on 25 March 2020 but we had to close it as the whole nation was under lockdown. All the same, we



started the online classes for the students. They receive the material and home works through our website which keep the students occupied during this lockdown. The College of Education is also having online classes by the lecturers through video conference. We are having a prolonged community recreation. Most of us have registered ourselves for the online Retreat organized by the JCSA. **Fr. Mathew Chemplany** gave a meaningful and inspiring recollection on the theme 'The Passion of our Lord and the Suffering in the context of Corona Virus.' We started on the eve of 02 April and went on till supper on 03 April. We had a fruitful sharing of the reflection on the 'Passion of our Lord in the context of the Corona Virus.' All of us were enriched by the sharing. Our senior citizens are enjoying the company of all of us as we spend more time with one another. **Fr. Ignatius Abraham** was asked to shift the Chapel, refectory, kitchen, gym, library, etc. from the old residence to Arrupe Ashram, the new residence. He also made sure that the senior citizens and their personal belongings were brought to Arrupe Ashram safely. **Fr. Gregory Gomes** stays at St. Michael's and continues his ministry online. All of us have moved to the new Jesuit Residence – Arrupe Ashram. All are welcome for a pleasant stay at Arrupe Ashram.

- Francis Chinnappan

**St. Xavier's, Patna:** Our students finished writing their Annual Examination and got their results before the lockdown. On 16 March, **Fr. Joseph Sebastian** returned to St. Xavier's from Guatemala, Central America, after attending a conference and quarantined himself for two weeks as a precautionary measure. **Schs Rajeev Ranjan and Jeevan Prakash** are a great help to our community ever since they returned to the



Province on 21 March. We closed our school on 21 March. **Fr. Ranjan Lazarus** got stranded here almost for 10 days after returning from Pune. **Fr. Christu** also quarantined himself for two weeks as he was not feeling well. We gave holidays to our co-workers for a week during the lockdown. We, the old and young members of the Community, managed all our House Chores in this period.

- Devashish Prasad

**St. Xavier's Colleges, XTTI Campus:** On 03 March, Sr. Cynthia, CJ, who is working with UN, addressed the students. On 04 March, the XI-DAS conducted a seminar for students regarding the prospects of Higher education in Management. On 07 and 08 March, **Fr. Sebastian Alphonse** attended the meeting of Jesuits in Science and Technology forum of South Asian Assistancy at Loyola Academy Hyderabad. On 14 March, the College was closed for students and later for the staff to protect them from COVID19. Lock down has not deterred the spirit of teaching and learning.



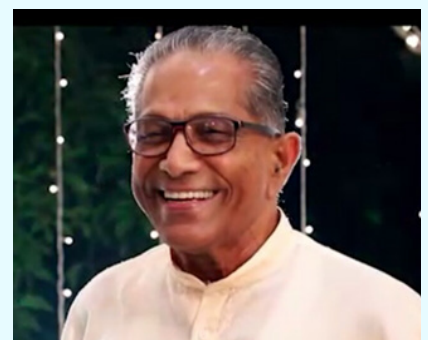
The staff conducts online classes using zoom cloud and conduct tests and assignments using Google class room. The study materials for online certificate courses from IIT Mumbai, is made available to students. The members of the Jesuit community are engaged in campus duty such as cleaning the house, watering plants, taking care of the vegetable garden. We have more time for prayer, adoration and research activities. The community also came up with a plan to reach out to the musahar community staying along the canal of Digha – Baily Road. **Frs. Nishaant, Martin, Prem** and other volunteers with the help of Digha police distributed food materials to 200 families. The sisters at CJ provincial house helped in packing the materials. **Fr. Nishaant** initiated fund mobilization from college students, staff and other well-wishers so that many poor families could be helped. The members of Youth for Free India (YFI) of our college are engaged in reaching out to the poor in their localities of Patna city. They distributed cooking materials at Banskoti, Langar toil, Musahar toli – sabzi bagh, Machua toli, Takiya par and near Jagdeo Path.

- Sebastian Alphonse

### Final Farewell to Fr. Dominic Muthedath, SJ

**Fr. Dominic Muthedath (85)** who served as the co-pastor of St. Stephen's Church, Danapur, expired on 20 March 2020. He went to sleep after wishing his friends on the feast of St. Joseph. He died peacefully in his sleep.

