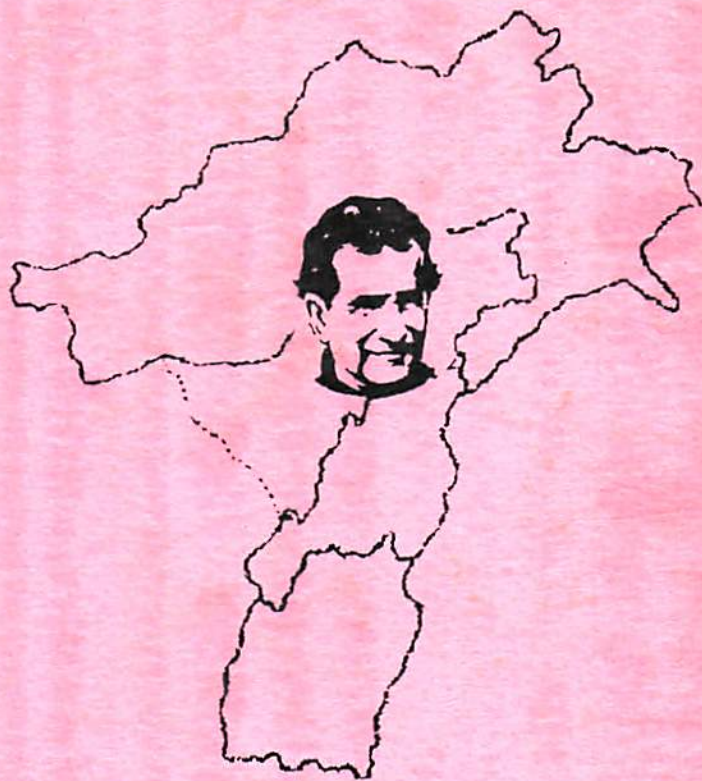


A CHRONICLED HISTORY

of the Houses of the Province of

St. Francis De Sales, Dimapur



Compiled and Edited by

Joby Mattappally sdb

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For Private Circulation Only

Don Bosco Provincial House
Dimapur
May, 2000

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Dedicated to
The brave Pioneers
who laboured
to build our today

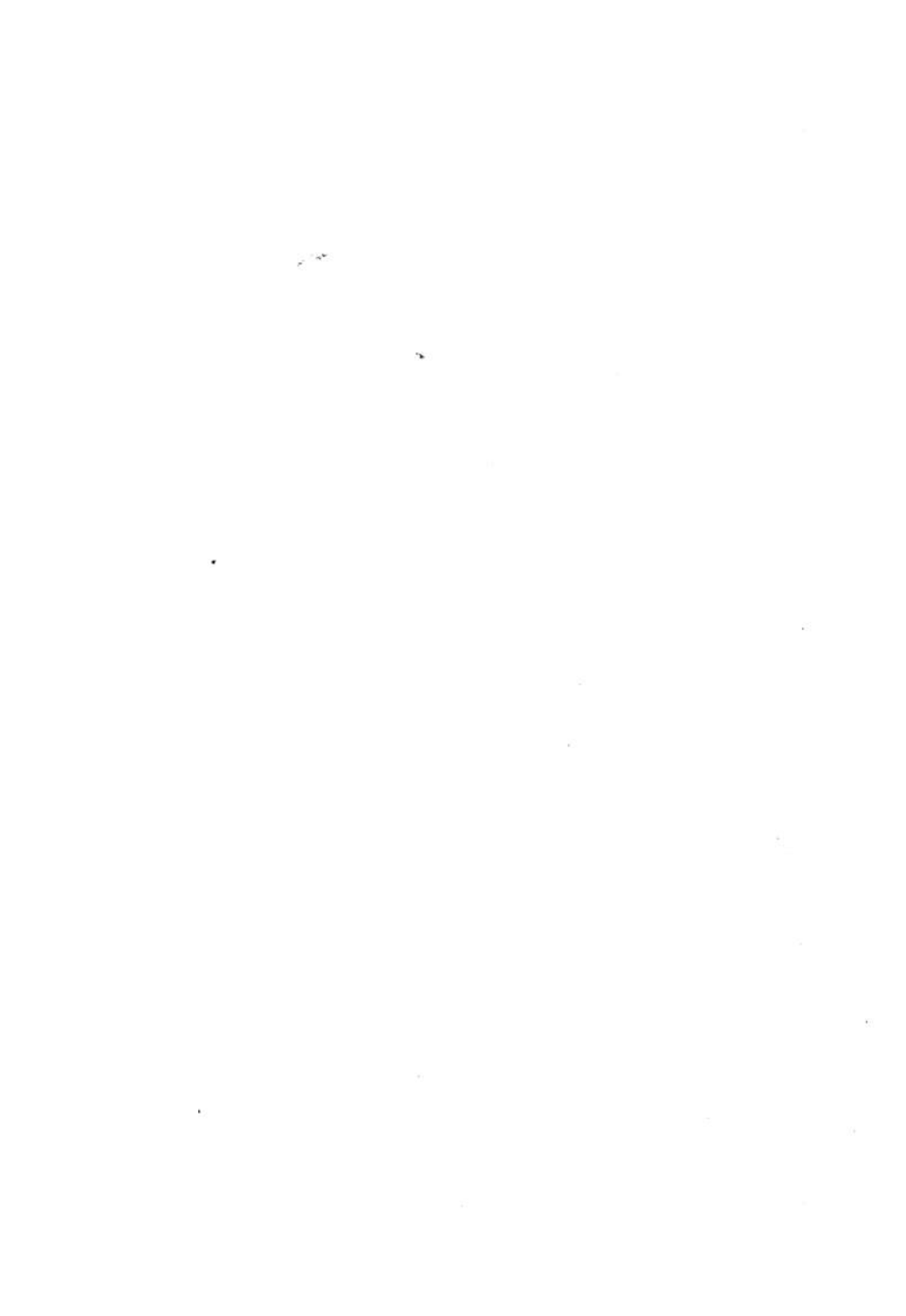


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FOREWORD

I am happy to present to you this "Chronicled History" of the various Salesian ventures and activities in the states of Upper Assam, Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh.

The Jubilee year is an appropriate moment to look at our past. As years pass by history is often forgotten. When we delve deep into the early years of Salesian presence in these states we recall the great men who preceeded us - the challenges they met with, the problems they faced, the hardships they endured, the sacrifices they made and their unflinching sense of dedication. The very vastness of the terrain was daunting; often a whole state was a mission centre. Today these have emerged as new dioceses, parishes, and sub-centres. This record expresses our appreciation for the many salesian missionaries who planted the Church in our provincial territory. What the province today is, indeed, a tribute to their sacrifice.

This record should lead us to thank God in the words of our Blessed Mother "He has done great things for us." May it lead us to a greater commitment and dedication to Christ and the mission of Don Bosco.

It was in April 1997 that Joby Mattappally and Cyriac Manipadam - then theologians at Bangalore - were asked to visit the various centres in the Province to gather the necessary data to bring out an account of the development of the province. I am happy that this work is published. It is my earnest hope that this will serve

as a "working document" to prepare a more comprehensive and historical record in the future. I am glad that Fr. Joby Mattappally has also prepared a multi-media presentation on Compact Disk, outlining the various centres of the province as well as the cultural heritage of the region. I am sure, this will also serve as a useful record.

I thank all the confreres and communities of the province for their support and contribution towards this work by providing facts and figures. I thank Cl. Sony Pottenplackal for preparing the type-setting and the lay-out of this work.

Fr. Varghese Palathingal
Provincial.

PREFACE

At the outset of this book, I would like to remind the readers that this work is a preliminary effort towards preparing a comprehensive history in the future. As the title itself suggests, it is a chronicled account of the growth and development of the various centres in the Province of Dimapur. It is a chronicled account as this book is based to a great extent, on the Chronicles of the various houses and records of some of the significant events that have shaped the growth of those institutions. Besides, it also deals with recent history. Yet, this work is not purely a chronicled record. It is also historical in as much as it studies the origin of the church in the area concerned as well as the numerous factors leading to the opening of the various institutions. In fact it is incomplete in many areas and one should not be surprised to find that it suffers from even factual inaccuracies.

Through out this work, the thrust has been to collect as much data as I could and present them in a readable format. As such one may find that the work of certain confrères may be treated at greater detail than others; some may have even been left out. I regret that I could not get materials regarding the work of all the confrères, though I would have loved to. Similarly, more pages are dedicated to certain houses, than others. However, I have only presented facts and abstained from making any value judgements. It may also be noted that due to the constraints of time and availability of material, many of the details that should have been included in this work are left out.

With regard to the sources it may be mentioned that the bulk of the data is derived from the Chronicles of the houses and the interviews that I have had with the confrères who have worked in the Province, whether they are presently stationed in the Province or not. Unfortunately many of the Chronicles were to a great extent incomplete and I had to rely on the information that I received from various individuals. Of course, I have tried to verify these information, wherever I could. A list of the sources is given at the end of this book. It may be also noted that due to many reasons, I was not able to put into writing all the information that I received. Hence a copy has been prepared for the archives with these details especially to help further research. "@" has been used to indicate that more details are available in the archival copy.

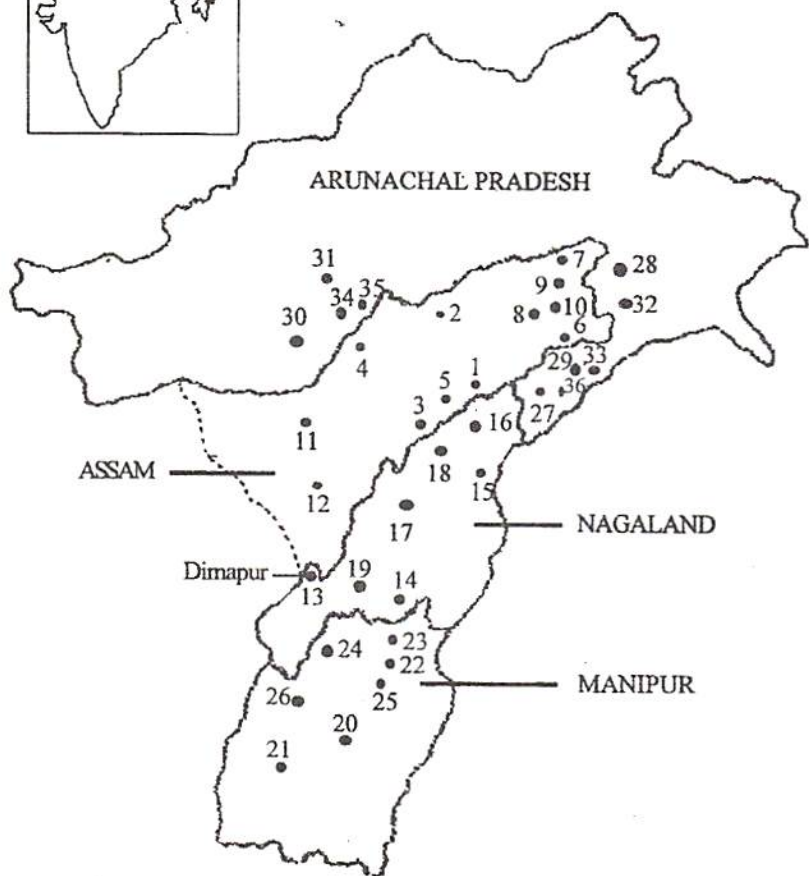
As I conclude, I would like to thank Rev. Fr. Varghese Palathingal, the Provincial for entrusting me with this task and for his constant support and assistance. It is no exaggeration to say that, but for him, this work would not have seen the light of day. I also place on record my gratitude to the various people who have helped me in bringing out this work. Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, Fr. Mulayinkal Thomas, Fr. Jerry Thomas, Fr. Aelavanthara Sebastian Fr. Aerimattathil Sebastian and Fr. Thomas Anchukandam, Professor of Church History at K.J.C. Bangalore, deserve special mention as they took great pains to go through the draft, correct the details and offer valuable suggestions. I thank Br. Pottenplackal Sony for typesetting and layout. Thanks also to the confrères for their availability with regard to both their time and material, for their warm hospitality and generous words of encouragement and support. Last but not the least, I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to Fr. Nazarius Lakra, Fr. Cyriac Manipadam, Fr. Theotimus Lakra and Cl. Kenny Pakma, my companions at Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore, for their continual support and assistance.

As mentioned earlier this work is not foolproof. I will be happy if you can let me know of any errors which you might come across in this book. Kindly address them to the Department of Archives at Provincial House, Dimapur.

This work has broadened my vision and perspective. It has helped me to grow in my understanding of persons and events. It has made me appreciate the value of present events and their role in sculpting the future. I wish a similar experience to each of the readers.

Fr. Joby Mattappally SDB

The Salesian Province of Dimapur



*Location of the Houses
in the Province*

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1. Amguri | 19. Sechü |
| 2. Dibrugarh | 20. Imphal |
| 3. Golghat | 21. Khoupum |
| 4. Harmutty | 22. Maram |
| 5. Jorhat | 23. Mao |
| 6. Margarita | 24. Sajouba |
| 7. Sadiya | 25. Senapati |
| 8. Tinsukia | 26. Tamenglong |
| 9. Tongna | 27. Mintong |
| 10. Doom Dooma | 28. Bordumsa |
| 11. Dergaon | 29. Borduria |
| 12. Jagun | 30. Itanagar |
| 13. Dimapur | 31. Palin |
| 14. Kohima | 32. Rajanagar |
| 15. Mon | 33. Khonsa |
| 16. Tizit | 34. Yachuli |
| 17. Wokha | 35. Joram |
| 18. Tuli | 36. Longding |



INTRODUCTION

When Fr. Thomas Panakezham, the Regional Counsellor for Asia, announced the division of the Province of Guwahati on 8th August 1981, it signalled a new stage in the growth and development of the Salesian Mission in North East India. The vast geographical territory, coupled with the rapid expansion of the Province of Guwahati, had made its division an imperative for the effective development and co-ordination of the Salesian work in North East India.

A definite step towards the division of the province of Guwahati had been initiated on 17th December 1980, when Fr. Thomas Panakezham, sent a letter to all the confrères of the province of Guwahati, setting out the reasons which led the Rector Major and his Council to study the possibility of the division of the province. Keeping in mind the spirit of shared responsibility, the confrères were requested to give their opinions in this regard. This consultation intended to be presented to the Superior Council, gave a clearer picture of the Province.

Having taken into consideration the views expressed by the confrères, the houses of Upper Assam (the districts of Dibrugarh, Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Tinsukia, Jorhat and Golaghat), Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh were detached from the Province of Guwahati to form the new Province of Dimapur (ANMA). The confrères were incardinated into the Province in whose territory the house was situated. The student confrères were invited to express a preference either for the Province of

Guwahati or that of Dimapur. The preferences were taken into account in keeping with the needs and vitality of each province. It was also decided that the houses of Formation of the Salesians at Shillong, though belonging to the Province of Guwahati, would continue to serve both the provinces.

The division of the Province of Guwahati was announced by Fr. Thomas Panakezham on 8th August 1981. A meeting of the Superiors of the new provinces was held in Guwahati on 24th September to determine especially the location of the Provincial House. The majority opined to have the Provincial House at Dimapur.

Fr. Matthew Pulingathil was nominated by the Rector Major, Rev. Fr. Egidio Viganò, on 18th December 1981 as the new Provincial. On 15th February 1982 Fr. Scaria Nedumala was nominated Vice-Provincial, Fr. Vadakethannikal Sebastian as the Economer and Fr. Stanislaus Kerketta and Bro. Antony Brahamakulam as Provincial Counsellors.

The Province of St. Francis de Sales, Dimapur was inaugurated by Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil, Bishop of Kohima on 18th June 1982, the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Province of Dimapur had 25 houses and 152 confrères. The Province was canonically erected on 8th December 1982.

In 1988 Fr. Scaria Nedumala was appointed the Provincial and Fr. M.P. Thomas the Vice Provincial. Fr. Mundathanathu Michael served as the Provincial Economer for three years and then Fr. Thomas Vattoth took over as Economer.

In 1994 Fr. Varghese Palathingal was appointed Provincial and Fr. Alex Pulimoottil the Vice Provincial. Fr. Joseph Variathukalayil was appointed Provincial Economer.

The following pages will seek to sketch a historico-chronological outline of the mission in the region, which is one of the more vibrant in the whole of India, underscoring especially the contribution of the Salesians in the development of the mission.

ASSAM¹

Assam or the valley of the Brahmaputra is an alluvial plain about 450 miles in length with an average breadth of 50 miles. Located in the north-eastern corner of India and stretching over an area of 78,438 sq. km, it has a unique geographical structure and socio-cultural milieu. The mighty Brahmaputra, its perennial tributaries, ever-green forests, fertile soil and numerous mineral resources are unparalleled in the country.

An ideal meeting ground for diverse races, Assam gave shelter to streams of human waves carrying with them distinct cultures and trends of civilization. Austro-Asiatics, Negritos, Dravidians, Alpines, Indo-Mongoloids, Tibeto-Burmese and Aryans penetrated into Assam through different routes and contributed in their own way towards the unique fusion of a new community which came to be known in later history as the Assamese. Assam, however, remained predominantly a land of the Tibeto-Burmese. The vast section of the people of Assam belong either to this stock or owe their origin to the fusion of this stock with other racial groups.

The state of Assam is situated between 24°N and 28°N latitudes and 90°E - 96°E longitudes. It is bounded by Arunachal Pradesh and Bhutan in the North, Nagaland and Manipur in the East, Meghalaya in the South and West Bengal in the West. Assam com-

¹ The information contained in these pages was sent to the houses concerned for verification. What is given here is the final collated text.

prises of 23 districts - Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Cachar, Darrang, Dhemaji, Dhubri, Dibrugarh, Goalpara, Golaghat, Hailakandi, Jorhat, Kamrup, Karbi Anglong, Karimganj, Kokrajhar, Lakhimpur, Morigaon, Nagaon, North Cachar Hills, Nalbari, Sibsagar, Sonitpur and Tinsukia. It has a total population of 22,414,322.²

The first Catholic priests ever to come to Assam were Fr. Stephen Cacella sj and Fr. John Cabral sj. They were on their way to Tibet in the year 1626. In 1850 Assam was united to the Vicariate Apostolic of Lhasa. Fr. Jacopo Broy of the Institute of Foreign Missions (MEP), was the first resident priest of Assam, with headquarters at Guwahati. In 1889 the Prefecture Apostolic of Assam was created with the headquarters in Shillong. In 1921 the Prefecture of Assam was entrusted to the Salesians of Don Bosco.

Today, there are five Dioceses in Assam - Dibrugarh, Tezpur, Silchar, Diphu and Guwahati. The Salesians of Don Bosco of the Province of Dimapur work in the Dioceses of Dibrugarh and Tezpur. The civil districts which fall within the limits of the Province are Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Jorhat, Lakhimpur, Sibsagar and Tinsukia.

² All the data given are according to 1991 census from *Basic Statistics of North Eastern Region*, North Eastern Council, Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt of India, Shillong, 1995.



AMGURI

Amguri is a small township with an urban population of 3,587 in the Sibsagar district of Assam. The people are predominantly middle class Assamese, though Adivasis, Bengalis and Marwaris comprise part of the population. There is a Catholic population of over 600 spread out in five tea gardens. In fact, the history of the Church in Amguri may be traced back to the year 1934 when Mgr. Orestes Marengo celebrated the Eucharist in the Amguri Tea Estate.

The beginning of a centre in Amguri had much to do with Don Bosco School, Tuli. The people of Amguri used to send their children to Don Bosco School, Tuli. Besides, the fathers regularly used to come down to Amguri to celebrate Eucharist in the Tea garden villages. Having sent their children to Don Bosco, and seen the fathers minister to the Catholics, the people were eager to have a school in Amguri itself. So they approached Fr. Devassy Kollenkunnel who used to go to the Borsila Tea Estate for the Eucharist, with the request to open a school at Amguri. Fr. Devassy told them that the first requisite to open a school was to have the land. The people under the leadership of Dr. Dutta soon suggested a promising plot of land. Fr. Devassy informed Fr. Thomas Menamparampil, who was open to the idea.

In 1983 Mgr. Thomas Menamparampil, Bishop of Dibrugarh, requested Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, the then Provincial of Dimapur,

³ Henceforth the use of "@" will indicate that more details are available in the archival copy.

to open a centre at Amguri. Accordingly on 9th November 1983 Fr. Leo Tirkey was asked by the Provincial to start the Amguri mission. Fr. Leo reached Amguri with Fr. Devassy Kollenkunnel on 20th December 1983. He was to stay at Tuli but the mission remained part of the Jorhat parish where Fr. Tom Karthikapallil was the Parish Priest.

A suitable piece of land, half a kilometre from the Amguri town, near the Electricity Board had been shown to Fr. Devassy Kollenkunnel by the Town Committee. The land was owned by half a dozen owners. The Town Committee managed to persuade most of the owners to sell the land for the school, at reduced rates. The land was inspected on 13th January 1984 and was bought for the school^{@3}. The registration and buying of some of the plots were completed on 27th August 1984.[@] Four thatched sheds were built - two for the school, one for the Confreres' Residence and another as the Teachers' Quarters. Fr. Leo began residing at the centre.[@] Don Bosco School was opened in May 1985 with admissions taken to the nursery and the Kindergarten.

The initial days of the centre were marred by controversies and problems. In the election of 1985 the AGP had come to power replacing the Town Committee which was Congress. The new MLA Mr. Pradeep Hazarika who belonged to the AGP was opposed to the school. Since the people wanted the school, he would not oppose the school openly, but chose to harass Fr. Leo and others connected with the centre. On one occasion, Fr. Leo Tirkey was detained in the police station for 23 hours. Mr. Patrick, one of the teachers was manhandled, paraded naked and shut up in the Amguri Thana. Mr. Patrick is said to have been involved in the conversion of a Bengali gentleman, a dealer in conveyor belts. One wonders whether it was the personal animosity or antagonism to Christianity which led to such unsavoury incidents. While the later developments[@]

at the centre preclude such an attitude, the opposition of the local M.L.A. Mr. Pradeep Hazarika and the antagonism of the people seemed to cause a threat to the running of the institution.

In protest, a memorandum signed by the Provincial, Fr. Matthew Pulingathil was sent to the President of India, to the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and to all the Christian MPs. Mr. M.M. Jacob replied in the name of the Prime Minister that the matter would be looked into, and that everything would be done so that the missionary may not be disturbed. An enquiry Committee arrived at Amguri to question the MLA, but he absconded. After that there was no trouble at the School. The Memorandum was drawn up by Fr. Thazhekaden Sebastian at the request of Fr. Provincial and it received wide coverage in dailies outside the North East, especially in the South.

Due to the developments in the centre it was felt necessary that someone should assist Fr. Leo Tirkey and Fr. Jose Kaniyampady was appointed to the centre. He reached Amguri on 20th February 1988. As a result of the various events, the number of the students which had touched 150, dramatically dropped to 46. By now the school had nursery, K.G., Class I and Class II. A school bus had been purchased with the donation of German Children. With the arrival of the bus, the school picked up momentum once again. The bus would ply a distance of 88 km a day, bringing children from villages as far as 22 kilometres. It may be noted that the people of these distant villages still remember Fr. Leo Tirkey with gratitude for offering them the possibility of quality education.

In 1988, one of the school buildings collapsed. As the number of the students had come down,[@] the classes were adjusted in the existing building and a smaller building was constructed. Fr. Jose Kaniyampady was given the charge of constructing a pucca building

for the school.® The work began in 1988 and a hall and two rooms were completed in 1990.

In February 1990 Fr. Nazarius Lakra was transferred to Amguri from Doom Dooma. Though he was to take charge of the Amguri Mission, due to unforeseen events,® climaxing in a jeep accident, he left for the Provincial House in August 1990. In the meantime, Fr. Jose Kaniyampady had been temporarily transferred to Tsemenyu in March. While the school struggled against many odds it may be mentioned that the students loved the school and would remain back even after the school hours. In August 1990 Fr. Mulayinkal Thomas, the Vice Provincial, accompanied by Fr. Bimal Lakra arrived in Amguri to effect the transfer of Fr. Leo Tirkey. After the Sunday Mass, when the farewell was announced, Fr. M.P. Thomas and Fr. Bimal Lakra were forced to quit the place by some of the local people!®

In 1991 Fr. Reginald D'Silva was appointed in the place of Fr. Leo Tirkey.® He arrived with Fr. Patrick Warjiri on 11th January 1991. Fr. Kaniyampady was also asked to return to Amguri. In order to dispel the fears and concerns regarding the centre among the people, a Parents' Meeting was called at the school in which about 22 parents participated. Fr. Patrick Warjiri left after two weeks of stay. The mission slowly limped back to normalcy. The number of students increased to about two hundred and new teachers were recruited. The construction of the school was also resumed. There was also a marked change in the general perception of the people with even the local MLA. turning favourable. During this time, due to the efforts of Fr. Reginald D'Silva a new church was built at the Amguri Tea Estate.

On 26th February 1992, Fr. Reginald D'Silva was transferred to Tongna. Fr. Thomas Kannath took over the reins of the mission.

He had arrived in Amguri from Doom Dooma on 1st February 1992. The new school building was completed and furnished during this time. A boarding with a few boys was begun. The idea of a boarding had come about when people asked for the bus service to be extended to other routes. So the few boys from these distant villages were kept at the boarding for a fee of Rs.350. Soon they were joined by some boys from the locality. Construction for the new boarding was begun in the same year.

Fr. Jose Kaniyampady was transferred to Harmutty in February 1994 and Fr. Joseph Parakkatt (Anand) took his place on 22nd March 1994. The school had by then about 460 students up to Class X. The new boarding was completed in May 1995, and the 12 boarders shifted to the new building. October 1995 saw the completion of the new residence of the Confrères. But in an unfortunate twist of destiny Fr. Thomas Kannath fell sick and died suddenly on 31st December 1995.

Fr. Joseph Parakkatt was appointed in charge of the mission. In the meantime the fathers had been visiting the nearby villages and ministering to the Catholic population. On 25th July 1996, the centre was officially erected as a parish. Classes were shifted to the new building in August 1996. The first batch of matriculation students appeared for examinations in 1996.

On 14th January 1997, Fr. Joseph Parakkatt was transferred to Dibugarh and Fr. Kuriakose Palathinkal was appointed Parish Priest and Principal. Under Fr. Kuriakose the school has been given special attention. A Children's Park has been put up in the compound. A Teachers' Quarters has been built and the salaries of the teachers have been considerably increased. A new village church was constructed in the Borsila Tea Estate.

Fr. Parappilly Jacob was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest in February 1997. In 1998, the boarding was closed down as the number of students were very few.[@] In 1998 Fr. Parappilly Jacob was transferred to Salesian College and Fr. Parumala Vincent was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest. In 1999 Fr. Parumala Vincent was transferred to Salesian College, Dimapur.

In February 2000 the school had 542 students. The parish has over 600 Catholics in about five sub-stations - Amguri Tea Estate, Halwating Tea Estate, Borbam Tea Estate, Borsila Tea Estate and Gabru Parbat Tea Estate. With its history of troubles and controversies far behind, Don Bosco School, Amguri is fast emerging as one of the top schools of the region.

Priests who have worked in the institution:

Fr. Leo Tirkey (1983-1991), Fr. Jose Kaniyampady (1988-1990), Fr. Reginald D'Silva (1991-1992), Fr. Jose Kaniyampady (1991-1994), Fr. Kannath Thomas (1992-1995), Fr. Parakkatt Joseph (1994-1997), Fr. Palathinkal Kuriakose (1997-), Fr. Parappilly Jacob (1997-1998), Fr. Parumala Vincent (1998-1999)

DON BOSCO SCHOOL DERGAON

Don Bosco School, Dergaon is located a kilometre off the national highway No.37. Situated within the district of Golaghat, it is approximately at a distance of 25 km from both Golaghat and Jorhat. The centre was started in 1995 with the main purpose of contacting the Misings who live three kilometres north of Dergaon all along the banks of the Brahmaputra to a distance of about twenty kilometers, from Sadiya to Majuli up to Bokhaghatt and beyond.

The Dergaon centre can approach about 50 villages, each with about 50-100 families. Except a few hundred people in the Majjuli Island there are no Christians among them. Misings, called 'Miris' earlier, are one of the plain tribals closer to Bodos, and linguistically very close to the Adi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh.

Dergaon was originally called 'Deor gaon' - God's Village. It consists mainly of Assamese Brahmins most of whom are Saivites. The others are Vaishnavites. The different ethnic groups of Assamese peoples who live in and around Dergaon are Brahmins, Kalitas, Keoliangs and Kaivartas. There are also a good number of Assamese Muslims. Other than the possibility for Mising apostolate, the Salesian presence in Dergaon also offers the prospect for the study of the Assamese people and their culture and of entering into a dialogue with them.

The Dergaon mission took shape when on 11th March 1993 Fr. Theophilus Ganlari, bought 10 bigas of land from Naresh and

Akosh Agarwal of Tinsukia. Fr. Theophilus was then the Parish Priest of Golaghat. The transactions were done through a broker, Mr. Ramesh Barua. In 1994 Fr. Benjamin Toppo was asked to look after the centre. He looked after the area while staying at Golaghat together with Fr. Theophilus. Two more bigas of land were bought for the centre at this time. The people were informed that the school would begin by 1st March 1995. @ On 10th January 1995 Fr. Benjamin Toppo was transferred to Doom Dooma as Rector and Principal.

Fr. Matthew Narimattam took charge of the mission of Dergaon on 11th January 1995. Since there was no house built, he stayed in Jorhat and looked after the centre from there. Fr. Benjamin had been looking after the centre from Golaghat. A room in the house of Mr. Amuliya Hazarika served as his office. On 7th February 1995 Fr. Matthew and Fr. Theophilus came to live in a rented house at Dergaon, paying a rent of Rs 300/- a month. It was blessed by Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, the Rector of Rua Home, Jorhat. A thatched shed was built and the nursery classes began on 1st March 1995 with two divisions - 84 children in all. The school was inaugurated by Fr. Varghese Palathingal, the Provincial of Dimapur.

The work for the new school building began on 24th February 1995, with Fr. Variyathukalayil Joseph, the Economist of the Province of Dimapur, blessing the corner-stone of the building. The school which began in a thatched shed was shifted to the new building on 1st August 1995. The two confreres shifted from their rented house and began staying in the school building - one in the office and the other in the staff room.

On 11th October 1995, three bigas of land touching the PWD road and the school land was bought for the FMA Sisters who had agreed to come to Dergaon. Later on 19th February one bigha and

12 lussas of land was also bought for the sisters from Mr. Binanda Phukan. On 17th January 1996, Sr. Bernadette, FMA and Sr. Rani, FMA arrived at Dergaon to start their apostolate.

'Maria Niwas', the Convent of the FMA sisters was inaugurated by Fr. Varghese Palathingal, the Salesian Provincial on 24th January 1996. Present on the occasion were Mgr. Joseph Aind, the Bishop of Dibrugarh and Sr. Ivy, the FMA Provincial. As the building was not yet ready, the Convent was started in the Teachers' quarters.

In 1998 there were about 318 children in the school from nursery to Class II. The centre had at its inception the plan to open a sub-centre closer to the Misings with a school up to Class III; but this idea has been scraped due to difficulties. A hostel instead primarily for the Mising students has been opened. The hostel was begun on 18th January 1998.

In February 2000, Fr. Kalapurackal Thomas was appointed to Dergaon for the Mising Apostolate. In 1998 there were eleven boarders, of whom the majority were Misings. They were looked after by the FMA sisters.

Those who have worked in the Centre:

Fr. Theophilus Ganlari (1995-1999), Fr. Matthew Narimattam (1995-), Fr. Kalapurackal Thomas (2000-)

DON BOSCO SCHOOL DIBRUGARH

Dibrugarh is one of the more important centres of Assam with a sizeable urban population. The population comprises mainly of Assamese, Oriyas and Adivasis. It has also the merit of being one of the earliest Catholic centres in North East India. Fr. Krick of the Foreign Missions of Paris (MEP) was the first Catholic missionary to set foot in Dibrugarh on 7th September 1851. Fr. Rudolf Fontaine, a German Salvatorian, opened the Dibrugarh Mission in 1908. But with the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the German Salvatorians were expelled from the country and the mission was closed.

The Dibrugarh Mission was re-opened by Fr. Leo Piasecki sdb, on 28th February 1931, at the request of Msgr. Louis Mathias. He started the Don Bosco School at Dibrugarh though it took more than 20 years for the school to be known as Don Bosco School.

Don Bosco, Dibrugarh remains the first Catholic mission school in Upper Assam. In the beginning it functioned as a residential Hindi Medium School catering exclusively to the children of the Christian community. Both the teachers and the students were Catholics and they stayed in the mission compound. Classes were held in thatched sheds. Later Hindi gave way to Assamese as medium of instruction in a bid towards a better integration and assimilation with the local culture. But the school remained open only to Christians.

During World War II, the academic life was disrupted and in 1941 the Italian fathers were taken to concentration camps. Fr. Louis Kerketta and Mgr. Immanuel Bars took over the mission at this juncture. The sacred Heart Church built by Fr. Piasecki served as a Burmese refugee camp. While the Japanese threatened to overrun Assam, Mgr. Bars closed the school and the pupils were sent home. Later the boys were called back to Dibrugarh and sent to Don Bosco School, Shillong. The school was reopened after the war.

Don Bosco School, Dibrugarh was officially handed over to the Salesians in 1958. The school was looked after by Fr. Ernest Zanon. The first salesian cleric sent to the boarding was Narimattam Matthew (1958). Fr. Dalzao the Vicar General had been looking after the school before it was handed over to the Salesians. The first Headmaster was Fr. Achilles Visentine.

In 1959, it was decided to open the present English Medium School where non-Catholics also could find a place. In fact, the need for an English Medium School for boys was felt as early as 1955, when the Little Flower School was begun for the girls. The foundation-stone for the new building was blessed on 9th February 1959. In 1960 the English section commenced in the school.

Don Bosco School was canonically erected on 18th March 1960 with Fr. Ernest Zanon as its first rector. The three-storied new building was completed in 1961. It was the highest building in Dibrugarh and it is said that it served as a landmark for pilots.

In 1961, Deacon Edakudan Joseph was appointed as the Headmaster. Fr. Svernelis was the Prefect and Bro. Bernabas Haw was in charge of the boarding. But due to the Chinese aggression, the school was closed down and all the Salesians were shifted out of Dibrugarh. After the War, the school was re-opened with

Fr. Kadavunkal Matthew as the Headmaster. He was followed by Fr. Tom Karthikapallil. The first batch of the students of Assamese Medium appeared for the matriculation examinations in 1964. Eight out of the nine who wrote the examinations passed.

In 1965 Fr. Zanon was replaced by Fr. Joseph Fantin. On 31st October 1967 he was transferred and Fr. Abraham Alangimattathil was appointed as the Rector. The first batch of English Medium students appeared for the matriculation examinations in 1969 when Fr. Tom Karthikapallil was Headmaster.

The year 1969 was a crucial one for the school. There was a big strike organized by boarders, day-scholars and staff, agitating for better conditions for all, demanding the lowering of fees and stopping of proselytization. The strike caused inconvenience to the Cathedral and to the functioning of the parish. This led Mgr. Hubert D'Rosario, the Bishop of Dibrugarh, to ask the school to be shifted to another place. Accordingly, in 1970 the school was turned into the Bishop's house.

Don Bosco School and the boarding were moved to its present site on Convoy road on 31st January 1970. It was blessed by Bishop Hubert D'Rosario sdb and inaugurated by Mr. H.N. Das, the D.C. of Dibrugarh. In 1970 itself the K.G. section of the English Medium was started under the guidance of Fr. Abraham Alangimattathil. Fr. Thekkekandom Thomas (T.T.) was the Headmaster.

On 31st May 1970 Mgr. Robert Kerketta sdb., succeeded Mgr. Hubert D'Rosario as the third pastor of Dibrugarh. Fr. Abraham Alangimattathil was appointed the Vicar-General and Fr. Arackal Thomas was appointed the Rector on 22nd February 1971. Fr. Variathukalayil Joseph was appointed the Administrator in 1972. He was followed by Fr. Stanislaus Kerketta in May 1973. Fr.

Stanislaus was transferred in 1974. In 1974 Fr. Thomas Vattoth was appointed Headmaster and Fr. Thazhekaden Sebastian, the Assistant Headmaster. Fr. Arackal Thomas was transferred and on 3rd July 1974, Fr. Uzhunnalil Matthew took charge as the Rector.

The year 1974 was marked by another strike. The strike was called jointly by the boarders and the day-scholars demanding that the policy of having two separate mess be scrapped and that the preferential treatment to the rich be avoided. They also demanded lowering of fees and better food for all. There had been two mess - one for the Assamese medium students who obviously paid lower fees or none at all and one for the English medium students. The school was closed temporarily and the strike was called off after the school agreed to some of the demands. The two-mess system was stopped and the fees were adjusted to meet the convenience of both the Assamese medium and English medium students. However many better-to-do students left the school and the boarding was left with a fewer number consisting mainly of the students of the Assamese medium.

In January 1976 Fr. Thomas Vattoth was transferred and Fr. Thazhekaden Sebastian was appointed the Headmaster. Fr. Stanislaus Kerketta was appointed Assistant Headmaster.

On 7th September 1977, Fr. Porcu Mario took charge as the Rector. In 1980 he was transferred and Fr. Matthew Narimattam took charge as the Rector on 8th June 1980.

The school and the boarding functioned normally till 1979 when the general ambience of disturbance gripped the school. The school was closed for eighteen months. There was demand to have an AASU unit in the school. The demand was backed by politicians, lawyers, doctors and local administration as a part of the "Assam for Assamese" movement. The slogans were "No Union, No School",

"We want the blood of Missionaries" and so on. The school remained closed till 1981 when it was opened with CRPF protection for a period of two years. The students were asked to pay fees for the two years when no classes were held so that the teachers could be paid. Though the pupils were given the option to take transfer certificates, all paid the fees and no one left the school. However it took two more years, for the school to function normally. When the school re-opened in 1981, only the Catholics numbering about 25 were called back to the boarding.⁴

In 1981, it was decided to turn the boarding into an aspirantate. The decision was taken by the Provincial Council and communicated at the meeting of the Rectors and Parish Priests on 14th July 1981. Accordingly, the first batch of 53 aspirants arrived from Maligaon on 27th July 1981.⁵

After the creation of the Province of Dimapur in 1982, the aspirantate also functioned as a pre-novitiate house. The first batch of post-matric aspirants reached Dibrugarh on 28th June 1982.⁶ They were shifted to Salesian College, Dimapur, in 1984.[@] The new group of post-matric aspirants who had reached Dibrugarh in 1984, however, left for Rua Home, Golaghat on 15th June 1985.

⁴ The Assamese Medium School was finally stopped in 1984. The process of closing down the Assamese medium school had already been started in 1979 when no more new admissions were taken to the school in spite of the demand by AGP activists.

⁵ The first batch of aspirants appeared for the matriculation examinations from Sacred Heart High School, Mawlai, Shillong in 1984.

⁶ In June 1983 Fr. Eanthanamkuzhiyil Michael was appointed the Administrator and Prefect of studies.

In 1986 Fr. Thazhekaden Seabstian was transferred after ten years. He had looked after the school during the most troublesome years of its history, when even threats to his life were real. Fr. Thazhekaden Sebastian had taken over from Fr. Vattoth Thomas in January 1976. During his days at Dibrugarh he also published General Knowledge for Cl. V and Cl. VI and Value Education for Cl. IX and Cl. X.

Fr. Kalapurackal Thomas was appointed the new Headmaster and Fr. Matthew Pottukulam, the Assistant Headmaster. The year 1986 also witnessed some administrative changes. Both primary and high schools were brought together and the Assistant Headmaster was asked to look after the junior school.

On 24th June 1986 Fr. Matthew Narimattam was transferred and Fr. Scaria Nedumala, who was then Vice Provincial, took over as Rector.

In 1986, a new venture was begun at Don Bosco School - Don Bosco Memorial Evening School offering free education to poor children. Bosco Kalaniketan, a department of local arts and music for the students; the Bosco Youth - an association of Don Bosco Past Students, the Don Bosco Scholarship Examination for proficiency in Assamese and computer education were also introduced in the school. During this time, Fr. Kalapurackal Thomas published *Petals* - a bilingual book of general knowledge on Assam.

In November 1987 Fr. Scaria Nedumala left for Dimapur and Fr. Stanislaus Kerketta was appointed the Rector.⁷ Fr. Matthew Pottukulam was transferred in February 1988 and Fr. Jerry

⁷ The first batch of aspirants who attended the regular school at Don Bosco, appeared for matriculation in the same year. Earlier the aspirants were having classes in the boarding itself.

Pathikulangara took over as the Assistant Headmaster. Fr. Bosco Periyannayagam was appointed as the Counsellor on 12th April 1988. He was transferred on 14th April 1989.

In November 1990, Fr. Stanislaus was transferred and Fr. Benjamin Toppo was appointed Rector and Headmaster. Fr. Kalapurackal Thomas was transferred to Sadiya.

In July 1992 Fr. Jerry Pathikulangara was transferred and Fr. Raphael Paliakara was appointed Assistant Headmaster. Later Fr. Raphael took over as Headmaster followed by Fr. Vengakunnel Thomas as Headmaster. Fr. Nangachiveetil Joseph was appointed Confessor and teacher. He also looked after the Junior Section.

Fr. Benjamin Toppo was transferred and in February 1994, Fr. Variathukalayil Joseph was appointed Rector. In October 1994 Fr. Variathukalayil Joseph was transferred and Fr. Scaria Nedumala took over as Rector. In March 1994 Fr. Joseph Kindo was appointed Administrator. He was transferred in 1997 and Fr. Joseph Parakkatt took over the administration. In February 1998 Fr. Tom Karthikapallil was appointed Rector. In 1999 Marengo Hostel for college students was opened with Fr. Joseph Kindo as in charge. In February 2000 Fr. Nellisseril Jose was appointed as Headmaster and Fr. Kulathunkal Joseph as confessor.

