

"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

item 454

Pukiu – Nagaland another Epiphany Province mission, in the 'Land of Festivals'



True to its motto – to manifest the Lord to all nations and cultures – the *Epiphany of the Lord* Province recently ventured into yet another new mission in the north eastern Indian state of **Nagaland**. It borders the already flourishing Pallottine presence in the neighbouring state of Arunachal Pradesh.

The first two missionaries, Frs Manoj Punchakunnel and Jose Reechus, set foot in Pukiu, in the diocese of Kohima, on 21 Aug just past. They were accompanied by the Provincial, Fr Varghese Pullan and Fr Johnson Puthur.

Welcomed by Bishop James Thoppil he handed over responsibility for this new outreach during a solemn Mass marking its inauguration. Formerly part of the Pungro parish, Pukiu is starting out with 137 Catholic families and a primary school of 300 students – all indentifying as the Yimchunger tribe.

Nagaland is a land of mountains and deep valleys, inhabited by more than 16 delightful tribal groups. Celebrations in the 'land of festivals' extend throughout the year, with each clan in its own style. In north eastern India there is a saying that goes: 'There is always something happening in Nagaland'!

Maybe surprisingly, Christianity is the predominant religion. Out of the state's population of 1.988m 90.02% are Christians! The 2001 census recorded their numbers as 1,790,349 making it, together with Meghalaya and Mizoram, one of just three Christian-majority states. There is very high church attendance in both urban and rural areas and huge churches dominate the skylines of Kohima, Dimapur, and Mokokchung. Other religions present are Hindus (7.7%), Muslims (1.8%), with the balance being Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and Animism (0.5%).



This new venture has great significance for a variety of reasons:

- it is a region of India that is open to the gospel message and the people are very much in need of pastoral care.
- the neighbouring states of Meghalaya and Manipur are also very open to evangelization and already enjoy a strong Christian presence.
- it is a matter of great joy that we already have students in formation who come from these north eastern states.

This region will undoubtedly become a significant source of vocations in the future. In addition it touches the border of Myanmar where the Australian Region intends to open a new mission in the near future.

East Asian countries provide fertile ground for implanting the Pallottine charism. The Society is already present in South Korea, Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Vietnam. The Pallottine Missionary Sisters too have ventured into the Philippines. It is expected that two new missions will be established in the near future, in Myanmar and Thailand. It is worth recalling here that the second strongest Pallottine presence today is in the Indian subcontinent. Together with our existence in Australia and Papua New Guinea, the Asia-Oceania region already constitutes a significant part of the Society in terms of number of members as well as in apostolic initiatives and possibilities.



It is generally true that these are all countries where Christians are only a minority. But the communities themselves are very vibrant. Strongly influenced by eastern religions like Hinduism and Buddhism, Asian people have an innate sense of God, show great respect for creation, manifest great gentleness in their manner and believe in religious tolerance. My visits to some of these East Asian countries have left deep impressions on me of their cultural heritage and their profound sense of the Divine. At the same time all these countries require substantial spiritual and material assistance. Millions await liberation from a multitude of bondages! I am sure that, with God's blessings, our Society will become strongly established in this part of the world in the next 15 to 20 years. Let's hope that the Indian Pallottines, together with the members of the Poznan Province as well as the French Region, will continue to venture out courageously in this area to realise the dream and vision of our Founder. It is a matter of joy that we have already ordained priests from South Korea and students in formation from both the Philippines and Taiwan. Vocation

promotion initiatives have already started in Vietnam. The future of any mission depends finally on local vocations!

On behalf of the entire Society, let me express my joy and gratitude to my own Province, to the Provincial Fr Varghese Pullan and to the first two missionaries, for keeping aflame the missionary spirit on the Himalayan mountains. Let us be sure, their generosity and courage will be greatly blessed and rewarded! This hope is based on the gospel truth: "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Luke 6, 38). On the other hand, if we are confined to the comforts of our existing structures or try only to maintain the status quo, decline and even death is assured!