The funeral mass was held at XTTI Chapel on 21 March, Saturday, at 4.00 pm. Most Rev. William D' Souza, SJ, the Archbishop of Patna was the main celebrant. He was joined by Fr. Donald Miranda, SJ, the Provincial and Fr. Joseph Dungdung, SJ, the Parish Priest of St. Stephen's Church, Danapur and other Patna Jesuit Priests. Sr. Attracta, SC, the youngest sister of Fr. Dominic was present for the funeral. She travelled



overnight by road from West Bengal. We had a good number of religious priests, and sisters, and lay people from Danapur parish for the funeral mass. Fr. Donald Miranda welcomed the gathering and presented the life and mission of Fr. Dominic. The Archbishop in his homily highlighted the virtues of simplicity, availability and deep faith of Fr. Dominic. He termed Fr. Dominic as a priest of the people. Sr. Mercy, SND, the niece of Fr. Dominic, thanked everyone. Fr. Selvin Xavier, the Socius, thanked all those present on behalf of the

province. He thanked the XTTI community for the arrangements and Fr. Josey and the juniors for the choir. He specially thanked Dr. Haque and the administrator, sisters and nurses of KHFH, Patna, for their generous help. After the final prayer, all present, paid homage to Fr. Dominic inside the chapel. We did not have the usual procession with the people to the cemetery. But the Archbishop, the Provincial and a small group of religious and priests witnessed the final funeral rite at the cemetery. May his soul rest in peace!  
(Please find the Obituary on the next page)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### “Your health in your hands”

The following items are available to make “Your health in your hands” possible.

1. Amritdhara oil – it can be applied for over 33 ailments.
2. Heart tonic; it is both preventive and curative for heart blocks and high BP.
3. A remedy for alcoholic addiction. It has no side effects and it works, even if the patient doesn't want to give up alcohol.
4. Snake stone for any poisonous bites and stings, it is also found to be effective for any old and unsealing infections.

Those interested can learn how to make nos.1, 2 and 3.

Please contact Fr. Sevanand Meloo, SJ, Xavier Bhavan, Digha Ghat, Patna.

Mob:9955532263. Email: [melookunnelsj@gmail.com](mailto:melookunnelsj@gmail.com)

## REQUESTING YOUR PRAYERS

### For the Sick:

**Prakash Antony** underwent a laproscopy procedure to remove a block in the stomach in Apollo Hospital, Chennai. He is recuperating at home in Chennai.

### For the Departed:

Fr. Arakal Jacob (AND, 96/75) died on 12 March 2020.

**Fr. Dominic Muthedath, SJ** (85/63), expired on 20 March 2020 in Danapur.

Mrs. Mariyakkutty Luka (90's), **mother of Fr. Jose Thayil, SJ**, died on 21 March 2020 in Kerala.

Mrs. Jesurethinam (80), **the youngest sister of Fr. Augustine Ambrose, SJ**, died on 28 March 2020

Fr. Andre Koluvan, SJ (DUM, 72/48) died on 29 March 2020 in a road accident.

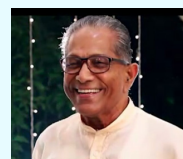
Fr. Valentine De Souza, SJ (GUJ 92/74) died on 06 March 2020 in Vadodara, Gujarat.

## FR. DOMINIC MUTHEDATH, S.J. (85/63)

Died at St. Stephen's Church, Danapur, Patna, on 20 March 2020

**Born** : 26.12.1934  
**Entered the SJ** : 14.08.1956

**Ordained** : 30.03.1968  
**Final Vows** : 15.08.1977



### Formation & Studies:

Secondary Education: St. Mary's H. S., Alwaye; 1954  
PUC (Cambridge Sch): S. H. College, Ernakulam; 1954-56  
Graduation: St. Xavier's College, Ranchi; 1965  
Novitiate: St. Stanislaus College, Sitagarha; 1956-58  
Juniorate: St. Stanislaus College, Sitagarha; 1958-60  
Philosophy: Sacred Heart College, Shembaganur; 1960-63  
Regency: K. R. School, Bettiah; 1963-65  
Theology: St. Mary's College, Kurseong; 1965-69  
Tertianship: Vinayalaya, Mumbai; 1973  
Diaconate: Kurseong; 22.12.1967, Bishop: E. Benjamin  
Ordination: Cherpunkal; 30.03.1968, Bishop: S. Vayalil  
Final Vows: Sasaram; 15.08.1977