In February 2000 the school has a total strength of 1455 pupils. Since 2000 admission to the nursery has been stopped. The evening school has about 200 students from classes 1-IV.® The finances of the evening school are managed by the house. The house also sponsors twelve students every year with their studies. The Apostolic School has 51 students from Class V to Class X. The Marengo Hostel has 12 students.

Those in-charge and Rectors:

Fr. Uguet, Fr. Aloysius Cerato, Fr. Emmanuel Bars, Fr. Dalzovo, Fr. Ernest Zanon (1958-1960-1965), Fr. Joseph Fantin (1965-1967), Fr. Abraham Alangimattathil (1967-1971), Fr. Thomas Arackal (1971-1974), Fr. Uzhunnalil Matthew (1974-1977), Fr. Porcu Mario (1977-1980), Fr. Matthew Narimattam (1980-1986), Fr. Scaria Nedumala (1986-1987), Fr. Stanislaus Kerketta (1987-1990), Fr. Benjamin Toppo (1990-1994), Fr. Variathukalayil Joseph (1994), Fr. Scaria Nedumala (1994-1998), Fr. Tom Karthikapallil (1998-)

Headmasters:

Fr. Aloysius Cerato, Fr. Chiosi, Fr. Achilles Visentin, Bro. Barnabas Haw, Fr. Joseph Edakudan, Fr. Tarcisius Resto, Fr. Kadavunkal Matthew, Fr. Tom Karthikapallil, Fr. Thekkekandom Thomas, Fr. Paul Petta, Fr. Thomas Arackal, Fr. Thomas Vattoth, Fr. Thazhekaden Sebastian, Fr. Stanislaus, Fr. Thomas Kalapurackal, Fr. Benjamin Toppo, Fr. Raphael Paliakara, Fr. Vengakunnel Thomas, Fr. Nellisseril Jose.

Others:

Fr. Cyril Francis, Fr. John Kongla, Fr. Zanghelini, Fr. Kannath Thomas, Fr. Neeranakunel Cyriac, Fr. Chollamadathil Matthew, Fr. Thekeparambil Sebastian, Fr. Eanthanamkuzhiyil Michael, Fr. Tony Pellissery, Fr. Kunnel Tom, Fr. Joseph

Pottukulam, Fr. Bosco Periyannayagam, Fr.
Pampackal Joseph, Fr. Nedumattathil Jose, Fr.
Jerry Thomas, Fr. Nangachiveetil Joseph, Fr. Kindo
Joseph, Fr. Hilarius Ekka, Fr. Joseph Parakkatt,
Fr. Kulathunkal Joseph.

DOOM DOOMA

Doom Dooma is situated at about 26 km from Tinsukia on the Tinsukia - Saikoah Road. It has a population of 15,000. St. Joseph's parish and Don Bosco School are located at about two km from Doom Dooma town.

Initially the Doom Dooma area was looked after from Dibrugarh. As the mission developed it was decided to begin a new centre there. With this intention in mind, a small strip of land was acquired during the period of the Second World War. However the land was found unsuitable and was exchanged for 11 acres of land from Beesakopi Tea Garden. Of these three acres across the road was bought for Rs. 100 per acre. During this period the mission was looked after by Fr. Boscardin, the Parish Priest of Dibrugarh and Fr. Louis Kerketta, the touring priest for the Doom Dooma area.

In 1947 Fr. Gerald Mandeville was put in charge of Doom Dooma. He made his maiden tour of the mission of Doom Dooma on 17th August 1947. A small chapel was built in the mission land in 1949. It may be noted that the building of the new chapel was done by the Catholic community. The bamboos were provided by the Gurni Village and Bordubi Garden and the work was done by the Catholics of the Tongna Circle. But as thatch did not come in time, only the frame for the church was completed. Unfortunately the frame too vanished within a few days; it was used by the people nearby as firewood!

In 1951 a new church was built, this time with wooden posts. In order to save it from the fate of the earlier church, it was given to the labourers of Beesakopi Tea Garden for their stay. In 1952 when Fr. Gerald Mandeville was officially appointed to begin the Doom Dooma mission, the church was vacated.

The mission of Doom Dooma was opened on 6th November 1952. Fr. Gerald Mandeville was appointed its first Parish Priest. Fr. Mandeville constructed three small sheds serving as the Confrères' Residence, church and the Sisters' Quarters respectively. The Missionary Sisters of Dibrugarh used to help in touring the villages and in giving instruction to children and adults.

On 21st December 1952, the foundation-stone was laid for a two- storeyed residence. The house was blessed on 26th April 1953.

On 13th December 1952, Fr. O'Brien arrived at Doom Dooma as the first Assistant Parish Priest of Doom Dooma. However, he found it difficult to tour and left for Bandel on 26th April 1953. He was replaced by Fr. Constantine on the same day. On 23rd November 1953, Fr. Constantine was transferred. Fr. Joseph Rubio was appointed the new Assistant on 8th December 1953. Now, another six acres of land was purchased from the Beesakopi Tea Garden to gain access to the road; the land was previously hemmed in all sides by the Tea Garden land.

The mission of Doom Dooma had a prominent visitor in the person of Fr. Ziggotti, the Rector Major of the Salesians on 28th January 1955. He blessed St. Dominic Savio's School which had just been started. The school was begun on 12th December 1954, with a few students. By March the number had increased to 160. The school was begun with K.G. I and K.G. II. When the students of Dibrugarh joined the mission, Class I was also started. The boarding was also begun at this time. Fr. Piasechi, arrived in Doom Dooma

on 6th October 1955, but fell ill soon after and left temporarily in October 1956. He was replaced by Fr. Borghi on 4th November 1956.

A refectory for boys was built on 2nd June 1957. In 1957 there were 63 boys in the hostel. Twenty-two day-scholars too attended the school.

The work for a new church was begun on 20th May 1957. It was blessed on 28th June 1959. On 2nd February 1964, the three-storeyed new convent building was blessed. It was primarily meant to be a boarding for the Catholic girls of the parish and was to serve as the school up to Class VII. The MSMHC sisters came to stay at the parish on 15th January 1964. The first superior was Sr. Josephine Lakra. The sisters looked after the boarding and the school. There were forty girls in the boarding.

On 5th May 1964, Fr. Gerald left for Belgium and Fr. Harold was appointed the care-taker of the parish. On 1st July 1964, Fr. Zanghellini arrived in the mission but left after a few months. He was followed by Fr. Cyril Francis on 20th August 1965 who too left after a few months. On 23rd February 1966, Fr. Gerald returned. He left for Jorhat on 19th August 1966 having worked in Doom Dooma for 15 years.

Fr. Matthew Uzhunnalil was appointed the Parish Priest. He was assisted by Fr. Jacob Malayatty and Fr. Mukala George. He built and furnished two dormitories and two refectories for boarders, a study hall and two kitchens. A dispensary began to function, together with a mobile van. Pucca churches were built in the villages of Chandpur, Dirak and Satmile. In Bagjan about 348 acres of land was purchased and 60 families were settled there. It was at this time that in Samalguri, 30 bighas of land was bought for the mission. Fr. Uzhunnalil Matthew also started the English medium section in the school.

In June 1971, Fr. Jacob Malayatty left the mission. His place was taken by Fr. Puthusery George. In July 1973, he was transferred to Naharkatiya as Parish Priest and was replaced by Fr. Andrew P[@], a diocesan priest.

Fr. Matthew Narimattam took over from Uzhunnalil Matthew on 16th September 1973. He purchased 22 bighas of land at Mankhua and built up a beautiful park for the boarders and furnished it with various items. It was inaugurated on 31st May 1974. In September 1975, Fr. Paulinus Chempalayil joined the centre after Fr. Andrew was transferred to Naharkatia. In 1975 another plot of 24 bighas was bought.

Till 1974 Dominic Savio School - boys' section (Assamese Medium - Classes IV, V and VI) was held separately in the Parish while the lower classes of boys and girls were conducted at St. Mary's Convent building. In 1974, the boys' section (Classes IV, V and VI) was also sent over to the Convent building. Dominic Savio Hostel came to be known as Don Bosco Niketan and the English Medium school which was started in the parish premises from Class III was known as Don Bosco School. It developed into a high school.

In August 1978, Fr. Joseph Parakkatt was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest.

On 5th February 1979 the parish school, till then managed by the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, was handed over to the parish. The decision to this effect had been reached on 2nd June 1979 between the Salesian Province of Guwahati and the society of MSMHC after an year of correspondence and meetings as well as tension.[@] The functioning of the school had run into difficulties and it was felt necessary that the parish school be managed by the parish itself. As per the agreement the sisters were to run K.G., Class I and II of the English Medium and Classes I to IV of the Assamese me-

dium and the Parish would run classes II to VII of English Medium and V to VII of Assamese Medium.

Fr. Joseph Parakkatt was appointed the first Headmaster of Don Bosco School. Don Bosco School took students to Class III on merit basis. For the first year, the classes were held in the Parish hall and in the shed that was already existing. The Assamese medium from V to VII was also held in St. Mary's School for a year.

There had been two mess in the boarding - one for the students of the English Medium who paid higher fees and another for the students of the Assamese Medium who paid lower fees. @ Now, the two-mess system was stopped and the boarding continued with only one mess.

The work for the new school building began in 1979 and was completed in a year. The new school was blessed by Mgr. Robert Kerketta on 31st May 1980. The new two-storeyed school building with eleven classrooms, four office-rooms and two halls for the study of the boarders was inaugurated by Fr. Mathai Kochuparambil, the Provincial of Guwahati on 1st June 1980.

Fr. Matthew Narimattam was transferred to Dibrugarh and he left on 7th June 1980 and Fr. Chacko Kakkanatt took over as the new Rector. Fr. Joseph Parakkatt was transferred and Fr. Thomas Arackal was appointed the Headmaster. On 14th August 1981, Fr. Theophilus Ganlari was appointed the assitant Parish Priest. The construction of the stage was done during this time. The Church was founded in the Seiring Village, when eleven families embraced the Catholic faith.

In 1984, Fr. Benjamin Toppo was appointed the Headmaster. It was due to his efforts that in January 1986 Class VIII

was begun. In February 1986, Fr. Nazarius Lakra was appointed Assistant Parish Priest.

After Fr. Chacko Kakkanatt was transferred, Fr. Thomas Kannath was appointed the Parish Priest. He arrived on 15th May 1986 as Rector. Fr. Benjamin Toppo, the Headmaster was transferred to Margherita on 18th May 1986. Fr. George Kalapurayil looked after the school till the Headmaster was appointed. On 15th July 1986, Fr. Theophilus Ganlari was transferred to Golaghat. Fr. Eanthanamkuzhiyil Michael was appointed the Headmaster. He took over on 6th February 1987. On 13th February 1988 Fr. Paulinus Chempalayil was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest.

The work of adjusting the rooms for the salesians was started on 24th October 1988 so that the new building could be started after the demolition of the residence. A thatched shed with three rooms was built near the parish hall. The work for the new residence began soon. The idea of a new building got a boost after the visit of Fr. Thomas Panakkezham, the Regional for Asia. He was shocked by the rickety building and endorsed the view that a new residence be built.

In January 1990 Fr. Nazarius Lakra and Fr. Eanthanamkuzhiyil Michael were transferred and their places were taken by Fr. Nathaniel Topno and Fr. Matthew Pottukulam respectively.

The first batch of matriculation students appeared in March 1990. The Assamese medium was stopped as there were very few students. There had not been admissions to the Assamese medium since 1988.

Soon after the completion of the Confrères' Residence in 1992, work was begun for the new boarding and the salesians moved into the new residence.

On 1st February 1992 Fr. Kannath Thomas left for Amguri and Fr. Matthew Narimattam was appointed the Parish Priest. He took charge on 6th February 1992. The three storey hostel building begun during the time of Fr. Kannath Thomas, was blessed on 27th October 1992 by Fr. Thomas Vattoth, the Provincial Economer. Renovations were made in the high school and the old dormitory of the boys was converted into classrooms.

In 1993, Fr. Matthew Pottukulam was transferred and Fr. Thettayil Joseph took over as the Headmaster on 21st January 1993.

In 1994 a gate was built between the convent and the parish to avoid the church precincts from becoming a thoroughfare with rikshaws and vehicles coming up to the courtyard. @ Fr. Kuriakose Palathingal was appointed the Administrator in 1994.

Fr. Matthew Narimattam was transferred to Dergaon on 11th January 1995 and Fr. Benjamin Toppo took over as the Parish Priest on 10th January 1995. On 7th January 1995 Fr. Kuriakose Palathingal was transferred to Tuli and Fr. Shaji Valiyaparambil was appointed the Administrator.

Fr. Thettayil Jose was transferred on 6th July 1995 and Fr. Aerimattathil Sebastian took over as the Headmaster on 13th July 1995. In January 1996, Fr. Nathaniel Topno was transferred to Tongna as Parish Priest. Fr. Joseph Kindo was appointed to Doom Dooma on 1st March 1997.

In February 1998, Fr. Shaji Valiyaparambil was transferred to Jagun. Fr. Louis Tirkey, arrived as the Assistant Parish Priest in 1998. In 1999 Fr. Aerimattathil Sebastian was transferred to Salesian College and Fr. Bimal Lakra was appointed the Headmaster. In February 2000 Fr. George Mukala was appointed as Confesor and Assistant Parish Priest.

Today the parish of Doom Dooma has about 10,500 Catholics and 52 sub centres. The school has 875 students in two sections from Class III to X. In 1998, there were 50 boys in the boarding. The number of boarders has been reduced as more school buses have been introduced by the tea gardens. The parishes of Margherita, Philobari, Tongna and part of Tinsukia are carved out of the parish of Doom Dooma. The centre is going to begin a Junior College independent of the board soon.

Parish Priests:

Fr. Gerald Mandeville (1952-1966), (Fr. Harold Shrieves [in charge](1964-1966), Fr. Uzhunnalil Matthew (1966-1973), Fr. Matthew Narimattam (1973-1980), Fr. Chacko Kakkanatt (1980-1986), Fr. Thomas Kannath (1986-1992), Fr. Matthew Narimattam (1992-1995), Benjamin Toppo (1995-)

Others:

Fr. O'Brien, Fr. Constantine Bili, J. Rubio, Fr. Leo Piasecki, Fr. Broghi, Fr. Harold Shrieves, Fr. Zanghellini, Fr. Cyril Francis, Fr. Malayatty Jacob, Fr. George Mukala, Fr. Pudussery George, Fr. Parakatt Joseph, Fr. Thomas Arackal, Fr. Paulinus Chempalayil, Fr. Theophilus Ganlari, Fr. Nazarius Lakra, Fr. Kalapurayil George, Fr. Eanthanamkuzhiyil Michael, Fr. Matthew Pottukkulam, Fr. Nathaniel Topno, Fr. Thettayil Jose, Fr. Kuriakose Palathingal, Fr. Shaji Valiaparambil, Fr. Aerimattathil Sebastian, Fr. Louis Tirkey, Fr. Joseph Kindo, Fr. Bimal Lakra, Fr. George Mukala.

ST. TERESA'S PARISH GOLAGHAT

Golaghat is one of the oldest missions of the Province of Dimapur. Earlier it formed part of the Dibrugarh Catholic Mission which then included North Lakhimpur, Jorhat, Dimapur, Naga Hills, Manipur and part of Mikir Hills. Golaghat mainly consisted of Tea Garden Labourers and priests from Dibrugarh used to visit them.

The Golaghat mission was started on 4th August 1941 by Fr. Peter Jean Neyens. It was blessed and inaugurated by Mgr. Stephen Ferrando, Bishop of Shillong, on 24th August 1941, placing it under the patronage of St. Teresa of Child Jesus.

Looking out for a suitable place to open the mission, Fr. Uguet the Provincial and Fr. Neyens were lucky to come across Mr. Flawkins' bungalow. This bungalow was built by Mr. Flawkins, a contractor and garagist, in the land belonging to the Borkatonee Tea Estate. However, due to financial reasons, Mr. Flawkins had to quit after a few years, leaving the building to a marwari from Titabar, who in his turn rented it to the retired agent of an insurance company. But this man died in one of the rooms of the bungalow and an Inspector of Excise to whom it was rented next, left it soon afterwards. When Fr. Uguet and Fr. Neyens visited the place, the Bungalow and the workshop had been lying vacant for two years and were in miserable conditions. The local people believed it was a haunted house.

On 6th September 1941, the bungalow and the workshop were purchased for Rs. 2,400. In one month's time, thanks to the Catholics of Rangajan village, the entire compound was cleared and got ready for church functions as well as for a primary school. More than 500 Catholics were present for the feast of St. Teresa of Child Jesus, celebrated for the first time, on 7th October 1941.

Fr. Fiorenzo Mellino took charge as Assistant Parish Priest on 9th December 1941

By the close of 1941 Fr. Neyens had established 95 flourishing communities totalling 6878 Catholics. All these communities were visited thrice a year. Little wonder, that over 200 days a year were spent in touring the various villages - some of them as far flung as Harmutty, Mariani and so on.

Fr. Mellino was transferred to Raliang on 12th February 1942. When the World War II broke out, Fr. Neyens was summoned to Calcutta to join the Belgian army. However he reached Calcutta a day late. By then the ship had already left. He returned to Golaghat and till the end of the War remained alone. He sold the old plot of land and bought a part of the Golaghat Tea Estate which was occupied by the Assistant Manager. The new property had a bungalow, a large plot of paddy field and a good bit of forest area. In this plot a small church was built for religious services. It was made of wood and the white ants felled it by the end of the war.

An Assamese Medium School and a boarding for boys was started in February 1945. The first teachers were Mr. John Tirkey, Mr. Joan Peter Ekka, Mr. Rufus, Mr. Raphael and Mr. John Kerketta.

After the War Fr. Peter Neyens left for Australia on 30th April 1946. Fr. Fiorenzo Mellino took charge of the mission on 1st April 1946. Fr. Bennet who came to assist him for a while had to leave as chaplain of the British soldiers who had returned from the War.

In the place of Fr. Bennet, Fr. Felix Bollini reached the mission on 6th December 1946. It was at this time that the boarding was constructed with materials disposed off by the departing American and British troops. The Church and the Confrères' Residence was also built at this time in the land bought by Fr. Neyens from the Halmirah Tea Garden. Fr. Mellino was transferred to Sonada and he left Golaghat on 13th February 1952.

28th December 1950 remains a red letter day in the annals of Golaghat mission as five Lotha Nagas from Lakhuti came to Golaghat marking the beginning of the Church in Nagaland. As Fr. Bollini could not keep up the touring Fr. Larrea joined the community having been appointed to look after the Lothas, with his headquarters and school at Golaghat. Each time he returned after his visit he brought new boys to Golaghat. The boarding at Golaghat had 240 adivasi boys and 93 Naga boys mainly from Lakhuti.

The Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians arrived in May 1951, with the first batch consisting of Sr. Victoria Toppo and Sr. Mary Surin. In 1952 an Assamese Medium School was opened with Sr. Mary Surin as in charge. Soon Sr. Teresa Soreng joined her. The girls' boarding began soon. For the girls from the hills a weaving school was also started.

The foundation-stone for the new church was laid on 14th June 1954. The work was completed in two years and it was blessed by Mgr. Orestes Marengo on 1st October 1956 in the presence of about 1100 faithful. The present residence of the fathers was built in 1963. It is worth noting that many distinguished personalities visited the parish. On 20th November 1961, the Internuncio Mgr. James Knox and on 17th October 1968, the Pro-Nuncio Mgr. G. Caprio visited Golaghat.

Fr. Bollini left Golaghat after 23 years on 26th July 1969 and the mission was taken over by Fr. Joseph Edakudan on 15th August 1969. The year 1969 also witnessed the beginning of Sacred Heart English School by the MSMHC sisters.

24th April 1970 remains a sad day in the history of the parish of Golaghat. Some of the unruly boys of the boarding with the help of some gundas beat up the two priests, Fr. Joseph Edakudan and Fr. Maria Selvam.[@] The mission was temporarily closed from 2nd May 1970 to 1st July 1970.

On 1st July 1970 Fr. Chacko Kakkanatt took over the mission. Bro. Raphael Bara was appointed Headmaster of the parish school temporarily though he remained in this post till his death on 6th February 1992. Fr. Terrence D'Souza, of the diocese of Dibrugarh, was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest.

The parish was too big and did not have a vehicle. Places like Bokaghat, Navjan, Woka, Chokihola, Lacitgaon, Sarupathar, Japrajan had to be reached either by bus or on foot.

After Fr. Terrence D'Souza left as the Parish Priest of Sarupathar in 1973, Fr. Kolacheril Thomas was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest. In 1977 Fr. Nathaniel Topno became Assistant Parish Priest in the place of Fr. Kolacheril Thomas. Fr. Harold also assisted at the centre and helped with the touring.

During this period the Gorunga paddy field of about 15 bighas was bought. There were around three hundred children in the boarding at this time. The plot of land near the convent was levelled and given to the sisters for cultivation. The installation of the sprinkler system of irrigation saw a dramatic increase in the yield of the land. Roads to Torajan, Rangajan and Polungi were built at this time through a food for work programme.

The late sixties and early eighties witnessed the happy beginnings of several new parishes carved out of Golaghat parish. Apart from the parishes opened in Nagaland-Manipur, the other parishes are Jorhat (1968), Sarupathar (1973), and Bokaghat[@] (1982). These parishes in turn have given rise to many others.

Fr. Chacko Kakkanatt was transferred and Fr. Leo Tirkey took charge of the mission on 24th June 1978. Youth work received a boost at this time. Fr. Leo began a football team consisting of about twenty youngsters. Perhaps this had much to do with the later developments.[@]

Fr. Paul Vernal Felix took over from Fr. Leo Tirkey on 7th February 1983. Fr. Nathaniel Topno was transferred to Tsemenyu in 1984 after seven years of stay in Golaghat. Fr. Louis Tirkey was appointed as the Assistant Parish Priest. Soon Fr. Reginald D'Silva also joined as the Assistant Parish Priest.

On June 15th 1985 the new pre-novitiate house of the Province of Dimapur "Rua Home" was temporarily housed in Golaghat. Fr. Joseph Chittisery was the rector of the Pre-novitiate house with Fr. Raphael Paliakara as the Administrator and Counsellor. The Naga Hall and one of the wings of the boarding were put at the disposal of the pre-novitiate. Rua Home was shifted to Jorhat on 10th May 1986.[@]

Admissions to the Assamese Medium School were closed as it was not economically viable. Many were opting for English Medium school and the number of students in the Assamese Medium school had come down. In 1986 Fr. Theophilus Ganlari was appointed the Parish Priest. In 1987, the remaining three classes of V, VI and VII of the Assamese medium were stopped. But the Adivasi Youth Association of Golaghat keen on running an Assamese Medium School, conducted the school (nursery to Class I) for two more years. After the initial enthusiasm wore

out, they too could not continue. By 1990 the Assamese Medium School was stopped.

In February 1989 Fr. Akkarapatty Jose was appointed Assistant Parish Priest. He was transferred in September 1989. Fr. Matthew Narimattam too joined the community with a view to developing the Woka mission.

In May 1990 Fr. Eanthanamkuzhiyil Michael was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest. Fr. Reginald D'Silva was transferred to Amguri on 11th January 1991 and was replaced by Fr. Anto Tharakan.

Woka was erected as a parish on 14th April 1991 by Mgr. Thomas Menamparampil, Bishop of Dibrugarh, with a diocesan priest in charge.

The work of Tea Garden plantation was initiated at Golaghat by Fr. Theophilus. Polythene bags and tea cuttings were brought and youngsters were mobilised to help. Fr. Theophilus also brought out a video cassette as well as audio cassettes of Assamese devotionals (Joydhoni I, II, III) while serving as a member of the Diocesan Liturgical Committee together with Fr. Joy Pallikunnel. A hymnal was also brought out. A Bodo devotional cassette called "Dekhwni bidwi" was also prepared at this time. The land at Dergaon was bought in 1993 and looked after from Golaghat. While serving as a member of the Kala Kristi, Fr. Theophilus also attempted to bring out Trishna, a video on the multi-cultural scenario of Assam.

Fr. Theophilus Ganlari was transferred to Dergaon and Fr. Paulinus Chemplayil took over as the Parish Priest in 1992. Fr. Eanthanamkuzhiyil Michael was transferred to Margherita in February 1994 and Fr. Parappilly Jacob was appointed the new Assistant Parish Priest. Fr. Joseph Kulam also joined the community. In

October 1994 the parish took up Tea Plantation on an elaborate scale and brought sixteen bighas of land under Tea plantation.

Fr. Joseph Kulam left for Salesian College in 1995. Fr. Parappilly Jacob was transferred and Fr. Albert Tirkey joined the mission on 15th March 1997.

Fr. Joachim Minj was appointed the Parish Priest and he arrived on 27th May 1997. Now eight more bighas of land has been brought under Tea plantation. Parish activities have been revamped. Catechists' meeting is now conducted along with a short retreat. Units of Mahila Samaj have been set up in all the villages and they are taking an active role in all the parish activities. Efforts are also on to encourage people to use land for cash crops and to prevent them from selling away the land.

The parish of Doigrung, 18 km from Golaghat comprising of fifteen centres of the Golaghat parish, was opened on 14th September 1997, with a diocesan priest as the Parish Priest.

In 1998 Golaghat parish has about 4,000 Catholics in 26 sub-stations. The vast majority of the Catholics are from the Tea Gardens. The parish also runs a boarding of about 40-45 students for the students of the Sacred Heart School run by the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians.

Don Bosco Non-Formal Training Centre

On 1st May 1995, Don Bosco non-formal Training Centre[@] was inaugurated at Golaghat with a view to help high school drop-outs, especially those from the tea garden areas. The Naga Hall was re-adjusted and a small building was put up at the side of it for the purpose.

Fr. Joy Sebastian was appointed in charge of the centre assisted by Bro. James Orappankal and Bro. Romanus Tirkey. The trades envisaged were electricity, motor mechanics, welding, carpentry and driving.

Bro. James was transferred to Don Bosco, Wokha in January 1997. In 1999 Bro. Benarius Topno was appointed to the centre. Today there are about 24 students taking lessons in driving, electricity and welding.

Parish Priests:

Fr. Peter Jean Neyens (1941-1946), Fr. Fiorenzo Mellino (1946-1952), Fr. Felix Bollini (1952-1969), Fr. Joseph Edakudan (1969-1970), Fr. Chacko Kakkanatt (1970-1978), Fr. Leo Tirkey (1978-1983), Fr. Paul Felix (1983-1986), Fr. Theophilus Ganlari (1986-1992), Fr. Paulinus Chempalayil (1992-1997), Fr. Joachim Minj (1997-)

The Others:

Fr. Nyso, Fr. Cerato, Fr. Bennet, Fr. Butters, Fr. Marocchino, Fr. Paschal, Fr. Guidotto, Fr. Frassy, Fr. Felix Matta, Fr. Anguilar, Fr. Larrea, Fr. O'Hara, Fr. Harold Shrieves, Fr. Joseph Felix, Fr. Robert Pernia, Bro. Kottarathil Joseph, Fr. Zanghellini, Fr. Mariaselvam, Bro. Raphael Bara, Fr. Terrence D'Souza, Fr. Kolacheril Thomas, Fr. Nathaniel Topno, Fr. Akkarapatty Jose, Fr. Eanthanamkuzhiyil Michael, Fr. Anto Tharakan, Fr. Louis Tirkey, Fr. D'Silva Reginald, Fr. Parappilly Jacob, Bro. Orappankal James, Fr. Albert Tirkey, Fr. Joy Sebastian, Bro. Romanus Tirkey, Bro. Romanus.

HARMUTTY

St. Francis Xavier School and Parish at Harmutty is situated on the border of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in the District of North Lakhimpur, Assam. It is located at a distance of 29 km from Lakhimpur and 32 km from Itanagar, the capital of Arunachal Pradesh. Banderdeva in the South (3 km) and Kimin in the North (45 km) serve as gates to Arunachal Pradesh.

The Harmutty mission was started through the initiative of Mgr. Joseph Mittathany and Fr. Kulandaisamy in June 1977. Since then it has played a great rôle in evangelizing the people of Arunachal Pradesh. It has served as a meeting place for the people of Arunachal Pradesh and as a study centre where the tribal boys and girls from Arunachal attended school and pursued their studies. It has also been a training place where the lay leaders, young boys and girls including students, got instructed in the Catholic faith, received baptism, got trained as catechists and then returned to their villages and preached the Gospel to their own people.

The centre at Harmutty was begun at a time when there raged organized persecution against the Christians in Arunachal Pradesh. Christians were arrested, beaten up, deprived of government facilities and thrown into prison. Jobs were denied to them. Christian students were turned out from schools and boardings. Churches were burnt down. The anti-Christian policy of the government had reached its climax with the Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly passing the obnoxious "The Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act" in 1978.

Fr. Kulandaisamy could not enter Arunachal Pradesh and he worked more as an animator of the people from Harmutty. Nevertheless every now and then he made attempts to go inside and visit the Christians. But he was closely followed by the police and the anti-Christian agents, and threatened by them. Mgr. Joseph Mittathany too refused him permission to visit Arunachal as it was considered too dangerous. In fact in 1979 when he managed to get a permit to enter Arunachal he was disturbed during the Eucharistic celebration and forced to quit. But neither the Freedom of Religion Bill nor the persecutions could stop the people of Arunachal Pradesh from accepting the message of Christ.

In the beginning Fr. Kulandaisamy worked from Malu Village about two and a half kilometers from Harmutty. The school at Malu had about 40 students in KG. Mr. Zacharias Barla and Ms. Mariamma were the teachers.

The present land was purchased and St. Xavier's school and boarding were opened in 1978. He constructed the building, part of which now serves as the chapel and the Confrères' Residence. A thatched shed was put up which served as the church. In 1979 the school and boarding had reached up to Class II and there were about 100 students.

During the years between 1978 and 1980 two important Catholic centres of Sagali and Palin were opened in Arunachal Pradesh due to the efforts from the centre at Harmutty. The entry of Catholicism to these places was made easy with the existing Baptist Christians; most of those who accepted Catholicism were from among the Baptists. Within a short period of three years and through the hard and sacrificing work of Fr. Kulandaisamy, the Baptism Register recorded 3000 Catholics! It

is said that by the end of 1980 the total population of Catholics in the Diocese of Tezpur had swelled to 17,000.

The centre received a Salesian touch in June 1981, when Fr. Jose Chemparathy was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest of Harmutty. The foundation-stone for St. Xavier's School at the present site was laid on 27th October 1981 by Mgr. Robert Kerketta. It was blessed on 2nd December 1982. At this time there were classes up to IVth Standard. Classes VI and VII were started together in 1982. The centre was not yet fully organized as a school and was conducted more in an informal setting.

The Sisters of Holy Cross of Chavanod arrived at Harmutty in June 1982 to help in the school and to look after the girls. Since 1981 the girls' boarding was being looked after by teachers Meera, Lidwin and Rita. On 3rd September 1982, Fr. Chemparathy Jose was transferred by the Provincial of Dimapur, Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, to Wokha as Headmaster.®

On 14th September 1983, the centre was handed over to the Salesians by Mgr. Robert Kerketta of Tezpur, to be looked after. Fr. Chemparathy Jose and Bro. Barnabas Topno arrived at Harmutty on 15th September 1983. Fr. Kualandaisamy left Harmutty on 1st October 1983 after seven years of stay. He had pioneered the work in the Arunachal Missions. He had done much towards the evangelization of Arunachal Pradesh and had even published a hymn-cum-prayer book in Nishi in 1982. Today he is fondly remembered by many of the Arunachal Catholics.

The contribution of several salesian students of Theology of Sacred Heart Mawlai, toward the education of Arunachal students cannot be overlooked. They found admissions for these students in the various schools - Salesian and non-Salesian - and carefully followed up their catechetical and Christian formation. Special men-

tion must be made of clerics Jose Chemparathy, George Pallimparambil and Antony Vazhappilly.

On 21st September 1983 Fr. Sebastian Thottipatt joined the centre at Harmutty. The School had classes up to VIII and the boarding had about 250 boys and girls. Those who passed Class VIII were taken to Don Bosco, Wokha.

The two-storey Boys' Hostel was completed in 1988. There were about 200 boys and about 140 girls in the boarding then. The Girls' Hostel had already been constructed in 1984. The work had been begun by Fr. Kulandaisamy. In 1988, one of the halls was converted into the church as the thatched shed where the services were held was on the verge of collapsing. Even today, the hall continues to serve as the church.

In 1985, Bro. Romanus Tirkey was appointed to the community. Fr. Louis Tirkey was the Headmaster. In 1986 Bro. Romanus Tirkey was transferred and Fr. Paulus Kerketta was appointed to the centre. Fr. Abraham Kaduthodil joined the mission in November 1987. The same year, Fr. Louis Tirkey left for Tongna and was replaced by Fr. Kunnel Tom. The work for the new School and guest-rooms were begun in the same year. It was designed by Fr. Kunnel Tom.

On 27th March 1988 Fr. Paulus Kerketta was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest. Fr. Sebastian Thottipatt was transferred to Tongna in 1989.

The school chose CBSE Board because that was more useful for the students from Arunachal Pradesh. It was not easy to get the "No Objection Certificate" from the Government of Assam. But through the good offices of Mr. Phulkesh Barua, then Speaker of the Assam Assembly and the influence of Fr. Vattathara Thomas

sdb, the Principal of Don Bosco Guwahati, approval was obtained from Mr. N. Saikia, the Secretary of Education. The School was officially affiliated to the Central Board in 1989. The same year the first batch of 20 students appeared for the matriculation examinations.

In 1990 the mission centre was thrown into confusion as problems developed regarding the land settlement. Part of the land belonging to the mission compound was encroached upon by a group of people and they set up the structure for a school. The mission was served quit order by the District Commissioner since it was situated in Tea Garden land which had reverted to the Government. However the issue was settled after the mission managed to get a stay order. Now the possession of the land has been legalised.

In June 1990 Fr. Paulus Kerketta was transferred and Fr. Kalapurayil George was appointed in his place. Fr. Kunnel Tom was transferred and Fr. Patrick Warjiri was appointed to his place 20th June 1991. In January 1992 Fr. Abraham Kaduthodil was transferred. On 2nd February 1992 Fr. Thurithiyil Sebastian was appointed to the centre for the Arunachal Missions. On 31st December 1993, Fr. Kalapurayil George was transferred.

The role that the mission centre at Harmutty has played in the evangelization of West Arunachal Pradesh can not be exaggerated. The entire functioning of the centre was oriented towards direct evangelization. During Christmas and Easter, the students went to their villages, instructed and baptized others. During the year, boys and girls were also selected from different villages and given special training to be able to go out and preach the gospel. Fr. Chemparathy Jose and the other priests visited the villages during Easter and Christmas. Places like Itanagar, Nokum Lapang and Kimin were visited regularly. The East Kameng District, inhabited by the

Nishis and the Akas, was being looked after from Harmutty till 1989 when it was placed under the Dholaibil parish.

It should be said that the greatest expansion and the growth of the Church in West Arunachal Pradesh took place between 1980 and 1990. The anti-Christian policy of the Government did not change and more stringent laws were enacted and applied to prevent the spread of Christianity. Nevertheless new communities sprang up in different parts of Arunachal Pradesh every year. Given below is the statistics of the founding of the new communities and their numerical growth by 1994.

YEAR OF FOUNDATION	PLACE	CATHOLICS AS IN DEC. 94
1977-78	Sagalee	4000
1979-80	Palin	6000
1981	Raga, Boa Simla	1500
1983	Mangio	3500
1984	Sangram	2300
1985	Yazalee/Yachuli	3000
1985	Itanagar	3000
1986	Koloriang	2000
1987	Nyanpin	2000
1988	Champang	1500
1989	Sarli/Damin	1100
1990	Tali	3500
1991	Deporiang	500
1991	Kimin/Doimuk	2000

On 6th February 1994, Fr. Jose Kaniyampady was appointed the Administrator. On 11th February 1994 Fr. Francis Tinglung joined the community for the Arunachal Missions. On 18th February 1994, Fr. Cyriac Neeranakunnel was appointed the Principal and Parish Priest.

Fr. Chemparathy Jose and the fathers appointed to Arunachal, continued to stay on in the Harmutty Centre, till the new centres were opened. Don Bosco Palin was begun on 2nd February 1995 and Fr. Thottathimyalil Francis and Fr. Francis Tinglung shifted to Palin on the same day. Soon Fr. Chemparathy Jose and Fr. Thurithiyil Sebastian took up residence in Jully-Daath, Itanagar.

With the opening of new centres in West Arunachal Pradesh, the Harmutty mission has entered a new stage in its existence with added emphasis being placed in catering to the Catholic community of the parish.

On 19th February 1996 Fr. Matthew Pottukulam was transferred and Fr. Karottupuram Sebastian was appointed as the Headmaster. He reached on 3rd August 1996.

Fr. Neeranakunnel Cyriac and Jose Kaniyampady were transferred on 18th February 1992 to Don Bosco, Tuli and Provincial House, Dimapur respectively. Fr. Abraham Kaduthodil arrived as the new Rector and Parish Priest on 11th February and took charge on 15th February 1998. Fr. Chempalayil Paulinus joined the centre as the Administrator and Assistant Parish Priest on the same day. In February 2000 Fr. Chempalayil Paulinus was transferred to Salesian College, Dimapur. Fr. Parappilly Jacob was appointed administrator and assistant Parish Priest.

In February 2000 the school had about 1150 students, mostly from Arunachal Pradesh. There were 110 boys and 140 girls in the boarding. Up to now about 230 students have passed matriculaion from the Harmutty Centre. With the opening of the various centres in Arunachal Pradesh, the emphasis of work has shifted to looking after the Catholic population of the parish who are mostly adivasis. The parish has about 17 villages and about 5,000 Catholics.

Parish Priests/Rectors

Fr. Kulandaisamy (1977-1983), Fr. Chemparathy Jose (1983-1994), Fr. Neeranakunnel Cyriac (1994-1998), Fr. Abraham Kaduthodil [Rector] (1998-).

Those who worked in the Centre

Bro. Barnabas Topno, Fr. Sebastian Thottipatt, Bro. Romanus Tirkey, Fr. Louis Tirkey, Fr. Paulus Kerketta, Fr. Kaduthodil Abraham, Fr. Kunnel Tom, Fr. Patrick Warjiri, Fr. Kalapurayil George, Fr. Matthew Pottukulam, Fr. Korottupuram Sebastian, Fr. Jose Kaniyampady, Fr. Paulinus Chempalayil, Fr. Parappilly Jacob.

ST. VINCENT'S SCHOOL JAGUN

St. Vincent's School, Jagun is situated at a distance of about 25 km from Margherita on the border of Arunachal Pradesh, a few kilometers away from the historic Stillwell Road leading to China. Being close to the Kursong Gate leading to Miao (9 km) and the Jairampur Gate leading to Nampong area (14 km), a centre here was thought to be an ideal place to cater to Arunachal Pradesh.

Jagun was originally a forest strip used by the government of Assam to rehabilitate the flood victims of Tinsukia district. Today it has a population of approximately 6,000 comprising mainly of Nepalis and Adivasis. Assamese, Misings, Bimaris, Bengalis, Singphos, Sema Nagas and Muslims are some of the other ethnic groups that have settled here.

One of the oldest communities to settle down here was an adivasi community from Naharkatia in the 1950s. Among this first group of settlers were also the six Catholic families from Uniamguri, Naharkatia, which explains the origin of the Catholic community here. Fr. Gerald Mandeville, the Parish Priest of Doom Dooma was informed by the Parish Priest of Naharkatia about these new settlers. Mr. Simon Dhar, the Catechist was asked to look for them to be received into the parish community. Mr. Simon Dhar found them already a fervant community. They were delighted to hear that a priest would be coming to visit them. In fact, after two months,

when Fr. Borghi, the Assistant Parish Priest of Doom Dooma visited them, he was surprised that they had already built a thatched chapel.

The number of Catholics grew as the number of settlers increased. Three more families joined them next year. The need was felt for a Catechist and Mr. Michael Purty was appointed to the post. As the community increased, the need for a bigger church was evident. A pucca church at Saathmile dedicated to Don Rua was built by Fr. Uzhunnalil Matthew when he was the Parish Priest of Doom Dooma. The community continued to be looked after from Doom Dooma till the parish of Margherita was erected in 1977. Records show that the church at Jagun was repaired in February 1978, after the façade was brought down by a storm. The renovated Church was blessed on 7th May 1978 by Mgr. Robert Kerketta of Dibrugarh Diocese.

It was the idea of Mgr. Thomas Menampampil to begin a centre in Jagun to cater to the Arunachalis. On his invitation the Brothers of Missionaries of Charity (MC Brothers) took up the mission. Bro. Varghese, the Regional Superior, Bro. Julius, Bro. Vijay and Bro. Marcus reached Jagun on 23rd June 1985. They were put up in the church and in the house of the catechist.

The 'Emmaus Cottage' as the residence of the Brothers was named, was blessed by Mgr. Thomas Menampampil on 5th April 1986. The brothers also ran an Old Age Home for about twelve inmates.[@] About 11 bighas of land had been purchased by Fr. Variathukalayil Joseph, the V.G. of Dibrugarh. The Emmaus Cottage was set up there. After four years of stay, the M.C. Brothers left the centre on 13th June 1990.

In January 1989 Fr. Paulinus Chempalayil was asked to look after the mission. He stayed in Margherita and looked after the cen-

tre. The work for the new building was begun soon but had to be abandoned on the order of SDO of Margherita which forbade the construction of permanent buildings on the site since it was government land and was located in the tribal belt. Accordingly a new piece of land was bought, to set up the centre.

