

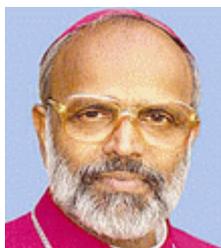


E-BULLETIN # 24

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

ITEM 51

India: reports of miracles in remote region lead to many conversions



Bishop Kattrukudiyil

Repeated incidents of supernatural healings are a primary cause of the massive growth of the Church in a remote corner of India – according to the region’s bishop. Bishop John Kattrukudiyil of Itangar, Arunachal Pradesh in north-east India, highlighted the phenomena of reported healings in explaining the growth of the Church in his diocese from virtually no faithful to about 40 percent of the population within 35 years.

Speaking to Aid to the Church in Need, the bishop described the situation in his diocese saying: “Time and time again they tell me story after story of healings that have happened in various places.

The bishop, whose region of India neighbours China, Bhutan and Burma, added: “I have a lot of theological background in my studies and it’s easy to become sceptical about all these kind of things, but the people are absolutely convinced that they have received healing.”

He told of one healing incident involving a man who renounced a past spent persecuting the Church and converted to marry a Catholic girl. Bishop Kattrukudiyil said: “After becoming a Catholic the man was asked to go and pray over a paralysed man. He was unwilling but he still went and prayed and the next day that man rose up and walked to the church.

“He was so shocked at this miraculous experience he began to go to church and now today he is a very active member of the parish.”

However, the bishop admitted that, while he had heard many first-hand accounts of this kind, they were often treated with scepticism when he related them to others. He said: “When I recount these stories to people in Europe and elsewhere they say ‘Oh bishop you are telling us stories’.”

But he went on to describe how these experiences were deepening people's spiritual lives. The bishop added: "There are so many healing stories coming to me which we cannot ignore. This is the experience of a very young Church, experiencing the same grace as that of the Church of Apostolic times."

Bishop Kattrukudiyil said: "The fact that many people experienced healing by praying to Jesus attracted many people to the Church in its early days – that and a kind of spiritual peace that they got by belonging to the Church."

He added: "From their experience, they found that when they came together and went to the house of someone who was sick and prayed over him the individual experienced healing. People who had had been suffering from various sicknesses for a long time were healed – it's really an experience of the early Church that these people had."

According to the bishop, Christians have mushroomed in Arunachal Pradesh over the last 35 years – from virtually no faithful to an expected 40 percent of the total population when the 2010 census results are finally released.

The country was closed to Christian missionaries because of strict entry permit laws – which were only revoked in the 1990s – but the situation changed when young people in Arunachal Pradesh sought education in Catholic schools in neighbouring Assam.

Some students at the Catholic schools asked for baptism and, with their parents' permission, received the sacrament before returning to their villages, where the faith spread. Some of these students were subsequently elected to government posts and helped to change the situation.

While in many places new Catholics faced beatings, house burnings, the slaughter of domestic animals and expulsion from of jobs or schools, gradually things improved, and no incidents of persecution or harassment have been recorded in the past twenty years.

Bishop Kattrukudiyil said: "Today the church is not tolerated but looked up to for her developmental works in education and health care. The politicians use every occasion to praise the Church for her philanthropic activities."

Bishop Kattrukudiyil thanked Aid to the Church in Need for its help in supporting the growth of the Church through projects to build minor seminary, convents and chapels as well as through training for catechists and teachers.

**John Newton – ICN [Independent Catholic News] – INDIA
03.07.12**

ITEM 52

"do you miss your home?"

This was the first question faced on my arrival in the eternal city. Considering that travelling to Rome was my first trip out of India the question was not out of place. It was asked by a genuinely caring person. And I gave a genuine reply. That is.....

Before I disclose my reply, kindly spare a moment to reflect on my arrival and initial days in Rome. After a tiresome journey, flying over many countries and miles, the plane landed at Fiumicino at about 8 pm on 29th June, 2012. The reality of being in a foreign land made me a bit nervous. With not a little anxiety I collected my luggage and made my way out of the airport.

As I came out, I literally ran into the arms of not less than three confreres. Two of them were familiar to me. And one pair of arms was new but at the same time equally warm and welcoming. The familiar confreres were Fr Norbert Sequeira and Fr Rajesh Cherian - both Indians I knew from home. The new pair belonged to an Irish Pallottine, Fr Rory Hanly. Then in the parking lot another surprise awaited. My novice master was present to welcome me, and that was a privilege. It was a privilege because my novice master is at present the Rector General of our Society. The half hour car ride from the airport to the Generalate flew in seconds - the magic of warm feelings.

In a 'new' house with 'new' members one could easily be lost. This might be the reality if the house was alien and the members indifferent. But it was not the case in the Generalate. Fr Gilberto Orsolin, the rector, with a twinkle in the eye and an enchanting smile - can anyone forget that smile? - directly took me into the whirlpool of warm feelings and I was welcome 'home'. Then there was Fr Francois Harelimana from Rwanda, who was both agile and extremely articulate with fine emotions and was ever willing to help a new confrere. There are many more: Fr Gerald Dwyer, rightfully straight forward and very caring; Fr Josef Schwind, of serene and tranquil composure; Fr Martin Manus and Fr Markus Reck, emanating love and kindness; Fr Jan Korycki, whose face is never without a smile; and many more.

There were other new companions just like me - as if members of an already existing community from around the globe. There were the Africans, the Brazilians, the Polish and the Indians. The fraternal feeling among all of them was exemplary, and it took only a moment to get along together.

So life became easy in Rome just because of one reason - the unifying factor that each one of us was a Pallottine. I was a Pallottine and in Rome I was with confreres.

So my reply summarised this experience when my friends put that question: "Do you miss your home?"

I replied: "I do not miss home, because I am in my home in Rome."

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