

E-BULLETIN #97

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

item 181

"Land of the Rising Sun"



Arunachal Pradesh is the largest and least developed hill state of India's North-East region, inhabited by 20 main tribes and 110 smaller tribes. It is diverse and peaceful primarily due to its inaccessibility. It is also heavily forested, and under-developed with few roads, thereby ensuring distinctiveness and autonomy.

Arunachal Pradesh borders the state of Assam to the south and Nagaland to the southeast. Burma /Myanmar lies towards the east, Bhutan towards the west, and Tibet & China to the north. Itanagar is the capital. Arunachal is known as the **"Land of the Rising Sun"**, situated in the

Himalaya range. It covers an area of 83,743 sq kms mostly with hills and valleys, with some 3,700 villages with 10 townships. The whole land is occupied by Mongoloid race people living in varying tribal groups.

There are two dioceses in Arunachal Pradesh – Itanagar and Miao. There have been difficulties in the past to enter this land, state borders were closed for missionaries. But by 1999 the situation began to change. A new state government arose, with several Christian Ministers and MLA's (Member of Legislative Assembly), auguring a new future. Since then missions began to make headway. Pallottines placed their foot on Arunachal soil on March 11, 2008. Fr Augustine Kolencherry was the first Pallottine missionary, at the invitation of the Bishop of Itanagar, Rt Rev Dr John Kattrukudiyil. Later from June 15, 2008 Fr Anto Thomas Mullanal joined him. Pallottines have been given pastoral care of Daporijo parish and its sub stations in the mountains reaching up to the Chinese border. Many opportunities for mission work exist in this land, people are longing to receive Christ and baptism. The people are mostly hill tribes beset with superstitions. The main area of apostolate is to educate them and bring them to faith.



We have 4 stations in the state of Arunachal Pradesh viz., **Kimin, Yachuli, Daporijo, and Siyum:**

1. **Kimin:**

Commenced in 2011 there is a newly built parochial house and **Fr Wilson** is the parish priest. We have 6 substations under this mission station. Here too people in the villages are waiting for our coming to proclaim Christ. Within the short span of time more than 80 faithful have received baptism. We have around Kimin mission a Catholic population of 1400. About 12000 are non-Christian. We need to build a church, school and boarding accommodation for boys and girls.



A lake at Sela on the way to Tawang in West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh.

2. **Yachuli:**

This is the second station, commenced in 2009, two and a half hours drive from Kimin. We have a parish, school and a hostel which belongs to the local Diocese. **Fr Tomy Thomas Parappallil** is the parish priest and **Fr Thomas Pulickeel** the principal of the school. Yachuli parish has 26 substations and in the hostel we have nearly 80 students.

3. **Daporijo:**

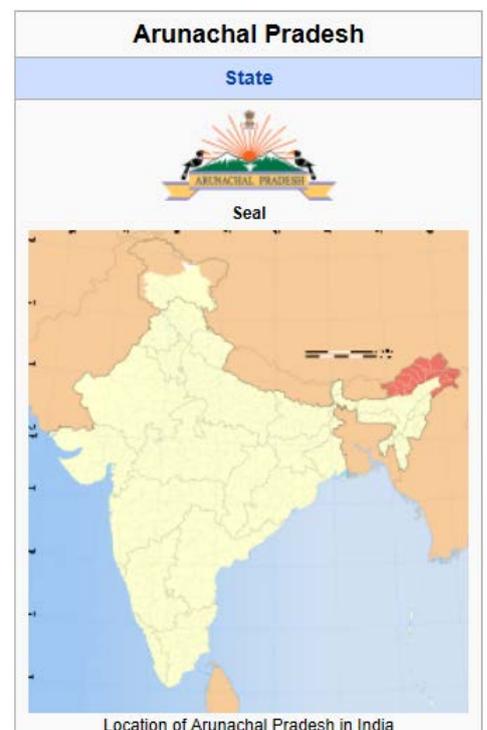
From Yachuli we have to travel 7 and half hours to reach Daporijo. Also commenced in 2009 there is a parish, school and hostel. **Fr Anto Mullanal** is the parish priest with **Fr Thomas Varkey** his assistant. Again several mission stations are administered from this parish.

4. **Siyum:**

To reach Siyum we need to travel another 3.5 hours beyond Daporijo. This mission was the first opened by the Pallottines in 2008. A parish church has been constructed [St Vincent Pallotti] and a house and school. A dispensary is run by the Sisters of the Destitute. **Fr Siju Jose** is the parish priest and **Fr Sijo** his assistant. This station is in the upper Subansiri district bordering China. The mission has sixty villages with some Catholic population and they are very welcoming especially towards the Catholic priests. More than 90 people have received baptism. Today the Catholic population of the Siyum mission is around 2200 and the non-Christians number about 15000. We have to build a school and a boarding facility for boys and girls.