The transactions for the new land were conducted on July 21st 1989 by Fr. Joseph Parakatt, Fr. Matthew Narimattam and Fr. Paulinus Chempalayil. The land was bought from Mr. Bhakta Bahadur Chetri. Nineteen bighas of land was demarcated on 13th February 1990. On 24th of February seven more bighas of land was bought.

A temporary shed was built for the school at the new site. Interviews were held for admissions on 22nd and 23rd April 1990 and St. Vincent's School with 30 children was started on 3rd May 1990. The number of children soon increased to 45.

The foundation-stone for the school building was laid on 24th May 1991 by Mgr. Thomas Menamparampil sdb. After Fr. Paulinus Chempalayil left for Golaghat in 1992 the centre was looked after by Fr. Philip Kokkapallil. He took charge of the centre on 15th February 1992. He was helped by Cl. Joy Sebastian from 15th July 1992. They too stayed at Margherita, from where they looked after the centre. Fr. Philip Kokappalil left on 8th March 1993.

Fr. Jerome Minj was appointed to look after the centre at Jagun. He arrived in Margherita on 9th February 1993. He was the first resident priest at Jagun. He began staying at the centre from 16th March 1993. Initially he stayed in a thatched shed a kilometer away from the school building, where the MC Brothers had been staying before. He was assisted by teacher Nestor Ekka. The foundation-stone of the Presbytery was laid by Fr. Kartotemprel Sebastian, the Administrator of the Diocese of Dibrugarh on 29th December 1993.

The number of confreres increased to two, when Fr. Louis Tirkey reached Jagun on 15th February 1994 as the Assistant Parish Priest. He was transferred to Tinsukia in December 1994 and on 31st January 1995 Fr. George Mukala joined Fr. Jerome.

The Presbytery was completed and blessed on 24th April 1995 by Mgr. Joseph Aind sdb. On 19th June 1996 Fr. Mukala George was transferred.

In 1998, Fr. Jerome Minj was transferred to Borduria after nearly five years of stay. Fr. Shaji Valiyaparambil was appointed the new Parish Priest and he arrived on 15th January 1998. Fr. Shaji was joined by Fr. Neeranal Francis as the Assistant Parish Priest. In 1999 Fr. Jose Kaniyampady was appointed assistant Parish Priest.

In 1998, the school had about 227 students in 7 classes (Nursery - V). There are about 1250 Catholics residing in the five villages of Jagun, Jyoti Nagar, Hawaipathar, Toklong and Naya Bagan.

Parish Priests:

Fr. Paulinus Chempalayil (1989-1992), Fr. Philip Kokkapallil (1992-1993), Fr. Jerome Minj (1993-1998), Fr. Shaji Valiyaparambil (1998-).

Others:

Fr. Louis Tirkey (1994-1995), Fr. George Mukala (1995-1996), Fr. Neeranal Francis (1998-1999), Fr. Jose Kaniyampady (1999-)

RUA HOME JORHAT

The pre-novitiate house at Jorhat 'Rua Home' was begun on 10th May 1986. But its origins may be traced back to Don Bosco Dibrugarh where the first batch of post-matric students arrived on 28th June 1982. The Province of Dimapur which was started on 18th June 1982 had felt the acute need for a pre-novitiate house. However, it was not perceived to be convenient at Dibrugarh and in 1984, the pre-novices were shifted to Salesian College for a year where they remained up to June 1985.®

The pre-novitiate was christened 'Rua Home' in 1985 when the pre-novices from Salesian College came to stay at Golaghat. It was blessed and inaugurated on 14th June 1985, by Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, the Provincial of Dimapur, on the Feast of the Sacred Heart and was dedicated to Blessed Michael Rua.

Fr. Chittisery Joseph was appointed the first Rector, Fr. Raphael Paliakara, the Counsellor and Administrator and Cl. Neeranal Francis the assistant. The first batch of 20 boys doing their P.U. II arrived from Salesian College Dimapur on 10th June 1985 along with the assistant Cl. Aerimattathil Sebastian. 13 boys from Dibrugarh too arrived. They had reached Dibrugarh on 13th July 1984. On 25th June 1985, the first batch of 14 post-SSLC students from Kerala arrived followed by those from Tamil Nadu and Bihar.

The pre-novices were housed in the boarding till then used by the boarders and the Naga Hall was put at their disposal. The

first batch of pre-novices left for Sunny Side, Shillong in January 1986.

Golaghat was only a temporary home[@] and the new land was purchased in Jorhat adjacent to six acres of land which had been previously purchased for a Don Bosco School in December 1981 by Fr. Paul Petta, the Parish Priest of Jorhat. The new piece of land was bought from Dr. Nilkamal Besbaruwa, through the efforts of Fr. Arackal Thomas, who was then the Parish Priest of Jorhat.[@] The land was registered and all the formalities were completed between Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, Dr. Besbaruwa and Fr. Arackal Thomas on 31st December 1985.

The foundation-stone for the new building at Jorhat was blessed on 3rd April 1986 at Sacred Heart Theological College by Rev Fr. Luke Van Looy, the Counsellor for the Missions. It was again blessed by the Pope John Paul II on his visit to Shillong the next day.

The work for a temporary residence began immediately. The date for shifting to the new place was fixed as 6th May 1986. But as the building was not yet ready, it was postponed to 10th May 1986. The house was inaugurated on 10th May 1986, at 5.30 pm. Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, Fr. Mulayinkal Thomas and Fr. Vadakethanikal Sebastian graced the occasion. Present were also the convent girls from Carmel Convent and the boarding boys of Golaghat along with Fr. Vernal Felix and Bro. Raphael Bara.

The beginnings were tough. Dearth of water was one of the major problems. In fact, the boys used to go to the Tea Garden for bath, wash etc. The people around were kind and co-operative in many ways especially with regard to the supply of water. The future pig-sty served as the refectory for the staff and the students. The poultry was used as the dormitory for boys.

Classes were held in the thatched school building. The toilets were makeshift. As most of the land was still jungle and no ground was ready, the boys played Square Ball primarily with the intent of clearing the area.

Meanwhile work for the construction of the house continued. The boys moved into the unfinished building in 1987. On 1st February 1987, the first batch of pre-novices from Jorhat left for Sunny Side, Shillong.

On 3rd May 1987 Fr. Joachim Minj was appointed Administrator. Fr. Arackal Thomas who was the Parish Priest of Jorhat, was appointed the Confessor. In August 1988 he joined the community as the Headmaster of the school. On 12th July 1988, Bro. Sunny Vettom joined the community.

On 17th August 1988, the refectory and kitchen area of the new building were inaugurated. The church was shifted to the new building on 31st December 1988.

Fr. Raphael Paliakara left for further studies to Shillong and Fr. Alex Pulimootil was appointed the Counsellor in his place. He arrived on 6th January 1989. On 13th February 1989, Fr. Alex Pulimootil was installed as the new Rector. Fr. Chittisery Joseph who was the Rector was transferred to Don Bosco Chingmeirong as Vice-Rector and Warden.

On 30th April 1989 the grotto of Our Lady was blessed. On 13th May 1989 Fr. Manuel Paikada joined the community as Catechist and student. In May 1989 Fr. Shaji Valiyaparambil took charge as Counsellor. On 10th July 1989 Br. Sunny Vettom left for Kerala. On 2nd May 1990 Fr. Patrick Soreng took over as the Administrator after Fr. Joachim Minj had left for Shillong on 9th February 1990.

The foundation for the chapel wing was laid by Fr. Thomas Panakezham, the Regional, on 25th July 1990. On 25th October 1990, Fr. Philip Kokkappalil was appointed the confessor. Fr. Manuel Paikada who had been assisting in the school, left for his new assignment in Wokha on 26th June 1990. On 10th November 1990 Fr. Stanislaus Kerketta took charge as Assistant Headmaster of the school.

Fr. Patrick Soreng was transferred to Tongna and he left on 14th March 1991. He was replaced by Fr. Variathukalayil Joseph in May 1991. Fr. Cyprian Kallikaden was appointed the Assistant Headmaster.

16th May 1991 was a sad day for Rua Home when Fr. Arackal Thomas, the first Headmaster and the confessor of Rua Home passed away after a sudden illness. He had helped in the buying of the land at Jorhat, and in building up the institution. He was the first Headmaster of the Don Bosco School and the first confessor of Rua Home. Fr. Arackal also prepared a text book of Mathematics which was published posthumously by the Oxford Press. Fr. Arackal had also conducted a boarding for poor students, in a building adjacent to the main road. @

On 4th February 1992 Fr. Shaji Valiyaparambil was transferred to the Tinsukia Parish and Fr. Denis Panipitchai was appointed in his place. Fr. Philip Kokkapallil was transferred to Jagun in February 1992 and Fr. George Mukala was appointed as Confessor.

Fr. Stanislaus was transferred in 1994 and Fr. Nelliseril Jose was appointed Headmaster. On 1st February 1994, Fr. Puthettupadavil Philip arrived as Assistant Headmaster and liturgical animator. On 2nd February 1994, Fr. Chalangattucherry Matthew took charge as the Administrator.

On 16th January 1995 Fr. Alex Pulimootil left to take up his new assignment as Vice-Provincial and on 18th January 1995 Fr. Matthew Pulingathil took over as the Rector.

On 13th January 1995 Fr. Matthew Narimattam and Fr. Theophilus Ganlari began residing in the house temporarily while looking after the Dergaon mission.

In April 1995 Fr. Denis Panipitchai was transferred to Bosco Bible School, Tinsukia and was replaced by Fr. Kamil Horo. Fr. Chalangattucherry Matthew was transferred in February 1996 and Fr. Maippan Paul was appointed the administrator.

In 1997 the pre-novices were registered in the Assam Higher Secondary Council for the first time. They appeared for their higher secondary examinations through Bahona College, Jorhat. Till then, the students were registered in NEHU university and wrote their exams through St. Antony's College, Shillong.

On 20th January 1997 Fr. Peringalathu Joseph joined the community as vice-rector and liturgical animator. On 1st March 1997, Fr. Jose Nellisseril was transferred and Fr. Philip Puthettupadavil was appointed the Headmaster. In May 1997, Fr. Tarcissius Toppo joined the community as Assistant Headmaster. In 1997 Fr. Maippan Paul was transferred and on 29th December 1997 Fr. Manayil Alex who took over as the Administrator.

On 24th February 1998 Fr. Peringalathu Joseph was appointed as the Rector in the place of Fr. Matthew Pulingathil who was transferred to Catholic Church, Tinsukia. In 1998 Fr. Kamil Horo was transferred to Mao and Fr. Tarcisius took over as the Counsellor. Fr. Kalapurayil Thomas was appointed as the Assistant Headmaster and liturgical animator.

On 2nd March 1999, Fr. Puthettupadavil Philip was transferred and Fr. Pampackal Joseph was appointed the Headmaster. In February 2000 Fr. Thottappallil Joseph was appointed administrator and catechist. Fr. Kalapurackal Thomas was transferred to Dergaon and Deac. Theotimus Lakra was appointed assistant Headmaster and Liturgical Animator. Fr. Jose Karippai was appointed counsellor in Rua Home in 2000 as Fr. Tarcisius Toppo is about to leave for higher studies abroad.

Rectors:

Fr. Chittisery Joseph(1985-1989), Fr. Alex Pulimootil (1989-1995), Fr. Matthew Pulingathil (1995-1998), Fr. Peringalathu Joseph (1998-)

Others:

Fr. Raphael Paliakara, Fr. Joachim Minj, Bro. Sunny Vettom, Fr. Thomas Arackal, Fr. Manuel Paikada, Fr. Shaji Valiyaparambil, Fr. Patrick Soreng, Fr. Philip Kokkappallil, Fr. Stanislaus Kerketta, Fr. Cyprian Kallikaden, Fr. Jose Nellisseril, Dennis Panipitchai, Fr. Patrick Soreng, Fr. George Mukala, Fr. Variyathukalayil Joseph, Fr. Philip Puthettupadavil, Fr. Chalangattucherry Matthew, Fr. Kamil Horo, Fr. Maippan Paul, Fr. Tarcisius Toppo, Fr. Thomas Kalapurackal, Fr. Joseph Pampackal, Fr. Manayil Alex, Fr. Thottappallil Joseph, Deac. Theotimus Lakra, Fr. Jose Karippai

DON BOSCO SCHOOL JORHAT

Don Bosco School, Jorhat was begun in 1986 together with the pre-novitiate house. The school was begun with the intention of making it an evangelizing presence, and as a means of financial support to the pre-novitiate. It was envisaged as a school for presenting the pre-novices for the Plus-Two Examinations. Such a school was important since sending the pre-novices to Shillong for the PUC examinations, through St. Anthony's College involved a lot of difficulties. The confrères of Shillong were very helpful, but it was very expensive and inconvenient.

The classes began with nursery on 19th March 1986. The school was looked after by Fr. Vadakethannikal Sebastian, the Economer, who was over-seeing the construction of the pre-novitiate house. From 1st of April, Cl. Jose Nellisseril, who had just finished his B.Ed. examinations, began looking after the school. He stayed in the Parish and came to the school with the school bus. On 12th May 1986, the school was handed over to Fr. Chittissery Joseph, the Rector of Rua Home.

The foundation-stone for the new school building was laid on 11th July 1987 and the building was completed by 1994. In August 1988, Fr. Arackal Thomas was appointed the first Headmaster of the school. Fr. Manuel Paikada was appointed Assistant Headmaster. In 1989 admissions were taken to classes V, VI and VII.

On 10th November 1990 Fr. Stanislaus Kerketta was appointed the Assistant Headmaster.

On 16th May 1991, Fr. Thomas Arackal, the first headmaster of the school, passed away suddenly after a brief illness, plunging the school in deep sorrow and shock. @ Fr. Stanislaus Kerketta was appointed the Headmaster. The first batch of 22 students appeared for matriculation in 1992 and secured 100 percent pass.

On 2nd February 1994 Fr. Stanislaus Kerketta was transferred to Tongna. Fr. Jose Nellisseril was appointed as Headmaster and he took charge on 18th January 1994. Fr. Puthetupadavil Philip was took charge as the Assistant Headmaster.

In 1997, Fr. Jose Nellisery was transferred to Margherita and Fr. Philip Puthettupadavil was appointed the Headmaster. Fr. Tarcisius Toppo took charge as the Assistant Headmaster.

In 1998 Fr. Kalapurackal Thomas was appointed the Assistant Headmaster.

In 1999 Fr. Puthettupadavil Philip was transferred to Provincial House, Dimapur and Fr. Pampackal Joseph was appointed the Headmaster. In 1998 the school had about 1300 students and a staff strength of thirty four.

Headmasters:

Arackal Thomas (1988-1991), Stanislaus Kerketta (1991-1994)-, Jose Nellisseril (1994-1997), Puthetupadavil Philip (1997-1999), Fr. Joseph Pampackal.

Asst. Headmasters:

Fr. Manuel Paikada, Fr. Stanislaus Kerketta, Fr. Cyprian Kallikaden, Fr. Jose Nellisseril, Fr. Philip Puthettupadavil, Fr. Tarcisius Toppo, Fr. Kalapurackal Thomas.

MARGHERITA

The plan of a mission centre at Margherita was a long-standing one. The priests residing at Doom Dooma and looking after the Christians scattered in different villages, right up to the Arunachal border at Jairampur, felt the need to establish a centre to facilitate the mission work. In fact, in 1963 while Fr. Gerald Mandeville was the Parish Priest, Mgr. Orestes Marengo had bought a plot of land in Margherita. It was about five acres, and lay across the small stream by the side of the railway line. Unfortunately it was very small and unsuitable for any construction work.

However, the possibilities for beginning a centre and obtaining a new piece of land for the same, brightened up suddenly in 1967, when Fr. Matthew Uzhunnalil of Doom Dooma Parish who was touring the Margherita area was put up with the manager of the Namdang Tea company. On this occasion, the manager proposed the present land called Gutti Bari as an ideal place for the mission and agreed to sell it. The information was passed on to Mgr. Hubert D'Rosario, Bishop of Dibrugarh and to Fr. Ignatius Rubio, the Vicar-General. They visited the land and contacted Mr. Peter Furst the superintendent of the Namdung Tea Company, and started negotiations. It was in 1967.

The present land was a war camp of the Americans during World War II. Fr. Uguet used to go to celebrate the Eucharist there. The land belonged to the Namdang Company but was acquired by the army during the War. The Company could not use the land for cultivation because the top soil was cut and levelled. After the War

it had been reclaimed by the Company for labourers' quarters but only a few labourers stayed there. The land which was about thirty-five acres was lying unused, filled with jungle and bamboos.

The appointment of Fr. George Mukala to the parish of Digboi to substitute Fr. Fassatti who had left for vacation to Europe in November 1968, helped hasten the process of buying the land and beginning the centre. Fr. George Mukala who was appointed the Parish Priest of Digboi in 1969 after Fr. Fassatti left for Kurla, Bombay, was asked by Mgr. Robert Kerketta to follow up the negotiations with the Namdang Company. But, despite the best efforts of Fr. George, the negotiations dragged on because though the manager and the superintendent of the Company were willing to sell the land the Board of Directors in England was opposed to the idea. So one had to wait for a favourable group of Directors for the deal to come through. That took place in 1970 but another unexpected problem cropped up - according to the newly passed Land Ceiling Act of Companies, no tea garden land could be disposed off.

The only way out of the impasse was to get an exemption. So Fr. George Mukala together with Fr. Thekkekandom Thomas, the Headmaster of Don Bosco School, Dibrugarh, approached the A.D.C., Mr. Barua. An application was forwarded to the District Collector requesting exemption and it was granted in September 1971. The stage was now set for the purchase of the land bounded by National Highway 37 on the one side and two rivers on the other. But on reaching the Registration Office it was discovered that three and a half acres of land lying between the new and old National High Way No.37 was occupied by the Arunachal Government as a part of the T.B. Hospital. Hence the sale deed had to be corrected and only the land measuring 32 acres could be bought. The land was registered for Rs.30,000 on the condition that when the Arunachal Govern-

ment released the land, it would be handed over to the mission. The sale deed was registered at Tinsukia on 15th November 1971.

But more troubles were in the offing. As soon as the news of the sale of the land leaked out there was opposition from a group comprising of the Ramakrishna Mission, the Marwaris, the Protestants and interested political parties. Instigated by them, the fourteen labourers staying on the land refused to vacate in spite of an offer of alternate land, houses and facilities by the Company. They demanded that the land be sold to them. The case went on for a year and it was clear that the Company could not win the case. On 15th May 1972 when Fr. Matthew Uzhunnalil and Fr. George Mukala visited the Superintendent Mr. Peter Frust, he expressed his inability to hand over the land and offered to pay back the land registration money. The fathers asked for few more days before the final decision was taken.

In order that the mission may be able to procure the land, a Novena to Mary Help Christians was started in Doom Dooma. The Novena proved very effective because on 31st May 1972 when Fr. Uzhunnalil Matthew and Fr. Mukala visited the Superintendent, they were surprised to be told that the labourers had agreed to vacate the land without any conditions! The land was taken over on the same day in the presence of Mr. Simon Penny, the Manager, Mr. Peter Furst, the Superintendent, Mr. Eric Singh and Mr. J.K. Barua, the PA in charge of the land. Also present were Mgr. Robert Kerketta, Fr. Abraham Alangimattathil, the V.G., Fr. Matthew Uzhunnalil and Fr. George Mukala. Barbed wire was brought from Dibrugarh and the entire land was fenced.

In order to avoid the land from being encroached upon by people, it was decided to declare it as belonging to the Church. The old house of Fr. Fassatti at Digboi, which was lying vacant after the

Sisters of Apostolic Carmel had shifted to their new residence at Muliabari was dismantled and put up at Margherita as a temporary chapel in 1973. As cement was scarce even the floor was cut into bits and put up at Margherita. Mr. Biren Mondol, a contractor from Digboi looked after the construction. The temporary church was blessed and dedicated to Mary Help of Christians by Mgr. Robert Kerketta on 23rd June 1973. On the first Sunday of every month and on feast days, mass was celebrated in this chapel.

The work of clearing the land was started in 1974 and was completed through food for work programmes. It took much patience and perseverance as the land was filled with stones and concrete blocks, having served as a camp for the Americans during the War. The first pucca building was the presbytery. On 12th February 1975 the foundation for confrères' bungalow was laid by Mgr. Robert Kerketta. The work of the Convent was started in February 1976 and completed in May 1976. It served as a hostel for girls later.

The Sisters of Charity took up residence at Margherita on 19th May 1976. The first three sisters were Sr. Gulielmina (Superior), Sr. Scholastica and Sr. Mauritia. The present convent building was blessed on 28th January 1979.

The Confrères' Residence and the Convent were blessed on 23rd May 1976 by Mgr. Robert Kerketta. It was inaugurated by Mr. Peter Furst, the superintendent of the Namdang Tea Estate. The Sisters' Residence was inaugurated by Sr. Patricia, the Provincial of Sisters of Charity. A big crowd from Dibrugarh, Digboi and Doom Dooma attended the function. Fr. George Mukala shifted his residence to Margherita on the same day. He would go to Digboi to say mass for the sisters on Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning, Saturday evening and Sunday morning. Though he stayed at Margherita, he continued to attend to all the needs of the Parish as before.

On 24th May 1976 the school was started in the Confrères' bungalow with K.G. classes but under much anxiety because the APO of Margherita had threatened to close the school. The prospectus was distributed in the garden and public offices and admissions were taken after an interview. There were 70 children in the first batch of nursery students. After the first terminal examinations in July. K.G. was started with the brighter students from the nursery being promoted to K.G. Thus there were two classes from August 1976. The teachers were Sr. Mauritia and Sr. Scholastica. The beginning of the school changed the antagonistic attitude of the people around towards the Catholic missionaries.

The parish was dedicated to Mary Help of Christians in thanksgiving for the favour of saving the foreign missionaries from being expelled from the country in May 1969 and for having been able to obtain the land. Mgr. Hubert D'Rosario and Mgr. Robert Kerketta had in their turn promised to build a shrine to Our Lady in thanksgiving.

On 1st April 1977 Fr. Joseph Mooloparambil, a diocesan priest, was appointed the first Assistant Parish Priest of Margherita and Digboi. On 29th May 1977 the parish of Margherita was solemnly erected. The parish was created by dividing Doom Dooma and its boundary stretched from Makum, on the South West and Arunachal Pradesh on the East and North East. @

As the school proceeded, a thatched shed of 20" x 30" was put up to accommodate the increasing number of students and the additional classes. The evolution of the boarding began when in 1980 a multi-purpose hall was put up for marriage courses, accommodation for catechists, for storing paddy etc. But when the shed was completed the idea of a temporary hostel was considered. A few toilets and a washing place were added. The boarders were taken in

after a selection camp. Thus the boarding began with 24 boys. The girls were accommodated in the sisters' quarters which was lying vacant after the new convent was built in 1979. Since the coming of the boarders, two divisions were started in the school.

On 23rd December 1981 Fr. Joseph Parakkatt replaced Fr. Mooloparambil as the Assistant Parish Priest. The parish of Digboi was separated in October 1983 on the feast of St. Therese of Child Jesus and Fr. Joseph Moolen was appointed Parish Priest. The gardens and villages from Digboi to Anandbag were given to the Digboi parish.

The work for the boys' hostel began on 21st May 1983 and was completed by 1984. It was blessed by Mgr. Thomas Menamparampil on 1st April 1984. The house for the grihini girls was extended and blessed on 8th September 1983.

The land of the mission, bought in 1971 had not yet been registered. So the papers and application were presented to S.D.C., Margherita in 1982. The matter dragged on and the mission was asked to surrender fifty-one bighas of land from the back of the compound; the mission could not own 101 bighas of land as per the Land Ceiling Act. But in May, the D.C. was changed and Mr. Pradeep Singh the new D.C., exempted the mission from the law and the land was registered on 2nd August 1983.

The problem of not being able to occupy the land lying between the roads for building up the school was overcome incidently in 1985 when Fr. George Mukala was invited by the Secretary of Meghalaya Government, Mrs. Trivedi, to divine wells in Shillong. Through her favour Fr. George met her husband Mr. Trivedi, who was in charge of the North Eastern Council (NEC) and explained the problem of the land. On 19th July 1985 he released to the Namdang Company the land which till then had been held by Arunachal Pradesh

Government, so that it could be handed over to the mission. Though the new Manager, Mr. Singh, was unwilling initially, through the good offices of Mr. J.K. Barua who had helped the mission earlier, it was made possible to take over the land. In 1985 itself, construction work was taken up for the school.

On 27th January 1986 Fr. Mukala George was transferred to St. John Bosco's Parish, Tinsukia as Parish Priest. Fr. Joseph Parakatt was appointed the new Parish Priest and Principal. Fr. Benjamin Toppo was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest and he arrived on 19th May 1986.

On 19th January 1987, the school was shifted to the new building. The new school building was blessed on 6th March 1987 by Mgr. Thomas Menampampil. The building was financed by Fr. Ludwig Schwarz sdb, the Salesian Provincial of Austria. It was inaugurated by A.P.O., Mr. Baruah on 7th March 1987.

In January 1989 Fr. Paulinus Chempalayil was appointed to Margherita with the charge of Jagun.

On 22nd June 1989, Fr. Benjamin Toppo left for studies to California and on 15th July 1989 Fr. Matthew Narimattam joined the community as the Assistant Parish Priest.

On 18th January 1992 Fr. Lazarus Kujur was appointed Assistant Parish Priest and Headmaster. Fr. Matthew Narimattam was transferred on 4th February 1992.

Fr. Eanthanamkuzhiyil Michael was appointed the Parish Priest on 6th February 1994 after Fr. Joseph Parakkatt was transferred to Amguri. The Church of Mary Help of Christians was blessed on 26th May 1994 by Mgr. Thomas Menampampil. Fr. Lazarus Kujur joined the community as Headmaster and Assistant Parish Priest. Computer classes were begun in the school on 6th March 1995.

1st May 1995 remains the saddest day in the history of the mission of Margherita. On the night of 1st May Sr. Augustina, the Superior of the Sisters of Charity was murdered in her bed.[@] The event has cast an indelible pale of gloom on the otherwise serene Mission Centre.

Though initially the plan was to have the school only up to VII, later it was decided to upgrade the school. Accordingly, Class VIII was started in 1994. On 6th October 1996, Mr. B. Akala, the General Manager, Coal India, a past pupil of Don Bosco, Tiruppattur, visited the school. He promised to help the school and agreed to build a new building without any preconditions and provide four classrooms in instalments - two classrooms in 1996 and two in 1997.

Fr. Lazarus Kujur was transferred to St. Joseph's Rajanagar on 5th February 1996. Fr. Emmanuel Xalxo took over as the Assistant Parish Priest on 15th February 1996. The newly constructed school building was inaugurated on 6th March 1996.

On 17th February 1997, Fr. Eanthanamkuzhiyil Michael was transferred to St. Thomas School, Sadiya and Fr. Emmanuel Xalxo was appointed the Parish Priest. Fr. Xalxo was installed on 16th March 1997. On 18th April 1997, Fr. Jose Nellisseril joined the community as the Headmaster. In January 2000 Fr. Mathew Pottukulam was appointed as Headmaster and Fr. Nellisseril Jose was transferred to Don Bosco, Dibruagarh.

The parish of St. Mary's, Margherita has about 5350 Catholics in 29 villages. In 1998 there were 1014 students in the school and 103 students in the boarding.

Parish Priests:

Fr. Mukala George (1976-1986), Fr. Joseph

Parakkattt (1986-1994), Fr. Eanthanamkuzhiyil
Michael (1994-1997), Fr. Emmanuel Xalxo (1997-).

Others who worked in the Centre:

Fr. Joseph Moloparambil, Fr. Benjamin Toppo, Fr.
Paulinus Chempalayil, Fr. Matthew Narimattam, Fr.
Lazarus Kujur, Fr. Jose Nellisseril, Fr. Mathew
Pottukulam.

ST. THOMAS SCHOOL SHANITPUR, SADIYA

Sadiya is one of the few ancient names that still dot the map of Assam. Situated at the angle formed by the mighty Brahmaputra and the Dibang river, Sadiya has been a mute witness to the various events that have shaped the history of Assam. It was the meeting point of the people from the hills and the plains from ancient times. Tribes such as Kacharies, Chutiyas, Khamtis and Ahoms had occupied the area for at least some time in the past. Many battles were won and lost here. 150 years ago the British had their outpost here, where they would come by the steamers and boats right from Calcutta. They had also established a beautiful town at Sadiya with the purpose of enhancing the prospects of trade with China. Fr. Krick and Fr. Boury, two Catholic missionaries, who were murdered in the Lohit mountains, passed through Sadiya on their way to Tibet. At Sadiya, the Baptists too had a flourishing mission with a school.

The flourishing town of Sadiya was destroyed by the flood waters of Dibang river in 1950 as a result of the earthquake that shook the Lohit mountains of Arunachal Pradesh. All that now remains of this great town are a few wild plum trees and thatch grass. Today, the landing place or ghat from where one can take ferries or boats to go to Dholla on the other side of the river, is called Sadiya Ghat.

Today, 50 years after the earthquake, though there is no town called Sadiya, the region is teeming with people. The area is

called Sadiya sub-division. The present headquarters is called Chapakhuwa, some 17 km from the river. Shantipur, which is only 5 km from Chapakhuwa, is a border town for both Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

Sadiya sub-division contains a river island also to the West of the Dibang river. It is surrounded on all sides by the Brahmaputra and Dotung rivers making it an island some 30 km long and 5 km broad. There are about 25 villages with a population of about 15,000 people. It is called Dibang Sapori. It is from one of these villages called Karmi, that a certain Sanjay Basumatary, came to meet Fr. Chacko at Doom Dooma, occasioning the coming of Catholic faith to this region.

It was on 28th February 1982, that Mr. Sanjoy Basumatary met Fr. Chacko Kakkanatt at St. Joseph's Church, Doomdooma. Mr. Sanjoy requested Fr. Chacko to baptise him and his family and informed him that there were some villages in Sadiya which were interested in coming over to the Church. He was told to prepare for baptism. He was also given a few Bibles to be taken to the village.

On 8th March 1982 Mr. Basumatary came to Doom Dooma once again; this time to put his boy and daughter in the boarding. Mr. Alexius Tirkey and Mr. Simon Tirkey, catechists of Doom Dooma parish were sent with him to visit the village and make enquiries. The catechists returned on 12th March 1982 and reported all that they saw in the Dibang Sapori area. They said that most of the people of Dibang Sapori were favourable to Christians. On 24th March 1982 the catechists went back to prepare the people for baptism during the feast of Easter.

On 30th March 1982 Fr. Chacko Kakkanatt set out for Dibang Sapori on his maiden trip. In the evening of the same day, the Holy Eucharist was celebrated in Dibang Sapori, for the first time and

Mr. Sanjoy Basumatary, his wife and child were baptized. Mr. Sanjoy was given the name Paul, his wife Mary, and the child was named Jacinta. The two elder children would be baptised later on in Doom Dooma as Aloysius and Bernadette. In 1982 in all 24 persons were baptised. They were all Bodos.

It must be remembered that almost all the people of Dibang Sapori are Misings. But there are sprinkling of Bodos among them. And they were the first to come forward to follow Christ. On 16th August 1982 Fr. Theophilus Ganlary's father Mr. Louis, together with Cleric Jerome Minj stayed in Karmi for two weeks and instructed some families for baptism.

On 16th September 1982 Mgr. Thomas Menampampil, Bishop of Dibrugarh, visited Sadiya to study the possibility of establishing a centre there. It was the height of floods and it took three and a half hours to cross the river from Dholla embankments to Sadiya. They stayed in Havildar P.B. Chetri's house for two days. They had a plan to cross over to Dibang Sapori, but since no boats were available they could not. It must be put on record that Bishop Thomas was very eager to start a mission centre in Sadiya and he gave a lot of encouragement and support.

The first Mising to be baptised was Mr. Apolo Kuli of Mimang together with his three younger brothers on 16th May 1983.

Since the people were asking for a school it was decided to start one in Seling village. Seling was considered the best place for starting a school because the people offered land and volunteered to build the 'kutchra' structure for school and also a house for the teachers. The people of the village were original settlers of the Dibang Sapori while the other villages had people coming from other parts of Assam, though all were Misings. The place had also the added advantage that the ferry from Dholla started regularly at 2.30 pm

and reached Paglam the nearest ghat at 4.00 pm and there was just enough time to reach seling on foot before sunset.

The school was started on 9th May 1983. Mr. Nicodem Purty was the first teacher. On 9th August 1983, he was joined by Mr. Thomas Joseph Kokkapallil. After two years, on July 12th 1985, for the purpose of expansion, the school was shifted to another site between Bhitara Seling and Bahar Seling. People had donated 60 bighas of land for the school. A structure of about 100 feet long was erected - with posts and roof and no walls. The school was an instant success with a number of children attending it. But the hopes were short-lived. When asked to pay their fees many of these students preferred to leave. With only a few students, the school in Dibang Sapori limped on.

3rd July 1986 was a milestone in the history of Catholic Church in Sadiya. On that day the parish of St. Thomas, Sadiya was erected with Fr. Chacko Kakkanat as the first Parish Priest. He came to stay in Dibang Sapori on 13th August 1986. He was accompanied by Sr. Agnes Basumatary, Sr. Victoria Kujur, Mr. Johny Kalapurackal and Mr. Abraham Chakkittakuzhy.

Though they started staying in Seling in the heart of hearts they knew that they would have to go away and could not continue for long because the prospects were not bright. They made arrangements to shift the school to Karmi, which is the centre of the island about 5 kms from Seling. Fr. Chacko went ahead to stay with Mr. Paul for a few days and then to a temporary house. The sisters in the mean time had gone to Doom Dooma.

In 1984 when some families migrated Fr. Chacko had bought 60 bighas of land from there. And that became handy. People in Karmi wanted a school and under the leadership of Mr. Paul they started building a 'kutcha' house about 60 ft long.

In the meantime a 'chang' house was ready for the sisters. Sr. Agnes Bara and Sr. Albertina started staying there. They arrived on 16th November 1986. Soon the Confrères' Quarters was also got ready. It was a specially constructed chang house with wooden posts, reeds and grass which were available in the neighbourhood. On 13th January 1987, the Fathers' Residence was blessed by Mgr. Thomas Menamparampil - three small rooms, a chapel and a verandah.

After several meetings with the leaders of Seling the school there was finally closed on 18th March 1987.

The people of Karmi were clamouring for a school - a Don Bosco School. But problems arose. There were quite a number of village schools which were not at all run properly. Teachers thought that all the children would rush to the new school and they would be in trouble. They also petitioned higher authorities in Chapakhuwa to prevent opening a school by the church.

Fr. Chacko thought this was a sign not to open the school at all. The authorities were opposing and there was no guarantee that people would pay the fees and that the school would be able to get teachers. Hence it was thought wiser not to start a school. Instead it was decided to open a dispensary for the people. Thus on 18th December 1987, Sr. Mary Topno came with Sr. Sabina Puliany, the Superior of Doom Dooma, to start the dispensary. Sr. Mary was helped by Sr. Albertina. Later on Sr. Veronica Lakra replaced Sr. Albertina.

On 27th March 1988 Mgr. Thomas Menamparambil visited the whole of Dibang Sapori and saw for himself the situation prevailing there. The highlight of the visit was the baptism of some people and the confirmation of all the previously baptised faithful.

Till now there wasn't a proper place to gather together when the faithful came. The Bishop agreed to build a hall and the work started on 1st May 1988. Christmas was celebrated in the newly completed hall.

Some new developments took place by way of expansion. On 16th May 1987, a young man named Sinadhor Perme was brought to Karmi by Mr. Paul. He was from Tinali village of Arunachal Pradesh, on the boundary of the Districts of Dibang Valley and East Siang. To reach there it was enough to cross the Dotung river and proceed by cycle for an hour. This contact gave access to new communities of Namsing, Anpum, Mer, Benggo and Paglam.

In Sadiya proper also two villages - Padam Pukhuri and Borgora - were contacted. The leader of the former was David Chetri and the latter, Mr. Bilasing Mili.

Longer stay in Karmi showed that it was not an ideal place for a Mission Centre. Lack of communication facilities was the greatest problem. Besides, due to constant floods, Dibang Sapori was becoming smaller and smaller. Whenever there was a flood there was no possibility of any contact. There was also the danger of the erosion of the Gopur and Karmi villages. Hence, it was decided to find a more stable location in Sadiya.

On 27th June 1987 a plot of 30 bighas of land had already been procured with the help of Mr. Balicharan Dao of 'Seling' in Shantipur. The plot was situated between the two towns of chapkhwa and Shantipur. It was far away from rivers and sufficiently close to the road. This place would now be the centre for all the missionary enterprises for the region of Sadiya.

On 6th November 1988 Fr. Paulinus Chempalayil began staying in a hut in this land. His two helpers were Mr. Rajan Perme and

Mr. Jyotir Sharma. Fr. Chacko continued his missionary works among the people of Saporì. On 8th November there was a meeting with the leaders of the Mising Community. Mr. Bilasing and his brother-in-law Mr. Nobin Pao took the lead. Almost all the Mising people wanted a school in Shantipur run by the Fathers.

Since Fr. Paulinus got sick and went back to Dibrugarh the same year Fr. Chacko decided to go to Sadiya to give a fresh start to the work. The communities in Saporì were homogeneous and they needed only a general direction from Sadiya. The centres in Mimang, Saro, Seling, Maimanapara, Gijenpuri and Karmi had already leaders in the form of Catechists and their helpers. Mr. Indrakanto Kuli of Mimang was appointed the head catechist, who would be the leader of the church in Saporì to oversee and facilitate. Fr. Chacko had built a sufficiently big structure in karmi to gather the people on important days and occasions.

On 31st January 1989, the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians left Karmi and on 7th February 1989 Fr. Chacko Kakkanatt shifted his residence to Shantipur. After more than three years of wandering, a permanent place had been found, between the two towns of Shantipur and Chapakowa, in the heart of the historical Sadiya and 17 km from Kundil Ghat.

On 9th March 1989 Fr. Joseph Kindo was appointed to Sadiya as the Assistant Parish Priest. The foundation for the permanent residence for the Confrères was laid on 14th April 1989.

The Confrères' residence was completed and on 1st January 1990 Fr. Chacko and Fr. Joseph Kindo began to stay in the new building. They had been staying in a thatched house till then. The new residence was blessed on 6th January 1990. In spite of fears and misgivings the building was completed without any interference from government officials.

On 8th February 1990 St. Thomas School was opened at Shantipur with Fr. Joseph Kindo as the first Headmaster. Mr. Pakson Naro, the oldest person of the area cut the ribbon and inaugurated the school. All the village elders and leaders were invited for the function. There were 106 children on the rolls and the teachers were Ms. Preeti Lata Barla and Ms. Merina Bodra.

It was on this date exactly one year ago that Fr. Chacko came to Shantipur. Dibang Sapori was not forgotten. On 15th February 1990 a boarding was opened for the students of Dibang Sapori with Mr. Rajan Perme as the first boarding-master. There were 13 children in the boarding.

Fr. Joseph Kindo was transferred on 21st January 1991. Fr. Nazarius Lakra helped at the centre as a substitute.

Sr. Stella Baxla and Sr. Constantina Baxla took up residence at Sadiya on 31st January 1991. They stayed at the Confrères' Residence till the new convent building was blessed by Mgr. Thomas Menampampil on 18th August 1991. The sisters teach in the school, run the dispensary of the parish and also look after the girls' boarding.

Fr. Nazarius went to Tinsukia as the Parish Priest on 2nd March 1991 and on 12th March 1991, Fr. Kalapurackal Thomas took charge as the Headmaster and Assistant Parish Priest. On 1st August 1991 the foundation-stone for the school was blessed by Fr. Sebastian Karotempel, the Vicar-General of the Diocese of Dibrugarh.

The new school building was blessed on 10th April 1992 by Mgr. Thomas Menampampil. It was an important occasion and for the first time, Catholics from Dibang Sapori too participated in the function. It was the biggest gathering of Catholics in Sadiya.

The need for a new hostel for the school children was felt acutely. With the generous contribution of "Manos Unidas" a very spacious and airy hostel was set up. The hostel was blessed on 7th November 1993 by Fr. Sebastian Karotempel, the Vicar-General of Dibrugarh. There were about 22 boys and ten girls in the boarding then. One of the three halls of the boarding served as the church. The boys used half of the study-hall as their dormitory.

On 24th January 1994 the All Assam Mising Sahitya Sabha held its annual Meeting 'Agom Kabang' in Sadiya. On the occasion Mgr. Thomas Menamparampil released the Gospel of Matthew translated by Mr. Hiranya Kr. Taya into Mising. It was a memorable event for the Sadiya Mission. There was a crowd of 5,000 present for the mammoth function.

On 8th February 1994 Fr. Albert Tirkey came from Mon to take charge of the school as the headmaster.

On 21st June 1994 Fr. Kalapurackal Thomas left Sadiya for the U.S.A. for higher studies. Since the beginning of the Mission the official liturgical language was Assamese because the Misings and Bodos use that language as their lingua franca. During his stay Fr. Thomas helped in preparing many Assamese hymns and making the liturgy more appealing. With the help of Mr. Ondheswar Pao, he also composed hymns for Mass in Mising. The hymn book *Vvroi* with hymns in Assamese, Boro and Mising was published at this time.⁽ⁱ⁾

A beautiful monument to Mary Help of Christians was erected at the Mission Compound in thanksgiving for all the favours received at the centre. This monument to Our Lady was blessed on 19th November 1994. It was designed jointly by Fr. Chacko Kakkanatt and Fr. Kalapurackal Thomas and was built by the contribution of well-wishers and friends.

The second part of the school building with a stage in front was completed with the help of N.E.G. Fr. Albert was transferred to Golaghat on 15th March 1997. He was replaced by Fr. Eanthanamkuzhiyil Michael on 17th February 1997. The boarding of the girls was shifted to the health centre built near the convent till a permanent hostel will be built for them in the future.