At this moment, let me add a word of admiration and respect for our great missionary, Fr Augustine Kolenchery who celebrates his feast day today, 28 Aug. His missionary adventures match those of olden times. Against all odds, he ventured into the mountainous state of Arunachal Pradesh in his early seventies. And, regardless of the extreme cold and steep terrain, he continued to work there until a week ago. Today the most flourishing mission of the Epiphany Province and one of the most challenging missions of the Society – second only to the mission in Papua new Guinea – lies in Arunachal Pradesh. Probably the new mission in Peru takes third place in terms of challenges. The paradox is that the missionaries working in such difficult terrain – Arunachal, Papua, Peru etc. – are really happy and pastorally satisfied regardless of all their struggles. Gospel, lived in its radical nature, never loses its attraction.

"Give, but give until it hurts" — Mother Teresa

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item 455

2nd National UAC Assembly – INDIA

Driving through the main gate at Prabhodana, the Pallottine formation centre at Mysore, one is greeted with lush greenery on either side, neat manicured lawns, flowers, bushes and majestic trees. The campus is in fact 'green' by design, as every drop of rain water is captured to meet the requirements of its residents. As well kitchen waste is composted and used for gardening, bio gas is generated from cattle waste and used for kitchen burners, solar energy is harnessed for domestic water heaters and powering driveway lights. Contributing to its uniqueness is a contemporary designed Chapel dedicated to Mary, Queen of Apostles coupled with the recently established Museum [refer #231]

From Aug 05-08 this venue hosted India's second National UAC Assembly. Fr Jacob Nampudakam, the Ecclesiastical Advisor of the Union and Ms Donatella Acerbi, its President both attended.

As always the time shared together following the opening Mass was enjoyable and life-giving, and made for a lively start to proceedings. These commenced with the traditional lamp lighting, a feature of Indian conferences.



Guests were welcomed formally by the Provincial – and local NCC President – Fr Varghese, after which we listened to his report, followed by those of the treasurer, national formation coordinator, and media spokesperson.

The theme, taken from the gospel of John: *'Chosen to bear fruit that endures'*, was then explored in Fr Jacob's delivery. He stressed the imperative that we must abide in Christ if we are to achieve results. Also that the three Core Communities of the UAC have the responsibility, together with him, of 'guaranteeing the unity and apostolic efficiency of the total Union'. He elaborated on the need for effective leadership in order to implement the objectives of the Union through communion and collaboration.

For Donatella this was her inaugural address. She described the theme as an engaging and prophetic one. St Vincent envisaged a union of people who were apostolically committed, resulting in collaboration between different vocations. He dreamt of a Church in which all would have a part and there would be no spectators! She concluded by recalling the constant obligation we ourselves have to be enthusiastic and effective.

Presentations followed on the following topics:

- We are chosen by Jesus to be UAC members Fr Joy Palachuvattil
- Bearing fruit in the Union implies all members – clergy, brothers, sisters, laity – sharing a genuine and deep friendship in Christ Sr Inacinha Fernandes
- UAC to bear fruit that endures Mr Joseph Bantleman

The second day saw the sharing of local experiences and activities by people from across the country. This was done via small groups who endeavoured to tease out different views on pre-determined issues, with the intention of discovering what solutions may have evolved at local level.



An evening social gathering saw a small auction, of curios and sweets, organised by the seminarians and resulting in financial aid to prisoners who had completed their prison term but could not be released due to their inability to pay the bail amount.

The final day saw groups bring back many useful recommendations, later incorporated into an Assembly Statement. Elections were held prior to the closing proceedings of what, all agreed, was a wonderful experience. The dialogue had been free and candid, providing a fresher and deeper appreciation of St Vincent's charism. Gratitude is extended to the organising committee and Prabhodana hosts.

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