Challenges and problems faced in this mission

The people are poor and depend on agriculture for their daily living. Most of the villages are far-flung and can be reached only after long hours of walking through thick forests and steep mountains, and crossing many rivers on rope bridges. The people are still enslaved by many superstitions. Many seek a blessing from the priest as the answer for many of their illnesses. People want their children to be educated in the schools run by priests,



and to be kept in the boarding houses run by priests and sisters. The main challenges in Arunachal are the following:

- people have superstitious beliefs and practices
- people are not educated
- people are very hot tempered
- no proper medical facilities especially in the villages
- no proper transport facilities to many of the villages - one has to travel on foot for several hours to reach them
- financial problems have to be faced
- no proper means of communication
- no electricity in the Upper Subansiri
- alcoholism and drug usage
- no proper houses or buildings for school and hostel.

In spite of these many challenges our Pallottine mission in Arunachal Pradesh continues to grow. For me working in this mission, so soon after my priestly ordination, was one of the most rewarding pastoral experiences. I think we will never understand the full meaning of our priestly and Pallottine vocation without going through such a missionary experience. God bless our missions.

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item 182

Collaboration with the community of Sant'Egidio



For much of my stay in Rome I have been living just a hundred meters from the **Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere**, the headquarters of the Sant'Egidio community – but quite unaware of the hidden richness of its charism! Only once can I recall having heard of either their evening prayers for youth, or their distribution of bread to the poor. It waited until the day God chose to reveal it to me.

This year the Spirit moved our General Council to decide to open the doors of our house, providing us an occasion to become involved in apostolic work. After Fr Jacob, our General Superior, announced to the entire community his desire to collaborate in ministry with the Community of Sant'Egidio, he appointed Fr Martin Manus to make it happen. Together with him, Fr Sebastian and I now form a team that will closely work with Sant'Egidio. Sunday 13 Oct was planned as our commencement date, and I was chosen to start. This is my story.

At ten o' clock in the morning a female member of the community named Cristina took me from our house gate and led me to Laurentina where it was planned that I celebrate the Eucharist. As soon as I got into her car she

asked me what I knew about Sant'Egidio. Realizing that my knowledge was very limited, she proceeded to relate the story of the Community and its apostolate starting at its foundation. In fact the Community of Sant'Egidio 'was founded in Rome by a group of high-school students led by Andrea Riccardi in 1968'.

From its beginning its aim was to gather young lay people for prayer, and to serve people in need. In just this way the community has grown, not only widening its influence but also the depth of its apostolate in response to the needs of God's people. Today it is present in various countries in the world and its apostolate has been expanded, not only through prayer and service, but also through initiatives in mediating international peace negotiations – most recently in Mozambique. One might say that they have become good Samaritans, not only taking care of the injured stranger, but also restoring peace on the road that leads from Jerusalem to Jericho.

We followed our road until we reached Laurentina the place of our mission. People were waiting for us. Everything was well prepared by the lay members of Sant'Egidio. I immediately celebrated the Eucharist and after the Eucharist I took communion to a sick person in her house before returning home.

Every experience is an occasion for learning and growing. What I learned from my experience can be summarized under these following four headings: **who, what, where and how:**

WHO Sant'Egidio is a community made up mainly of lay people. While we struggle as Pallottines searching for ways in which we can collaborate with laity, I saw lay people already involved in ministry. I saw the dream of Pallotti being realised.

WHAT ...do they do? They pray and serve. And their service happens not only through providing material sustenance. They do serve food but make sure the people to whom they give bread receive as well spiritual food at a Eucharistic celebration.

WHERE They choose to meet people who live at the periphery of life. Laurentina is a very poor area of Rome and, being built next to the rich quarter called EUR, the distinction between rich and poor is quite clearly evident.

HOW Finally I was very impressed by the way they carry out their apostolate. I admired their simplicity and their generosity in serving the poor, but most of all I admired the fact that, in doing so, they 'wear' their identity. I found that it was important even for me to not only serve but to provide a *Pallottine* service, a service marked by Pallottine identity. In fact it is only in being aware of our identity that we could truly collaborate without confusion.

This was just the first among many experiences we are preparing to share with the community of Sant'Egidio through this coming academic year.

May the grace of God help us become true apostles in the image of Jesus, the Apostle of the Eternal Father.



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on #96