In a meeting held at Bishop's House, Dibrugarh, on 9th July 1997, the villages of Paglam, Anpum and Dambuk circles were officially handed over to St. Thomas, Sadiya.

Fr. Anto Tharakan was appointed to the parish on 8th May 1999 as the assistant Parish Priest.

There are about 1500 Catholics. The parish now has 16 villages - six villages in Arunachal Pradesh, six villages in Dibang Sapori and four villages in Sadiya proper - where there are Christian presences. The school has about 700 students from Nursery to Class X. There are 62 boys and 35 girls in the boarding.

THE MIRACULOUS STONE

One of the events that had aroused much interest in and around Sadiya was the story of the miraculous stone. It was Mr. Bidyadhor Pegu, the Panchayat President from Amarpur Ghat who chanced upon this stone on the river-bed on 24th November 1996. The stone was 13 inches high and 7 inches broad and weighed 16kg. The peculiarity of this stone was that it had the image of a pregnant woman on it. Even the child in the womb was visible on the stone. Mr. Bidyadhor Pegu was convinced that the image was that of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He had many dreams in connection with this and finally asked Fr. Chacko Kakkanatt for baptism. He was baptized on Easter Sunday 30th March 1997.

The story of the miraculous stone came to an abrupt end in 1997 when on 30th March 1997, the house of Mr. Bidyadhor Pegu was destroyed in an accidental fire.

Those in charge:

Fr. Chacko Kakkanatt (1986-)

Others:

Fr. Paulinus Chempalayil, Fr. Joseph Kindo, Fr. Nazarius Lakra, Fr. Kalapurackal Thomas, Fr. Albert Tirkey, Fr. Eanthanamkuzhiyil Michael, Fr. Anto Tharakan.

BOSCO BIBLE SCHOOL TINSUKIA

Situated at a distance of 45 km from Dibrugarh, Tinsukia is one of the commercial nerve centres of Assam and a convenient place to contact East Arunachal Pradesh. When the idea of beginning a centre for the Arunachali students was discussed, Tinsukia was immediately thought of as a convenient place.

Situated at Hijuguri, about three kilometres from Tinsukia town, Bosco Bible School, Hijuguri came into being due to the initiative of Mgr. Thomas Menamparampil, Bishop of Dibrugarh. He wanted to set up in Tinsukia, a Bible School like that of St. Francis Xavier's School, Harmutty, to form the Arunachal boys and girls into missionaries of their own people, through a thorough training in Bible and Catechism.[@] He approached Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, the Provincial of Dimapur, in 1982, with the suggestion that the Province undertake this project. Realizing its great value, the Provincial immediately accepted, and discussed the matter with the council. The council too declared itself in favour.

Bosco Bible School was envisioned as a residential youth centre particularly to answer the special missionary needs of Arunachal Pradesh. Accordingly, it was decided that the school should provide facilities for studying Bible and Christian doctrine in detail with Church History, Liturgy and Vatican II documents. The purpose of the Bosco Bible School has been outlined as follows: To make young people agents of evangelization espe-

cially among communities that are newly responsive to the gospel. While pursuing secular studies they will also have courses in Sacred Scripture, Catechism, Church History, Church Leadership, Methods of Evangelisation and religious music. It looks forward to the future when it might cater to those wanting only religious studies.

To meet this end the Bosco Bible School will organize camps, courses and retreats for the faith formation and apostolic animation of young people especially of the more responsive tribes. The school will avoid higher fees, expensive uniforms, costly equipments and sophisticated styles.

Bosco Bible School was opened on 3rd July 1983, on the feast of St. Thomas. Fr. Palliparambil George was put in charge of the school. He arrived at Tinsukia on 4th June 1983. As the building was not yet completed, the school began on the campus of St. John Bosco Parish, Tinsukia, with the first batch of 18 Arunachali boys. Fr. Zachari Panamattamparambil was the Parish Priest of Tinsukia. Fr. Thekkekandom Thomas, the Assistant Parish Priest too helped the Bible School while staying in the parish.

The classes began on 4th July 1983. Soon there were about 29 boys. But accommodation was difficult in the parish and the boys had to shift from room to room. Cl. Kottarathil Mathai was the first Assistant. Cl. Savio Remedios also helped in the centre.

The work for the school had begun in 1983 in the land which had been bought by the Diocese of Dibrugarh as early as 1958. On 27th August 1983, the boys were shifted to the top floor of the new building which now serves as the Staff Refectory. In May 1984 Fr. Thottappilly George joined the Bible School. After the boys began staying in the new building, a store-room was constructed before

the work began for the main building. The store-room now serves as the hall.

The construction work was carried out by the Diocese and was built by the help of some agencies, and the Rector Major of the Salesian Society, Fr. Egidio Viganò. The Diocese of Dibrugarh also paid a monthly allowance towards the running of the school which did not of course see to the entire expense in the functioning of the house. The initial days at the school were tough and frugal. It was a day of celebration when a stray cow would wander into the compound and there would be no one to claim it soon enough!

In 1984 the first batch of students were admitted to Class VI, after a year of intensive course in English, Catechism and the Bible. The majority of the boys were grown-ups who had no previous school experience whatsoever. Now it became clear that if given proper classes many of these students could write the matriculation examinations as well and thus become not only evangelizers but also future leaders in their villages and the state. Hence the syllabus was drawn up and classes were organized for this purpose.

The new building was completed and blessed on 6th May 1984 by Mgr. Thomas Menampampil. Fr. Thottappilly George was replaced by Fr. Chittilappilly Varghese in May 1985. Fr. Kalapurayil George was appointed to the centre on 13th October 1986 though on 4th November 1986 he left for Doom Dooma to substitute Fr. Kannath Thomas. Cl. James Thurithiyil from Bangalore Province also helped in the centre.

In 1986 girl students began attending the school for the first time. They were four of them - three Tangsas and one Nocte. They stayed in the boarding run by the sisters of Charity while attending the Bosco Bible School. The decision to take in girl students was arrived at in a

meeting between Mgr. Thomas Menampampil, the Bishop of Dibrugarh and the lay leaders of East Arunachal Pradesh.

On 23rd January 1987 Fr. Kalapurayil George returned to the Bible School from Doom Dooma and in February 1987, Fr. Chittilappilly Varghese was transferred. Bro. Matthew Kaliyaden was appointed to the Bible School on 3rd February 1987. The first batch of matriculation students appeared from St. Antony's School, Shillong, in 1987.

In 1987, Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung was appointed to the Bible School as the Counsellor and student. Bro. Matthew Kaliyaden left for Dimapur on 25th May 1987 and on 22nd September 1987, Fr. Kalapurayil George was transferred to Tongna. In December 1987, Fr. Nestor Guria was appointed to Bosco Bible School as Counsellor. Fr. Kurien Joseph, a diocesan priest also stayed at the Bible School at this time. Fr. Jerome Minj joined the community as Administrator in March 1989. Fr. Nestor Guria left for studies to Rome in May 1989 and on 31st July 1989 Bro. Matthew Kaliyaden replaced him as the Counsellor. Fr. Sebastian Thottipatt was appointed as liturgical animator.

In 1989 the house was canonically erected with Fr. Palliparambil George as the Rector. Bro. Matthew Kaliyaden left for Mon on 7th February 1990. Fr. Sebastian Karottupuram became the counsellor. In 1990 Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung was transferred to Don Bosco School, Dimapur. In February 1993, Fr. Jerome Minj was transferred and Fr. Louis Tirkey took charge as the Administrator.

In 1994 Fr. Palliparambil George was put in charge of the missions of East Arunachal Pradesh, as the possibility of opening a centre at Arunachal had become bright. Fr. Sebastian Karottupuram was appointed the Rector. On 28th January 1994 Bro. Matthew Kaliyaden became the counsellor once again. Fr. Valiplackal Jose

was appointed the Administrator of the Bible School after Fr. Louis Turkey was transferred.

On 24th May 1995 Fr. Nestor Guria replaced Fr. Sebastian Karotumpuram as Rector. In the same year, Fr. Valiplackal Jose left for the foreign missions and Fr. Dennis Panipitchai took over as the Administrator in May. In February 1998, Fr. Dennis Panipitchai was transferred to Kheti (Hanguangthong) and Fr. Kaippallimyalil Joseph (Fr. Jose Chacko) was appointed as the Administrator. Br. Matthew Kaliyaden left for his studies on 13th August 1998. Bro. Perumanoor George was appointed as the Counsellor in 1999. In January 2000, Fr. Jose Chacko was transferred to Don Bosco, Tuli and Fr. Akkarapatty Jose was appointed as administrator.

Up to 1997, 2822-2900 students have passed out of the school. The students appeared for the HSLC for the first time in 1987 in the Meghalaya Board. From 1991-1993 they appeared through the Assam Board and the examinations were written in Don Bosco Doom Dooma and Sineram. Since 1995 CBSE is being followed. The students appeared for the examinations through St. Xavier's School, Harmutti from 1995 to 1997. The 1998 batch appeared through Government High school, Borduria, as writing the examinations through the school at Harmutti became difficult.®

The service that the Bosco Bible School has done to the Church in East Arunachal Pradesh is phenomenal. It served as a launching pad for the missionary work in East Arunachal and the boys engaged themselves in active apostolic ministry. The Church in East Arunachal to a great extent, owes its existence and growth to the past pupils of Bosco Bible School. In the past 13 years, the school has provided education and training to over 1200 boys and girls from various tribes of Arunachal. About 40 percent of those admitted here have been educated up to matriculation level enabling

them to pursue higher studies. Many of the leaders and government employees in Arunachal Pradesh today are past pupils of Bosco Bible School.

Besides, the students of Arunachal Pradesh, students from Tripura have also studied at Bible School since early 1986 till the Tripura mission was opened by the Guwahati Province. One among them, Amitabh Debbarma (Antony) is a Salesian.

In February 2000, there were about 130 boys and 43 girls from classes VI to X studying in the school. Of these about 20 of them are students of Government High School, Borduria.

Those in-charge:

Fr. Palliparambil George (1983-1994), Fr. Sebastian Karotupuram (1994-1995) and Fr. Nestor Guria (1995-)

Others:

Fr. Thottappilly George, Fr. Chittilappilly Varghese, Fr. Kalapurayil George, Bro. Matthew Kaliyaden, Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung, Fr. Jerome Minj, Fr. Kurien Joseph (diocese of Khandwa), Fr. Sebastian Thottipatt, Fr. Louis Tirkey, Fr. Valiplackal Jose, Fr. Joseph Kulathunkal, Fr. Dennis Panipitchai, Fr. Kaippallimyalil Joseph, Bro. Perumanoor George, Fr. Akkarapatty Jose.

ST. JOHN BOSCO'S PARISH TINSUKIA

Surrounded by Tea Gardens and Oil fields, Tinsukia is a thriving business town. Its population consists mainly of business communities such as Marwaris, Biharis, Bengalis and Assamese. The Parish of St. John Bosco, Tinsukia is situated at Gilab Pukhri, about one and a half kilometres from Tinsukia town. The parish caters mainly to the Tea Garden labourers.

Tinsukia has been serving as a quasi parish having regular Sunday mass since 1979 when the sisters of Missionaries of Charity opened their house at Tinsukia. The M.C. Convent was opened on 29th September 1979 and Fr. Paulinus Chempalayil, the Bishop's secretary used to come from Dibrugarh to say mass for the sisters. The Eucharist used to be celebrated in a temporary shed. In fact in May 1980, when Fr. Paulinus Chempalayil was transferred to the Cathedral Church as Parish Priest he was given a warm farewell by the people of Tinsukia.

The Parish of St. John Bosco, Tinsukia was opened on 8th January 1980. It was culled out of the parishes of Dibrugarh, Doom Dooma and Naharkatia. Fr. Philip Kokkapallil was installed as Parish Priest by the episcopal delegate, Fr. Dominic Barwa. There was already a pucca shed existing at that time. On 5th October 1980, the first general meeting of the parish was held at the parish. Fr. Philip Kokkapallil began an Evening School for adult education in which around 50 participated. Fr. Philip stayed in one of the classrooms.

In 1981 Fr. Philip Kokkapallil was transferred and Fr. Zachary Panamattamparambil took over as the Parish Priest. He was also helped by Fr. Matthew Chanikuzhy. In 1982 the Savio School was started with K.G. The construction of the new school building began soon. Fr. Thekkekandom Thomas was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest. Fr. Leo Tirkey joined as the Assistant Parish Priest and he remained at the centre till he left for Amguri on 20th December 1983. In 1983, the boys of the Bible School were housed at the Parish as the place for their stay was not ready at Hijiguri. In May 1985, Fr. Jerome Minj was appointed to the parish.

On 24th November 1985, Fr. Zachary Panamattamparambil passed away after a sudden illness. In his absence the parish and school were looked after by Fr. Jerome Minj and Fr. Thekkekandom Thomas.

Fr. Mukala George was appointed as the new Parish Priest and he arrived on 27th January 1986. The school had reached Class III and attempts were made to get a new plot of land to start the high school. In 1985, the Tinsukia Developmental Association offered a big plot of land for the school near the court. But when the sale deed was to be signed, it was discovered that there were few families staying at the site. It was decided that the sale deed would be signed only after the occupants were evicted. This delayed the process. In the mean time, the A.G.P. Government came to power and allotted the land to a Sports Club. The government refused to give any land for the school and no private parties could give a plot large enough for a high school.

In 1986 about forty bigas of land was bought at Burapathar, near St. Luke's Hospital. The land fell within the Tinsukia Developmental Area and it was thought to be an ideal place for the school. But unfortunately the expected develop-

ments did not take place in the area and it was not possible to start a high school there.

As no land was available, it was decided not to proceed to Class V in spite of heavy pressure from the parents. The parents had earlier been assured that the school would proceed towards high school. A disappointed bunch of parents took their wards to other schools.

On 24th May 1986, a statue of Mary Help of Christians was installed in the church. The construction of the new hostel was begun on 28th May 1986. The work progressed swiftly and the newly constructed Savio Hostel was blessed by Mgr. Thomas Menampampil on 31st May 1987.

The foundation stone of the shrine of Mary Help of Christians was blessed by Mgr. Thomas Menampampil on 31st May 1987. Fr. Jerome Minj was transferred in March 1989. Fr. Kalapurayil George was appointed to his place and reached on 6th March 1989. After Fr. Kalapurayil George was transferred on 20th May 1990, Fr. Paulus Kerketta took over as the Assistant Parish Priest.

In 1990, the possibility of opening class V in the new site at Burapathar was considered. A letter was circulated among the parents requesting their opinion. The majority of the parents were not willing to send their wards to the new school. It may be noted that in the mean time good schools like Tinsukia Academy, St. Stephen's School, Baby Nursery English School etc., had come up. The plan of upgrading the school was shelved a second time.

Fr. George Mukala was transferred in 1991 and on 3rd March 1991 Fr. Nazarius Lakra took over as the Parish Priest. Fr. Mukala George remained on to oversee the completion of the church before he left for Jorhat. The new parish hall was also completed. The old

church which stood in front of the present church was demolished and the ground was levelled.

The New Shrine of Mary Help of Christians was blessed on 17th November 1991 by Mgr. Robert Kerketta in the presence of Mgr. Thomas Menampampil and the Salesian Provincial, Fr. Scaria Nedumala sdb. A huge gathering of people attended the function. Fr. Paulus Kerketta was transferred in January 1992 and Fr. Shaji Valiyaparambil was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest on 5th February 1992. In a significant decision in 1992, the Savio School which had classes only up to IV was upgraded to Class V.⁴

After the completion of the church, work was begun for the Confrères' Residence in three stages. The first part of the building - the Residence of the Confrères - was completed in 1992. The adjacent hall was the next one to be constructed. In 1994 Fr. Thomas Vattoth was appointed Assistant Parish Priest. The last part of the constructions were over with the new offices being completed in 1995.

On 25th January 1995, Fr. Shaji Valiaparambil was transferred to Doom Dooma and Fr. Louis Tirkey took over as the Assistant Parish Priest. Fr. Nazarius left for M.Th studies to Bangalore in February 1996. Fr. Vattoth Thomas was transferred and in May 1996, Fr. Matthew Pottukulam was appointed to the centre as Assistant Parish priest.

On 12th February 1996 Fr. Stanislaus Kerketta took charge as the fourth Parish Priest of Tinsukia parish. In February 1997, construction work began for the Hostel Extension. The shed that served as the refectory of the boarders has been demolished.

Fr. Matthew Pottukulam was transferred to Senapati in February 1997. In February 1998, Fr. Louis Tirkey was transferred to

Doom Dooma and Fr. Matthew Pulingathil took over as the Assistant Parish Priest. Fr. Lazarus Kujur was also appointed as the Assistant Parish Priest in 1998.

In 1999 the school had over 400 students from Class K.G. to VIII. The boarding had 82 students from K.G. to VIII. Class VIII was begun in 1999 with 14 students. The parish has about 29 villages with 5,300 Catholics in all.

Parish Priests:

Fr. Philip Kokkapallil (1980-1981), Fr. Zachary Panamattamparambil (1981-1985), Fr. Mukala George (1986-1991), Fr. Nazarius Lakra (1991-1996), Fr. Stanislaus Kerketta (1996-)

Others:

Fr. Matthew Chanikkuzhy, Fr. Thekkekandom Thomas, Fr. Leo Tirkey, Fr. Jerome Minj, Fr. Kalapurayil George, Fr. Paulus Kerketta, Fr. Shaji Valiaparambil, Fr. Thomas Vattoth, Fr. Matthew Pottukulam, Fr. Louis Tirkey, Fr. Matthew Pulingathil.

TONGNA

St. Dominic Savio's Church, Tongna, is situated at an equidistance of twenty-three km from the Doom Dooma and Philobari parish. It is also a gateway to the Lohit District of Arunachal Pradesh, being only eight kilometers away from the Dirak Check-post. The beginning of the parish centre at Tongna was thought of especially as a means to reach out to East Arunachal Pradesh.

The parish was officially opened on 3rd July 1983, the Feast of St. Thomas. It was canonically erected on July 5th 1983 with St. Dominic Savio as the patron and was carved out of St. Joseph's Parish, Doom Dooma. At a meeting held in Doom Dooma with Fr. Kakkanatt Chacko, Fr. Kannath Thomas and Fr. Ganlari Theophilus, it was decided that Tongna Purana Line, Tongna Litung Line, Tongna Tin Line, Tongna No.18 Line, Tongna Rampar, Sulhibari, Eragaon, Kolabari, Chanpur, Dirak, Palang line, Kailaspur, Kasijan, Kakopathar, Koomsong, Romaigaon and Teji would be part of the Tongna parish. Later on 8th July 1983, Fr. Joseph Mooloparambil of Philobari asked Fr. Philip Kokkapallil to include also Kumari village, Dumsi and Sengapathar which are in Arunachal Pradesh.

Don Bosco School, Tongna, was blessed on 24th July 1983. A crowd of 600 people attended the function. Fr. Variathukalayail Joseph, the Vicar-General of the Diocese of Dibrugarh blessed the building and Mr. N.C. Ray, the Manager of the Tongna Tea Garden cut the ribbon and inaugurated the temporary school building.

The first Parish Priest was Fr. Philip Kokkapallil. The village church was already existing when he reached. About eighteen bigas of land was gifted by the Tongna Tea Garden to begin the parish. Initially, Fr. Philip Kokkapallil stayed in Doom Dooma and looked after the centre. But after three months he shifted to a shed built by the people.

On 19th September 1984 a small plot of one biga and a katta which was adjoining the tea garden was bought for the Presbytery. This was because the manager had requested not to build anything pucca on the garden land as it was only leased to the present management. On 19th November the work was begun in the new land. But the land was found unsuitable as there was too much sand. After discussions with the Manager it was decided that pucca construction will be allowed in the land. For this, Church was made a tenant and in the contract, the mention of concrete constructions was omitted. The building work was started on 26th November 1984. The new foundation was blessed by Mgr. Thomas Menamparampil on 16th December 1984.

Fr. Kalapurayil George was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest of Tongna on 2nd June 1985. He was transferred in June 1986.

In April 1987, Fr. Philip Kokkapallil was transferred and Fr. Stanislaus Kerketta was appointed the Parish Priest. The new school building was blessed on 11th May 1986 by Mgr. Thomas Menamparmabil. By 1987 the construction of the Church was completed. It was blessed on 15th August 1987. On the same day the convent of the Sisters of Mary Immaculate (SMI), was opened with Sr. Mary Thomas and Sr. Leela taking up residence there.

Fr. Stanislaus Kerketta was transferred on 23rd September 1987. Fr. Louis Trikey took charge as the new Parish Priest on 19th December 1987. During the interim period Fr. Kalapurayil George

looked after the centre. The new building for the dispensary was completed in 1988. On 17th February 1989 Fr. Sebastian Thottippatt was appointed Assistant Parish Priest. Fr. Kalapurayil George was transferred on 5th March 1989. Fr. Sebastian Thottippatt had to leave the Parish due to certain events.® For a time, Fr. Louis Tirkey looked after the centre alone. In 1990, Fr. Reginald D'Silva was appointed as the Assistant Parish Priest.

The first two boys came to the boarding on 7th August 1990 though the Savio Boys' boarding officially began only in 1993. These two boys resided in an old thatched house, for a fee of Rs. 100. In January 1991, Fr. Reginald D'Silva was transferred to Amguri and Fr. Patrick Soreng was appointed in his place.

On 18th February 1992 Fr. Louis Tirkey was transferred. Fr. Reginald D'Silva was appointed the Parish Priest. He took charge on 26th February 1992. Fr. Patrick Soreng was transferred on 21st April 1992 and Fr. Joachim Minj arrived as the new Assistant Parish Priest on 18th July 1992.

Fr. Joachim shifted to Tinsukia Parish and was later transferred to Wokha. Fr. Anto Tharakan was appointed as the Assistant Parish Priest and he arrived on 29th October 1993. Fr. Reginald D'Silva left the centre due to peculiar situations.®

After Fr. Reginald D'Silva left Tongna, Fr. Stanislaus became Parish Priest once again on 31st January 1994. He was transferred to Tinsukia and on 29th January 1996 Fr. Nathaniel Topno was appointed the Parish Priest. On 18th February 1997, Fr. Anto Tharakan was transferred to Don Bosco Dimapur and Fr. Bernard Topno was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest. He reached Tongna on 20th August 1997. In February 2000, Fr. Nazarius Lakra was appointed as assistant Parish Priest.

The parish of Tongna has 6252 Catholics in 28 sub stations. Though Tongna is the land of the Morans the parish consists only of adivasis especially Uraons and Mundas. In 1998, the school was up to V and had 217 students. The boarding had 39 boys (KG-V).

Parish Priests:

Fr. Philip Kokkapallil (1983-1987), Stanislaus Kerketta (1987), Louis Tirkey (1987-1992), Reginald D'Silva (1992-1993), Sanislaus, Kerketta (1994-1996), Nathaniel Toppo (1996-)

Asst Parish Priests:

Fr. Kalapurayil George, Fr. Thottipatt Sebastian, Fr. Kalapurayil George, Fr. Louis Tirkey, Fr. Patrick Soreng, Fr. Joachim Minj, Fr. Anto Tharakan, Fr. Bernard Topno.

NAGALAND

Nagaland is a picturesque land, endowed with an enchanting landscape of green hills, valleys and rivers. This land of exotic charm is bounded by the states of Arunachal Pradesh in the North, Manipur in the South, Assam in the West and Myanmar in the East. The state of Nagaland lies between 2506'N and 2704'N latitudes, and 93020'E and 95015'E longitudes.

Nagaland remained untouched for many turbulent centuries, during which the Nagas were engaged in fierce head-hunting expeditions in their hill-top villages. The state of Nagaland comprising of the former Naga Hills district of Assam and the former Tuensang Frontier division of the North East Frontier Agency were made a Centrally Administered Area in 1957, administered by the President through the governor of Assam. In January 1961 the Government of India conferred the status of a State on Nagaland. The state of Nagaland was formally inaugurated on 1st of December 1963 as the sixteenth state of the Indian Union.

Each village of Nagaland is an epitome of the ancient Greek city states with its own definitive population, area and administration. No wonder Nagaland is sometimes described as a conglomeration of 'Village Republics'. Village-level institutions form the backbone of Nagaland. By 1980, the Village Development Boards (VDB) were given administrative and local mandate.

The population of Nagaland is entirely tribal. The sixteen odd tribes and sub-tribes that inhabit this colourful oriental State

have their own distinctive dialects, customs and traditional dresses. The prominent tribes are Angami, Ao, Sema, Lotha, Rengma, Chakhesang, Sangtam, Konyak, Phom, Chang, Yimchunger, Khiamungan, Zeliang, Kuki and Pochury.

The state of Nagaland has an area of 16579 sq. km. and a total population of 12,09,546. The state is divided into the eight districts of Kohima, Wokha, Mon, Phek, Zunheboto, Mokokchung, Tuensang and Dimapur.

MAP OF NAGALAND



PROVINCIAL HOUSE DIMAPUR

The site where the present Don Bosco Provincial House is located was bought in 1967 from Mr. Lumthi while Fr. Tarcisius Resto was looking after Christ King Parish, Kohima with the hope of beginning a Don Bosco School. In 1976 Bro. Brahmakulam Antony was asked to build up the structures necessary for a primary school. Iron and other materials were brought for beginning the construction but the plan was shelved as the necessary written permission could not be got from Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil, Bishop of Kohima-Imphal.® In fact part of the material brought to build up the school was used to construct the present Teachers' Quarters at Don Bosco, Kohima.

The present site lying unused was thought of as the ideal place to begin the Provincial House, when the creation of the Province of Dimapur was announced on 8th August 1981. There was no Salesian house in Dimapur then and Fr. Mathai Kochumaparambil, the Provincial of Guwahati asked Bro. Brahmakulam Antony to look after the construction of the house.

The foundation-stone of the new Provincial House was blessed by Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil on 1st November 1981. By 18th June 1982, the ground floor was completed and the house was inaugurated by Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil. It was blessed by Mgr. Robert Kerketta, the Bishop of Tezpur and Fr. Joseph Kizhakekara, the Provincial of Calcutta. Mgr. Hubert D'Rosario, the Archbishop of Shillong was the President for the Eucharistic

celebration that followed. At the post-communion, Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, the new Provincial, read out in the name of the whole Province of Dimapur, an act of consecration of the Province of Dimapur to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It was fitting to do so because the starting of the Province was on 18th June, the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart, that year.

Don Bosco Provincial House, Dimapur was canonically erected on 2nd July 1982 with Fr. Scaria Nedumala as its first Rector. Bro. Brahmakulam Antony was the administrator. Fr. Joseph Pampackal was the secretary to the Provincial and Fr. Vadakethannikal Sebastian, the Economer.

In 1986 AIDA (ANMA Integrated Developmental Agency) was started with its office in Provincial House. Fr. Bimal Lakra was appointed as secretary of Aida. In January 1997, Fr. Job Kallarackal was appointed with the charge of propaganda and sponsorship. @

Rectors:

Fr. Scaria Nedumala (1982-1988), Fr. Mulayinkal Thomas (1988-1994), Fr. Pulimootil Alex (1994-).

Administrators:

Bro. Brahmakulam Antony, Fr. Joy Sebastian, Bro. Benarius Topno, Fr. Jonas Kerketta, Fr. Manuel Paikada, Fr. Mathai Kottarathil, Fr. Anto Tharakan, Fr. Ponnattil Mathew, Fr. Parumala Vincent, Fr. Jose Kannianpadi

Secretaries:

Fr. Pampackal Joseph, Fr. Mathew Pottukulam, Fr. Murickal Joseph, Fr. Chennoth Sebastian, Fr. Palackal Nebu Mathew, Fr. Puthettupadavil Philip.

Others:

Fr. Vernal Paul, Fr. Karthikapallil Thomas, Br. Dennis Panipitchai (student), Br. Kaliyaden Mathew (student), Fr. Bimal Lakra (AIDA), Fr. Thazhekkaden Sebastian (Don Bosco School), Br. Vettom Sunny, Fr. Kunnel Thomas, Fr. Palely Jose (Don Bosco School), Fr. Thettayil Joseph (Don Bosco School), Fr. Ngamkuchung Joseph (Don Bosco School), Fr. Chollamadathil Mathew (student), Br. Villanthanam Sabu Joseph (Asst to Economer), Fr. Thottapilly George (AIDA), Fr. Job Kallarackal (Propaganda), Fr. Jerry Pathikulangara (AIDA), Fr. Cholamadathil Mathew (Constructions).

DON BOSCO SCHOOL DIMAPUR

The idea of beginning a Don Bosco School in Dimapur, had been under consideration for a long time. The land for the same was bought in 1967 where the Don Bosco Provincial House stands today. Materials had been dropped to begin the primary school. But as no written permission could be got, the school could not be started. However, when the new Province of Dimapur was begun, the permission for the school was obtained from Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil, Bishop of Kohima.®

The land where Don Bosco School stands today was bought in 1983 from Dr. Sechü. The school was opened on 19th March 1985. The foundation-stone for the school building was blessed by Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil on 26th March 1985. Mr. K.L. Chishi, the Minister of Education and Rural Development laid the foundation-stone of the school. Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, the Provincial of Dimapur, presided over the function. On 21st August 1985 the work of the new building began with the ceremony of first casting of the school building being performed by Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, the Provincial.

In the beginning, the school and the constructions were looked after by Fr. Vadakethannikal Sebastian, the Provincial Economer. On 5th June 1985 Fr. Mathew Pottukulam was put in charge of the school. Admissions to the school were taken on 15th November 1985. There were fourteen students in all and the teacher

was Ms. Sherley. The school was conducted in a thatched shed. In 1986, the school took new admissions to Class I.

In February 1986, Fr. Mathew Pottukulam was transferred to Dibrugarh and Fr. Murickal Joseph was put in charge of the school. It may be noted that the various fathers in the Provincial House took turns to help in the school. In 1987 new admissions were taken to Class III and IV.

On 20th January 1988, Fr. Thazhekaden Sebastian took charge of the school. The school had three sections in 1988. As the standing policy of the Province was not to have more than two sections, the question of bringing down the sections was taken to the Provincial. But on a written reply from the Provincial to continue the same, the school proceeded with the three sections.

Initially, the school had to face much antagonism from the neighbourhood especially because of the question of the approach road.[@] It all began on 2nd December 1989 when the City High school (illegally) erected walls in front of the school entrances. The School claimed that the approach road was their private property and the road was blocked. There were brickbats and many local people were brought to the school to threaten the Principal. Fr. Thazhekaden Sebastian, the Principal was assaulted by Mrs. Ate Zeneisule, the Principal of City High School.^{*} And the hand of the working lady Tina who was on guard in the school was broken by the irate mob. The issue was finally taken to the court when the City High School against Don Bosco School in the High Court. The case dragged on for about three years and was finally closed with the verdict in favour of Don Bosco School, by the court at Dimapur.[@] But since another approach road had been constructed to the school, the other gates were not opened.[@]

^{*} 2nd May 1990

On 27th April 1990 Fr. Palely Jose was appointed the Assistant Headmaster. Till now Fr. T.O. Sebastian was looking after the school alone.

On 20th February 1991 Fr. Thettayil Jose was appointed the Headmaster[@] after Fr. Thazhekaden Sebastian was transferred[@] and left for Kerala for treatment. In January 1991 Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung too joined the school community at Provincial house. Fr. Patrick Warjiri was also appointed to the school. He left for Harmutty in June.

A new venture began at Don Bosco School when on 24th July 1991 Don Bosco Youth centre was opened and Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung was put in charge of the Youth Centre.

The newly built Confrères' Residence was blessed on 12th April 1992 by Fr. Thomas Panakezham, the Regional Superior.[@] The event was marked by a prayer service at 4.00 pm. Fr. Thazhekaden Sebastian, Fr. Thettayil Joseph, Fr. Jose Palely and Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung had already been staying at the new residence for about a week.[@] The house was unfurnished and incomplete. One of the biggest problems of the newly begun house was water shortage.

In 1993 January Fr. Thettayil Jose[@] was transferred to Doom Dooma and Fr. Chittiserry Joseph took over as the Headmaster. In May, Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung took a leave of absence to work with drug addicts on an experimental basis.[@] In 1993, the first batch of students appeared for matriculation examinations.

In 1994 Fr. Jose Palely was transferred and Fr. Kanjirathinkal Francis took over as the Assistant Headmaster and Youth Director in January 1994. He was followed by Fr. Patrick Warjiri.

In 1995, Fr. Chittisery Joseph was transferred to Don Bosco, Kohima, as Assistant Principal and in February 1995 Bro. Perumanoor George was appointed to the School as the Headmaster. Friends' Movement was widened to include about thirty College Youth at about this time. In June 1995 Fr. Chittilappilly Varghese was appointed to Don Bosco School as the Administrator. Fr. Kanjirathinkal Francis was transferred and Fr. Patrick Warjiri took over as the Assistant Headmaster.

Fr. Cheruvila Francis and Fr. Pathikulangara Jerry of the Youth Services of the Province took up residence at Don Bosco from February 1995.

In 1997 Fr. Chittilappilly Varghese was transferred to Zubza and Fr. Anto Tharakan was appointed the Administrator. Later he was transferred to Kohima as the Youth Director. At the end of 1997 Fr. Pathikulangara Jerry was transferred to Aida, Dimapur.

On 10th January 1998 Fr. Karumampallil Joseph was appointed Rector, Headmaster and Administrator of the School. Fr. Thazhekaden Sebastian was transferred and he left for Kerala on 2nd February 1998. On 5th February 1998 Bro. George Perumanoor was transferred to Tamenglong as Headmaster and Counsellor. Fr. Puthussery John was appointed as the Assistant Headmaster and Youth Director in 1998.

In February 2000, the school has about 1800 students. There are about 100 youngsters who regularly attend the Youth Centre. Youth Centre activities include music practices, typing, games, computers and so on.

Rectors:

Fr. Thazhekaden Sebastian (1992-1998), Fr. Karumampallil Joseph (1998-).

Headmasters:

Fr. Mathew Pottukulam, Fr. Murickal Joseph, Fr. Thazhekaden Sebastian, Fr. Thettayil Jose, Fr. Chittisery Joseph, Bro. Perumanoor George, Fr. Karumampallil Joseph

Others:

Fr. Jose Palely, Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung, Fr. Kanjirathinkal Francis, Fr. Patrick Warjiri, Fr. Charuvila Francis, Fr. Pathikulangara Jerry, Fr. Anto Tharakan, Fr. Chittilappilly Varghese, Fr. Puthussery John.

SALESIAN COLLEGE DIMAPUR

The land at Nagarjan where Salesian College stands today - 121 bighas and 4 kathas - was bought from Mr. Khehokhu, the G.B. of Thaheku village and another piece of land - 20'x312' - was bought for the approach road from Mr. Zakievi of A Khel, Nagarjan village in 1977. The land deals were done through Fr. Nangachiveetil Joseph who was the Parish Priest of Holy Cross Parish, Dimapur. Construction of a fence around the compound, with ankle pillars was undertaken the same year by Bro. Brahmakulam Antony. The land was bought to begin a High School. The Primary School was to be at the site where the present day Provincial House is located. However, the plans did not materialize as Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil, Bishop of Kohima-Imphal, refused permission for the school.

When the idea of starting a Philosophate was mooted, the land at Nagarjan was considered for the purpose. The modalities were soon worked out. Accordingly an agreement was drawn up by Fr. Mathai Kochuparambil, the Provincial of Guwahati and Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil and signed on 11th March 1982. According to this agreement, the diocesan Seminary of Dimapur - Good Shepherd Seminary - was entrusted to the Salesians of Don Bosco to accommodate the Salesian students of philosophy. The only condition was that the Salesians should look after the seminarians who were already there who numbered between ten and twelve. As per the agreement from 1982 onwards, for two years, the Salesian stu-

dents of philosophy were temporarily accommodated in the Good Shepherd Seminary.

Salesian College was inaugurated on 25th May 1982 at 6.00 pm. The mass was presided over by Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil. Fr. Mathai Kochuparambil and Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, the Provincials of Guwahati and Dimapur respectively concelebrated. Fr. Mulayinkal Thomas was appointed the first Rector with Fr. Aelevanthara Sebastian as the Dean of Studies. Fr. Kaduthodil Abraham was the Administrator. The first batch had 19 students. Cl. Kottarathil Mathai was the assistant.

The foundation-stone for the College was blessed by Fr. Tohill Bernard, the Councillor for Missions, on 25th November 1982 in the presence of Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil, Bishop of Kohima and Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, the Provincial.

From 1982 new seminarians for the Diocese of Kohima joined the community. It started with the Bishop requesting the staff to accommodate twelve new seminarians for a month in 1982. They remained on. Cl. John Kaveas joined the community to look after the seminarians. Later in 1983 another twelve boys for the diocese were sent to Good Shepherd Seminary with Cl. K.M. Joseph, as assistant.

The new batch of sixteen brothers arrived on 27th May 1983 raising the number of students to thirty-five. Clerics Cyprian Kallikaden, Mathai Kottarathil, Jose Kuruvachira, Philip Valayam, Augustine Kuzhikannam and so on helped in the teaching. Visiting professors from Bangalore, Bombay and Calcutta also helped.

The new building was inaugurated on 8th December 1983 by Fr. Tohill Bernard, Councillor for the missions at a function in which about 250 people participated. The house was blessed by Mgr.

Abraham Alangimattathil, the Bishop of Kohima. Fr. Thomas Mattam sdb, of Guwahati Province joined community as confessor in 1984. The Salesian community shifted from "Good Shepherd" to the present site on 24th March 1984.

Due emphasis was given to the oratories from the beginning. Fr. Abraham Kaduthodil animated the Sunday oratories with great zeal and dynamism. The 8mm film on the life of Christ was shown in most of the villages. "Youth Voice" was published for the first time. In the beginning the brothers used to go out in their cassock for Sunday oratories. This was resented by the neighbourhood, who feared Romanization. As a result, the brothers stopped using cassocks during their Sunday apostolate. This was later resumed.

On 27th May 1984 the third batch of eighteen brothers arrived from the novitiate completing the community. On 17th June 1984 the pre-novices of the newly formed Province of Dimapur were shifted to Salesian College. They were twenty-eight in all - eighteen first years and ten second years. Fr. Tony Pellissery was the Dean of Studies for the Pre-novices and the liturgical animator of the college.

On 15th September 1984 the foot-ball pitch was inaugurated by Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, the Provincial.

One of the highlights of the year 1984 was the youth meet of the whole Province organized on 18th October 1984 to mark the Golden Jubilee of Don Bosco's canonization. About 491 youth participated in the function.

On 11th January 1985, Fr. Paul Bernick joined the College community as Confessor.

The Basketball court was inaugurated on 19th April 1985.

On 17th May 1985 Fr. Aelevanthara Sebastian was transferred and Fr. Pampackal Joseph took over as the Dean of Studies.

On 3rd August 1985, the new chapel was blessed.

On 27th May 1985, Fr. Tony Pellissery was transferred to Imphal and on 14th June 1985, the pre-novices were shifted to Rua Home, Golaghat. Fr. Joseph Pampackal was transferred on 26th May 1986 and Fr. Cyprian Kallikaden was appointed the Dean of Studies.

10th November 1986 was a significant day in the history of Salesian College. Fr. Egidio Vigan), the Rector Major of the Salesian Society visited the College. He left on 14th November after the Provincial level reception held at the College.

Salesian College was canonically erected on 24th November 1987. Fr. Abraham Kaduthodil was transferred and Bro. Benarius Toppo was temporarily appointed as the Administrator. He was followed by Fr. Joy Sebastian.

In 1988 Fr. Kottarathil Mathai joined the staff of Salesian College as lecturer and Liturgical Animator. Fr. Mulayinkal Thomas became the Vice-Provincial in 1988 and Fr. Matthew Pulingathil was appointed the Rector on 24th October 1988.

In 1989 Fr. Kuruvachira Jose was appointed to the College as lecturer. In December 1989 Fr. Pampackal Joseph was appointed the new Dean of Studies after Fr. Cyprian left for his studies.

In 1990 Fr. Kuzhikannam Augustine joined the staff of the College. Fr. Mathai Kottarathil was transferred to Tamenglong in 1991. Fr. Joy Sebastian was transferred to Don Bosco, Senapati and Fr. Savarimuthu Arokiasamy was appointed the Administrator in 1992. In January 1993 Fr. Nestor Guria was appointed to the Col-

lege. In 1994 Fr. Puthenpurackal Joseph of the Guwahati Province joined the College as lecturer. Fr. Kuzhikannam Augustine was transferred to Borduria as Assistant Parish Priest.

The G.B. who had given the land for the road, had been claiming that he was promised a pipe connection for water facilities. He even resorted to blocking the road to press his demand. The problem of the road was settled after a well was dug for the G.B. who had given the land.

On 18th January 1995 Fr. Matthew Pulingathil was transferred to Jorhat and on 21st January 1995, Fr. James Poothuruthil was appointed the new Rector. In 1995 Fr. Cyprian Kallikaden was appointed to Salesian College as Liturgical animator. In May 1995 Fr. Nestor Guria was transferred to Bosco Bible School, Tinsukia. Fr. Joseph Kulam was appointed to the community.®

The College was officially affiliated to the Nagaland University in 1995 under the name "Salesian College for Higher Education". Fr. Cyprian Kallikaden was appointed the Principal. Fr. Puthenpurackal Joseph was transferred. On 14th February 1996 Fr. Vincent Kunnathettu was appointed as the Counsellor. Fr. Jose Kuruvachira left for higher studies to Rome. The construction of the College auditorium began in 1996. Fr. Savarimuthu Arokiasamy was transferred to Langjing, Imphal in 1996 and Fr. Karumampallil Joseph took charge as the Administrator.

To meet the need for more classrooms, one of the dormitories was converted into three study halls and other adjustments were made. The work was completed by November 1996. In June 1997, work began for the roofing of the house. Renovation of the cemetery was also started.® The renovated cemetery was blessed on 2nd January 1998.