### Apostolic Assignments as a Priest:

Co-Pastor: Catholic Church, Sasaram/Gulni; 1969-71  
Co-Pastor: Catholic Church, Barh; 1971-72  
Parish Priest: Catholic Church, Chenari; 1972-80  
Minister: XTTI, Digha Ghat, Patna; 1980-82  
Parish Priest: Chuhari; 1982-85  
Teacher: St. Michael's High School, Patna; 1985-92  
Spiritual Father: Mission Home, Palai; 1992-94  
Spiritual Father: Xavier Hall, Bangalore; 1994-95  
Minister: Atmadarshan; Dec., 1995-96  
Teacher & Co-Pastor: Barbigha; 1996-99  
Teacher & Minister: Catholic H.S., Ara; 1999-2004  
Administrator: BSI, Patna; 2004-05  
Co-pastor & Socius to NM: Itarhi; 2005-06  
Sabbatical: (6 months) 2006  
Co-Pastor: St. Stephen's Church, Danapur, 2007-08  
Parish Priest: St. Stephen's, Church, Danapur, 2008-10  
Administrator: Jeevan Sangham, Bodhgaya; 2010-19  
Co-Pastor: St. Stephen's Church, Danapur, 2019-2020

*When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, He said of him,  
"Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile" (Jn 1:47)*

Like Nathanael, **Fr. Dominic** was indeed a person 'in whom there was no guile'; he was a faithful disciple of Jesus and a dedicated Jesuit priest. For anyone who came into contact with Fr. Dominic, it was amply clear that his life was centered on Jesus, nourished by the daily Eucharist and other spiritual practices; his personal and apostolic life flowed from this source. The ever present child-like smile on his face and his zeal for apostolic works was contagious - inspiring, energizing and challenging everyone to live similarly. His ability to express himself clearly without hurting others and his simplicity of life, devoid of any taint of glamour, endeared him to all sections of people - young and old, rich and poor, healthy and sick, Christians and non-Christians, and, people of all languages and cultural backgrounds.

Fr. Dominic is the tenth of the eleven children of his loving and devout parents - of his four brothers, one is a Capuchin priest and of his six sisters, five are religious. So, he brought depth of faith and bond of affection among family members as a heritage, which were amplified by the Jesuit formation and found fruition in the form of abundant apostolic zeal to draw people close to Jesus and enabled him to be in solidarity with everyone, especially the socio-economically weak, the aged and sick. Even the health set-back which he suffered at the age of sixty, when he had to have a by-pass surgery, did not dampen or hinder the spirit of joyous service that was the hallmark of his entire life.

He died as unassumingly as he lived: on 19 March 2020, Fr. Dominic spent the day as usual and in the evening called up the many 'Josephs' of the Province, including his companion and Pastor of Danapur - Fr. Joseph Dungdung, SJ, who was out of station for vocation promotion work - to wish them on their feast day. He had his supper and typical pleasant conversation with his cook. After making a few phone calls to some of his relatives, he retired for the day; and, while he was fast asleep, the Lord called him unto Himself. Next morning, when the cook went to call him for the daily Mass and breakfast, he found that Fr. Dominic had already returned to his Master for Eternal Rest.

Because of the news of outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, there was palpable fear among the people and large gatherings were being discouraged / avoided. Even so, a moderate gathering of fellow Jesuits and other priests, religious and laity bid a fitting farewell to Fr. Dominic on 21 March, on the eve of 'जनता कर्फ्यू' (People's curfew), called by the Prime Minister for the next day.

Lord Jesus, you said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." (Mt 5:8). Your priest-servant Fr. Dominic, as you know better than us, was a person of pure heart. As you grant him the bliss of seeing your glorious face forever, through his intercession, grant us a share in the graces with which you blessed him while he was with us on this earth. Amen.

- Fr. Susai Raj, SJ



## Centenary History of Patna Jesuit Mission -2

- Jose Kalapura, SJ

As noted in the March issue of Patna Jesuit Mission History Ganga Lahar Series, the coming of the American Jesuits to Patna in 1921 was to carry forward the Capuchin Mission in Bihar which began in 1703 and ended in 1919. While the Capuchin Mission was somewhat triggered by the collapse of the first Jesuit Mission (1620), the second Jesuit Mission (1919) was triggered by a political crisis suffered by the Capuchin Mission. In this issue, we discuss the Capuchin Mission in Bihar for over 216 years, before the handing over of Patna Diocese to the American Jesuits in 1919.

