

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

item 301

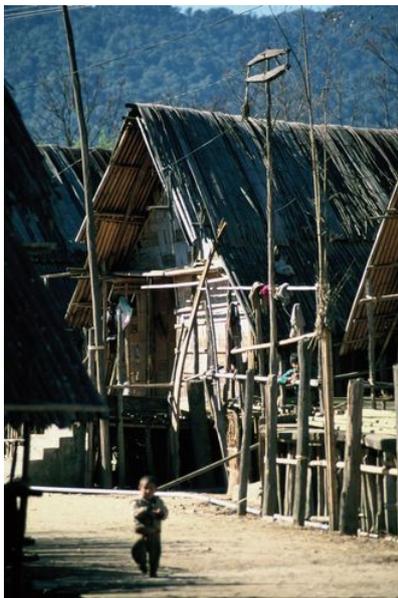
expansion in Arunachal Pradesh



"Go forth!" In 2012, at the request of Bishop John Thomas of Itanagar Diocese in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, Pallottines moved out to carry the joy of the Gospel in another direction, to **Sangram** (the word 'Sangram' means war, but our war is only against darkness, superstition, ignorance and selfishness). It required a journey of 13 hours from Itanagar, north towards the borders of China. Interestingly the people look Chinese and a few of them dress like Chinese too. Many Mongoloid tribes occupy these areas of the Himalayas.

We became aware that this area, with 12 scattered mission stations, had already been the cradle of faith in the mountain ranges of the Kurum-Kumey District for the past 13 years. A church had been constructed at Sangram but there was no priest to administer the SACraments or to attend to the spiritual needs of the people. The Christian Brothers [of Bl. Edmund Rice] and the MSMHC Sisters were already there but they were mostly involved in the teaching apostolate in their high school which absorbed all their energies. The Sisters also had to attend to a dispensary for the sick in various villages around.

St Vincent Pallotti insisted that every Christian should be an



apostle in his own realm of activity – as a farmer, a teacher, a labourer, wood cutter in the forest, a hunter in the jungles, or a shop keeper in the valley. Even children and youth are obliged to proclaim Christ wherever they are. So it was indeed a thrilling experience for us to witness how the people in these mountainous areas, especially young boys and girls together with the catechist, are filled with apostolic zeal. They joyfully proclaim Jesus as they ascend the mountains and scale down the valleys.

Travelling with the parish priest to villages in far away jungle areas they sing in Hindi:

“chala jana hey door se door chalke lekar Jesu ka pyara, pyara nam...”

“we have to go a long, long way bearing the dear, dear name of Jesus to the mountains and hills and proclaim that name to everyone and in that name devils will run away, the blind will see, the deaf will hear and the lame will jump with joy...”

We get a delightful feeling whenever we hear this missionary song. People who received faith in Jesus with baptism just 2 years ago have become real evangelizers.



Once we were on a mountain top to visit a small village of 14 families. Our catechist, Shri Jakob Takap, pointed out a cluster of families far away, almost lost in a distant crevice and told me: “Father, look at those families. They are far away from the areas where most of the farmers live. They are almost isolated. No priest or catechist has visited them. It will be seven hours walk from here. Shall we go there and meet those people?” I was overjoyed to hear that! This zealous catechist put fire and zeal into

me. Subsequently we decided to open a new mission there. Some 26 families came and gathered to learn the catechism and later we baptized them. Today it is a flourishing Christian community. This and the other Christian communities of the hill tribes which we have built up have become real evangelisers and veritable lay missionaries. What we urgently need are well-informed catechists and zealous, dedicated priests.

A few years ago Pallottines moved out from Daporijo in the Upper Subansiri district and succeeded in establishing churches and missions in **Siyum** and its neighbourhood. Of late, under the energetic leadership of Fr. Johnson Puthur SAC and his companions, our ministry there has undergone a marvellous change. Siyum was originally a very difficult place, some were really inimical in the beginning. A few people obstructed the construction of the church and school. Some even came to attack us. But these are nothing but the common experiences of missionaries all over the world.

Going further north, we could stabilize the Christian faith in a number of groups of the faithful in distant missions like Einmury, Nacho and the far off Limking on the borders of China in the Upper Subansiri District. At **Nacho** and **Einmury**, the missionaries were joyfully welcomed and the people offered cordial cooperation. Today the communities of the faithful have grown considerably. Fr. Anto Mullanal SAC, Fr. Siju SAC, Fr. Shinu SAC, Fr. Shinson SAC and other young priests have done marvellous work in these areas.