Fr. Karumampallil Joseph was transferred on the 10th of Januray and on 27th January 1998 Fr. Parappilly Jacob took over as the Administrator. Fr. Vincent Kunnathettu was transferred to Khoupum Valley and in March 1998 Fr. Kanjirathinkal Francis was appointed to the College as the Counsellor. In January 1999 he was transferred to Doñ Bosco School, Kohima as Principal and Fr. Sebastian Aerimattathil was appointed Counsellor and Lecturer. Fr. Parappilly Jacob was transferred and Fr. Parumala Vincent was appointed the Administrator. Fr. Kachapilly Joy (ING) joined the college as lecturer. In February 2000, Fr. Kulathunkal Joseph was transferred to Dibrugarh. Fr. Raphael Paliakara was appointed Vice Rector and Librarian. Fr. Paulinus Chempalayil was appointed as confessor. In February 2000 there are 125 students in the College.

Rectors: .

Fr. Mulayinkal Thomas (1982-1988), Fr. Matthew Pulingathil (1988-1995), Fr. James Poonthuruthil (1995-).

Deans/Principals:

Fr. Aelevanthara Sebastian, Fr. Joseph Pampackal, Fr. Cyprian Kallikaden, Fr. Joseph Pampackal, Fr. Jose Kuruvachira, Fr. Cyprian Kallikaden

Others:

Fr. Abraham Kaduthodil, Fr. Thomas Mattam (Guwahati), Fr. Bernick Paul, Fr. Tony Pellissery, Bro. Benarius Toppo, Fr. Joy Sebastian, Fr. Savarimuthu Arokiasamy, Fr. Augustine Kuzhikannam, Fr. Puthenpurackal Joseph (Guwahati), Fr. Nestor Guria, Fr. Joseph Kulathunkal, Fr. Jonas Kerketta, Fr. Kunnathettu

Vincent, Fr. Kanjirathinkal Francis, Fr. Sebastian
Aerimattathil, Fr. Parumala Vincent, Fr. Joy
Kachapilly, Fr. Raphael Paliakara, Fr. Chempalayil
Paulinus.

CHRIST KING PARISH KOHIMA

The first opportunity for a Salesian missionary to enter and reside in the Naga hills came in the form of a request from Sir Akbar Hydari, the Governor of Assam. The request was made to Mgr. Ferrando, Bishop of Shillong, and concerned directly the Medical Sisters to serve the sick in the newly opened hospital of Kohima. The Bishop requested the Sisters of Christ Jesus who had come to Shillong a little earlier. They accepted the invitation made by the Bishop under the condition of having along with them a chaplain for their spiritual ministrations. At first there were Srs. Margarita and Guadalupe with the chaplain Mgr. Emmanuel Bars; Srs. Dolores and Pilar followed later. They were however forbidden from exercising any pastoral ministry other than medical care. They arrived at Kohima on 31st December 1948.

Among the people of Kohima, both the Baptist Christians and the non-Christians, the presence of a foreign "Chaplain and Sisters" naturally aroused curiosity, which soon turned into admiration and outright sympathy and friendship. Soon there were a few favouring the Catholic Church. Mr. Neizo Louis and Mr. Kevipralie Paulus were the first among them. They translated the teachings of the Catholic Church into Angami and distributed it among the people. Slowly a small group was formed who participated in the Sunday services in the Hospital chapel. Thus the seeds of the Catholic faith was planted.

Mgr. Emmanuel Bars was replaced by Fr. Umberto Marocchino in 1951. The appointment of Mr. Carvalho as the DC of Kohima came as an unexpected boon. He was a fervent Catholic and soon the rules were relaxed. Fr. Marocchino was no more under such restrictions as was his predecessor, Mgr. Immanuel Bars. He could move about and meet people. 14th December 1952 remains a red letter day in the history of the Catholic Church in Nagaland. On that day, the son of Mr. Pralie Belho of Kohima Village was baptized in the hospital and christened John Kevipele. At Christmas 1954 Mr. Pralie himself was baptised taking the name Paulus and with him 8 others of the first group were also baptised. Fr. Umberto Marocchino with his 'Gilera' Motorcycle - which incidently was the first motorcycle in Kohima - became the symbol of Catholic Church in Kohima.

At the close of 1954 the contract between the government and the Spanish sisters working in the Hospital of Kohima expired without being renewed. The sisters had to leave. But the chaplain stayed on. The considerate Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Carvalho, had reasons to allow him to stay. There were native Catholics at Kohima in need of a priest and besides them certain government employees were Catholics, not to speak of the Catholic servicemen in the security forces.

Fr. Marocchino moved from one place to another, staying with a friend or the other. In the beginning he stayed at the house of Mr. Mezheru Samuel who was then in charge of the upkeep of the Kohima War Cemetery. During his stay with Samuel, Fr. Marocchino used to celebrate Holy Mass at the open air altar of the cemetery. Later his Catholic friends arranged for him a place to celebrate Mass in the house of Mr. Louis Neizo of T.Khel, Kohima village.

As the number of Catholics grew larger, the room grew smaller. The ground floor of the Tsutuonoma Khel[@] Community Hall began to be used for Mass on Sundays. This school served as chapel and meeting place for the Catholics for a number of years. There were about 60 Catholics by then. In 1956 Fr. Marocchino decided to shift his residence to Kohima village. Arrangements were made to rent Mrs. Vilanuo's house in Lhisema Khel and his things were brought and kept in Mr. Suosahie Philip's house. But on 8th June 1956, before he could occupy the new place he was urgently summoned to Imphal.

The beginning of the Naga agitation had its repercussions on the mission. On 11th June 1956 the Naga Home Guards attacked the Indian Army leading to the battle that engendered terror and confusion. The belongings of Fr. Marocchino including the Baptism register which were kept in the house of Mr. Suosahie Philip were destroyed. Fr. Marocchino had to wait for a month before he could come back to Kohima. When he came back after the stir had died down, he stayed with Mr. Carvalho, the DC, till he shifted to a house rented from Mr. Levi.

The first Catholic church in Kohima was built in 1957 in T. Khel. The land was given by Mr. Keviselie Sekhose. The land in Sozieba was the second highest view-point in Kohima village. The work for the building of the church was begun soon. Many people helped in the construction of the church. Major D'Souza, a Catholic officer of the Indian army brought his soldiers and helped in cementing the floor of the church. Colonel Adam of Indian Army also contributed benches for the church. The local Catholics too helped in various ways.

In 1958 Philip Suosahie came to offer his services to the church and was appointed the catechist. As the number of Catholics

increased, there was need for a bigger church. The land-owners of Bayavu, (where the present Education Directorate Office stands) agreed and payment was made with the intention of building a bigger church there. But it was opposed by the Baptist Church, with some of its members even going to the extent of writing to the Naga Underground Army to kill Mr. Kevipralie Paulus, Mr. Louis Neizo and Mr. Suosahie Philip. They were accused of being traitors and of buying Naga land for Rome.

The issue of building the church was finally settled in 1959 when the Panchayat gave the order in favour of the Catholics. Work began soon. A road to the site was dug and loads of stones were shifted to the site to start the building. But the victory in the court was fruitless as far as the building of the church was concerned. The Government of Nagaland intervened and allotted the site for Government purposes. Obviously, the Catholics were forced to give up the site.

In the meantime, Fr. Umberto Marocchino was getting ready to build a school near the church. He had earlier started a Lower Primary School at Mr. Levi's house. It was now shifted to Pazilietsie (to Mr. Neizo's place) near the church. The school continued to run with about 50 students. The teachers were Mr. Suosahie Philip, Mr. Kuovi, Miss Lhourzeu, Miss Dierhevinuo, Miss Zhanuo and Miss Neichuvonuo. After the school was over, Fr. Marocchino would distribute milk to the children.

Fr. Marocchino stayed at his post at Kohima for 12 years. In spite of the unsettled conditions prevailing in the area he consolidated and increased the Catholic community at the centre. During his time the communities of Kohima, Keruma, Khonoma, Nerhema, Phesama, Dimapur, Eralibil, Semaguri and Singrijan were founded. He had also made some useful contacts in the region of Chakhro at Medziphema.

In October 1963, Fr. Marocchino left for Italy. Mgr. Orestes Marengo sdb, who had taken keen interest in the origin and development of the missionary work in Nagaland, had to look out for a successor to Fr. Marocchino who would not be allowed to return to Kohima by the Government. He asked for Fr. Paul Bernick from South India, an Indian citizen by registration, to be sent to Kohima. As Fr. Bernick could not come immediately. So Fr. Joseph Felix was asked to look after the Kohima mission.

At first Fr. Felix stayed in the rented residence where Fr. Marocchino stayed and then at Mr. Mesevilie's house in T. Khel, Kohima village. Later Fr. Felix shifted to the house of Mr. Philip Suosahie. As no land was available for the Confreres' Residence, Philip Suosahie offered his house for the fathers. It was refurnished and partitioned with C.I. Sheets.

Fr. Paul Bernick arrived in Kohima on 4th January 1964. The Parish of Christ King, Kohima, was officially erected by Mgr. Hubert D'Rosario sdb in the year 1965. The incumbent Father-in-charge Fr. Paul Bernick was then officially appointed as Parish Priest. The two fathers continued the work of Fr. Marocchino. They found themselves in a better position than their predecessor. They were a team now, though small. People with enquiries about the Catholic faith would generally come to the centre and the faithful out in the villages were in need of priestly ministry, further instruction and encouragement as they experienced opposition in most cases.

On 14th May 1964, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) arrived at Kohima. The little Flower School was begun with Sr. Francesca as the superior. The school was earlier looked after by Mr. Godenho at the present Kohima English School site. The sisters stayed at Mr. Lhouvineio Lungalang's

residence in D. Block and later shifted to Kuozhu where a big plot of land was bought for the school and the convent.

6th September 1964 marked the declaration of the end of hostilities in Nagaland and the Episcopal ordination of Mgr. Hubert D'Rosario as the new Bishop of Dibrugarh. The end of the year also saw the Catholic Angami Delegation at the International Eucharistic Congress at Bombay. From among 25 Angami delegates three were chosen to present gifts to the Holy Father, Pope Paul VI. Among the delegates, was also Mr. John Bosco Jasokie, later the Chief Minister of Nagaland.

In 1966 Fr. Joseph Felix was transferred to the Khasi hills. During his three years in Nagaland, he opened schools in Peren, Puruba, Zunheboto, Tuensang, Khonoma and Dimapur. He took great pains to ensure the good running of these schools even bringing his relatives including his own father. Of these All Saints at Peren, Holy Cross at Dimapur, St. John's at Tensang and St. John Bosco at Khonoma were taken over by the Mission.

Fr. Joseph Felix was replaced by Fr. Uzhunnalil Mathew. A little while later Fr. Tarcisius Resto, joined the team. With three to plant and with God giving the increase, the harvest was increasing fast not only among the Angamis but also among the Rengmas and the tribes of the Chackesang area. The Catholic communities were established in the following villages: among the Southern Angamis at Jakhama, Kigwema, Viswema; among the Western Angamis at Jotsoma, among the Northern Angamis at Merema; among the Rengmas at Theosopinyu and Contsenyu; in Chackesang area at Zhamai and Zelumi. In each village a temporary chapel was erected and a catechist appointed.

Such rapid development of the Catholic Church in Nagaland could not remain unnoticed and unopposed for long. In the year

1967, a concerted anti-Catholic propaganda was unleashed in the form of tracts and pamphlets. A delegation of four prominent Baptist leaders also met Fr. Paul Bernick, to pressurise him to stop Catholic activities. The climax was the signed Memorandum "protesting against the naked invasion of the Catholic Church into Baptist territory". A copy was sent to the Government at New Delhi and one to the parallel set up of the Federal Government. However in Nagaland at large, with the exception of Chackesang area, there was no adverse effect on the work of Catholic Church.

In December 1967 the fathers shifted from Philip Suosahie's house in L. Khel to the Lower Primary School in Psuchatsuma Khel after staying there for four years. The problem of the land for the church remained unresolved until Mr. Vikuosa Pienyu offered a plot of land for the church, through negotiations with Fr. Joseph Felix. This served as an impetus and the adjoining lands were given to the mission by Mrs. Sonuo, Mr. Puzielie, Mr. Jaei, Mrs. Zasilieu, Mr. Ado, Viruduo, Mr. Salhouzhu, Mr. Hievizolie, Mr. Zakievi, Mr. Krucha, Mr. Zhatuo, Mr. Kruzhu and Mr. Duokuo. But even here the construction could not begin as a prominent part of the land was occupied by the security forces.

In 1967 Fr. Uzhunnalil Mathew was transferred to Doom Dooma. He was substituted in 1968 by Fr. Mailparambil Thomas.

In 1969, Christ King School was opened by the Bethany Sisters under Superior Mother Loyola. The school was established on a small plot of land given by Vikuosa Pienyu of P. Khel, Kohima Village, at a time when no one was willing to give land to the Catholic mission. The sisters arrived in February 1969. They stayed in the top-floor of the school in one of the classrooms.

In July 1969 Fr. Paul Bernick left for Imphal in Manipur. Fr. Ittiyachen Manjil, took over as the new Parish Priest on 1st August

1969. Fr. Tarcisius Resto and Fr. Mailparambil Thomas were transferred. Fr. Ittiyachen Manjil was one of those who had volunteered to the missions of North-East, in response to the request of Fr. Ziggotti, the Rector Major of the Salesians. Fr. Ziggotti had requested the Indian Salesians of South India, to volunteer to work in the North-East, as a result of the threat of the eviction of non-Indian Salesians from the North-East. Fr. Ittiyachen was assisted by Fr. Ponnatil Mathew who came on 20th July 1969. The Lower Primary School of P. Khel still served as the Priests' Residence. It was found necessary to begin another residence. The living conditions were far from satisfactory. The house was infested with rats and water had to be brought by jeep from Zubza.

In 1969 constructions began for a new but temporary residence for the fathers as well as for the Community Hall. The constructions were undertaken by Mr. Iqbal Singh. But the constructions did not proceed smoothly. The Assam Rifles objected to the new construction since it fell within their firing range. The villagers did not want the open area in front of the school to be taken over for the church. Finally, an agreement was reached through the intervention of Mr. Jasokie, the Minister of Education. It was decided to cut short the length of the Community Hall, on both the sides.

In August 1970, Fr. Ponnatil Mathew was transferred to Dibrugarh and Fr. Kollenkunnel Devassy was appointed to the parish. Later Fr. John Med joined the mission. In 1970 Fr. Stanley Coelho, Fr. Castelino and Bro. Raymond D'Souza of the Society of Jesus came to Nagaland. They stayed in Christ King Parish till they opened Loyola School at Jakhama and started working there. The Church had already been founded in the Jakhama village on 14th November 1966. Then it belonged to the Kohima Parish of Christ King.

The Community Hall cum church was blessed by Mgr. Hubert D'Rosario on 13th February 1971. An agreement had been reached between the Usouma clan and the mission represented by Fr. Felix. Accordingly, a plot of land at Yakozou was rented out to the mission at a yearly rent of Rs 50. It may be noted that on 16th February 1992 an agreement was reached by which the said plot of land was finally handed over to the Catholic Church by Usouma clan.

Don Bosco School was started at Kohima in 1971 by Fr. Ittiyachan Manjil. The land was bought from Mr. Lhousphalie, Mr. Neimo, Mr. Vichalie, Mr. Deisalie, Mr. Neilao, Mr. Satuo Anthony, Mr. Kiyawelic and Mr. Kuovi. Fr. John Med and Fr. Kollenkunnel Devasia were transferred and Fr. Alappatt Jose and Fr. Vadakeparambil Joseph were appointed Assistant Parish Priests.

The Medical Mission Sisters under Dr. Celine Namchu came in 1972. They stayed at the Little Flower School and came to look after the sick thrice a week at Mr. Philip Suosahie's house. Afterwards they built the present Medical Mission Sisters' Residence. Till 1989 the Government Maternity Centre was also looked after by them.

The Diocese of Kohima-Imphal was erected in May 1973 with Rev. Abraham Alangimattathil as its first bishop. He was ordained on 13th October 1973 at a function held at Don Bosco School ground.

The Primary School was run by the Sisters of Bethany entirely and even the finance was managed by them. The Fathers were also taking their meals in the convent. However, differences of opinion with regard to the management of funds, served as a major irritant and developed into a full-blown crisis leading Fr. Ittiyachan Manjil, Fr. Alappatt Jose and Fr. Vadakeparambil Joseph to leave Kohima on 21st August 1973.⁶ Fr. Ittiyachan Manjil was much ap-

preciated by teachers and students as evidenced by the students who even blocked the road to prevent him from leaving.

During the interim period the fathers from Wokha looked after the parish. Fr. Menampampil Thomas, then Vice-Provincial looked after Don Bosco School. Early in 1974, Fr. Bernick Paul was summoned from Imphal to look after the parish and Fr. Payngott Antony from Wokha to look after the Don Bosco School. Later Fr. George Padinjarepampil helped Fr. Bernick to look after the parish. The Teachers' Quarters was built at this time.

In the period between 1967 and 1973 Catholic Communities were established in the following villages; in Chackro area Socunoma; among western Angamis at Mezoma, Zubza, Peducha; among Northern Angamis at Chiephobozou; Tuphema; among Rengmas at Tseminyu, among the Semas at Lazami and Pugabotto, in Chackesang area: Chobama, Chisami, Thenyumi, Kolazu Basa.

On 30th December 1974 Fr. Mundanthanathu Michael was appointed Parish Priest of Christ King, Kohima, ending a period of uncertainty. Fr. Padinjarepambil George (P.D.) was the Assistant Parish Priest. In 1975, the boarding was re-opened with about twelve students. The boarding which had been running in the room adjacent to the Presbytery had hitherto been used as a room for youth, after it was closed down due to the fluid situation.

In 1975, a water tank was constructed. Till then water used to be brought daily from the water source in the compound of Little Flower. Fr. Michael Mundanthanathu narrated how one drum would be filled by the time Mass was over and the other would be ready when the breakfast was finished. With the construction of the water-tank, and commissioning of the government water project with the main tank near the presbytery, the problem of scarcity of water was solved.

Many plots of land were acquired at this time. The land where the boarding stands today was bought in 1976. The land below the boarding was purchased with the purpose of building a cemetery. The present playground was acquired from Mr. Ado in exchange for a plot of land owned by the parish near the public playground.

A project was approved for building two hostels - one for the boys and another for the girls. Though the place where the Christ King Junior School stands today, was levelled for the girls' hostel, it was decided to build the school first. The girls were partly accommodated in the junior school. The building work was completed in 1978.

After the Hostel was completed constructions began for the school. In 1980's work began for the levelling of the playground. Fr. Mundanthanathu Michael was transferred on 30th June 1985, after nearly ten and a half years of stay. In an interesting episode, when Pope Paul VI passed away, the message of Fr. Michael Mundanthanathu was published in the newspapers by PTI. as the Archbishop Michael's message.

On 24th June 1985 Fr. Tom Karthikapallil took over as the Parish Priest from Fr. Michael Mundanthanathu. In 1990 Fr. Ponnatil Mathew who was already working as Assistant Parish Priest was appointed as the Parish Priest. Fr. Aerimattathil Sebastian was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest in January 1990. Fr. Aerimattathil Sebastian was transferred in December 1992 and Fr. Mechery Varghese was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest. In 1993 Bro. Benarius joined the community as a student.

In 1994 Fr. Ponnatil Mathew was transferred and Fr. Andrew Xavier took charge as the Parish Priest. The Silver Jubilee Celebrations of Christ King School was held from 29th and 30th October 1994. The Chief Guest for the occasion was His Excel-

lency Srinivasan, the Governor of Nagaland and Manipur. A souvenir was published on the occasion. It was also resolved at that time to build a Jubilee Memorial Library cum-Reading room.

In January 1995 Fr. Manianchira Sebastian was appointed as Assistant Parish Priest. On 18th June 1995 Fr. Bernard Topno too arrived as the Assistant Parish Priest. In January 1996 Fr. Sebastian Manianchira was transferred to Don Bosco Tuli.

On 10th March 1996, Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil laid the foundation stone for the new church to be completed in time for the Golden Jubilee of the Parish to be celebrated in 2002.

In February 1997 Fr. Bernard Topno was transferred and Fr. Sanjeev Linda took charge as the Assistant Parish Priest on 20th February 1997.

The Silver Jubilee Memorial Library cum-Reading room was inaugurated by Mrs. Banuo Z. Jamir, the Commissioner and Secretary for Education of the Government of Nagaland on 24th April 1998. On 14th March 1999 Fr. Sanjeev Linda was transferred to Khoupum Valley and Fr. Chennoth Sebastian was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest. He arrived on 17th March 1999.

The following parishes have been created out of the Christ King Parish:- Dimapur, Jakhama, Chizami, Tsemenyu, Medziphema, Catholic Publication Centre, Thenyizumi, Peren, Cathedral, Chiephobozou and Lazami.

In 1999 the parish has 3954 Catholics in five substations of Rusoma, Chedema, Merema, Thizama, Kohima and the two villages of Dihoura and Kijumetouma. There are 1296 students in the school.

Parish Priests:

Fr. Paul Bernick (1964-1969), Fr. Ittiyachen Manjil

(1969-1973), Fr. Mundathanathu Michael (1974-1985), Fr. Tom Karthikapallil (1985-1989), Fr. Ponnattil Mathew (1990-1994), Fr. Andrew Xavier (1994-)

Others:

Msgr. Bars Immanuel, Fr. Umberto Marocchino, Fr. Joseph Felix, Fr. Uzhunnalil Mathew, Fr. Tarcisius Resto, Fr. Ittiyachan Manjil, Fr. Mailparambil Thomas, Fr. Ponnattil Mathew, Fr. John Med, Fr. Kollenkunnel Devasia, Fr. Stanley Coelho sj, Castelino sj and Bro. Raymond D'Souza sj, Fr. Alappatt Jose, Fr. Vadakeparambil Joseph, Fr. Puthenpurackal Joseph, Fr. Menamparpil Thomas, Fr. Anthony Rebello svd, Fr. K.C. George, Fr. Padinjareparambil George, Fr. Bryan, Fr. George Kunnel msfs, Fr. O.C. Abraham, Fr. George Parackal, Fr. Joseph Alencheril, Fr. Peter Paul, Fr. Aerimattathil Sebastian, Fr. Mechery Varghese, Bro. Benarius Topno, Fr. Sebastian Manianchira, Fr. Bernard Topno, Fr. Sanjeev Linda, Fr. Chennoth Sebastian.

DON BOSCO HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL, KOHIMA

Don Bosco School, Kohima, came into existence on 7th February 1971. The school was started by Fr. Ittiyachen Manjil, the then Parish Priest of Christ King, Kohima. The school began from Class V upwards, separate from the parish institution, Christ King School. As there was nothing else at hand but the grand idea, the school commenced in the sacristy of the parish....

Search for a suitable site for the school began and the place where the present Directorate of School Education stands was earmarked for Don Bosco School. But some land-owners refused to provide land for the approach road. The plan had to be abandoned even though the villagers had worked to clear the ground for constructions to begin. The search for the land finally came to an end when the Kohima Village agreed to give the present site to the school. The land was bought from eight owners separately - Mr. Lhousphalie, Mr. Neimo, Mr. Vichalie, Mr. Deisalie, Mr. Neilao, Mr. Satuo Anthony, Mr. Kiyawelie and Mr. Kuovi.

In spite of the disputes regarding the building of the school at the proposed site, it was decided that the school be built at once and constructions begin. The disputes were concerning the levelling of the land. The villagers would not agree to level the top of the hill, as they believed that the hill was the abode of the spirits of their ancestors. To cut the hill meant desecration. At long last and after much insistence they agreed, after being repeatedly argued that it

was meant for their own children. Thus, while the classes progressed in the sacristy of the church, the Catholics cleared the jungles and levelled the present school building site through social work. The construction work was given to Mr. Neisalhou Alexander. However, due to financial constraints only five classrooms were constructed. These now form the groundfloor of the present establishment.

The opening of Don Bosco School as a co-educational institution was a bold step for the school as well as for the future of education in the region. In spite of the tradition of running schools for boys only, it was felt that a co-educational school was better suited to the demands of the time and society. Permission for a co-educational school was granted by the Salesian Headquarters in Rome on an experimental basis. Special effort was also made to promote the Christian atmosphere in the school.

In August 1973 Fr. Ittiyachen Manjil left for Madras and Fr. Payngott Antony was put in charge of the school. He was the first priest to reside in the school itself. However, in 1975 Fr. Antony returned to Christ King Parish and began residing there.

The school was officially recognized by the Board of School Education, Nagaland on 1st March 1975. The same year, the first batch of matriculation students appeared. It was a proud moment for the school because all the nine students who appeared for the examinations passed.

In 1976 Fr. Payngott Antony left for Madras and Fr. Thazhekaden Sebastian took over the administration for a week. But he took ill and was replaced by Fr. Arimpoor Louis in March 1976.

The extension and the remodelling of the school building was started in 1976. The work was initially looked after by Fr.

Mundanthanathu Michael who was the Parish Priest of Christ King and later by Bro. Brahmakulam Antony.

On 21st August 1979 Fr. Kuriakose Palathingal took over from Fr. Arimpoor Louis. The school had only about 398 students in the rolls at the time. In order to increase the number of the students, a school bus was introduced for the first time. Work also began for the hall, the new wing of the school and the staff quarters. The salary of the teachers was also increased. The hall, the new wing of the school and the staff quarters were inaugurated by the late Mr. N.I. Jamir, the chief secretary of Nagaland and blessed by Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil, Bishop of Kohima, in 1981.

The year 1981 marked also the beginning of a new section of Class III. Around this time a children's park sponsored by the Social Welfare Department of Nagaland, retention walls, drinking water facilities and toilets were constructed. Compound walls, black-topping of the Basketball court, equipping of the auditorium and the construction of a new floor for science laboratories were also done during this period. In 1982 and 1984 the school topped the state in HSLC examinations.

All Nagaland Private School Association was founded at the initiative of Fr. Kuriakose Palathingal. This body emerged as one of the significant associations in affecting decisions regarding school education. The Cumulative Record for Classes V to X which is now issued by the Board of School Education for Nagaland was prepared by Fr. Kuriakose at the request of the Board. Question papers for the member schools were also prepared by the Association. Inter-school sports and cultural competitions were also organized.

On 5th May 1984, a new Salesian community was started in Don Bosco School, Kohima. Fr. Kuriakose Palathingal was alone for one month. Fr. Charuvila Francis, joined him in June 1984.

Admissions to the nursery were taken for the first time on 26th September 1985, though classes began only in February 1986. An admission test was also introduced for Class V students from Christ King School. It was a significant decision and also brought along with it much controversy and tension.[@]

On 30th September 1985 Fr. Kuriakose Palathingal was transferred and on 1st October 1985 Fr. Chollamadathil Mathew took charge of the school. The land problem had not yet been fully settled and a new piece of land was being negotiated with L.Khel for the nursery and K.G, when Fr. Kuriakose was transferred.[@] There were 596 students then in the school. Fr. Kuriakose Palathingal left on 11th October 1985. Don Bosco Boarding was begun by Fr. Mathew Chollamadathil. The boarders were housed in the building for science laboratory.

In July 1986 Fr. Charuvila Francis was transferred to Imphal and Fr. Eanthanamkuzhiyil Michael took over as the new Assistant Headmaster. 1986 saw the introduction of Computer Education in the School, for the first time in Nagaland. At the end of 1986, Fr. Eanthanamkuzhiyil Michael was transferred and Fr. Karippai Jose was appointed to the post.

The construction of the Don Bosco Youth Centre-cum-Hostel began in 1987. It was designed by Fr. Mathew Chollamadathil. The design and the construction of DBYC-cum-Hostel was started on the assurance of 50% financial support by the Nagaland government which was given to Fr. Kuriakose Palathingal in 1985, the International Year of Youth. The Government of Nagaland gave Rs. 2 lakhs in October 1986 towards the foundation. Unfortunately the work was started only in 1987. The delay was due to the hope of acquiring a small piece of land next to the present building. Even though the said land was not acquired, since Mr. Neikralie offered

part of his land, the construction of the hostel was taken up in 1987. But by the time the foundation was completed, the ministry headed by Mr. S.C. Jamir, that had promised help was gone. Mr. Talitemjen Jamir, a past pupil of St. Antony's, Shillong, a parent and an ardent supporter of Don Bosco promised to help in his capacity as Secretary, Education, provided the written commitment of his government was given to him. Since the whole thing had proceeded on *alla bona*, no further help came from the government.

In February 1988 Fr. Jose Karippai, was transferred. Fr. Tony Pellissery was appointed the Assistant Headmaster. In a notable development, the entire school administration was computerized in 1988. It was in Don Bosco School that computerised mark sheets and tabulation were seen for the first time in Nagaland. The Nagaland Computer Society was founded and computers were made available to the public. Computer Training Programmes were organised by Fr. Tony Pellissery.

Some of the highlights of Don Bosco School during this period were the Mastermind - a quiz organised for the whole of North East, Inter-school and inter-state games tournaments, flower shows, fashion parades, computer displays etc.

On 31st January 1992 Fr. Aelavanthara Sebastian was appointed as Principal and Rector. Fr. Emmanuel Xalxo took over as the Assistant Headmaster in place of Fr. Tony Pellissery who was transferred to Imphal. Fr. Devassy Kollenkunnel was appointed Administrator. At the end of 1992, Fr. Chollamadathil Mathew who continued to look after the construction of the Hostel, left for Leuven, Belgium, to do his post graduate diploma and masters in architecture. Fr. Kollenkunnel Devasia was transferred to Science Hostel, Kohima. In 1993, Bro. Perumanoor George was appointed as the Assistant Headmaster and Fr. Emmanuel Xalxo took over the administration.

Don Bosco Board of School Education was begun in 1993. The co-ordination for the State of Nagaland was done from Don Bosco School, Kohima. An innovation introduced in the school at this time was the Dance Festival involving the various schools of Kohima. The land problem was settled and the compound wall was completed by July 1995. The Catholic community was greatly instrumental in settling the land disputes that had caused a serious threat to the good running of the school. Thirteen people contributed land to make an approach road on the side of the school.

In 1994 Bro. George Perumanoor left for Shillong and Fr. Bernard Topno was appointed the Assistant Headmaster. In 1995, Fr. Chittisery Joseph was appointed the Assistant Headmaster..

Don Bosco Youth Centre cum Hostel was blessed by Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil on 29th October 1994. The House warming ceremony of the new residence of the confreres was held on 31st January 1995.

In 1995 the school opened Plus Two, with the idea of affording an opportunity for higher education to the financially less privileged students. On 15th May 1995, the labs were inaugurated by the Minister of Education Mr. Nilo Rengma along with Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil, the Bishop of Kohima and Fr. Varghese Palathingal, the Provincial of Dimapur.

In December 1995 Fr. Aelevanthara Sebastian was transferred and Fr. Bimal Lakra took over as the Rector and Principal of Don Bosco School on 31st January 1996. In February 1996, Fr. Emmanuel Xalxo was transferred to St. Mary's Margherita and Fr. Chalangattucherry Mathew was appointed the Administrator. The School celebrated its Silver Jubilee on 16th October 1996.

In 1997 Fr. Chalangattucherry Mathew was transferred and Fr. Thekeparambil Sebastian was appointed the Administrator in April 1997. On 7th July 1997 Fr. Anto Tharakan joined the community as the Youth Director. In 1998 Fr. Chittisery Joseph was transferred to Don Bosco Maram, and Fr. Thettayil Joseph was appointed the Vice Principal. Bro. Mathew Kaliyaden joined the community as a student on 13th August 1998.

In January 1999, Fr. Bimal Lakra, the Rector and Principal was transferred to Don Bosco, Doom Dooma.

After the canonical visitation in 1998 by Rev. Fr. Joachim D'Souza it was decided by the Provincial and his Council to separate the posts of Rector and Principal. Accordingly in 1999 Fr. Thettayil Jose was appointed as Rector on 15th January 1999 and Fr. Kanjirathinkal Francis was appointed the Principal. Fr. Francis took charge on 20th March 1999. Fr. Thekeparambil Sebastian was transferred to Khoupum Valley and Fr. Jerome Moshary was appointed as the Administrator and Vice Principal. In 1999, there are 1523 students in the school and 20 hostellers.

Don Bosco Youth Centre

Don Bosco Youth Centre, Kohima was started in 1995. Fr. Kunnel Tom was appointed its first director.

The aim of the youth centre is to work with young people to bring all their talents and aptitudes to full maturity so that the individual is able to encounter the Reality in himself or herself, in others and in society with serenity. It tries to facilitate "personal growth" and the unity of the person. To this end the centre gears its programmes and activities to value formation, with a positive outlook on life; gradual maturing of freedom, in the ability to make proper decisions assuming personal responsibility; awareness of the

dangers of the present-day permissive society; drugs, AIDS, etc.; and enlightening youth with more choices for careers that bring out the best.

Some of the activities of the Youth Centre as envisaged were: Intensive coaching classes for drop-outs; courses in dress-making & fashion-designing, computers, recording studio etc.; Music Course - drums, Guitars, Keyboards; Spoken English, Taekwondo Class through out the year Recreational facilities: Table Tennis, Football, Basketball, Carroms, Roller-skating, Cycling; Prayer Sessions after the Taize Community model of France; Free news notes every month.

In June 1996 Fr. Kunnel Tom left for Africa and Fr. Anto Tharakan was appointed the new Director of the Youth Centre. He arrived on 7th July 1997. He was transferred to Sadiya on 8th May 1999.

About 50 attended the youth centre daily. Computer classes, Typing, music, games etc. are some of the regular activities of the Youth Centre. Coaching classes are held for failed matriculation students from June to November every year.

Rectors:

Fr. Chollamadathil Mathew (1989-1991), Fr. Aelavanhara Sebastian (1992-1995), Fr. Bimal Lakra (1995-1998), Fr. Joseph Thettayil (1999-)

Principals:

Fr. Ittiyachan Manjil (1971-1973), Fr. Payngott Anthony (1973-1976), Fr. Arimpoor Louis (1976-1979), Fr. Kuriakose Palathingal (1979-1985), Fr. Chollamadathil Mathew (1985-1991), Fr.

Aelevanthara Sebastian (1991-1995), Fr. Bimal Lakra (1995-1999), Fr. Kanjirathinkal Francis (1999-).

Others:

Fr. Karotemprel Sebastian, Fr. Charuvila Francis, Fr. Eanthanamkuzhiyil Michael, Fr. Jose Karippai, Fr. Tony Pellissery, Fr. Emmanuel Xalxo, Fr. Kollenkunnel Devasia, Bro. Perumanoor George, Fr. Bernard Topno, Fr. Chittisery Joseph, Fr. Kunnel Tom, Fr. Thettayil Joseph, Fr. Chalangattucherry Mathew, Fr. Thekkeparambil Sebastian, Fr. Anto Tharakan, Fr. Jerome Moshary.

DON BOSCO HOSTEL SCIENCE COLLEGE, KOHIMA

Don Bosco Hostel, Kohima, is situated at about nine km from the Kohima town, off the Kohima-Imphal Highway and three km from the Jotsoma Village. Located at a congenial place away from the city and in close proximity to the reputed Science College of Kohima, the hostel provides an ideal setting for study.

The idea of beginning a college hostel for the students of Science College, Kohima, was incidental. The Bishop of Kohima, Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil wanted to buy a plot of land to build a church to conduct services on Sundays for the Catholic students and others of the area. Mass used to be held in one of the classrooms of the college till then. As no land could be got it was thought, that the college could be approached to provide a hostel for the Catholic students.

Fr. Ponnatil Mathew approached the District Commissioner, Mr. Lima Aier who readily agreed. Though initially the Bishop was looking for a land of 25/30, a bigger plot of land 300/400 was acquired. In spite of the fact that Mr. Dekha, the Principal did not favour handing over the proposed plot, by coincidence and the intervention of Mr. Kiran Wati, the Director of Higher Education, the present plot of land was allotted to the Bishop of Kohima for a hostel in 1988. The Salesians of Don Bosco did not acquire the land as the application had been made for the Diocese.

The construction of the hostel began immediately. In 1989 it was entrusted to the Salesians. Fr. Aelevanthara Sebastian was appointed the first Warden. He arrived on 2nd February 1989 and got the hostel campus ready. He took up residence on 9th February 1989.

The hostel building was blessed on 11th February 1989 by Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil sdb. The first batch began with eight boys and later four more joined raising the number to twelve. The hostel received government recognition on 13th December 1989 from the Director of Higher and Technical Education.

Most of the works of the hostel are looked after by the hostellers themselves. They look after the mess, liturgical animation etc. A sum of Rs. 100 per month is collected towards the hostel fees. The Bishop's House, Dimapur, pays Rs. 3,000 towards the maintenance of the Hostel.

Fr. Kalappurayil George arrived at the Hostel on 10th June 1990. He substituted Fr. Sebastian Aelevanthara who in the meantime had gone to the States. On 26th September 1990 Fr. Aelevanthara Sebastian returned.

On 20th February 1991 Fr. Aelevanthara Sebastian was transferred to Wokha and Fr. Mechery Varghese took over as the new Warden. And on 6th February 1993 Fr. Kollenkunnel Devassy was appointed as the Hostel Warden. He was followed by Fr. Joseph Edakudan. After Fr. Joseph Edakudan left for Maram in 1995, Fr. Parumala Vincent was appointed as the Warden. He arrived on 1st February 1995. Fr. Manayil Alex took over as the Warden after Fr. Parumala Vincent was transferred to Provincial House, Dimapur on 9th June 1996. @

On 24th January 1998 Fr. Aelevanthara Sebastian took over as the new Warden once again. Fr. Sebastian besides being the

Warden is also a Lecturer in the English Department of Nagaland Central University. He also looks after the Catholic Community of Science College Campus and Jotsoma Village. There are 26 students in the hostel of whom 10 are Catholics.

The Wardens:

Fr. Aelevanthara Sebastian (1989-1990), Fr. Mechery Varghese (1991-1993), Fr. Kollenkunnel Devassy (1993-1994), Fr. Joseph Edakudan (1994-1995), Fr. Parumala Vincent (1995-1996), Fr. Manayil Alex (1996-1997), Fr. Aelevanthara Sebastian (1998-)

DON BOSCO CENTRE, MON

Mon is the Headquarters of the Konyak district which is the biggest district in Nagaland with an area of 1786 Sq. km and a population of 1,41,699. The Konyaks were originally part of the Wanchos of Arunachal Pradesh. They were later called Konyaks. The term "konyak" literally means 'man'. The Konyak tribe is one of the most backward tribes in Nagaland, primitive in their ways, addicted to opium, and quite illiterate.

Catholic missionaries entered the Mon area for the first time in 1980. Till then the district witnessed only a few casual visits of priests from Dibrugarh, Dimapur and Tuensang. One of the earliest priests to visit Mon was Fr. Thekkekuruvinal Chacko (T.J.) of Tuensang. He had visited Mon from 5th to 7th October 1970. At that time there were only 80 to 100 Baptists in Mon Village.

In the year 1976, Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil sdb, Bishop of Kohima-Imphal, approached the Salesian Provincial of Guwahati, Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, to start a Don Bosco School and Boarding at Mon. He said that many people were asking for a Don Bosco School, and that he felt that through the school we could make contact with the people of the Mon District and Evangelization work could be started. The Provincial council too agreed that it was good to explore the possibilities. Accordingly, on 5th July 1976, Fr. Provincial met Mgr. Abraham at Jorhat Parish, and together, they travelled to Mon on 6th July 1976.

At Mon, they contacted Mr. Chingai Konyak. Mr. Chingai had his two sons in Don Bosco Boarding at Dibrugarh and a daughter in the LFS boarding also in Dibrugarh and was the leading man in the Mon Town Committee that requested for a Don Bosco School in Mon. He wanted the people of Mon to have the same benefits he had for his children. Mr. Chingai took Mgr. Abraham and Fr. Provincial to two different sites where the school could be set up. The Town Committee had left the choice to the visitors. After visiting both lands, the Provincial chose the land near the Road, astride the Mon-Tobu Road. With the promise of completing the negotiations speedily they came away. But the Baptist Pastors compelled the Town Committee to give away the land to the Border Road, and today they are set up there. The other piece of land too was disposed off. Thus the first attempt at starting a Don Bosco School at Mon came to nothing.

Later on, the interest in Don Bosco School for Mon revived again, and invitations were sent to Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil. On 21st February 1980, the Provincial of Guwahati, Fr. Mathai Kochuparambil, the Economist Fr. John Kalapuraputhanpura, and Fr. Peter Bianchi, went with Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil to Mon, once again to see the possibilities for opening a Don Bosco School. Since Mr. Koma, the man who was to be the mediator between the Angh and the mission could not be traced (he had agreed he would come), Fr. Mathai Kochuparambil and Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil returned to Dimapur leaving Fr. John Kalapura and Fr. Peter Bianchi in Mon. However the man did not turn up even after two days and Fr. John Kalapuraputhanpura too returned leaving Fr. Bianchi alone.

Fr. Bianchi stayed in the circuit house near the DC's Residence until the man came after 12 days. The next day they met the

Deputy Angh as the Angh was not at home. A meeting was arranged with the Headman and the Elders of Mon town and it was agreed that the mission would buy 30 acres of land on the Sonari Road before reaching Mon Town. The price agreed upon was Rs. 3,000 per acre and it was to be bought from about twelve owners.® The next day the registration of the land was done and the money was paid. Fr. Peter Bianchi returned to Halflong.

On 10th June 1980, the first group of missionaries, Fr. Peter Bianchi and Fr. Justin Lyngkhoi came to Mon, the district headquarters. Mr. Tinpong, the dobashi had agreed to give the house of the Angh of Daboka for rent but on reaching it was found to be already occupied by some one else. For a week the fathers stayed in the PWD rest house called the Inspection Bangalow and later in the house of Mr. Chaying. After a stay of twelve days they shifted to Mr. Chingai's house for a rent of Rs 300/-. They started learning the Konyak language and making friends. Fr. Justin took his lessons in Konyak from Mrs. Thiangli, the wife of Mr. Lima Chingai.