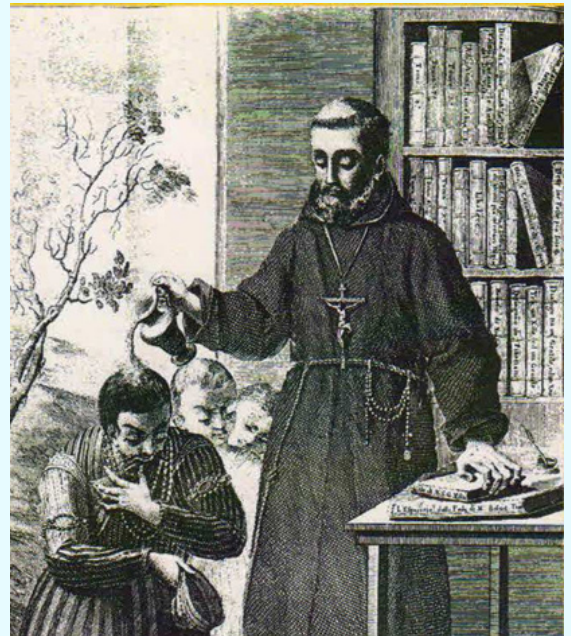
### Capuchin Mission in Bihar, 1703-1919

The Capuchin disciples of St. Francis Assisi from Italy arrived at Patna in 1706 and proceeded to Lhasa in Tibet, which was their assigned mission. Besides their transit house at Patna, they also set up another transit house at Kathmandu around 1710. Eventually the Tibet Mission and Nepal Mission were wound up in 1745 and 1769 respectively, due to various reasons—political, cultural, religious, administrative, besides resource crunch.

Patna being an international trading centre a few European companies had established their centres there by early 18th century. King Dhurup Singh of Bettiah, who had been in contact with the Capuchin priests at Patna since early 1740s during his visits to Patna for commercial purposes, invited the charismatic healing Capuchin priest Father Joseph Mary Bernini, then resident at Patna, to his capital at Bettiah to treat his ailing wife. Through his medical skill the priest healed the queen. Providing warm hospitality to the priest, the King wanted him to found a Christian centre at his capital, for which he sought sanction from the pope. Thus the Capuchins founded their second centre in Bihar, at Bettiah, in 1745, under the patronage of the King.

The priests were given permission to preach Christianity in his kingdom and permitted his subjects to convert if they wished. In 1750, when they built a new church there, the King and his convoy came to join in the inauguration cum first Christmas celebration on Christmas eve.

During the 16 years of his service at Bettiah, Bernini became an endearing spiritual guru at Bettiah and saw 41 conversions at Bettiah. The community of converts, originally belonging to diverse castes, eventually became a new ethnic community with distinct socio-religious identity known as Bettiah Christians, through inter-caste marriage within themselves. To this group was added the migrant Newari Christians, exiled from Nepal due to political reasons in 1769, and since then settled at Chuhari village, 11 kilometers north of Bettiah. After 1850s the community members began to emigrate for employment outside Bettiah and Chuhari. It is estimated that the Bettiah Christians comprise some 16000 members and are presently dispersed in various urban centres of north India and abroad. The making of the Bettiah Christians, the oldest Christian community in northern India, is a signal achievement of the Capuchins the Jesuits later. Over the years, due to effective church mediation in all aspects of life, the community made great progress, especially after 1950s.



*From Lorenzen-bk Scourge of the Mission*

With the winding up of the Tibet and Nepal missions, more Capuchins were available for work in Hindustan which necessitated ecclesiastical and organizational changes. The Tibet Mission became Tibet-Hindustan Mission, which was raised to Hindustan-Tibet Prefecture in 1769, with headquarter at Patna City. They offered pastoral service at Danapur Cantonment (1772), Bankipur (1775), and Bhagalpur (1779). In Patna City, a pukka church was built in 1779, in place of the earlier one, built in 1713.

