

THE JESUIT MISSION OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: AWARENESS AND URGENCY

(Visits to the Junior Jesuits – Novices, Juniors, Philosophers and Theologians of India)

**Ranchi (Juniorate, St. Xavier's), Borreya (Theologate), Kalimpong (Novitiate)
and Namchi (B.Ed. College)**

(November 2018)

I took the opportunity while holding the meetings of the Central and North Zonal meetings of the Coordinators to visit the Jesuit Juniors studying in St. Xavier's University College in Ranchi, Regional Theologate at Borreya in Ranchi, St. Joseph's School and College at Northpoint, the Manresa Jesuit Novitiate in Kalimpong, and the Loyola College of Education in Namchi, all in Darjeeling Province. The respective administrators and officials organized my talks with the Novices and the B.Ed. college students and faculty.



In all these places, the talk was on how to establish cordial relationships, especially across cultures, religions, regions, etc. It was an introductory talk to both the Novices and the Juniors explaining to them the Society's ministerial structure and the place of the Ministry of Interreligious Dialogue and its significance for today's India. In Borreya, it was a talk on the theology of religions, the practical issues in religious relationships, the present religio-

political scenario and the future of religious dialogue. The discussions were lively. In Namchi, I focused on how the students could transcend differences of culture and habits to understand each other to form one community of compassion and understanding.



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Visits to the Junior Jesuits

(De Nobili College – Pune, Dhyana Ashram – Kolkata, Juniorate in Sitagarha, Juniorate in St. Xavier's, Ranchi)

(November 20-24, 2016 and December 10-22, 2016)

- I travelled to Pune and Mumbai on Nov. 20-24, 2016 and, later, on Dec. 10-22, 2016 to Patna, Bodhi Gaya, Sitagarha, Ranchi, and Kolkata to visit the scholasticates and to address the young Jesuits on the status of the Ministry of *Interreligious Dialogue, its shades and shores* and also to organize the Assistancy meeting of the Corodinators of Dialogue from provinces and regions.



- A presentation was made on the religio-political situation of contemporary India in order to discern newer paths and directions to the ministry of dialogue and the qualities and the competence a Jesuit needs to have.



- I encouraged the young Jesuits to think and to relate with others beyond the boundaries of caste and religion, harnessing good will and genuine interest in their neighbourhood or wherever they make a visit. A survey was conducted to know the mind of young scholastics regarding this ministry.



- I met the following senior Jesuits, dialoguing with the poor, with Buddhism, and in Formation and Education:
 - Fr. Prashanth, Head of the *Dept. of Interreligious Studies* in St. Xavier's College, Mumbai
 - Fr. Philip Manthara, Patna St. Xavier's High School
 - Fr. Joe Thadavanal, Rector of St. Xavier's College, Patna

- Fr. Jose Kalapura, Director of the Xavier Institute of Social Research, Patna
- Fr. Robert Athickal in Tarumitra, Patna
- Fr. Sushil Sah, Queen of the Apostles parish, Patna
- Fr. Lawrence Soosai and Jeevan Sangham in Bodh Gaya
- Fr. Keith D'Souza SJ, Prof. of Philosophy and Religious Studies in St. Pius X Pontifical Seminary of the Archdiocese of Bombay
- Fr. Aniceto Pereira, Rector of the Seminary
- Fr. Noel Sheth in St. Xavier's College, Mumbai
- Fr. S.M. Michael, SVD and BIRD (Basics of Inter-Religious Dialogue)



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Visits to the Junior Jesuits

(Clive's House – Trichirapalli, Vidyaniketan – Trivandrum, Satyanilayam – Chennai, Berchmans Illam – Chennai, Arul Kadal – Chennai, Sanjeevan Niwas – Vijayawada, and De Nobili College – Pune)

(JULY 10-21, 2015)

Fr. Vincent Sekhar, the Secretary for JSD, has visited so far *Clive's House* (Trichirapalli on July 10, 2015), *Vidyaniketan* (Trivandrum on July 13, 2015), *Satyanilayam* (on July 17, 2015), *Berchmans Illam* (on Sept 21, 2015) & *Arul Kadal* (on July 15, 2015) (Chennai), *Sanjeevan Niwas* (Vijayawada on Aug 28, 2015), *De Nobili College* (Pune on July 21, 2015) and the Common House professors in De Nobili College, Pune, speaking to them about the Jesuit Mission of Interreligious Dialogue in South Asia.

Fr. Sekhar highlighted the need and significance of interreligious dialogue, following the footsteps of the three Popes (John Paul II, Benedict XVI, Francis) in their interest and interaction with the different religious communities, going to their temple and mosque, receiving and sharing knowledge and good will. He also brought out the stress of the triple-dialogue mentioned in GC34 and the mission of the Society, particularly “the right relationship with One another” (also with God and with Creation). He said salvation comes through right relationships.



In all these scholasticates, there were inputs and fresh interest being created among the youngsters. A survey was taken and in that some have shown “much interest” in this ministry of dialogue and would like to learn the many things that are challenging in this field. More details about the survey output will be given later. The Secretary plans to send materials online, and then call for a meeting of those scholastics (cum permissu) who show special taste and interest in this field.



In his sharing with the Professors of De Nobili College, he browsed through the activities and challenges faced by Jesuits in different area. Also the need for one-to-one guidance of scholastics, who are interested in Indian culture, religions, philosophies, languages, etc. giving his own experience of how he was motivated in Indology and Sanskrit by Fr. De Smet and Fr. Aubrey Mascarehnes in 1977-79.

Fr. Sekhar said that more and more Indian thought and practices could be brought in our courses in comparative perspective as Comparative Philosophy and Theology are picking up fast. There could also be the lab component (practicals & exposure) in every course. There was a fruitful discussion. The professors also pointed out how their curriculum envelops integrated approaches and disciplines, the languages they teach, and the mode of assignments.

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