The search for a place for the school ended when Mr. Chingai offered his school to the fathers. The English Medium school run by Mr. C. Shingwang which had up to Class VI, was handed over to Don Bosco. It was bought for Rs. 20,000. Fr. Mathai Kochuparambil, the Provincial and Fr. P.P. Jose were present for the transferring and registering of the school on 5th September 1980. In August constructions were begun for the Confreses' Residence which now serves as the Teachers' Quarters, the Convent and the town school. Sunday Mass was held in the Chingai School.

The Sacred Heart Sisters from Tezpur came to see the land on 17th September 1980. On 28th December 1980 the first group of sisters of Sacred Heart arrived in Mon to stay permanently. For a

few days they stayed in the PWD bungalow and then shifted to the DC's Bungalow.

On 11th February 1981 the new school building and the residence of the fathers were blessed by Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil[@] in the presence of Fr. Thomas Panakkezham, the regional. On the evening of the same day the school in the Town was inaugurated by Fr. Thomas Panakezham. A two-storey pucca building had now substituted the old shed. The new building had six RCC rooms with one office, a store-room and four latrines. The school continued to be called 'The Chingai English School'. When the school started there were about 250 students from K.G. to Class III. Fr. Joseph Felix brought the teachers from Calcutta.

In the beginning there was no boarding as there were no Catholics. After the sisters came, a boarding was begun with a few students.

Fr. Bianchi narrates an incident about one of the cows of the sisters was missing. Fr. Justin went in search of it. Some one had told him that they had bought the cow from the cowman of the sisters. After some time they returned the cow. One day Fr. Bianchi complained to the cowman's father about his son stealing the cow. "Your son stole our cow." "My son is very stupid," he replied, "I stole many times and nobody ever caught me. My son is foolish. He was caught stealing."

Soon Fr. Justin began making new contacts. On 25th February 1981 Mr. Paulus Angami joined the mission and together with him Fr. Justin Lynkhai started visiting the villages of Lempongshinga, Phongtong, Mon, Tenmai etc. They would carry filmine with them. But the visits had to be stopped soon, as the Protestant leaders were unhappy about it.

On 27th February 1981, Fr. Justin published the first leaflet on the Catholic Church. There was a strong reaction from the Protestants and a meeting was held in the Mission centre. On 31st March 1981 - more than 500 copies of "Graphic description of Christian Church" and "True Church of Christ" were published. The leaflet concluded that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church and the baptists leaders were greatly upset.

Fr. Justin Lyngkhoi left Mon after three years of stay and his place was taken by Fr. Murickal Joseph. In January 1983 three new schools were opened at Tizit, Aboi and Wakching. On 13th August 1985 Fr. Peter Bianchi left Mon for treatment to Vellore and Fr. Chacko Edamala was appointed to take his place. But on 28th August 1985 Fr. Chacko Edamala passed away following a short illness. During the interim period, Fr. Murickal Joseph looked after the centre.

Fr. Devassy Kollenkunel was appointed to Don Bosco Mon as in charge and he arrived on 4th November 1985. On 30th May 1986, Fr. Murickal Joseph was transferred to Don Bosco Provincial House, Dimapur. Fr. Anto Tharakan joined the community on 26th May 1986. In 1986, the school uniforms were changed. @ Saturday classes and the two-shift system was stopped. The land where the present high school stands was purchased and the construction of the new School building was begun.

On 14th February 1987, Fr. Anto Tharakan was transferred and Bro. Romanus Tirkey was appointed to the centre. On 25th May 1987 Bro. Mathew Kaliyaden reached Mon. He was transferred on 31st July 1988 and was replaced by Fr. Patrick Soreng.

8th December 1988 was a day of shock. A few miscreants who claimed to be the Underground attempted the life of Fr. Devassy Kollenkunel. However, after a week it was clarified by the del-

egates of the Underground that they were not involved in the incident and that the culprits were already killed.

It was now decided to close down the school at Wakching. Though there were many students in the school, due to lack of cooperation from the people and because of the animosity aroused against the Catholic Church and the school at the instigation of the baptist brethren, the school was closed down. The fact there was already another school in the village was also considered in taking the decision.

In 1990 Fr. Patrick was transferred to Jorhat and Fr. Alex Manayil was appointed to the centre. From 28th August 1990 to 20th December 1990 Fr. Eanthanamkuzhiyil Michael helped at the centre substituting Fr. Devassy Kollenkunnel. Fr. Alex Manayil left on 13th February 1991 and Fr. Albert Tirkey took over on 8th February 1991. Bro. Mathew Kaliyaden was appointed to Mon for a second time on 7th February 1990. The school at Wakching was closed down. On 7th February 1992, Bro. Mathew Kallidadan was transferred.

On 2nd September 1992 Fr. Devassy Kollenkunnel was transferred to Don Bosco School, Kohima. Fr. Kaduthodil Abraham took charge of the centre. Fr. Albert Tirkey was transferred in February 1994 and Fr. Stephen Chazhisserry was appointed as Assistant Headmaster.

Fr. Stephen left for Khoupum Valley on 5th February 1995 and Fr. Thottapilly George took his place. In a murky incident, on 10th February, Rs. 4020/- was looted by some gunmen from the Confreres' Residence. On 13th February 1995, the school was closed in protest against the incident.

30th August 1995 was a memorable day for Don Bosco Centre, Mon. On that day Mr. Paul Hogmo[@] and family were received

into the Church by Fr. Varghese Palathingal, the Provincial. He was the pastor in Mon village for ten years and was the first one to join Catholic Church from the Mon Village. On 11th November 1995, the Konyak Catholic Ponchim was inaugurated at Don Bosco, Mon.

On 25th November 1995, Don Bosco School at Aboi was handed over to Mr. Eyong M.L.A., of Aboi. It was decided to close down the school, as we could not meet the demands of the people to upgrade the school to Class X, besides being economically unviable. The closing of the school led to few families of Aboi coming over to the Catholic Church.

Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung joined the community on 29th November 1995.

On 16th March 1996, St. Paul's School, Longpho was inaugurated by Mr. Pongnao, M.L.A. A few families had come over to the Catholic Church in the Longpho village. In 1996, Fr. Savarimuthu Arokiasamy was appointed to the centre.

On 8th June 1996, the first Past Pupils' Meet was organized in Don Bosco, Mon. The Chief Guest on the occasion was Mr. Sekhose, the D.C. who was a past pupil of St. Antony's, Shillong. Twenty-seven past pupils attended the meeting.

Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung opened up a new dimension to the work in Mon by co-pioneering the public drug service programme "Linge Yepu" and by establishing "Turning Point", (a community Drug and HIV services) in Mon in 1997.

On 2nd October 1997, 11 families were received into the church in Aboi, by Fr. Abraham Kaduthodil. On 26th January 1998, the Government of Nagaland awarded him with a "Commendation Certificate" for his outstanding contribution to drug work in the state.

On 5th November 1997, Don Bosco Computer Centre was inaugurated by Mr. Pongnao Konyak, M.L.A. and blessed by Fr. Varghese Palathingal. The computers were provided by North Eastern Council (NEC).

On 10th February 1998, Fr. Abraham Kaduthodil left for Harmutty. Fr. Mundanthanathu Michael arrived as the new priest in charge on 30th January 1998.

On 25th October 1998, three families were received into the Church in Mon Village by Fr. Michael Munanthanathu. On 25th December 1998, open Christmas was celebrated for the first time in Mon, sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Liangen Konyak.

Today there are about 140 Catholics who are catered to from Don Bosco, Mon. There are Catholics in the five villages of Longpho, Sangnyu, Abboi, Longchang and Mohung. There are about 1400 students in the school and 43 boarders.

Those in charge:

Fr. Peter Bianchi (1980-1985), Fr. Chacko Edamala (1985), Fr. Devasia Kollenkunnel (1985-1992), Fr. Abraham Kaduthodil (1992-1998), Fr. Mundanthanathu Michael (1998-)

Others:

Fr. Justin Lyngkhoi, Fr. Murickal Joseph, Fr. Anto Tharakan, Bro. Romanus Tirkey, Bro. Mathew Kaliyaden, Fr. Patrick Soreng, Fr. Manayil Alex, Fr. Eanthanamkuzhiyil Michael, Fr. Albert Tirkey, Fr. Stephen Chazhissery, Fr. Thottapilly George, Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung, Fr. Savarimuthu Arokiasamy.

DON BOSCO SCHOOL & SAVIO HOME SECHÜ-ZUBZA

The village of Sechü was formed by a number of people who came from different villages and settled down there. The Catholic Church took root in the village of Sechü in 1969 when Mr. Guovi, the catechist of Jotsoma gathered about ten people and brought them to Fr. Ittiyachan Manjil and Fr. Tarcisius Resto of Christ King Parish, Kohima. After an year of instruction the village embraced the Catholic faith in 1970, marking the beginnings of the Catholic faith in the region. Since then, the village was looked after from Christ King, Kohima.

In 1985, there was the possibility of obtaining a plot of land at Sechü. It was offered to the Jesuits who were looking for a land to build a college. But it was turned down then. However, being next to the playground and at a convenient place, it was thought to be an ideal place for Salesian work. 3/4 acres of land was bought at Sechü in December 1985 for Rs. 60,000. The transactions were done by Fr. Chollamadathil Mathew. In January 1986 more land was bought, this time from different people.

On 24th February 1986 a nursery and K.G. school was started in the house of Mr. Nizo. It was started by Fr. Chollamadathil Mathew while Fr. Tom Karthikapallil was the Parish Priest of Christ King, Kohima. The teachers were Mr. Clifford Breens and Mr. T.J. Sunny and they stayed in the house of Mr. Philip Seckro. The school which began with 21 children in Nursery and K.G., had 28 students by the end of the academic year. Text books were supplied from Don Bosco

Kohima. The salary was the same as that of Don Bosco, Kohima, though the fees was only Rs 25.00, half of the fees of Don Bosco, Kohima. Soon more land was purchased and a plot was exchanged for Rs. 11,000.

In March 1987 a tin structure measuring 100"/20' was built with the help of the GREF and the villagers. There were five rooms (20/20) with a six feet verandah. The hostel which was begun in the Teachers' Quarters was later shifted to the school building.

Initially the entire administration was done by Mr. Clifford Breens who was also the Headmaster. Later T.J. Sunny took over as the Headmaster and Mr. Clifford Breens took over the running of the hostel. A village church was constructed on the 100/50 land donated by Don Bosco for the same. The church was financed by Fr. Murphy of England and the church was dedicated to St. Maria Goretti. Fr. Mathew Chollamadathil was the architect and contractor. It was blessed on 5th March 1989.

Two more classrooms and a girls' hostel were built in 1989. The boys' hostel was completed in 1991. The school was upgraded to Class V in 1992 and to Class VI in 1995. Class VII started in 1997. The students who passed were admitted to Don Bosco. It may be noted that while the school catered to all the children of the village, it always ran in deficit. Part of it was recovered from the hostel while Don Bosco School, Kohima met the rest.

In 1995 it was decided to begin an aspirantate for the tribal boys at Sechü. The idea of beginning a formation house for the tribal boys had been mooted years ago but could not be materialized until 1996 due to some particular circumstances.® On 9th January 1996 Fr. Mathew Chollamadathil was put in charge of the construction work at Sechü for the school. The construction work began on 18th January 1996. The first two floors serve as school while the top floor houses the Savio Home - the apostolic school.

In 1997 Fr. Chittilappilly Varghese was appointed Director. He arrived on 28th January 1997. The first batch of seven boys arrived on 29th and another six boys arrived on 30th. The centre was inaugurated on 6th February 1997 by Fr. Varghese Palathingal, the Provincial. It is dedicated to St. Dominic Savio. Cl. Albert Besii joined the house as teacher and assistant on 3rd March 1997. Don Bosco School continued to be administered by Mr. Sunny and later Mr. Biju succeeded him.

The aspirants shifted to the new building on 5th February 1998. The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) took up residence at the centre on 2nd February 1998 with Sr. Elsy and Sr. Maria.

Fr. Joseph Ngangachiveetil joined the community as vice rector and liturgical animator on 25th February 1998. On 7th May 1998, Savio Home and the new school building was blessed by Fr. Varghese Palathingal, Provincial of Dimapur. Bro. Poonamkavil Biju Jacob was appointed as the Counsellor in 1999. He was transferred to Don Bosco, Kohima as Assistant Headmaster and Counsellor in March 2000.

Today, the school has about 450 students in ten classes. The first batch of students appeared for Matriculation exams in February 2000. Don Bosco School and Savio Home Sechü stand out as a unique venture of lay collaboration and involvement of the Salesian family with Sr. Elsy FMA., as the Headmistress and Mr. Abraham Angami as the Assistant Headmaster. There are 100 students in the boys' boarding looked after by the teachers and 24 in the girls' boarding looked after by the sisters. There are 42 aspirants in Savio Home.

Director/Rector:

Fr. Chittilappilly Varghese (1997-)

Others:

Fr. Mathew Chollamadathil (1996-1997), Fr.
Nangachiveetil Joseph (1998-), Bro. Poonamkavil
Biju Jacob (1999-)

DON BOSCO SCHOOL TIZIT

Don Bosco, Tizit, was opened in 1983, while Fr. Bianchi was in charge of Don Bosco School, Mon and Fr. Murickal Joseph was the Assistant Priest. The contact had begun in 1981. It was opened together with Aboi and Wakching. The teachers were brought from Calcutta by Fr. Joseph Felix. They arrived by the end of January 1983 and the school was opened in a temporary shed belonging to the King of Sangsa.

The first teachers were Mr. and Mrs. Glen, Mr. Ignatius and Mr. Cornelius. There were 37 students in three classes: KG, Class I, and Class II. The school was upgraded to II and III in 1986.

The construction of the new building started in 1986. The foundation-stone was laid on 17th January 1986. It was inaugurated on 12th August 1987 by the Hon. Minister of PHED Mr. Yeangphong Konyak.

In 1987 it was decided to begin the Bosco Agricultural Complex at Tizit. Fr. Murickal Joseph who was in the Provincial House was asked to look after the constructions in Tizit. Accordingly constructions were begun for the boarding, confreres' residence, piggery and poultry.

Fr. Murickal Joseph arrived in Tizit together with Bro. Romanus Tirkey on 19th January 1989. Fr. Murickal Joseph and

Bro. Romanus Tirkey and Mr. Alex slept in the school. The next day they stayed in the house of Mr. George.

The centre at Tizit was officially inaugurated and blessed on 25th April 1989. Bro. Romanus was transferred to Salesian Novitiate, Imphal. On 7th February 1993 Fr. Thekeparambil Sebastian was appointed the Headaster.

On 25th November 1993 there was an altercation between Mr. Shingwang, the deputy angh and Fr. Joseph Murickal which will prove significant for the future unfolding of events. Mr. Shingwang brought his vehicle and told one of the boarders to inform Fr. Joseph Murickal to fill petrol in the vehicle. But on his return, Mr. Shingwang found that his order was not carried out. Mr. Shingwang who was inebriated, ordered Fr. Joseph Murickal to push the vehicle which Fr. Joseph refused. Mr. Shingwang came back with his rifle and being not able to find Fr. Joseph, shot the dog and the chickens of the house. Fr. Joseph filed a complaint against Mr. Shingwang and he was jailed for a few days. This was a great humiliation for Mr. Shingwang.⁹

In 1994, Fr. Murickal Joseph was transferred and Fr. Sebastian Thekkeparambil took charge of the centre. Fr. Kalapurayil George was appointed the Assistant Headmaster.

In May 1994 the construction of the boundary wall was begun. But on 25th November, just one year after the quarrel between Mr. Shingwang, the land-owner and Deputy Angh, and Fr. Murickal

⁹ Proably Mr. Shingwang was angry because of the influence that Fr. Joseph Murickal enjoyed because of his relationship with important officials. It is likely that he felt side lined and wanted to show his importance by requesting Fr. Joseph to fill petrol in the vehicle.

Joseph, a notice was received to stop all constructions till measurement was done in the land. As measurement of the land and settlement seemed only a dream it was decided to close the school. But pressure from authorities and people made us open the school as they had not been warned about the closure.

But as the problem became more acute it was decided that the school would be downgraded to class V from Class VII and the Salesians would be out till the settlement of the land issue. Though two years of negotiations were futile, some outside pressure[@] made Mr. Shingwang to come forward to settle the land issue by offering to sell about fifty acres to Don Bosco. Before Fr. Sebastian moved out, an area of 25 acres was bought and registered in the ADC's Court in Tizit in the first week of March 1997. The salesians are still out of the centre and the school upto class V is being looked after by a teacher, Mr. Joseph Dhanwar and supervised from Mon.

Those who worked at the centre:

Fr. Murickal Joseph, Bro. Romanus Tirkey, Fr. Thekeparampil Sebastian, Fr. George Kalapurayil, Bro. Mathew Kaliyaden, Fr. Patrick Warjiri.

DON BOSCO SCHOOL TULI

Don Bosco School, Tuli is situated at a distance of 29 km from Amguri and 69 km from Mokokchung. It was thought that the establishment of a Don Bosco school at Tuli would be an ideal means to make the first approach to the Ao Nagas and others who are in the area. In fact, the Catholic Church had been trying to enter the Ao strongholds like Mokokchung since 1954.

In 1977 the occasion presented itself: the past pupils of St Antony's, Shillong wanted a Don Bosco School to be opened in Tuli. But there was strong opposition from the Baptist Church, especially the pastors, about the fathers being invited to open the school. In order to solve the problem of education a Baptist school - 'Koinonia' was immediately opened. The past pupils argued that they had studied in St. Antony's College, a Catholic institution but had not become Catholics. The argument carried the day.

A Delegation of Past Pupils met Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil and made a request to open a Don Bosco School in Tuli. The Bishop approached Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, Provincial of Guwahati in 1978. He reasoned that if a Don Bosco School were started at Tuli, with a boarding, it was easy to win over the people of the area to the Church. Tuli was a remote place and the Provincial was not in favour of starting a school there. However, on the occasion of the first visit of Fr. Thomas Panakezham, the Regional, the Bishop wanted a meeting with him at Dimapur. Fr. Thomas Panackezham,

the Regional visited the Province in September 1978, and the meeting was held at the Bishop's House at Holy Cross, Dimapur. Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil strongly pleaded with the Regional to start the Don Bosco School, Tuli, as the gift of his first visit to the Province. In the meeting it was decided that Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil, Fr. Matthew Pulingathil and Fr. Porcu Mario would visit Tuli and assess the situation.

In September 1978, the above delgation visited Tuli. During the visit, the leaders met the Bishop, the Provincial and Fr. Mario and everything was promised; freedom for eveangelization; freedom for their children to become Catholic if they so wanted; that they themselves may become Catholics if things went well. They showed the delegation, the land earmarked for the school. Everything looked unbelievably honest and well-intentioned.®

The Provincial Council approved the new ventures as it was supposed to help the extention of the Church in the Ao area. The Bishop agreed to see about the registering of the land for Don Bosco. The land was registered in the middle of 1979. It belonged to two or three owners. Attempts were made to purchase a plot either near the town or near the paper mill. But the efforts were fruitless. The people were willing to donate the land, but realising the possibilities of future complications, buying the land was insisted upon.

The initial plan was to stay in Jorhat until a Catholic community was formed at Tuli. But the people were insistent that the fathers should stay. They had agreed to become Catholics though it was only a general commitment. Finally it was decided that the fathers would stay in Tuli itself.

Fr. Tom Karthikapallil who was the Rector of Christ King, Shillong was asked to go to Tuli. Fr. Tom reached Tuli accompanied by Fr. Mathai Kochuparambil, the Vice-Provincial, Bro. Linus

and Fr. Edassery on 7th December 1978 in an old car just bought from shillong for Rs 29,000 for the Tuli mission. On the way it is said, they searched the whole of Amguri to get a chicken to celebrate the feast of Mary Immaculate; they did not succeed in getting one!

Fr. Tom Karthikapallil rented a building belonging to Mr. Marthemjen, opposite to the paper-mill office. Mr. Marthemjen was a fishery officer and had agreed to give the house for the father to stay for a very nominal rent. In December 1978 the school was opened in his private house. Admission forms were given and the classes started in February 1979. There were two rooms below and one room on top. The top room was divided into three, serving as refectory, chapel and kitchen and a classroom which also functioned as the bed-room. The two rooms below were used as classrooms. There were three classes - Nursery, KG I, Class I - and about 180 students. Three classes were begun only on the insistence of the people.

The classes continued in the building till July. The three teachers were Ms. Margaret Kare, Ms. Philomena and Fr. Tom Karthikapallil. Later Mr. Antony Karthikapallil came to help in the school especially in collecting fees, selling books etc. Mr. John Topno, currently instructor of Golaghat Driving School, was the cook then.

Constructions were begun in the new land. By August 1979 three classrooms and the Headmaster's office were completed. What prompted the building of the new school rather fast was the request of Mr. Marthemjen for a nominal sum of Rs 2,000/- per month! It was thought more profitable to construct our own building. Father had to pay for the six months the school was run from his private house though he had offered it as a free gift and told that the father could remain there as long as he wanted.

The site of the present school was covered with thick jungle. It was impossible to explore the whole area. So about two acres of land was cleared and a building was put up. People came for social work. When the building started one of the land-owners Mr. Toshi and his brother demanded that the contract for the building be given to them. He was upset that Mr. Panger Wati was given the contract. Hence Toshi would often come drunk and put stones in the compound to divide the land and stop the work.

The school compound could have been another 200 meters ahead if it had not been exchanged for a plot of land and pond called panikheti. It was done so that we would be able to enclose our land. It was at this time that Mr. Zulu whose Father-in-Law was an MLA, asked for a plot 100" by 100" at the end of the compound. It was given as he was one of those who had given the land at a nominal rate. But then it turned out that he occupied quite a lot of land. A bit of the land was taken first to keep the fire wood, another stretch as a cow shed, a part of the pond for fishery and so on until he had a small hillock for himself. This of course took place a little later.®

In August 1979 the school was shifted to the new building as soon as the ground floor was ready. A small room was made adjacent to the Headmaster's office for Fr. Tom to stay. The lady teachers remained in a rented building between Marthemjen's house and the present school building. Mr. John Topno stayed near the kitchen. The kitchen was a shed with bamboo walls.

During the initial days one had to walk nearly two kilometers to get water from a brook. A telagari was used for the purpose - to get water for drinking and cooking. Father would go to the river or the pond for bathing. There was no electricity nor shade. Obviously the best time to bathe was when it was night and it was

raining. A manual fan with strings was made to ease out the oppressive and unbearable heat which characterizes Tuli in summer.

Desks and benches were made and brought from Jorhat by truck. Mr. Jagadeesh Singh, the Punjabi tailor from Jorhat stitched the uniforms. The entire expense for the new building and furniture was paid for by the Province of Guwahati.

The people asked the government and arranged the N.S.T. bus to pick up the children. There was a short experiment with a private bus as the school bus but it had to be stopped after a boy fell from the top of the bus. The N.S.T. began plying for the school once again.

Fr. Tom Karthikapallil spent the time after the class visiting families, cultivating the compound and carrying water. In the beginning he used to organize Sunday oratories. It went on for three to four Sundays but then no more boys would turn up as the pastor had forbidden any one from coming to Don Bosco on Sundays. So on week ends he would go to Amguri for Mass. Sundays were regularly spent in Jorhat together with the teachers.

The Protestant pastors were especially unfavourable to the school and the Catholic Church. When the notice 'Don Bosco School, Catholic Church' was put up outside the school, there was a demand that the 'Catholic Church' be removed. In the beginning Fr. Tom Karthikapallil used to go to the villages to show filmine. But again the pastors objected. Initially the people were very willing to help. They would give vegetables etc. and come in to say hallo but not after the building came up; once the building was up they began coming to sell vegetables.

During his stay at Tuli, Fr. Tom Karthikapallil also used to visit Mokokchung to celebrate mass for the few Catholics there. As

there was no church, the Mizo chapel was used for the service. Later when it was decided to begin the mission of Mokochung, the Salesians were offered the mission. But it was turned down.

Fr. Tom Karthikapallil left for St. Antony's College in 1980. There were classes up to II in one section. The question of closing the Tuli Mission was considered as the apostolic prospects were very dim. However, it was decided to continue the mission. Fr. Devassy Kollenkunnel was appointed in charge of the school and he arrived on 2nd July 1980. In 1985, after Fr. Devassy left for the States, Fr. Karumampallil Joseph was appointed to the mission for four months. He left on 1st November 1985.

Fr. Nanagachiveetil Joseph took over from Fr. Devassy on 30th October 1985. In 1986 constructions were begun for the boarding. In 1987 it was decided not to open Class IX as there were very few students. The people demanded that the school proceed to Class IX and threatened to prevent the school from running if their demands were not met. The province gave in to the demand and the school was upgraded to High School.

On 16th June 1987, Fr. Nangachiveetil Joseph was joined by Fr. Andrew Charuvila as the Assistant Headmaster. The first batch appeared for matriculation examination in 1988. The Confreres' Quarters was completed at this time. Fr. Nangachiveetil Joseph left Tuli on 30th March 1989 and Fr. Andrew was appointed the Headmaster. Fr. Aerimattathil Sebastian was appointed as Assistant Headmaster.

On 18th February 1992 Fr. Louis Tirkey joined the school as Assistant Headmaster. Fr. Jose Akkarappatty was appointed in charge of the school in 1993. Fr. Jose Akkarappatty was transferred in 1994 and Fr. Kuariakose Palathingal was appointed the Headmaster. Fr. Neeranal Francis too joined the community in 1994.

On 12th June 1995, was a sad day for Don Bosco, Tuli. On that day, the Chairman of the Coordinating Committee of the school, Mr. S.T. Anung Aier, together with a few members and some parents, totalling about 20 persons in all, approached Fr. Kuriakose, the Headmaster and insisted to have, without any prior information, an emergency meeting then and there. As the Headmaster was proceeding to make arrangements for the meeting one of the parents caught the Headmaster by the neck and dragged him to a Nursery class room and hit him saying that he was not satisfied with the cleanliness of that particular class room. The Assistant Headmaster, Fr. Francis Neeranal, who was coming to the rescue of the Headmaster was stopped on the verandah and he was mercilessly kicked all over and pushed away into a room. Even a lady teacher who stood in the way was manhandled.

The teachers were intimidated and locked up in the Staff room, so that they could not come to their assistance. Meanwhile a large crowd had already gathered around the school. In the presence of the students and the public, the arbitrators started shouting derogatory slogans, abuses, gesticulating and intimidating. Thereafter the Headmaster and the Assistant Headmaster were forcefully made to sit down for a public enquiry which was conducted in Ao language and therefore the Headmaster and the Assistant Headmaster could not follow the proceedings. They were not allowed to defend themselves against the accusations levelled against them. Whenever they tried to speak, they were given blows, kicks or things were thrown at their face. Even the Class IX students were brought in to give evidence against the Headmaster and the assistant Headmaster. The students spoke in Ao and the fathers were not allowed to intervene nor did they explain to the fathers what the students had said. At one instance they slapped the Headmaster, at another moment they throttled the Assistant Headmaster who scarcely es

escaped their grip. Some others in the meantime entertained the large crowd that gathered there by making mockery of the Catholic form of worship and religious practices. The drama ended at 3.00 p.m. in the afternoon. The school was closed with effect from 13th June 1995.

To arrive at an amicable solution, a meeting was held between the Salesians and the representatives of the parents and the public of Tuli on 11th July. They met again on 1st August 1995. In the meeting held on 1st August, the following were communicated to the representatives from Tuli: i) that there would be no priest or religious staff residing at Tuli Don Bosco as long as we were not satisfied with the support and security given to them by the general public, ii) that there would be no admissions to nursery classes in 1996 until a final decision regarding the school was taken, iii) that the present Coordinating Committee of the school was dissolved, iv) that only the governing body can take disciplinary action on the religious staff and only the managing committee can take such actions on the other staff and v) that the parents involved in assaulting the staff were to remove their wards from Don Bosco School with immediate effect. The representatives did not agree to the conditions i, ii and v and walked out of the meeting.

On 6th November 1996 the Provincial Council met in Amguri to discuss the issue of re-opening the school at Tuli. Fr. Tom Karthikapallil and Fr. Alex Pulimootil were delegated to make an on the spot study. They visited the school from 14th to 15th November 1996. Finally It was decided to reopen the school. Fr. Kuriakose Palathingal looked after the school from Amguri.

On 28th January 1996 Fr. Sebastian Manianchira was appointed Headmaster on 29th January 1996 Fr. Cyriac

Pulinthanathumalayil arrived as the Assistant Headmaster . They began staying at the centre once again. In 1998 Fr. Manianchira Sebastian was transferred to Imphal and Fr. Cyriac Neeranakunnel was appointed Headmaster. In February 2000, Cyriac Pulinthanathumalayil was transferred to Borduria and Fr. Jose Chacko Kaippallimyalil was appointed assistant Headmaster.

The school has 708 students.

Headmasters:

Fr. Tom Karthikapallil (1978-1980), Fr. Devassy Kollenkunnel (1980-1985), Fr. Nangachiveetil Joseph (1985-1989), Fr. Andrew Charuvila (1989-1993), Fr. Akkarappatty Jose (1993-1994), Fr. Kuriakose Palathingal (1994-1996), Fr. Sebastian Manianchira (1996-1998), Fr. Neeranakunnel Cyriac (1998-).

Others:

Fr. Leo Tirkey, Fr. Karumamapallil Joseph, Fr. Aerimattathil Sebastian, Fr. Louis Tirkey, Fr. Neeranal Francis, Cyriac Pulinthanathumalayil, Fr. Jose Chacko Kaippallimyalil.

DON BOSCO, WOKHA

On 28th December 1950 a group of five Lotha Nagas came down to Golaghat mission in the Assam plains and enquired about the Catholic Church from Fr. Bollini. After two days of lengthy discussions, armed with rosaries, medals, crucifixes and holy water, the five returned to their village of Lakhuti where the Baptists had expelled them from their Church a year earlier.¹⁰ After getting clearance from Mr. M. Kithan, the head of the Lotha tribe in Wokha, three of them, Mr. Yantsao Yanthan, Mr. Shanpano Humtsoe and Mr. Chenisao Humtsoe returned to Golaghat on 11th April 1951. After another day of instruction they were received into communion with the Catholic Church, making them Nagaland's first Catholics.[@]

It was a dissension in the Lotha Baptist Church that had brought them into the Catholic fold. These Christians had been

¹⁰ I have come across two versions regarding the reason for the excommunication. According to one version, Mr. Shanpano Humtsoe (ex-deacon), Mr. Yanthan Yantsao (watchman) and Mr. Chenisao Humtsoe (member and ex-deacon) were expelled from the Baptist Church because they refused to pay an increased sum towards the Church. In 1949, the Lotha Baptist Church Council had announced in the news bulletin that the pay of the Pastor be increased by Rs. 2.50. This was not agreed to by some of the members. Another version has it that they were excommunicated for not keeping Sunday abstinence from work, as they had come from the market on a Sunday.

excommunicated from the Baptist Church together with their families. But not wanting to revert to their traditional Naga religion, they had decided to become Catholics. They had come to know about Catholic Church, for the first time, from Mr. Rhanumo Humtsoe, one of the dissidents. Mr. Rhanumo Humtsoe had worked as a servant with the Anglican Bishop and later with Fr. Leo Piasecki sdb. Mr. Rhanumo told the expelled Christians that the Catholic Church had a mission at Golaghat. That was how they had come to Golaghat, met Fr. Bollini and subsequently accepted the Catholic Faith.

These first Catholics intended to have their own place of worship. So, soon after their return from Golaghat, they collected wood, thatch and other materials and built a small hut where the first religious service was held on 1st May 1951. The response to the beginning of Catholic Church among the Lothas of Lakhuti was encouraging. Without a priest among them, and as yet having no catechist, their membership increased. Some time later, Mr. Louis Yanthan was made the first catechist. Fr. Bollini could not visit these Christians as he was a foreigner and required an inner-line permit, which was not easily granted. However, in 1953 he managed to obtain a permit and visited Lakhuti and Sunglup for the first time from 16th to 19th March 1953.

Despite, the Baptist opposition and ban on foreign missionaries to enter the area, the number of Catholics increased due to the zeal of this tiny group. In the meantime, Mgr. Marengo, the new bishop of Dibrugarh decided to care for the Lotha Nagas personally, since he had no other personnel to spare. To this end, he studied the Lotha language with the help of the catechist and got the first catechism, prayer books and hymn books ready. On 28th November 1953, on his first visit to Lakhuti, along with Fr. Ravalico, he baptized 200 Lothas from Lakhuti, Sunglup and Achuk and the next day the bap-

tism of another small group followed. Now, it was imperative to have a priest to minister to them.

In 1954 Fr. John Larrea was sent to look after the Lotha mission. For some time he toured the Lotha area from Dibrugarh but in September 1955 he shifted his residence to Golaghat. He learned the language quickly and toured the villages. But it was not easy for Fr. Larrea to visit Nagaland as he had to obtain permission from Delhi for each visit. Nevertheless he made a number of tours to the Lotha hills and beyond. Fr. Larrea made his maiden visit in February 1954. Another tour was made in October of the same year. These and other periodic visits involved much walking, preaching, baptisms, film shows and catechesis. As a result of his efforts, new communities sprang up in Yimpang, Sunlap, Achuk, Longayim and Mekokula villages. By the end of 1955 there were 415 Catholics.

Fr. Larrea also took pains to see that boys and girls were sent for schooling. As early as 1st February 1954, three Lotha boys and two Lotha girls had been sent to Dibrugarh to start their studies. Another group of boys joined Don Bosco School, Dibrugarh on 4th January 1957. A group of girls were also residing with the sisters at Golaghat where they were given training in home science along with catechesis. The idea was that on their return to the villages they would be able leaders.

A very successful missionary effort was the Naga school at Golaghat. It was begun to serve as a preparation before sending the boys and girls to Dibrugarh. A thatched house was constructed with the help of the villagers. It started functioning on 15th February 1958 with 17 boys. Two years later their number increased to 52. In the meantime, Fr. Larrea visited the villages whenever he could. However, between 1956 and 1957, he could not visit the Lotha Hills because of the Naga agitation which had

turned violent. However, he used the time to bring out A Catholic Longtsu Yi a summary of Il Mio Catechismo in Lotha. However, in March 1958 Fr. Larrea succeeded in making a short visit to his Christians. He was surprised that the number of Catholics had by now increased to 1165.

After the Naga agitation began permissions to visit the Lotha areas became more difficult. In fact, between 1957 and 1959, Fr. Larrea could visit the villages only twice. The need for a priest who could easily visit the area was felt. Thus in 1959 Fr. Roland O'Hara sent to join the Lotha mission at Golaghat. Now frequent visits to the villages became possible. Fr. O'Hara made his first tour of the Lotha area from 21st December 1959 to 6th January 1960.

Though the Naga school at Golaghat catered exclusively to the Lotha boys, it was realised that no lasting work could be done without a residence in the hills. As the number of Catholics as well as the students at Golaghat increased, the urgent need to build a residence for the fathers and to shift the Naga school to the hills was felt. In fact, in 1962 Fr. Larrea had been approached by the people to start an English Medium School in the Wokha headquarters. In 1963 when Mgr. Marengo visited Wokha, the request was renewed and question of shifting the school to Wokha was seriously considered. Fr. Roland O'Hara was asked to purchase the land for the same.

The Baptist Church used all possible means, including the Underground to dissuade the people from selling land to the "Romans". The land was purchased at an increased price as people were extremely anti-Catholic.

In the meantime, Mgr. Marengo was transferred to the Tezpur Diocese and Mgr. Hubert D'Rosario took his place. Mgr. Hubert D'Rosario visited Golaghat in February 1965 and on this occasion it

was decided to open a Catechist Centre at Dibrugarh and to shift the Lotha Mission from Golaghat to Wokha. It was also decided that Fr. Roland O'Hara would be put in charge of the new centre.

Mgr. Hubert D'Rosario, visited Wokha on 10th March 1965. The work for the school began on 10th April 1965. This caused strong reaction among the members of the Baptist Church, who with the help of some local Underground leaders called for several protest meetings. Mr. Nrio Murry, Mr. Lojano and Orensu who had sold the land were asked to rescind the deal and were threatened. There was no one to assist in building, as people were ordered not to help the fathers. They were threatened with fine. Local leaders would often give trouble.

As no assistance could be got Fr. Larrea, Fr. O'Hara and a few masons worked doing the manual labour themselves. The local Catholic communities sent volunteers to work for one week each to make stone chips, clear forests, level the ground, to dig etc. The masons came from the Khasi hills led by Mr. Hobert Mawroh.

In spite of threats and the demands to stop the work, the first building took shape in two months. Initially three sheds were built - the primary school, church and a hall which also served as the dormitory. Water connection was got for a bundle of tobacco according to the agreement made by Mr. Oren Murry.

On 8th September 1965 the parish of Wokha was officially erected comprising of the districts of Wokha, Mokokchung and Tuensang. Fr. Roland O'Hara was appointed the Parish Priest with Fr. Thekkekuruvinal Chacko, a diocesan priest now in Manipur, as the Assistant Parish Priest. The first batch of 27 Lotha students arrived from Golaghat on 1st September 1965 and started the Don Bosco School at the present campus. The shed served as the classroom, study hall, dormitory and dining room. Lotha was the me-

dium and only boys were admitted. The teachers were Miss. Lobilo and Tsenimi of Sunglup and Ms. Barbara of Lakhuti. The hostel wardens were Mr. P.M. Joseph and Mr. P.S. Joseph, ex-aspirants from Bandel.

In 1966 the Lotha medium school was turned into an English Medium one and girls were admitted to the school for the first time. Tuition fee was raised to Rs. 10 a month and Hostel fee to Rs. 30 or 16 kg rice and Rs 18/-. Uniforms - black pants and shirt for boys, white skirt and blouse for girls, maroon tie and green sweater - were introduced. There were about 160 students of which 125 were boarders.

With English as the medium, the admissions soared and the school soon made a name for itself snatching the first prizes in drill display, singing competition, march past etc. Electricity connection was obtained and a rice huller and circular saw were bought but not installed after Fr. O'Hara had left.

Everything seemed to be bright till misfortune struck. Misunderstandings developed between the Mgr. Hubert D'Rosario who wanted to transfer Fr. Roland O'Hara and Fr. O'Hara himself who did not want to be transferred.

In September 1966, Fr. Thekkekuruvinal Chacko was transferred and Fr. Basil Thornamplackal, was appointed the assistant Parish Priest followed by Fr. George Mukala. Fr. George arrived in Wokha in the first week of September 1966. He had come as a volunteer from the Province of Madras and had been staying for two months with Fr. Larrea at Dibrugarh, learning the Lotha language. Fr. George too picked up the language and began touring the villages. But due to unfavourable circumstances,[@] Fr. Mukala George could no longer continue in the parish and after two years, he was transferred to Doom Dooma in August 1968.

On 22nd July 1968, Bishop Hubert D'Rosario arrived at Wokha with Fr. Mathew Tharakan and Fr. Tarcisius Resto. Fr. Mathew Tharakan had been appointed to Wokha. But on 25th July, a meeting was held in the school to protest against the transfer of Fr. O'Hara.[@] They shouted slogans and gheraoed the bishop demanding that Fr. O'Hara be not transferred. The situation came to its climax when at the end of 1968 Fr. Roland O'Hara quit the priesthood and settled down at the Lakhuti village.

The Lotha mission was hampered by several drawbacks. First of all the parish centre was far away from the bigger Catholic communities. Secondly, threats of fines, banishments and other harassments scared away those who wanted to join the Catholic church. Thirdly false propoganda against the Catholic Church by the Christian denominations; fourthly lack of enthusiastic and selfless lay leaders among the Catholics; fifthly the departure of Fr. Roland O'Hara from active ministry and the non-availability of another priest who was familiar with the community and the mission field.[@]

The transition period was filled in by Fr. Paul Bernick from Kohima who arrived on 14th November 1968 and later by Fr. Tarcisius Resto. Fresh life was injected with the coming of the Ursuline Sisters in January 1969. The mission received a new vitality in the hands of Fr. Payngott Anthony who was appointed as the Parish Priest and Fr. Michael Mundathanath, the Assistant Parish Priest, both of whom arrived at Wokha on 6th August 1969. The construction of the hostel building was completed in 1971. In September 1971 Fr. Devassy Kollenkunnel joined the mission.

The construction of the school was soon started. The levelling of the new school site began on 13th April 1972. The villagers from Longsa came to help with the levelling. The boarding was also built at this time. The school received official recognition in 1972.

At the end of 1973 Fr. Payngott Anthony was transferred to Kohima as the Principal of Don Bosco and Fr. Mundanthanathu Michael took over as the new Parish Priest in October 1973. In April 1974, Fr. Felix Vernal Joseph arrived as the Assistant Parish Priest.

On 30th December 1974 Fr. Mundanthanathu Michael was transferred to Christ King Kohima as Parish Priest and Fr. Devasia Kollenkunnel was appointed the Parish Priest and Headmaster. In May 1976 Fr. Mathew Ponnattil joined the community as the Assistant Parish Priest. Fr. Job Kallarackal was appointed as Assistant Parish Priest in May 1977. Fr. It was during the time of Fr. Devasia that the school began Class IX. For many years the school had classes only up to VIII. In May 1979 Fr. Job Kallarackal was transferred. Deacon Andrew Charuvila also joined the centre. Kuttikaden Paul was appointed to the centre in June 1980.