Incidentally, in 1784 the Capuchins in Patna were entrusted with the Mughal Mission founded in 1580 by the Jesuits at the invitation of Emperor Akbar at Agra. This Mission had a few Christian centres in the vast Mughal Empire built up by Akbar and his successors. The Jesuit Mughal Mission continued till 1773, when the Jesuit Society was suppressed worldwide by the pope. The Mission was then handed over to the Carmelite missionaries, raising it as the Great Vicariate of the Mughal. Unfortunately they could manage it only till 1784, when the Holy See annexed the northern part of this Vicariate to the Patna-based Tibet-Hindustan Prefecture. Since Agra was centrally located its headquarter was shifted from Patna to Agra. Later it was raised to a Vicariate in 1820, with a bishop heading it at Agra.

In 1845, Agra Vicariate was bifurcated to create Patna Vicariate with the eastern half of Uttar Pradesh and the whole of Bihar as its territory. Bishop Anastasius Hartmann was made the first bishop of Patna Vicariate in 1845. It was he who initiated the coming of the Sisters of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBMV-now known as Sisters of the Congregation of Jesus-CJ) at Bankipur in 1852.

In 1866, the headquarter of Patna Vicariate was shifted to Allahabad, which was a more central place in the vast Capuchin mission territory. Patna Vicariate was raised to a full diocese in 1886, and was named Allahabad Diocese which, by then, had many centres in north India, besides in Bihar.

Under the two Capuchin-managed dioceses of Agra and Allahabad, many churches and vicariates emerged in north India covering the present states of Rajasthan, Punjab (of Pakistan and India), Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, central and north Bihar, Darjeeling and Sikkim.

Within Bihar, there were only eleven churches till 1892: at Padri ki Haveli (Patna City) (1713), Bettiah (1745), Chuhari (1769) Bhagalpur (1779), Purnea (1836), Bankipur (1848), Kurji (1854), Danapur (1856), Jamalpur (1866), Chakhni (1883), and Latauna (1891).



*Cathedral Church, Bettiah, Bettiah Diocese*

In 1892 the north Bihar territory was entrusted to the Capuchins from Tyrol, Austria, under the newly erected Bettiah Prefecture. The churches on the south of Ganga continued to remain under Allahabad Diocese.

The Tyrolese Capuchins made substantial contribution in Bihar, by setting up many mission centres and institutions. Under the dynamic leadership of the Prefect Father Hilarion of Abtei (1892-1910), the Prefecture saw the founding of several new mission centres such as Samastipur (1892), Darbhanga (1894), Someshwar (1894), Ramnagar (1895), Dossaiya (1897), Fakirana (1897), Muzaffarpur (1898), Rampur (1898), Chanpatia (1900), Morpa (1907), Hope Town/Darjeeling (1907), etc., during the next twenty three years.

They also facilitated the arrival of the Holy Cross Sisters (Sisters of the Mercy of the Holy Cross) from Switzerland at Bettiah in 1894. They started a minor seminary and recruited candidates for priestly training and founded a congregation of nuns, Claria Bahins, from among the Bettiah Christians. They set up the first printing press in Bihar, the Catholic Mission Press, Bettiah.

As World War I started in 1914, the Austrian Capuchins were interned as enemy subjects by the British Colonial Government in India. The tremendous growth of the Church under the Austrian Capuchins suffered a setback due to lack of missionaries. During the interment, a Belgian Capuchin working in Punjab, Fr. Felix, was commissioned to manage the Prefecture assisted by the eight local diocesan clergy of Bettiah.

Resolving the crisis, the Holy See created a new diocese (Patna Diocese) and entrusted it to the Jesuits in 1919. Bifurcating Allahabad Diocese all the churches in Bihar south of the Ganga and suppressing Bettiah Prefecture all the churches in north Bihar were brought under Patna Diocese.

Belgian Jesuit priest of Ranchi Mission Louis Van Hoeck was consecrated the first bishop of Patna Diocese. It may be noted that the Belgian Jesuit Mission of Bengal had been working in the Chotanagpur Division of south Bihar since 1880s. He took over the leadership of Patna Diocese on March 10, 1921. Soon after, on March 16, 1921, the first five American Jesuits arrived at Patna to manage the Diocese.

The Capuchins are credited to have founded most of the churches in north India and Bihar. One may note that they built on what was started by the Jesuits of the Mughal Mission in north-west India and of Patna Mission since the 18th century. In early 20th century, it was the privilege of the Jesuits again to manage the Church in Bihar which had been nurtured by the Capuchins for over 200 years earlier.