When we first visited **Limking**, the farthest village on the top of the mountain, we found just one Catholic family out of more than thirteen. Since no priest was able to go there they went to other Christian denominations and found a place to pray and offer gifts to the Lord. We lacked a plot of land where a church could be set up. But God’s providence worked a miracle for us. As we were looking for a plot to build a small chapel, we met a young Hindu family who had a small house and a little plot at the highest point of the village. The young man of the family told us: “Father, if you like, I shall offer this small plot of land of mine to you free. You can build the church on this land. I will be very glad to see people praying here. And my family will join you too.” We accepted and in two weeks we built a bamboo hut for the chapel, blessed it and

offered Mass there. Only two families attended, the Catholic family and the new Hindu family. The latter today are active Christians. We always remember the words of the Lord “I am with you, do not fear”.

Of late, a new building was constructed at **Kodak** to replace the existing bamboo structure which was used as the church for many years. At Kodak people have been clamouring for a church and a school for the neighbouring villages hidden behind the mountains and valleys.



Our Bishop has been looking for dedicated priests. Let us pray that many more missionaries arrive in these areas which are in reality “ripe for harvest”. As St Paul said profoundly: “Necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if do not preach the Gospel”.

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item 302

what does the *Year of Consecrated Life* mean to me?

To me the words of Saint John Paul II underline the real value of consecrating one’s life to God. Instituting the *World Day of Consecrated life*, in 1997, he stated that consecrated life, deeply rooted in the example and teaching of Christ, is a gift of God the Father to his Church – a reminder to us of the feast of the Presentation of the Lord – that, as did Jesus through the action of Mary, so consecrated persons give their lives to God as their greatest gift.



The foundation of this life is thus grounded in the life of Jesus. Through living our profession of the evangelical counsels the character of Jesus – the chaste, poor and obedient one – is made constantly visible and realized in the midst of the world. Eyes of faith are always geared towards the mystery of the kingdom. As a Pallottine, this mystery is witnessed every time our consecration is realized.

St Vincent Pallotti added three additional promises to the three evangelical counsels, as stated in our Law:

“By our consecration we give ourselves entirely to God, and we resolve to follow Jesus...So we promise to the Society: consecrated celibacy, poverty, obedience, perseverance, the sharing of resources and a spirit of service.”

This profession commitment is our response to God’s invitation to live for him in the service of the world, and to realize the mystery of God in a fraternal community. We follow the example of Mary who offered the greatest gift to God, meaning Jesus who sacrificed Himself for our redemption and salvation. I am convinced that, to put this mystery into practise, one has to allow oneself to be cultivated inwardly by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Just as Jesus came amongst us as the apostle of the eternal Father, His Spirit must become our drive too.

“If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life...through his Spirit that dwells in you.” [Rom. 8:11]

God’s Spirit is the core value of our consecration. Pallotti tells us: “If we are to imitate Our Lord Jesus Christ, it is very necessary that we possess His Spirit. Accordingly all our thoughts and feelings must be like those of Jesus Christ, so that we can...imitate him in our actions”. We are invited to give God’s Spirit a place in our

hearts. It is indeed this Spirit who awakens and moulds our desire to respond fully to our vocation. In every age the Spirit of God enables men and women to realize the fullness of God. As Jeremiah put it: “You have seduced me, Lord, and I have let myself seduced” [Jer. 20:7].

So the word of God is our guidance in this vocation. We ought to have a complete dedication characterized by a boundless love to serve all. Saint John Paul II’s words again:

“The first missionary duty of consecrated persons is to themselves, and they fulfil it by opening their hearts to the promptings of the Spirit of Christ. Their witness helps the whole Church...to serve God freely, through Christ’s grace which is communicated to believers.”

As consecrated persons, we are called to continually deepen our response to God, so that we become true signs of Christ in the world. Like the apostles, who left everything to gain life in Christ, we are encouraged to follow the steps of our Founder and to put all our trust in Christ. Through the gift of our charism, spirituality and apostolic life we must make visible the mission of the Church. We are challenged to continue reviving faith in our secularized world as consecrated persons.

This year marks the 18th year of celebration of the original ‘Day of Consecrated Life’, and now coincides with the theme proclaimed by Pope Francis, for a ‘Year of the Consecrated Life’.

Let us use this precious moment to dedicate all consecrated people into the loving care of our mother Mary for her intercession.

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SAC asia oceania e-bulletin

you commented...

on #157 Thank youa recent and innovative way for the Pallottine Family and beyond to share the lived experiences and inspiring stories, thus keeping St Vincent’s charism alive, and impelling us all to “let the holiness of God shine forth” wherever we are.

a correction for article #300: Mariana Alfonso Mujica ISAC from Argentina is the person pictured - not Donatella Acerbi [sorry Mariana! – rh]

PW 02.02.15

Thanks for the Asia Oceania news you send us regularly. It is inspiring to hear from our bishop **Bruno Ateba SAC** about the difficult situation in which our fathers and Christians persevere in our mission, in the midst of problems from Boko Haram. It is also inspiring to hear from Lay associations (Donatella Acerbi) about their commitment to the Apostolate through UAC.

MK 01.02.15