In 1980 Fr. Devasia was transferred to Tuli and Fr. Ponnattil Mathew took over as the Parish Priest. Fr. Job Kallarackal was appointed to the Arunachal mission. The first batch of Class X students appeared for the public examinations in 1980. Because of the good result and the beginning of High School, there was a sudden spurt in admissions to the school. As there was no High School for long time, it had been difficult to get students to the school. Now the situation changed dramatically. During this time the school building was extended. On 5th September 1982 Fr. Chemparathy Jose reached Don Bosco, Wokha as its first Headmaster. Till then the school was looked after by Cl. Savarimuthu Arokiasamy and the Ursuline Sisters. The year 1982 also saw the creation of the new parish of Lakhuti with Fr. Jesudas as the Parish Priest.

In February 1983 Fr. Ponnattil Mathew was transferred and Fr. Sebastian Manianchira was appointed the new Parish Priest. Fr. Chemparathy Jose was transferred to Harmutty on 5th September

1983. Fr. Kuttikaden Paul was transferred to Tseminyu and on 14th May 1983 Fr. Cheiyamladiyil Mathew (C.V.) reached Wokha as the new Headmaster.

On 27th May 1985 Fr. Thettayil Jose took over as the Headmaster of Don Bosco Wokha from Fr. Cheiyamladiyil Mathew who had been transferred to Tseminyu. The new parish of Bandari was carved out of Wokha in 1986. The construction of the new school building was started during the time of Fr. Sebastian Manianchira. The first floor was completed in 1987 and the second part was completed in 1989. The Lady Teachers' Quarters was completed in 1988. In June 1987 Fr. Jonas Kerketta joined the community for some time.

1987 was marked by heavy rush for admissions to the school so that the lottery system had to be introduced from 1988. From 1987, three sections were also started from Nursery to Class IV. In 1989 Fr. Sebastian Manianchira was transferred and Fr. Paul Vernal Felix took over as the Parish Priest on 21st February. In 1989 work was begun for constructing the compound wall. The wall was completed in 1991 with the help of the Longsa Village.

Fr. Paul Felix left for Africa and in August 1989 Fr. Vattoth Thomas was appointed as Rector and Parish Priest. The School celebrated the Silver Jubilee in 1990. In July 1990 Fr. Paikada Manuel was appointed the Assistant Headmaster. The new school building was inaugurated by His Excellency Dr. M.M. Thomas, the Governor of Nagaland and blessed by Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil sdb on 27th October 1990.

Fr. Thettayil Jose was transferred in February 1991 and Fr. Paikada Manuel was appointed the Headmaster. Fr. Aelavanthara Sebastian was appointed the Assistant Headmaster.

On 15th October 1991 Fr. Mundanthanathu Michael was appointed Rector and Parish Priest once again after Fr. Thomas Vattoth was appointed Economer of the Province of Dimapur. Fr. Aelavanthara Sebastian was transferred to Kohima and on 7th February 1992 Bro. Mathew Kaliyaden took charge as the Assistant Headmaster.

The Ursuline Sisters who had done yeomen service to the parish left in December 1992 and in their place the FMA sisters arrived on 16th August 1993. On 14th May 1993 Fr. Joachim Minj joined the community. On 20th July 1993 Bro. Mathew Kaliyaden was transferred. Fr. Manuel Paikada was transferred to Imphal and Fr. Bosco Periyanyagam was appointed Headmaster. He took charge on 3rd February 1995. In 1996, construction began for the Confrères' Residence. On 28th January 1997, Fr. Joachim Minj was transferred and Bro. Orappankal James joined the community.

In January 1998 Fr. Mundanthanathu Michael was transferred to Don Bosco Mon and Fr. Bosco Periyanyagam was appointed as Rector and Headmaster. Fr. Ponnattil Mathew took charge as the Parish Priest. Fr. Chalangattucherry Mathew was appointed as Assistant Parish Priest and Administrator in July 1998. The newly constructed Confreres' Residence was inagurated on 5th August 1998.

In 1999 the Parish of Wokha had about 2,300 Catholics in the six villages of Longsa, Rephyim, Pangti, Humtso, Doyang and Yikhum. There were about 1789 students in the school of whom 350 are Catholics. There are 44 boarders. There are also two village schools - Riphyim with 195 students and Longsa with 113 students. The school is to begin +2 some time in June 2000.

Parish Priests/Rectors

Fr. Roland O'Hara (1965-1968), Fr. Paynkhot Antony

(1969-1973), Fr. Mundanthanath Michael (1973-1974), Fr. Devasia Kollenkunel (1974-1980), Fr. Ponnattil Mathew (1980-1983), Fr. Sebastian Manianchira (1983-1989), Fr. Vernal Paul Felix (1989), Fr. Vattoth Thomas (1989-1991), Fr. Mundanthanath Michael (1991-1998), Fr. Bosco Periyayanayagam (1998-), Fr. Ponnattil Mathew (1998-)

Others:

Fr. Thekkekuruvinal Chacko (Diocese of Imphal), Fr. Basil Thornamplackal, Fr. Mukala George, Fr. Bernick Paul, Fr. Tarcisius Resto, Fr. Job Kallarackal, Fr. Kuttikadan Paul, Fr. Cheiyamladiyil Mathew, Fr. Chemparathy Jose, Fr. Jonas Kerketta, Fr. Thettayil Jose, Fr. Manuel Paikada, Fr. Aelaventhara Sebastian, Fr. Bosco Periyayanayagam, Bro. Mathew Kaliyaden, Fr. Joachim Minj, Bro. Orappankal James, Fr. Chalangattucherry Mathew.

MANIPUR

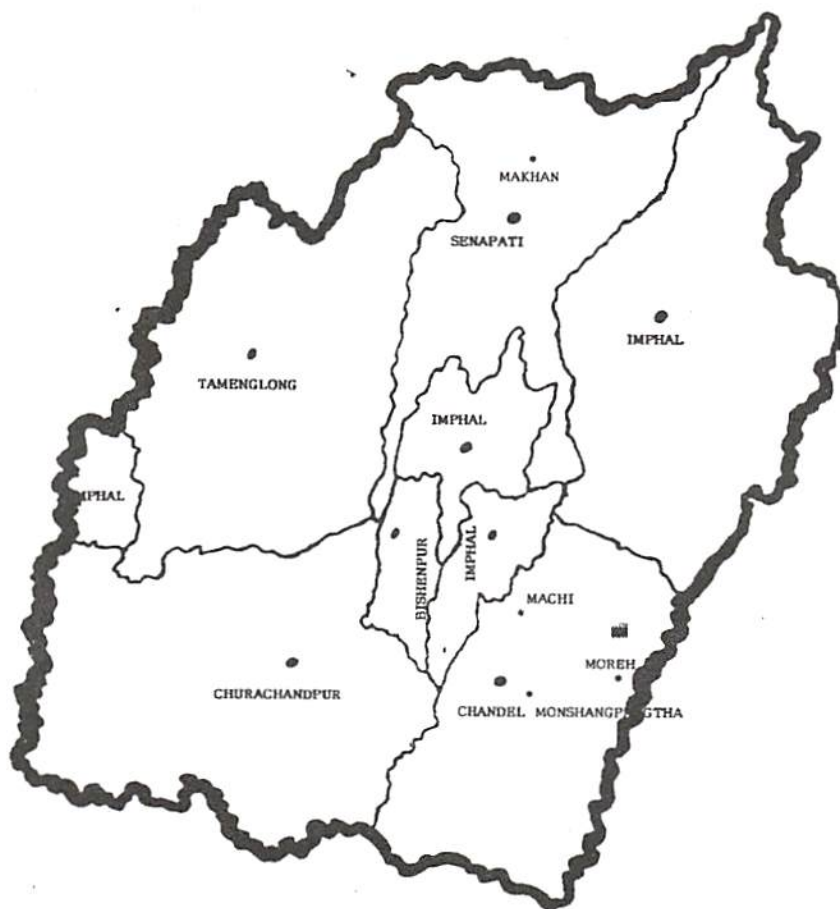
Described by Lord Irwin as the "Switzerland of India" and by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as the "Jewel of India" the state of Manipur is a picturesque land studded with rows of rolling hills and yawning valleys. Situated between 23° 47'N and 25° 41'N latitudes and 93° 06'E and 94° 48'E longitudes, Manipur is bounded by Nagaland in the North, Burma in the East, Mizoram and the Chin Hills of Burma in the South and the Cachar district of Assam in the West.

Of the total area of 22,327 sq. km, the Imphal Plain covers 1,800 sq. km, while the hills cover the entire remaining part - about 9/10th of the state. Manipur has a total population of 1,837,149, of which 1.32 million live rural settlements. Besides the Meiteis who inhabit the Imphal Plain and form bulk of the population, around 30 separate tribal groups inhabit the hills.

Manipur has a varied and proud history from the earliest times. It came under British rule as a princely state in 1891. The Manipur Constitution Act, 1947, established a democratic form of government with the Maharaja as the Executive Head and a legislature constituted by election on adult franchise. The Legislature was dissolved on the integration of the state with the Dominion of India in October, 1949. Then it was governed as if it were a Chief Commissioner's Province and from 26th January 1950 as a Part 'C' State under the Indian Constitution. In 1950-1952 an advisory form of popular government was introduced and in 1957 this was re-

placed by a Territorial Council. In 1963, a legislative assembly was established. The status of the Administrator was raised from that of Chief Commissioner to that of a Lieutenant Governor in December 1969. Manipur became a full fledged state on 21st January 1972.

Today, the state of Manipur consists of the nine districts of Senapati, Tamenglong, Churachandpur, Chandel, Thoubal, Bishanpur, Central Imphal, West Imphal and Ukhrul.

Map of Manipur

DON BOSCO CHINGMEIRONG, IMPHAL

The first Catholic missionary who visited Manipur was Fr. Ansgar Koenigsbauer, a Salvatorian priest from Bondashil. He reached Manipur on 2nd May 1912 via Dimapur. Seventeen Catholics playing in the military brass band required his pastoral ministry. Moreover, he wanted to purchase cows and buffaloes of good quality from Manipur for his Christians in Bondashil. The Raja was friendly with the missionary and posed no problem towards opening a Catholic mission in Manipur. Maj. Shakespeare, the political agent of the British government too, was quite friendly and helpful. But lack of personnel did not permit the Salvatorians to pursue the matter of a new mission in Manipur.

The first Salesian missionary to set foot in Manipur was Fr. Leo Piasecki who used to pay visits to the Irish Catholic family of Dr. McHiver, Medical Officer of Imphal.

The story of the beginning of evangelization work in Manipur may be traced back to the year 1939, when a certain Mr. Haorei Kasar came to Dibrugarh for a Compounder's Training Course. He came into contact with the Catholic fathers and the boarding school there. As a result, in 1940 Phanitphang Hongray was admitted to the school and boarding. Hongray was baptized by Mgr. Immanuel Bars sdb, on 15th August 1942 and was christened George. He became the first Catholic from the Tangkhul area. Hongrey got two others, Chinaochung Peter and C. Paul Yuishi admitted to Don Bosco

School, Guwahati. Chinaochung Peter was baptized by Fr. Attilio Colussi in 1944. Soon many others joined Don Bosco, Guwahati. These students, on their return home brought the Catholic faith to their villages.

In the meantime, George Hongrei, met the Maharaja to plead for permission for the Catholic missions to come to his land. The king issued a permit for two Catholic priests. It was thus that, on 1st November, 1948 Fr. Orestes Marengo and Fr. Attilio Colussi together with Mr. Kaorei Kasar and Mr. George Hongrey set out for Imphal from Guwahati by Jeep. They reached Imphal two days later. The Maharaja, a past pupil of St. Edmund's met them on 4th November. He had no objection to the missionaries working in Manipur as long as they did not convert the Manipuri Hindus.

Fr. Colussi and Fr. Marengo proceeded to Ukhrul, the next day to study the possibility of a future mission centre. It is interesting to note the comments of some of the children on seeing Fr. Marengo and Fr. Colussi. "You see," one of them said, "the one without beard is the wife, the other with the beard is the husband!" The headman of Ukhrul was pleased to hear that the missionaries were willing to open a school there. Due to unforeseen circumstances, however, the plans for beginning a mission centre in Ukhrul had to be abandoned. The Maharaja soon became only a figurehead. Mr. Moon, a staunch Protestant from Northern Ireland was appointed the Chief Commissioner and was very hostile to the Catholic Church.

A new chapter began in the history of the Manipur Missions on 12th July 1951 when the new Diocese of Dibrugarh was created with Mgr. Orestes Marengo as its first bishop. On 16th May 1952, the day the new bishop was installed at Dibrugarh, there was a delegation from Hundung, come to request for a resident missionary centre for Manipur.

In February 1952, Fr. Hubert Marocchino from Kohima visited Hundung. He was invited to by Dominic Shome, the son of the headman of Hundung and a past pupil of St. Anthony's School, Shillong. Dominic had already spread the faith among his people and Fr. Marocchino on that occasion instructed 33 families (350 persons) to prepare them for Baptism.¹¹ Migration from Burma had brought some Catholics into the Sugnu sub-division during the war.

The Manipur mission received a major boost in 1952 Fr. Aloysius Ravalico was asked to look after the mission of Manipur. He made his maiden journey to Imphal on 16th February 1953. The proximate occasion was the wedding of one of the past pupils of Don Bosco School, Guwahati, Mr. John Longyao. Fr. Ravalico visited the village of Ukhrul, and at Hundung he baptized 36 children. Although Mgr. Marengo had warned him not to baptize anyone, he could not resist from baptizing those who pleaded for baptism. Thus the first communities of Catholics were from among the Angogs, the Tangkhuls, the Zous and the Thadous. The following April he returned to Hundung and baptized 120 adults. In October of the same year he visited two Chin villages of Letha mountains.

At the end of December 1953, Mgr. Marengo accompanied by Fr. Ravalico visited the Hundung - Ukhrul- Chin area. It was decided to take up residence in Manipur and an urgent request for permission was sent to the Rector Major for the same. In 1954 Fr. Ravalico left for the United States on a fund-raising mission. In the absence of Fr. Ravalico the mission was looked after by Mgr. Orestes Marengo. Between 1953 and 1955 Mgr. Marengo had made five journeys to Manipur.

¹¹ According to another report, 11th February 1952 Fr. Umberto Marocchino baptized the first 33 families, founding a Catholic community of 350 members in Hundung.

In March 1955 Fr. Peter Bianchi was appointed to Dibrugarh to help in the Manipur Missions. Mgr. Marengo and Fr. Peter Bianchi visited Manipur on a tour that lasted 35 days during which they visited most of the communities on the Burma border and few Anal Christian communities.

In 1955 Fr. Ravalico returned from the States. Everything was now set to begin a residential missionary centre at Imphal. And on 5th March 1956 Fr. Aloysius Ravalico set out for the Manipur Missions from Dibrugarh along with Fr. Peter Bianchi. They reached Mao Gate on 6th March and that same evening at 9.00 pm they were warmly welcomed by Captain Hartnet and family in Imphal. It may be noted that Manipur which was a forbidden land for the missionaries opened up especially because of the assistance of three important officials - the Chief Commissioner of Imphal, Mr. Mathew from Kerala; the I.G.P. of Imphal from Rajasthan whose wife was a Catholic; the District Commissioner, Mr. Sundaram from Tamil Nadu.

On 9th March 1956, Fr. Aloysius Ravalico and Fr. Peter Bianchi took up residence in a rented house on the outskirts of the city at the Thaomeipham Road. The house belonged to Mr. Shimrei (Kashipri), an officer in the P.W.D. The house had two rooms - the bigger room was divided into two and occupied by the two priests. The second room served as the chapel. The first Holy Mass was attended by nine boys belonging to Tangkhul, Chen and Moyon tribes. On the same day a delegation from the South West Manipur came inviting the missionaries to the Paithe, Shimete and Zou tribes.

Soon after settling down, Fr. Aloysius Ravalico and Fr. Peter Bianchi began their two months of first visits. For Easter 1956, Fr. Peter Bianchi visited Hundung and Choitar. But the most important of the visits was the missionary visit to Maram. During his visits

Fr. Ravalico would take his 16 MM projector and show the film "Son of Man" in the villages. It was something looked forward to by the people.

After the two months of visits, Fr. Ravalico and Fr. Peter Bianchi recruited a number of boys and girls to be taken for studies. 23 boys were taken down to the school at Naharkatia. A number of girls too were sent for their studies - the senior girls to the Grihani School at Golaghat and the junior girls to Little Flower School, Dibrugarh. The boys who were taken down to Naharkatia were baptized on 15th December 1956 by Fr. Aloysius Cerato sdb. Among them was also Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung.

On 7th May 1956 when Mr. Palit, the Superintendent of Police left for Bengal, his house was obtained for the mission and Fr. Ravalico and Fr. Bianchi moved to that house. The new house was christened Nirmalabas (Abode of the Immaculate) since the mission of Manipur was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. The house was blessed on 9th May 1956, on the feast of the Ascension, by Mgr. Orestes Marengo sdb. About 300 Christians of different communities participated in the function. After the blessing, Mgr. Marengo remained on to complete a prayer book in Tangkhul and to translate the prayers into Manipuri.

Soon the 'Palit Bhavan' underwent a total metamorphosis. The garden of the house was converted into a playground and the house began milling with activity. Immediately a boarding with a few boys was started. The boys stayed in Nirmalabas and attended the public school. Among the first students were Mr. N. Ashuli and Mr. David. Among the activities held were the various Catechists' Training programmes. Soon in the garage opposite to the centre a Weaving Centre was opened for the girls. The thrust of the various activities at the centre were one of catechesis.

Nirmalabas being too small, a large piece of land was bought in August 1956 at Chingmeirong, near the approach road to Imphal. The land at Chingmeirong was low land, infested with mosquitoes and frogs and believed by the local people to be inhabited by evil spirits. But soon the marshy land was drained of the water and the construction of the building was begun at the site. In May 1956, Fr. Bianchi visited the Maram Mission[@] and on the 28th of the same month he proceeded towards Mao on a maiden trip. First visits were also made to the villages of Hmar, of Senwon and of Rokot. In August 1956, Bro. Fausto Pancolini also joined the mission for some time.

On 20th December 1956, Fr. Joseph Felix joined Fr. Ravalico and Fr. Peter Bianchi. He was a good musician and linguist and at once made a tremendous impact. In February 1957 constructions were started at Hundung for a wooden structure. The school had been started earlier by Fr. Ravalico.

On 17th March 1957 Fr. George Venturoli too joined the mission increasing the number of confrères to four. Fr. George Venturoli picked up Manipuri well and published *Let's Sing*, a booklet of English and Manipuri hymns. He also put to music to many of the Manipuri poems.

In May 1957 Fr. Peter Bianchi visited the village of Leibi of the Maring Nagas. In the same month Fr. Felix made the first visit to Awangkhu village. By now there were several elementary schools, two middle schools, and a weaving school. In November 1957, a group of Catholics and catechists were taken to Shillong to see the annual Eucharistic Procession of the Cathedral Church at Shillong, commonly known as Procession Bah.

On 3rd December 1957, on the feast of St. Francis Xavier, the centre at Hundung was opened marking a significant event in

the growth of the mission in Manipur. Fr. Peter Bianchi and Fr. Joseph James Felix took up residence at Hundung. Fr. Bianchi and Fr. Felix toured the Thangkul, Maram and Tamenglong areas from here.

On 31st January 1958, Fr. Ravalico and Fr. Venturoli shifted their residence from Nirmalabas to Chingmeirong, the newly constructed Don Bosco Youth Centre. The Savio School and Confrères' Residence were blessed on 9th March 1958. Mr. R. Burns was the architect and constructor of the new building. About 400 people participated in the function. The Tangkhul choir led by Fr. Felix solemnised the occasion.

Don Bosco Youth Centre was a two-storey building with the kitchen and the store-room at the back. The building at the left of the Confrères' Residence was not complete but the boarders were shifted to the building. There were about fifty boys from different tribes. The boys who had come back from Naharkatia to join the boarding were distributed in the various village school since there was not enough place in the boarding.

The number of boys in the boarding kept increasing, soon touching the mark of eighty, and belonging to 15 different tribes. More help came in the person of Fr. Douglas J. Wollaston, who remained with Fr. Ravalico in Imphal, as Headmaster of the school. The school called Don Bosco Youth Centre however, was considered a tribal school. In fact the local people were not friendly with the missionaries and would call them mayangs and Hao machasing. At night they would be disturbed by pelting stones at the house.

Sr. Cleofe and Sr. Cecille Doyle of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, took up residence at Nirmalabas, Imphal, on 10th February 1958. The Little Flower School was begun on 24th February 1958.

On 26th July 1958, Fr. Joseph Kachiramattam, a diocesan priest also joined the community of Youth Centre. In 1958, the boys who were sent to the various village schools were also taken into the boarding. The Youth Centre had classes up to IV and there were about 200 boarders. Most of them paid only marginal fees or nothing at all. In fact Fr. Ravalico would give money to the boys not only to go home during the holidays but also to come back. In spite of being hard up for funds, he did not mind spending them for getting the boys back to the boarding.

The foundation stone for the new church of Mary Immaculate, Chingmeirong was blessed on 1959. Fr. Joseph Felix was transferred and Fr. Mathew Planthottam was appointed to the centre. He reached on 16th June 1959. On 31st December 1959, Sacred Heart Church, Hundung was blessed and Fr. Mathew Planthottam was appointed in charge of the centre at Hundung. Fr. Peter Bianchi came down to Don Bosco Youth Centre.

Fr. Ravalico had had keen interest in nurturing local vocations. In 1959, Fr. Ravalico sent the first batch of two aspirants to Bandel, Calcutta. They were John Deng and Paul, two Kuki boys. The second group consisting of Angelus Paiza (Tangkhol), Andrew Runther (Chote) and John Zamkhomang (Kuki) were sent in 1960. The third group of six aspirants were sent to Bandel in 1961 - Joseph Shangnoulei, James Mingnayong, Andrew Panzi, Aloysius Nehkхоjang, Donald Kosha and Joseph Ngamkhuchung.

The new church of Mary Immaculate at Chingmeirong was blessed on 24th May 1961 by Mgr. Orestes Marengo. The church was a big two-storeyed structure, the ground floor provided a hall and classroom for the more than 300 children of the centre. The upper storey was the church. The year 1961 also saw the arrival of Fr. Mani Parenkulangara, another diocesan priest,

thus increasing the strength of diocesan priests working in Manipur to three.

In 1962 Fr. Aloysius Ravalico, the pioneer of the Manipur Missions was transferred to Shillong due to failing health. Fr. Douglas Wollaston was put in charge with Fr. Egidus Daniel and Fr. Peter Bianchi to assist. Thanks to the indefatigable zeal of Fr. Ravalico, by now, the Church in Manipur was well established with two centres, four proceeding High Schools, numerous Catholics and a band of priests and nuns.

In 1962 Little Flower School and Convent were shifted from Nirmalabas to the present site at Kwakeithel and Fr. Peter Bianchi shifted to Nirmalabas.

In 1963 Fr. Wollaston was transferred and Fr. Peter Bianchi was appointed the Parish Priest. He was assisted by Fr. Egidius Daniel. Fr. John Kongla was the Administrator. In 1964 Fr. Joseph Edakudan was appointed the Headmaster of Don Bosco School. In 1964 Fr. Joseph Kachiramattam left for Sugnu to begin the new centre there.

The first batch of Matric students appeared for the public examinations in 1965. The very next year, in 1966, the school secured 20 and 21 ranks in the North Eastern Board. This helped much in boosting the image of Don Bosco School. It may be noted that the whole of North East was under one Board with the headquarters at Guwahati. It is interesting to note that already in 1964, the school was recognized up to Class X though there were classes only up to IX. But it was derecognized as quickly when Fr. Wolasten questioned the credentials of the Inspector of Education in granting such recognition. The school was recognized again in 1965 but only after some initial difficulties. Mr. Dekha of the Directorate of Education was very helpful in getting the school recognized once again.

The Carmelite Sisters (CMC) arrived on 26th January 1966 and began staying at Nirmalabas which was lying unoccupied. The school was inaugurated on 14th February 1966. The year 1966 also saw the beginning of the centre of St. Mary's, Mao. Fr. Bianchi began residing there and Fr. Egidius Daniel was appointed the Rector and Parish Priest of Chingmeirong. In 1968, Fr. Daniel left the Salesian Society. Fr. Joseph Edakudan looked after the centre during the interim period. He was assisted by Fr. Mathew Tharakan from January to August 1969. For a month Fr. Sebastian Karotempel too helped at the centre.

In August 1969 Fr. Edakudan Joseph was transferred to Golaghat and Fr. O.V. Abraham was appointed the Rector and Parish Priest. In July 1969 Fr. Paul Bernick and Fr. Chettupuzha George joined as Assistant Parish Priests. Fr. Thomas Mailaparambil too was appointed to Don Bosco Imphal.

In 1970 Fr. Sebastian Manianchara was appointed Rector and Parish Priest of Don Bosco, Imphal. Fr. Mariaselvam was appointed to the centre in June 1970 and in 1972 he began the new centre at Tamenglong. In 1971, Fr. John Med joined the centre and looked after especially the Khoupum Valley area. The house of Nirmalabas was handed over to the CMC sisters in 1973. In 1974 Fr. Paul Bernick was transferred to Christ King Kohima. The new convent of the CMC sisters was blessed by Fr. Sebastian Manianchira on 11th March 1974.

The construction of the new school building at Chingmeirong too began at this time. It was looked after by Bro. Brahmakulam Antony and the construction was undertaken by Mr. Jagadish Das.

In July 1975 Fr. Joseph Edakudan was appointed the Rector and Parish Priest and Fr. Manianchira continued to be the Headmas-

ter. The new school building was inaugurated in August 1975 by Mr. Rishang Keishing, the Minister of Education. In 1976 Fr. Thomas Vattoth joined the community as the Assistant Parish Priest. In 1976 Fr. John Med was transferred to Don Bosco Mao, as Assistant Parish Priest in charge of the Maram area.

While Fr. Joseph Edakudan was the Rector, the land in front of the school and at the side of the school were obtained from the Government[@]. The land had been earlier allotted for D.M. College, Imphal. Land was also obtained near the present Confrères' Residence.

Fr. Vattoth Thomas too was transferred and Fr. Chittisery Joseph was appointed to the centre in May 1980. In June 1980 Fr. Sebastian Manianchira was transferred and Fr. Roy Antony was appointed the new Headmaster.

5th February 1981 was a day of shock. Fr. Joseph Edakudan, the Rector and Parish Priest was assaulted by three miscreants. Cl. Nester Guria and Cl. Thettayil Joseph were held captive. The school was closed indefinitely for the first time in its history. On 23rd February the school was re-opened after nearly three weeks. In a major reshuffle following the incident, Fr. Joseph Edakudan was transferred to Mao in February 1981, and Fr. Scaria Nedumala was appointed the Rector on 4th July 1981. Fr. Roy Antony was transferred and Fr. Menampampil George was appointed Headmaster on 21st February 1981.

In 1982 when the new Province of Dimapur was created Fr. Scaria Nedumala became the Vice-Provincial. Fr. Scaria left for Dimapur on 15th May 1982 and Fr. Thazhoor Chacko was appointed Rector and Parish Priest.

Fr. Chollamadathil Mathew was appointed as the Assistant Headmaster on 24th May 1982. In January 1983 Fr. Mathew

Chollamadathil took over as the Headmaster and Fr. George Menamparampil as the Assistant Headmaster.

Don Bosco School at Langjing was begun on 14th February 1983. Fr. Menamparampil George looked after the school in the beginning.

Fr. Chittissery Joseph was transferred to Senapati as Assistant Parish Priest in September 1983 and replaced by Fr. Karumampallil Joseph.

In August 1984 Fr. Thazhoor Chacko was transferred to Khoupum Valley and Fr. Menamparampil George took over as the Rector. In October 1984 Fr. Chollamadathil Mathew was transferred to Don Bosco, Kohima as Rector and Headmaster. In May 1985, Fr. Aelavanthara Sebastian joined the community as student.

On 14th October 1986, Ravalico Hostel was begun at Chingmeirong. Fr. Job Kallarackal was appointed as the first Warden. In 1987 Fr. George Menamparampil was transferred to Don Bosco, Tamenglong and Fr. Neeranakunnel Cyriac was appointed the Rector and Parish Priest. In 1988 Fr. Chittilappilly Varghese was appointed Headmaster and Fr. Alex Manayil took charge as the Assistant Headmaster.

All Manipur Don Bosco Centenary Celebrations were held at Don Bosco, Imphal from 7th to 10th April 1988. Perhaps, the year 1988 also closed a chapter in the glorious history of Don Bosco, Imphal and signalled the beginning of a new phase in its existence. While one may attribute many reasons for it, this may be primarily due to the dramatic turn around in the socio-political situation of Manipur, marked by the emergence of numerous militant outfits, ethnic conflicts and political instability. The overall situation prevalent in the state has undoubtedly influenced the functioning of the school and the attitude of the general public towards it.

On 10th November 1989 Fr. Manayil Alex, the Assistant Headmaster was attacked by an unidentified person. He suffered an injury on the eye-brow. A strike followed and the school was closed. Fr. Alex Manayil was transferred to Don Bosco, Mon and Fr. Jose Nelliseril was appointed the Assistant Headmaster. In February 1990 Fr. Thekeparambil Sebastian was appointed the Administrator. In January 1991 Fr. Chittilappilly Varghese was transferred and Fr. Vadakethannikal Sebastian took over as Headmaster. The same year, Fr. John Med was appointed to Don Bosco, Chingmeirong as the Confessor.

On 18th May 1992, an attempt was made on the life of Fr. Vadakethannikal Sebastian, the Headmaster. Don Bosco School and other Catholic institutions in the valley remained closed in protest. The school opened only on 25th June 1992 after a meeting with the Mgr. Joseph Mittathany, Bishop of Imphal, on 11th June 1992.[@] The other Catholic institutions which were closed down opened on 22nd June 1992. In protest against the incident, it was decided that admissions will not be taken to the nursery and K. G., I and II till further notice. Admissions to Class I and II were resumed only in 1995 after situations seemed to have changed for the better. However there have been instances of various Underground groups demanding varying sums of money.[@]

In January 1993, Fr. Nebu Mathew was appointed the Headmaster and Fr. Aerimattathil Sebastian as the Assistant Headmaster. In 1994 Fr. Cyriac Neeranakunnel was transferred to St. Francis Xavier's School, Harmutty and Fr. Tom Karthikapallil was appointed Rector and Parish Priest.

On 25th May 1995, the instance of one of the teachers, Mr. Azang, beating Master Rajesh Haobam, the President of the Interact Club brought some element of tension. In the scuffle that followed the boy beat the teacher. The students boycotted

the classes demanding the immediate dismissal of the teacher and damaged the property of the school and the church. The school was closed temporarily and classes II to VIII were opened on 3rd July 1995.

On 31st July 1995 another event marred the functioning of the school. Two tribal boys were caught for writing obscenities on the wall. A Tangkhul boy who defended them was beaten up by a few other boys who were Meitheis. Tension ran high and the school was closed for two days.

In July 1995 Fr. Aerimattathil Sebastian was transferred to Don Bosco, Doom Dooma and December 1995 Fr. Nebu Mathew was transferred to Dimapur as the Secretary to the Provincial. Fr. Manuel Paikada took over as the Headmaster in January 1996. In February 1997 Fr. Stephen Chazhissery was appointed Assistant Headmaster and Director of Youth Centre.

Unfortunate events continued to occur in the school. On 18th May 1997, UNLF, an outlawed insurgent group demanded Rs. one lakh from the school. On refusal to pay the sum, on 24th and 31st of August, computers, cordless phones and a slide projector were forcibly taken away from the school. On 3rd September 1997 the school was declared closed until a permanent solution to the recurring demands for money was found. As a follow-up, on 18th September 1997 a meeting of all the Heads of Salesian institutions was held at Kohima. About forty confrères participated in the meeting and arrived at the following decisions: i. to withdraw the Principal and Headmaster temporarily from the school, ii. to ask the Assistant Headmaster to see to the day-to-day running of the school, iii. to close the school by February 1998 if no viable solution was arrived at by then and iv. to explore forms of social work that could be undertaken in the school complex.

Accordingly Fr. Mathew Tharakan and Fr. Joe Edakudan were asked to conduct negotiations to arrive at a solution. Fr. Tom Karthikapallil and Fr. Manuel Paikada were shifted out of Imphal and Fr. Stephen Chazhissery was put in charge of the school.

As a core group of parents formed before could not agree to a viable solution, on 20th October 1997, notices were issued to terminate the services of the teachers. This led to a reaction from the teachers who started a non-cooperation movement. The students who turned unruly damaged benches, fans etc. Surprised at the turn of events, the parents of the students demanded revoking of the notice for closure and assured help to chalk out a solution before November 1997. A steering committee was formed and on 30th October 1997 a written assurance was given by the representatives of the parents to exclusively handle demands for money from identified or unidentified persons without reference to the school authority. Consequently, the revocation notice for closure and termination of teachers' services were published on 3rd November 1997. It should be noted that the articles of some of the past pupils of Don Bosco School, like Mr. Yambem Laba, Saroj Kumar etc, defending their alma mater helped greatly in arriving at a solution.

In February 1998 Fr. Scaria Nedumala was appointed as the Rector and Parish Priest after Fr. Tom Karthikapallil was transferred to Don Bosco, Dibrugarh. Fr. Neeranal Francis was replaced by Fr. Sebastian Manianchira as the Administrator. In 1999 Fr. Nebu Mathew was appointed as the Administrator and Fr. Sebastian Manianchira was transferred to Shajouba.

In February 2000, Fr. Scaria Nedumala was transferred to Itanagar and Fr. Manuel Paikada was appointed Rector and Parish Priest. Deac. Andreas Kindo was appointed assistant Headmaster and Counsellor.

The Parish of Mary Immaculate, Chingmeirong has over 3075 Catholics in the 12 sub-centres of Saram, Poirou, Thayong, Ragailong, Gaipuinam, Dimdaijam, Ramgailong, Khabam, Langol Hill, Phayeng, Longa Koireng and Chingmerong. The school has about 1500 students and there are 37 students in the boarding.

Those in charge/ Parish Priests/ Rectors:

Fr. Aloysius Ravalico (1956-1962), Fr. Dougl's J. Wollaston (1962-1963), Fr. Peter Bianchi (1963-1966), Fr. Egidius Daniel (1966-1968), Fr. O.V. Abraham (1969-1970), Fr. Sebastian Manianchira (1970-1975), Fr. Joseph Edakudan (1975-1981), Fr. Scaria Nedumala (1981-1982), Fr. Thazhoor Chacko (1982-1984), Fr. Menampampil George (1984-1987), Fr. Neeranakunnel Cyriac (1987-1994), Fr. Tom Karthikapallil (1994-1998), Fr. Scaria Nedumala (1998-2000), Fr. Manuel Paikada (2000-)

Others:

Fr. Joseph Felix, Fr. George Venturoli, Fr. Joseph Mattam, Fr. Parenkulangara Mani, Fr. Mathew Planthottam, Fr. John Kongla, Fr. Bernick Paul, Fr. Chettupuzha George, Fr. John Med, Fr. Thomas Vattoth, Fr. Chittiserry Joseph, Fr. Karumampallil Joseph, Fr. Chollamadathil Mathew, Fr. Vadakethannikal Sebastian, Fr. Aelavanthara Sebastian, Fr. Tony Pelliserry, Fr. Anto Tarakan, Fr. Manayil Alex, Fr. Thekeparambil Sebastian, Fr. Nebu Mathew, Fr. Jose Nellisseril, Fr. Josin, Fr. Sebastian Jose, Fr. Pampackal Joseph, Fr. Paikada Manuel, Fr. Stephen Chazhissery, Fr. Neeranakunnel Francis, Fr. Sebastian Manianchira, Fr. Nebu Mathew, Deac. Andreas Kindo.

RAVALICO HOSTEL CHINGMEIRONG, IMPHAL

In 1982 the idea of a hostel for the College youth was mooted for the first time during the Planning Session of the Provincial Council. The land at Poumei Colony which had been lying vacant for a long time, was proposed as the ideal place for the hostel.® It had been bought as early as 25th August 1965 when Fr. Peter-Bianchi was the Parish Priest of Don Bosco, Chingmeirong. Soon after the decision to open the hostel, construction work was taken up at the site. By 1985 the building was completed though not fully furnished.

Fr. Job Kallarackal was appointed the first Warden of the Ravalico Hostel. He arrived on 31st October 1985. The rules of the hostel, admission form etc were already printed and eight applicants were in the waiting list. But since the building had certain defects, the opening of the boarding was delayed until the latrines and the septic tank were redone.

The hostel was opened on 14th October 1986 with eight boys. It was blessed on 3rd November 1986 by the Provincial, Fr. Matthew Pulingathil. Initially the hostel had to face a lot of inconveniences. One of the difficulties was concerning water. In fact water was bought for Rs 150/- every week for the purpose of drinking, cooking etc. The boys would go to a pond outside or to Don Bosco for washing. The water scarcity was most acute between October 1985 and April 1986.

In the beginning only Catholic youth were admitted into the hostel. But later a few non-Christians were taken on the condition that they would become Catholics. The hostel fee was Rs. 30/- per month and the mess fee Rs. 250/- per month towards the mess. In general, they managed everything including the mess. For a few years the Catholic students also stayed in the hostel to prepare for the matriculation examinations. 'Joseph Marie Pick Scholarship', introduced for the hostel students on 6th October 1988 served as an encouragement for excellence in studies.

In December 1989 Fr. Job Kallarackal was transferred to Akkuluto and Fr. Chittissery Joseph was appointed as the new Warden. Fr. Joseph Chittissery was transferred to Tseminyu on 14th February 1992 and Fr. Tony Pellissery took over as the Warden. He arrived on 1st February 1992.

In August, 1993, a Cycle Scheme was introduced in the hostel to help the poorer students. According to the scheme, the students were allowed to pay a rent of Rs.200/- a year and use the cycle or pay in instalments and own the cycle. The same year also saw the introduction of Ravalico Cup Basket-ball Tournament. A grant was given from the government for making a basketball court. The Youth Centre was inaugurated on 9th October 1993. The Youth Centre held its first Membership Day on 5th December. There were about 125 boys and girls present.

After Fr. Tony Pellissery, Fr. Mathew Pottukulam took over in February 1994. In September 1994 Fr. Pottukulam left for Don Bosco, Tamenglong to substitute Fr. Jose Palely and Fr. Thottappilly George was appointed as the Warden. Fr. Thottappilly George was followed by Fr. Manuel Paikada in 1995. He was followed by Fr. Jose Palely in 1996. After Fr. Jose Palely was transferred to Don Bosco, Langjing, Fr. Joseph Edakudan looked after the hostel.

On 21st May 1997 Bro. Biju Poonamkavil arrived as the Warden. In 1999 Fr. Paulus Kerketta was appointed the Warden. In 1999 there are 61 students studying in the 11 Colleges of Imphal. They belong to nine tribes and over fifteen parishes. There are fifty-four Catholics. The hostel fee is Rs. 60/- and 40/- for rooms with two and three beds respectively. The students contribute Rs. 400/- month towards the food.

Wardens:

Fr. Job Kallarackal (1985-1989), Fr. Chittissery Joseph (1989-1992), Fr. Tony Pellissery (1992-1994), Fr. Mathew Pottukulam (1994), Fr. Thottappallil George, (substitute), Fr. Manuel Paikada (1995), Fr. Jose Palely (1996), Fr. Joseph Edakudan (substitute), Bro. Poonamkavil Biju (1997-1999), Fr. Paulus Kerketta (1999-)

DON BOSCO SCHOOL LANGJING, IMPHAL

The land for a Don Bosco School was bought on 25th October 1965 at Iroishemba when Fr. Bianchi was the Parish Priest of Mary Immaculate Parish, Chingmeirong and Fr. John Kongla was the Administrator. It was a brick field and was bought from a Marwari. The idea behind buying the land was to shift the boarding from Chingmeirong so that there would be only the parish and the day school at Chingmeirong. There was talk that a State Highway would soon be coming along that part of the land at Iroishemba and hence it was considered a strategic place. But unfortunately developments did not take place as expected and the idea was abandoned. Mr. Timothy was put up there to look after the land and to cultivate.

In 1976, when there was a rumour that the vacant lands would be taken over by the government, a school was started in the land in order to prevent it from being taken over. A small building which had previously served as the office of the brick factory was now used as the nursery. The school ran for a few years and was shifted to a private house at Iroishemba, on the other side of the river. Later the school was closed when the danger of a take-over by the government was no more. @

The idea of beginning a school at the land at Iroishemba came to life once again as a result of the heavy rush for admissions in Don Bosco School, Chingmeirong. One can understand the mag-

nitude of the problem, when one realizes that there were about 1500 applications for the 150 seats that were available. In fact, the lottery system had to be adopted to give a fair chance to one and all. The only schools existing at the time were Don Bosco Chingmeirong, Little Flower and Nirmalabas and they could not absorb all the students. In October 1982, taking into consideration the prevailing situation, it was decided to begin a new school at Iroishemba, Imphal.

Thus the second Salesian School at Imphal - Don Bosco School, Iroishemba - was opened on 14th February 1983 as a branch of Don Bosco Chingmeirong. Fr. Chacko Thazhoor, the Rector of Don Bosco School, Chingmeirong graced the occasion. Don Bosco Boarding was also started on the same day with eight boarders of Class V from Chingmeirong occupying the building. Cl. Maximus Langstiech took charge of the building and school temporarily.[@] The staff consisted of Cl. Maximus, Mr. Robert, Mr. Peter Mason, Mr. Joseph Rongmei, Ms. Dhaneswari Devi. There were five classes - Class V, I, KG and nursery.

The school was begun in a temporary shed which was constructed with the help of the police personnel under Mr. Karunamai, the S.P. The students of Don Bosco, Chingmeirong, helped in getting the school ready. Cl. Maximus returned to Don Bosco, Chingmeirong and from 3rd March 1983, the school was looked after by Fr. Menampampil George. There were about 92 children in nursery class in two sections. The total number of students was 236. A temporary dormitory, chapel, store-room and kitchen were soon got ready. After four nights of 'community-sleep' the boys shifted to the new dormitory-study hall.

On July 6th 1984 Fr. Kunnel Tom (K.D.) took charge of the school from Fr. Menampampil George. The foundation stone of the new school building was blessed by Fr. Matthew Pulingathil.

Present on the occasion were also Mgr. Joseph Mittathany and other dignitaries. On 20th May 1985 Fr. Aelavanthara Sebastian joined Fr. Kunnel Tom.

The construction of the new school building at Langjing progressed quickly under the leadership of Fr. Mathew Chollamadathil who was the architect and the contractor. By 10th January 1986, the school was complete with seven classrooms, two rooms for the teachers, the Headmaster's office and a teachers' common room. On 11th July 1986 Fr. Charuvila Francis took over as the new Headmaster. He was assisted by Bro. Perumanoor George who had arrived a few days earlier.

From 1986, Don Bosco School, Iroishemba came to be known as Don Bosco, Langjing. The change of name followed the discovery that the school was actually situated at Langjing and not at Iroishemba. On 23rd March 1988, Fr. Nebu Mathew joined the community as the new Assistant Headmaster increasing the number of confrères' to three. Don Bosco School, Langjing achieved a new mile stone on 24th April 1988 when Don Bosco School, Langjing was constituted as a separate community. It was blessed by Fr. Mathew Pulingathil, the Provincial of Dimapur.

On 10th November 1989 the Governor of Manipur, Hon. Chintamani Panigrahi laid the foundation-stone of the second wing of the school. The foundation-stone was blessed by Fr. Michael Mundanthanathu, the Provincial Economist. On 10th February 1991 Bro. Perumanoor George was transferred to Maram as Assistant Headmaster.

Since 1991, Don Bosco School, Langjing has been marred by many an unfortunate incident. On 14th June 1991 Fr. Charuvila Francis and Fr. Nebu Mathew were assaulted and Rs. 10,000 were robbed. Several teachers and workers were locked up. The

incident acquired wide publicity. The school was re-opened on 1st July 1991.

On 26th February 1992, the bridge over river Numbul was inaugurated by Hon. Nabakishore, the D.C. of Imphal.

September 1992, was marked by the general disturbance prevailing all over Manipur with the All Manipur Students' Union (AMSU) demanding student unions in all the schools. For about a month the school remained closed. It was re-opened only on 28th October 1992 after AMSU agreed to the continuation of the house system in the school instead of the students' union.

On 3rd February 1993 Fr. Nebu Mathew was transferred to Don Bosco Chingmeirong as Headmaster and Fr. Thottathimyalil Francis was appointed as the Assistant Headmaster. He arrived on 1st February 1993. In January 1994, Fr. Thottathimyalil Francis left for Khoupum and Fr. Cyriac Pulinthanathumalayil took over as the new Assistant Headmaster on 10th February 1994. It was now decided to construct a wall around the school so as to prevent unwanted elements from easily entering it. On 8th June 1994 the Statue of the Sacred Heart was installed in the school.

On 15th June 1994 the school was looted and the staff and students were attacked. The miscreants who claimed to be the Underground demanded three lakhs rupees and threatened to destroy the school if it was not paid within three days. They broke open the school office and robbed a camera, two torches and a cordless phone. In response, the school was closed indefinitely after calling a meeting of the parents and teachers on 9th July 1994. The school was re-opened after assurance of support from the parents of the students. Classes resumed on 25th July 1994. However it was considered not safe to remain in Langjing. So in

1994, Fr. Charuvila Francis and Fr. Cyriac Pulinthanathumalayil began staying at Don Bosco, Chingmeirong.

On 3rd February 1995, Fr. Charuvila Francis was transferred after nearly nine years of stay and Fr. Patrick Warjiri was appointed to his place. Fr. Patrick arrived on 4th February 1995. Fr. Patrick and Fr. Cyriac started staying at Langjing once again. The boarding which was closed in 1994 was re-started. On 11th February 1996 Fr. Lazarus Kujur took charge as the Assistant Headmaster after Fr. Cyriac Pulinthanathumalayil was transferred to Don Bosco, Tuli.

Trouble began brewing once again in March 1996. The NSCN (National Socialist Council of Nagaland) sent a letter demanding Rs. 50,000 and the RPF (Revolutionary Peoples' Front) renewed its demand made the previous year. Even after being told that they were not to tax religious institutions, the disturbance continued. The RPF came with guns and later with grenades threatening to destroy the whole school. Soon another group of RPF joined the fray though they later agreed that it was enough that money be given to one of the groups.

On 17th July 1996 Fr. Lazarus Kujur was transferred and Fr. Savarimuthu Arokiasamy was appointed the Assistant Headmaster.

The situation became more grim as on 8th July 1996 Fr. Patrick was assaulted in his office. The school was closed in protest and was re-opened on 15th July. In order to arrive at a solution for the recurring problem, on 20th July 1996, a meeting of twenty-three Confrères' was held at Chingmeirong. In the meeting it was decided: i. to withdraw the Headmaster and Assistant Headmaster from the school, ii. to inform the authorities that no demands for money will be acceded to and iii. that the parents

and guardians be informed of the possibility of the closure of the school at the end of the current academic year if no solutions were forthcoming. Fr. Joe Edakudan was appointed to look after the centre till the situation became normal.

In response to the decision of the management, the students of Class IX and X convened a meeting attended by more than 500 guardians/parents. They formed a core group to find a viable solution. Meanwhile the teachers raised Rs 50,000 from the students and themselves and paid it to the Underground organization concerned. The Underground organisation in its turn promised that they would not demand money from the school any more. 'Don Bosco School Langjing Parents' Committee was formed to protect the school authorities from all harassments and demands for money and a written assurance of the same was handed over to the Provincial, Fr. Varghese Palathingal.

As the situation had greatly improved, on 11th April 1997 Fr. Jose Palely was appointed as the Headmaster. After Cl. Thomas Kalluvellil who had been helping in the school left for his theological studies on 31st July 1997, Cl. Sabu Muthirakalam was appointed to assist in the school. He arrived on 29th June 1997. In 1998 Fr. Paulus Kerketta took over as the Assistant headmaster. He was transferred to Ravalico Hostel in 1999. In February 2000, Fr. Jose Palely was transferred to Maram and Fr. Vincent Kunnathettu was appointed as Headmaster. There are over 1200 students in the school.

Headmasters:

Fr. Menamparampil George (1983-1984), Fr. Kunnel Tom (1984-1986), Fr. Charuvila Francis (1986-1995), Fr. Patrick Warjiri (1995-1996), Fr. Jose Palely (1997-2000), Fr. Vincent Kunnathettu (2000-)

Others:

Bro. Perumanoor George, Fr. Nebu Mathew, Fr. Thottathimyalil Francis, Fr. Cyriac Pulinthanathumalayil, Fr. Lazarus Kujur, Fr. Savarimuthu Arokiasamy, Fr. Joseph Edakudan, Cl. Thomas Kalluvellil, Cl. Jose Muthirakalam (Sabu), Fr. Paulus Kerketta

SALESIAN NOVITIATE NGARIAN, IMPHAL

The Salesian Novitiate, Ngarian, is situated at a distance of about 18 kilometres from Imphal city. It was begun in the year 1988 to meet the need of the increasing number of novices. Till the year 1987, the novices of the province of Dimapur made their Novitiate at Sunny Side. But as a result of the sharp increase in their number, it was no longer possible to accommodate them at Shillong. Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, the Provincial, was informed concerning this both in 1986 and 1987 by the novice master Fr. Isaac Mattappillil.[@] The matter was taken up by the Provincial Council of Dimapur and later forwarded to the Rector Major, who asked the Province of Dimapur to open its own Novitiate, paving the way for the beginning of the Salesian Novitiate at Imphal.

A circular letter was sent out to all the confreres by the Provincial explaining the situation, and asking them to give their suggestions for the location of the Novitiate. The Consultation Papers that came back with the opinions of the confrères, showed that the majority of confrères were in favour of establishing the Novitiate in Manipur. They opined that since the Pre-Novitiate and the Aspirantate were in Assam and the Post-Novitiate in Dimapur, Nagaland, it was fitting that the Novitiate is set up in Manipur.

Accordingly, Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, the Provincial, asked the Confrères of Don Bosco Chingmeirong to look for a suitable land. Phaying, Langjing, Ngarian and the Maharajah's hill near

Phoidinga at the junction of the national highway and Leimakhong road were proposed as possible sites. The idea of Langjing was abandoned as there were only paddy fields around the present land. The land offered at Kangchup, was small and belonged to the village which meant it would take a long time before it could be registered and bought. The Maharajah's land near Phoidinga was priced exorbitantly high at Rs 2,50,000 per acre.

On 27th July 1987, Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, reached Imphal and visited the various sites. The site at Ngarian seemed suitable. The next day, the Provincial with a delegation of confreres consisting of Fr. George Menamparampil, Fr. Job Kallarackal, Fr. Sebastian Aelavanthara, Fr. Tony Pellissery, Fr. Francis Charuvila, Fr. Thottappallil George, Fr. Joseph Karumampallil and Bro. Sunny Vettom visited the land. On their return to the house of Chingmeirong, a meeting was held to evaluate the opinions of the confrères. The majority were in favour of Ngarian. Those few who felt differently, said that there was no other house nearby. The Provincial Council, at a meeting held at Dibrugarh in August 1987, finally chose Ngarian for the Novitiate.

The task of procuring the land was entrusted to Fr. George Menamparampil, Rector of Don Bosco, Chingmeirong. To obtain the possession of the land, to get it levelled, and to begin the constructions, Fr. George moved to Ngarian and made many sacrifices. The confrères of Don Bosco Imphal were equally generous and outgoing to make sure that the Novitiate House was ready for 1988. All the houses of the Province contributed generously for the Novitiate.

The land at Ngarian was owned by Mr. Sani Mao. It was on 8th April 1987 that Mr. Sani Mao spoke to Fr. Menamparampil George for the first time about his willingness to sell the land. Fr. Menamparampil George was at that time on his way back from ad-

ministering last sacraments to an old lady at Poirao Village. As a programme for the drug addicts at Chingmeirong was getting wound up, the spot was thought suitable for a rehabilitation centre.

Mr. Sani had agreed to sell the land at Rs 10,000 per hectare. But when the surveyor was brought to measure the land, he could not succeed in measuring it. So it was decided to prepare a map and to pay a lump sum of Rs 4,00,000 for the land. Everything seemed to be working well until a certain Mr. Unda from Angtha village claimed that the land belonged to him. A series of meetings was held and finally at a meeting held on 3rd October 1987 Mr. Unda confessed that his claims were false. He and a group of witnesses signed a paper in the presence of Mr. Pramod, the lawyer, that they had no claims on the land and that they had no objection to it being bought by us. Little did Mr. Unda and party know that such a paper had no legal value!@

The contract for the construction was given to Mr. Laloo Singh for Rs 25.50 per square foot. The levelling of the hill began with Mr. Landon's bulldozer on 11th October 1987. Fr. Menampampil George slept in the house of Mr. Sani. Soon about 40 cultivators of the land approached Fr. Menampampil George to know whether they would lose their pineapple crops. Fr. Menampampil George assured them that if the land was cultivated he would not buy them as they were not ready to be compensated.

The workers arrived on 20th October 1987. Boys from Don Bosco, Langjing came to clear the boundary. The boys from Sacred Heart School, Yairipok also helped. On 19th November 1987, 11.67 hectares of land was registered in the name of the Salesian Novitiate owned by the Salesians of Don Bosco represented by Fr. Menampampil George.

The foundation-stone for the novitiate was laid on 22nd October 1987, on the feast of Diwali by Fr. Matthew Pulingathil. The water for the construction had to be brought from different places by truck. After Fr. George Menampampil was transferred to Don Bosco, Tamenglong as parish priest, Fr. Bimal Lakra was appointed to look after the constructions. He arrived on 1st January 1988. On 20th February 1988 Fr. Jonas Kerketta, the socius designate joined Fr. Bimal in getting the work completed quickly.

The Novitiate was blessed on 25th March 1988 by Mgr. Joseph Mittathany and inaugurated by Fr. Matthew Pulingathil. A huge gathering of well-wishers were present on the occasion. The first batch of novices arrived on 31st March 1988. Fr. Varghese Palathingal was the Novice Master, Fr. Thekeparambil Sebastian, the Administrator, Fr. Jonas Kerketta, the Socius and Cl. Philip Puthettupadavil, the Assistant.

The initial days were difficult due to the lack of water, electricity, play-grounds and so on. As there were no playgrounds, evening walks replaced games. Later the hillock below the road was used for community games like 'Arabian Flag', till a volleyball court was constructed atop the hill adjacent to the Andhro Road. It was later converted into a basketball court. In December 1988, the novices had their mission experience at Don Bosco, Tamenglong. The house got its electrical connection on the feast of Don Bosco, 1989. By 30th September 1989 the flooring was completed.

The first batch of 10 novices professed on 2nd April 1989 at Mary Immaculate church, Chingmeirong. The rectangular courtyard inside the building was cemented and converted into a basketball court and a new volleyball court was constructed at the side of the refectory.

In February 1990 Fr. Thekeparambil Sebastian was transferred and Fr. Vadakethannikal Sebastian was appointed the Administrator. The chapel was completed in 1990. It was designed by Fr. Cherukareth Raphael of Guwahati Province.

The land problem which was there right from the inception of the house was settled on 18th November 1990. Mr. Sani from whom we had bought the land, had leased out a portion of the said land to a group of people from Angtha village. They now refused to vacate from this area. Since this portion was very close to our residence (near the kitchen and cow shed) and consequently a source of constant disturbance, we exchanged this area with another portion of land at the farthest eastern end (a hillock) and got the cultivators vacated.

Similarly another smaller portion claimed by Mr. Kesub Singh at the southern end, was exchanged for a plot on the north-western side touching the national highway, which now form the boundary on the north-west.

28th April 1991 was marked by high drama. Perhaps in an unprecedented event of its sort, two brothers, Mark Lanthou and Biju Poonamkavil were kidnapped by a group of militants for a ransom of Rs. two lakhs. In the massive man-hunt that followed, they were released. It was the fourth encounter that the novitiate had with the Underground and by far the most serious. For a few months the commandos from the Manipur Special Force guarded the institution. The commandos were withdrawn in 1991. Since then the situation has returned to normal.

In January 1991 Fr. Vadakethannikal Sebastian was transferred to Don Bosco, Chingmeirong as Headmaster and Fr. Joseph Kindo was appointed as the Administrator. Fr. Jonas Kerketta was replaced by Fr. Jerome Moshary. Fr. Joseph Kindo was followed by

Bro. Romanus Tirkey as the Administrator in February 1993. In 1994 Fr. Mathew Tharakan was appointed as the Socius and Administrator.

In 1994, Fr. Varghese Palathingal, the Novice Master was appointed Provincial of Dimapur and in July 1994 Fr. Mulayinkal Thomas was appointed as the Novice Master.

Fr. Mathew Tharakan was transferred to Khoupum Valley in January 1995. Fr. Karumampallil Joseph took over as the Socius and Administrator followed by Fr. Chennoth Sebastian in May 1996. Fr. George Mukala joined the community. Fr. Chovelikudiyil Mathew was appointed the Administrator and Socius in 1999.

Masters:

Fr. Varghese Palathingal (1988-1994), Fr. Mulayinkal Thomas (1994-)

Others:

Fr. Jonas Kerketta, Fr. Thekeparambil Sebastian, Fr. Jerome Moshary, Fr. Vadakethannickal Sebastian, Fr. Joseph Kindo, Bro. Romanus Tirkey, Fr. Karumampallil Joseph, Fr. Mathew Tharakan, Fr. Chennoth Sebastian, Fr. George Mukala, Fr. Chovelikudiyil Mathew

DON BOSCO KHOUPUM VALLEY

Khoupum Valley is situated at a distance of 88 km from Imphal and 60 km from Bishenpur. The beginnings of the Catholic Church in this hidden valley may be traced to Joseph Dindai, John Tipna and Meichalung Leo - the three brothers from Thanagong Village, Meidun from the Leisok Village and Abraham Lungaidoipou students who joined Don Bosco School, Imphal in 1958. On their return to their respective villages during the holidays, they instructed the people, thus planting the Church in their villages.

The story of the mission of Khoupum Valley is also the story of missed opportunity. With the help of the students from Khoupum, Fr. Aloysius Ravalico had made his first trip to the Valley and reached a place called Taoringpung. However, thinking that to be the end of the Valley, he returned to Imphal. Had he pushed on just three kilometers more, the history of the Catholic Church in the West District of Manipur would have been different. He had just missed the "Gold Spot" of the Valley - about 2,000 acres of paddy-fields spread through the Khoupum foothills. Fr. Aloysius Ravalico had also considered setting up a school in the Khoupum region but due to opposition from various quarters, the idea could not be executed and he put up the school at Churachandpur instead.¹²

¹² The Naga Underground groups are said to have incited and intimidated the people to oppose the project.

Though some of the students from Khoupum were baptized as early as 1959, the real opening of the valley came only with the touring by Fr. Paul Bernick, and Fr. Chettupuzha George and later by Fr. John Med.

Fr. Paul Bernick narrated how in one of his tours, Fr. Chettupuzha George was upbraided by an old lady from Taosemjang in Khoupum area. "How can you allow your old father to climb the hills", she asked. The lady was convinced that Fr. George was the son of Fr. Bernick. She could not imagine how unfeeling Fr. George was in allowing his father to walk about in the hills in his old age. All the same, she enquired about the health of Fr. Bernick. Fr. George replied to her in Rongmei, that he was fine. We do not know, whether it was due to the bad ear of the old lady or the poor language of Fr. George, the old lady replied: "After all, he was old enough to die."

In 1972 the new centre at Tamenglong was opened with Fr. Maria Selvam as in charge. This marked a new chapter in the Khoupum missions. Now the mission began to be looked after from Tamenglong.

On 15th March 1976 Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, the Provincial of Guwahati and Fr. Mathew Tharakan, the Parish Priest of Tamenglong, visited Khoupum Valley, to study the possibility of starting a centre there. They looked around the Valley, visited the leaders, and spent the night at the Gaidimjang Village Church. It was during this visit that the decision was taken to purchase some land which was easily available then.

A certain Protestant Preacher Rev. Sahu, from Bihar, after an unsuccessful tour of the Khoupum Valley, had predicted: "FIVE YEARS AND KHOUPUM VALLEY WILL BE DESTROYED." Many were frightened by the prediction, and began to sell off their lands and belongings to flee. This helped the mis-

sion to buy the necessary land for beginning a centre. In 1976 land was bought from Mr. Montha of Gaidimjang and the purchase and registration done at Imphal with the help of Mr. Meichalung Leo of Thanagong village.

The terror of earthquake was indeed a windfall as far as the material development of the school was concerned. Many of the fleeing families were only too willing to sell their land at a very cheap rate. A tin-roofed house which was bought from Mr. Douseilung of Guipijang, the ex-pastor, served as the Girls' Quarters. The present Confrères' Quarters was bought from Mr. Poukolung for Rs 6,000. The thatched roof was removed and changed into tin-roof. The tin for the roof was also got from another family that had run away. The paddy fields near Thanagong village playground, below the community hall, beyond Youngpung were all bought in two years' time. The land opposite to Mr. Ponkalung was bought from Mr. Lankhamri for Rs. 2,900. All were registered at Imphal.

Don Bosco School, Khoupum was started on 11th February 1977. The school was inaugurated by Fr. Vadakethannikal Sebastian, the Assistant Parish priest of Tamenglong. The school was conducted at first in the Gaidimjang Catholic Church building which had been bought by Fr. John Med. Mr. Thomas Buigang from Taosemjang, a past pupil of Don Bosco Chingmeirong, was the first Headmaster of the school. After the first term the school was shifted to Don Bosco land proper. A shed was put up by the Catholic community for the school. There were 65 students in two sections - KG I and II. In 1978 class III was begun and the number of teachers increased to three.

On 28th April 1979 Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung took charge as the Assistant Parish Priest of Tamenglong.

In 1979 the school did not proceed to IV as it should have, even though there were 5 teachers by now. This was because the number of students had dropped considerably. The main reason for the sudden fall in numbers was the frightful predictions of Rev. Sahu, which were now thought to be imminent. Believing him the people had killed their livestock, gathered all they could and left the valley en masse. To add to it, anti-Catholic feelings too were stirred up.

However, when nothing eventful occurred at the stipulated time and the earthquake scare was over, many of those who had left the village, returned. The villages came to life once again. and in 1980 the school was raised to class four and the student strength rose to 270. The hostel for the boys was started at this time. There were about eight boys then.

The Thanghabut hillock (Don Bosco Hill) was bought on 26th November 1981 for Rs. 20,000. The money was paid by Fr. Kochuparambil Mathai, the Provincial of Guwahati.

In November 1982 with Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung coming to stay permanently at Khoupum valley, a new era opened in the history of the region. He soon put up new buildings and consolidated the work. The village elders agreed to give the land to widen the existing foot path in exchange for a water point from the compound. Thus a 20 feet wide road to Don Bosco through Daithaolong was constructed with the help of the entire Catholic Community and the Daithaolong village people. As per the agreement a small water tank was built and water was supplied to the village from the Don Bosco compound. @

The school registered great improvement. By 1982 the number of students had increased to 460. There were about 35 boys in the boarding. There were also about ten girls who were staying with one of the lady teachers. In January 1982, the school buildings were

demolished to put up semi-pucca buildings. However some of the villagers claimed the school building to be in their plot. So the new building was put up in the new plot.

The mission began cultivating its fields from 1982. Till then paddy fields were leased out to the Catholic community for cultivation. A power tiller was bought and a rice mill was set up in May 1983.

In September 1983 Don Bosco Khoupum began a new venture with a fruit processing unit being set up. Mr. John Tipna was in charge of the undertaking.® The unit began making pineapple, orange, lemon squash and jam. On 31st January 1983 a unit of Don Bosco Past Pupils' Association was started at Khoupum. Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung also began the Khoupum Circle Catholic Students' Association. On 26th February 1984 a new piece of land was purchased where the present convent is situated. On 19th March 1984 another piece of land was bought from Mr. Gaipatrei.

Everything seemed to go well when the tragedy struck on 6th July 1984. On that day the Satu villagers attacked the Catholics working in the field at Thanagong. This land had been bought by Fr. Mathew Tharakan, the Parish Priest of Tamenglong for a church.® However, since nothing was built, it was used as a paddy field to support the boarding through a day's social work by the Catholic communities of the valley. Another individual from Satu village had claimed the land to be his and filed a complaint with the Subdivisional Officer at Nungba. The SDO had ordered a stay on the cultivation of the land. But the order did not reach the mission. The Catholics turning up to cultivate the land, infuriated the villagers of Satu who attacked the people with knives and rods. Dominic Direipou, a student of Class X at Don Bosco, Chingmeirong, Imphal, was hacked to death by the furious mob, while trying to defend his father. Many

others were injured. Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung had a narrow escape as he was working in the field at Satudai road when the incident took place. Father could not come back to the Residence as some vowed to eliminate him.

As the situation was extremely tense Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung was forced to leave the Valley. He left for Imphal temporarily on 10th July 1984. Fr. Scaria Nedumala, the Vice-Provincial of the province of Dimapur took his place for a few days. Fr. Joe returned after the situation had returned to normalcy. On 7th August 1984 Fr. Chacko Thazhoor, Rector of Don Bosco, Imphal was transferred to Khoupum Valley. Fr. Peringalathu Joseph was appointed to Khoupum Valley in May 1985.

On 11th June 1985 after five years of active involvement at the mission of Khoupum Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung, was transferred. @

On 15th August 1985 Khoupum Valley was raised to the status of a parish and Fr. Chacko was officially appointed its first Parish Priest. Fr. Peringalathu Joseph was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest.

On 25th March 1988, Sr. Pinto Louisa and Sr. Kerketta Mary, arrived at Khoupum Valley to begin the FMA Convent. The convent of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians was inaugurated by Sr. Philomena, Provincial of the Shillong Province on 13th May 1988. The sisters assist in catechesis, and liturgy, distribute medicine, and help in the school, besides looking after the girls' boarding.

On 13th August 1988, Fr. Chennoth Sebastian was appointed the new Assistant and on 1st September 1988, Fr. Thazhoor Chacko left for Africa. Fr. Peringalathu Joseph was appointed the new Parish Priest on 28th September 1988.

3rd February 1992, Fr. Chennoth Sebastian was transferred to Provincial House, Dimapur as the secretary to the Provincial. He was replaced by Fr. Thottathimyalil Francis in February 1992. In January 1993 Fr. Francis was transferred to Don Bosco Langjing as Assistant Headmaster and Fr. Alex Manayil arrived as the Assistant Parish Priest.

The ethnic fights that broke out in the whole of Manipur in 1993 had its impact on the otherwise peaceful valley. The fights that ensued between the Kukis and the Nagas, claimed many lives even as numerous villages were torched mercilessly. Even the Church got involved unintentionally as the church truck was forcefully taken by an ethnic group to stock the violence.

Fr. Peringalathu Joseph left for his studies to Rome in May 1994. Fr. Thottathimyalil Francis was appointed the new Parish Priest his place. This period was marked by a number of problems and opposition. One of the boys taken down to the South by Fr. Francis Thottathimyalil for treatment was reported dead and this caused much consternation and antagonism. The incident of one of the girls of the village eloping with one of the workers also raised much resentment among the people. They demanded that the church pay compensation. When Fr. Francis refused they dragged the worker concerned to be thrown into a smouldering cauldron. To save the person, Fr. Francis agreed to pay the sum that they demanded.

On 28th January 1994 Fr. Paulus Kerketta joined the community increasing the number of the priests at the centre to three. On 24th May 1994, the foundation-stone was laid for the new building for boarders and tailoring girls.

In 1995, Fr. Francis Thottathimyalil was transferred to the missions of West Arunachal Pradesh. In spite of the unfortunate happenings at the centre, during the time of Fr. Francis two schools

were constructed at Thangal and Longrang and paved way for a third school at Tupul.[@] The period also saw the building of five village churches. 80 houses were supplied with C.I. sheets through another project.

Fr. Mathew Tharakan took charge as the new Parish Priest on 6th January 1995. And in February Fr. Stephen Chazhisseril was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest. Fr. Paulus Kerketta took over as the Headmaster.

With the Underground units demanding money and vehicles often, the peaceful atmosphere at the mission centre is marked by harassment and tension. At times the confrères' are prevented from going out of Khoupum. On one occasion in August 1995 the situation was so bad that Fr. Stephen Chazhisseril had to walk all the way from Khoupum to Awangkhol (seven to eight hours of walk) to meet Fr. Provincial who was expected to come to Khoupum to inform him not to venture into Khoupum due to the disturbances.

In the following few months there was constant demand for contribution to the NSCN. The issue was finally solved by calling an emergency meeting of the Catechists and Elders of the parish. They decided to collect Rs. 100 per family to make up the amount of Rs. 50,000 which was demanded. In the meantime, Fr. Mathew Tharakan went to Imphal to meet the higher authorities and to explain the matter to them. In spite of their insistence not to tax the mission, the group at Khoupum was adamant to get the money. Finally one of the officers came to the rescue and assured the mission that it was not necessary that the Catholics pay separately since all were paying equally.

In another event, on 18th December 1995 Fr. Mathew Tharakan was taken hostage by Kuki militants. He was on his way to Imphal with the teachers in a jeep driven by Fr. Stephen

Chazhissery when he was kidnapped. A ransom of Rs. five lakhs was demanded for his release. Finally, he was released on 22nd afternoon, on payment of Rs 60,000. It was the false impression that the Naga militants were being aided by the mission, that prompted the militants to take Fr. Tharakan hostage. @

That untoward actions are not strange in Khoupum valley was proved yet again on 1st March 1996. Fr. Mathew and Fr. Stephen were beaten up in public by unruly militants in the bazaar at 9.00 a.m., while the students were arriving for class. This took place because the fathers had refused to comply with the militants' demand for the vehicles and rejected the demand for the admission to students of Satudai village. The school was closed and a procession was taken out for condemning the incident. It was silenced by the butt of the gun. Similar demands for money, generator, vehicles and so on has continued also in 1997 and 1998.

On 13th February 1996, Fr. Chovelikudiyil Mathew was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest. Fr. Stephen Chazhisseril left for Imphal on 14th February 1997. In 1998 Fr. Paulus Kerketta was transferred to Langjing, Imphal and Fr. Vincent Kunnathettu was appointed as Assistant Parish Priest and Headmaster of the school. He took charge on 25th January 1998. In February 1999 Fr. Vincent Kunnathettu was transferred to Don Bosco, Maram and Fr. Chovelikudiyil Mathew was transferred to Salesian Novitiate Imphal. Fr. Thekeparambil Sebastian and Fr. Sanjeev Linda have been appointed to their place. They took over on 13th and 15th of March respectively.

The Parish has over 4000 Catholics in 27 substations. The substations are : Khoupum Centre, Gaidimjang, Thanagong, Taosemjang, Taodaijang, Namgaijang, Thengkonjang, Langkhoi, Guitang, Gaijinluong, Ragailong, L. Kullen, Satudai, Sangji, Upper

Tausang, Lower Tausang, Laisok, Charoi I, Charoi II, Charoi III, Charoi IV, L. Khunnou, Upper and Lower Lungleijang, Thangal, Katayang and Nungasai. There are over 673 students in the school and over 50 boys and 60 girls in the boarding.

Pioneer:

Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung (1981-1985)

Parish Priests/Rectors:

Fr. Chacko Thazhoor (1984-1988), Fr. Peringalathu Joseph (1988-1994), Fr. Thottathimyalil Francis (1994-1995), Fr. Mathew Tharakan (1995-)

Others:

Fr. Chennoth Sebastian, Fr. Alex Manayil, Fr. Paulus Kerketta, Fr. Stephen Chazhisseril, Fr. Chovelikudiyil Mathew, Fr. Vincent Kunnathettu, Fr. Thekeparambil Sebastian, Fr. Sanjeev Linda.

ST. MARY'S PARISH MAO, PUNANAMEI

The origins of St. Mary's Parish, Mao may be traced to the year 1956, when a few months after the first missionaries had settled down in "Nirmalabas", Fr. Peter Bianchi was approached by three Mao students from Punanamei. The students were Mr. John Ashiho, Mr. R. Kreho and Mr. Daili and they were accompanied by an elderly gentleman Mr. Puni, the Baptist evangelist of the area. They had a private Middle English School which was poorly run and with little finance and a skeleton staff. The government had turned a deaf ear to their incessant pleas for the recognition of the school. They pleaded with father to take up their village school. Fr. Bianchi was unable to comply with their request and told them that his hands were full. But then he agreed to go and preach in the village. To his question whether the people would accept Catholicism, Mr. Puni replied: "If the Holy Spirit inspires them, they surely will".

Not long after, the same students returned. They met Fr. Peter Bianchi and informed him that a number of youngsters from Punanamei had decided to become Catholics and were asking him to go and visit them. So on 28th November 1956, Fr. Bianchi reached Mao-Gate on his maiden visit. As he got down from the bus, he was welcomed by a group of villagers from Punanamei with some village authorities and the Headman. There was no road leading from Mao Gate to Punanamei. They walked through Songsong and Kalinamei, climbed to Rubunamei and reached

Punanamei by a narrow path passing through the present compound.

Later Fr. Bianchi met the catechumens - about forty young boys and girls. He was the guest of Mr. K. Obow who had just built his new house. In the evening a number of Baptist leaders and some village elders came to meet him. The next day, discussions were held with the Headmaster Mr. A. Lorho, along with the village leaders. They talked about the school, the culture of the Maos and the Catholic religion. Finally Fr. Bianchi promised to give hundred rupees a month towards the running of the private Middle English School.

Since then, Fr. Peter Bianchi began visiting the village oftener. Frequent visits became meaningful because a number of people wanted to embrace the Catholic faith. Fr. Aloysius Ravalico often accompanied Fr. Peter Bianchi with films.

As the number of the Catholics increased the need for a church was felt. In 1957 when Mgr. Marengo, Bishop of Dibrugarh visited Punanamei along with Fr. Peter Bianchi, he agreed to provide C.I. sheets for the roofing and the cost of labour for construction. The people put up the skeleton of the building, flooring, walling, doors and windows. The newly constructed church of the Punanamei village was blessed in 1958.

In 1962 a girl's school was begun in Punanamei. It was in the same compound where the mission centre is situated today. The primary school had classes up to III. It may be noted that Sr. Bernadine and Sr. Magdalene belong to this first group.

In 1965 Fr. Peter Bianchi appointed Mr. Yuishi Paul of Ukhrul as the catechist. He was stationed at New Maram and he visited Punanamei once or twice a month. He instructed the new Catholics

in the doctrine. His visits became more frequent and the youth started going to various villages to preach - to Makhan, Kaibi, Chakumai, Chowoinamei, Mao Pungdung etc. From the Mao area the flame of faith spread to the Paomei and Chiluvei areas.

Meanwhile Mr. John Longyao, a Thangkul catechist, went about touring the other Maram areas and brought the Catholic faith to them. He visited Willong, Rajamai, Sadim Pukri, Maram Khounou etc. The people of Maram Khullen founded the New Maram village under the leadership of Mr Paul Yuishi. The next catechist there was Mr. Paul Rimien, a Rongmei from Tamenglong. The two catechists gave excellent leadership to the Catholic community. They had a day night school besides a weaving centre.

In 1966 the Punanamei mission was opened by Mgr. Hubert D'Rosario, Bishop of Dibrugarh with Fr. Peter Bianchi as the one in charge@. He began residing in Mao. In 1966 itself, constructions began for the school building.

The sisters of Mount Carmel (CMC) arrived on 15th February 1967@. Mother Agnes was the first Superior. They helped in the school, offered medical help through their dispensary and catechised the faithful. As the sisters' quarters was not ready yet, Fr. Bianchi shifted to the village club, the house below the Baptist Church.

On 1st August 1967 Fr. Tharakan Mathew joined Fr. Bianchi as the Assistant. The school then had about 200 students till Class VIII. The classes were held in the sheds. There was a boarding for both boys and girls. The boys numbered about 40. Fr. Bianchi had already built the Confrères' Residence which now serves as the Teachers' Quarters and the Convent.

In June 1968 Fr. Bianchi was transferred@ to the Cathedral Parish of Dibrugarh as the Parish Priest and Fr. Moolachery Augus-

tine was appointed to the centre. But he took up the Mao mission only on 3rd August 1969. The interim period was filled by Fr. Sebastian Karotemprel, the Vice-Provincial.

The early days at the centre were difficult as there was lot of opposition to the entry of Catholic Church into the area especially from the Baptist brethren. This is proved by the following incident. On 18th December 1968 Fr. Mathew Tharakan who was touring the Purul and the Pomei areas; along with the catechist was attacked by the Village Voluntary Force (VVF) who were near the Paomata military base. Fr. Mathew was beaten up and his hand was broken. The catechist managed to run away, even leaving his clothes! Many villagers came to defend father. They too received a lot of blows. The incident took place at about 7.00 p.m. at Saranamai. The action was against the establishment of Catholic Church in Saranamai and was instigated by the Baptist brethren who were unhappy about the entry of the Catholic Church into the village. The threat did not have the desired effect. Fr. Mathew was back on the same tour on 21st December 1968 and the Catholic community continued to flourish in spite of heavy persecution.

On 17th January 1969 Fr. Mathew Tharakan left for Imphal to help Fr. Joseph Edakudan. Fr. Sebastian Karotemprel looked after the centre at Mao.

St. Mary's Parish, Punanamei was canonically erected on 15th August 1969 with Fr. Moolachery Augustine as the first Parish Priest. Fr. Augustine could not remain for long because he was an asthma patient. Besides he had other difficulties from numerous quarters.® To make matters worse in January 1971, he fell over maifu, the pot of fire used to warm up the room. Fr. Mathew Tharakan and Mgr. Robert Kerketta had gone to attend the Congress at Makkel and there was no one in the house when

the accident took place. Providentially, one of the girls helping in the kitchen, reached on time and pulled him out. Fr. Augustine was taken down to Dibrugarh for treatment and could be back only for Easter.

On 16th April 1971 Fr. Augustine left for the South. Fr. Mathew Tharakan was appointed the new Parish Priest. But unfortunately Fr. Mathew Tharakan met with an accident on the way to New Maram. He sustained a few broken ribs and was hospitalized in Kohima for a week. Fr. Bernick who had come from Imphal, substituted Fr. Tharakan. Cl. Andrew Vadakkumpadan, a student of theology, of Dibrugarh diocese, also helped him for some time. However, the accident told heavily on the mission work, as Fr. Tharakan could not visit the villages for many months.

The arrival of Fr. Scaria Neduamala on 7th July 1971, as the Assistant Parish Priest, breathed new life into the mission which was under tremendous strains due to lack of personnel, especially after the accident of Fr. Tharakan. The Catholic communities had not been visited for about 18 months. Now the touring of the villages became regular. Extensive tour was undertaken of all the villages of the Mao-Maram area with each village being visited three to four times a year. It was remarkable especially when one considers that very few villages could be reached by road and so most of the touring had to be done on foot.

Visiting the villages regularly was the only way to sustain the faith and the sacramental life of the people since long catechetical programmes were not possible. The pattern of these village visits were almost always the same, geared as it was to catechetical instruction. The fathers would reach the village about evening after many hours of walk and spent the time in instruction followed by

rosary and confessions. In the morning there would be mass and father would meet the people before leaving for the next village. The village tours were usually spanned out over many days. Regular catechists' meeting was held every month and the tour programmes were finalized on that occasion. It should be said, that these extensive and regular tours of the villages greatly strengthened the Church in the Mao-Maram area.

While the fundamental thrust of the mission was visiting the villages for instruction and for new contacts, the parish centre too had its own busy schedule throughout the year. In 1971, the school had classes up to Class VIII[@] and there were about 300 students. The school and the boarding served as means to enter into new villages and contact new people. For instance children were admitted from villages like Yankhullen, where fathers were forbidden to enter. It should be mentioned that the sisters played a major role in looking after the school.

The work for the new church was begun in 1971. The people co-operated by helping to level the ground etc. The money for building the church was given by Fr. Peter Bianchi. The construction of the new church demanded much patience and toil. The roads were narrow and so nobody wanted to bring the pre-fabricated material needed for the church. Finally Mr. Jerry, the driver working with Fr. Abraham Alangimattathil sdb, the V.G. of Dibrugarh, agreed to bring the necessary materials. He brought the trusses. But the structure could not be lifted up and the work ground to a halt. Finally Fr. Mathew with the students of the school managed to lift up the structure. It was an admirable feat and Fr. Mathew attributes it to the students' lack of inhibition and readiness to obey. The catechists who tried to put up the same, however, ended up tragically, with one of them losing a finger!

The new church was designed by Fr. Peter Bianchi. The boys played a major role in the construction of the church. They constructed the roads. The wiring of the new building was done by the boys under the direction of Bro. Raymond, a Jesuit. Boys also assembled the benches for the church. Today many of the boys of that batch are highly placed in the society.

The new church of St. Mary's at Punanamei was completed in 1973. The church was blessed by Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil, the new Bishop of Kohima-Imphal on 30th December 1973 in the presence of Mgr. Robert Kerketta. The parish of Mao had 53 villages@ in five circles at that time - Mao (15 villages), Maram (14 villages), Leopona (5 villages), Chiluvei (8 villages) and Paomata (7 villages) besides the villages of Karong, Senapati, Mayankang and Dilikunou.

In 1974 Fr. Scaria Nedumala was transferred to Sunny Side as the Socius. He was replaced by Fr. Pellissery Sebastian.

Schools were opened in Tungjoy in the Paomota area in 1974 and at Purul in the Leapona area in 1975. The Mao gate school was opened in 1975 in response to the demand from the people at Mao gate. They gave two and a half to three acres of land for building the school. More land was acquired in 1981.

The faith of the people was a great motivating factor that sustained the missionaries. For instance those who were absent during the village visits would be eager to make their confession if they happened to meet the priest on the road. They would be even waiting on the road for communion, while father would be on his way back from another village. The story of a boy named S.P. Thuinganim, from Ngari village, is a standing testimony to the unwavering faith of the people.

Thuinganiam, was preparing for his matriculation examinations when he visited the Parish Church of Punanamei. He met Fr. Scaria, the assistant Parish Priest. He had heard about the Catholic Faith and was eager to have a prayer book. Fr. Scaria gave him the book he had asked for but little did he expect that Thuinganiam would be laying down his life for his faith within a few months.

Back at his village, he spoke about the new found Faith to his companions who also became interested. As they were the first to know about the Catholic Faith in that village, they spoke about it to others. They even claimed they were Catholics. The Baptist Pastors were annoyed and ordered that only the Baptist Church would be allowed in the village. But the new Catechumens took no notice of it.®

One evening, in the first week of June 1974, some armed men, in army uniform arrived at the Village and called out S.P. Thuinganiam and his companions by name. They were ordered to assemble in the village ground. The villagers too, hearing the shouts, came out and gathered at the ground. The boys were made to line up. It was S.P. Thuinganiam who answered to the shout of the leader of the armed men: "WHO OF YOU ARE CATHOLICS HERE?" Thuinganiam stepped forward and professed his faith: "I am a Catholic." That said it all. The gun was levelled against his head and he was shot at point-blank. The others were given a severe warning that a similar fate waited any one who dared to disobey the village law. Thuinganiam was the only son of a family and had just written his matriculation examinations. By the time the results came, which showed that he had passed in the Second Division, Thuinganiam was no more.

When the fathers learned about the incident, Fr. Pellissery Sebastian and some lay Catholics visited Ngari. Later, the father of the boy visited the parish centre and asked for baptism. He was

convinced that his son was neither an Underground nor a spy of the army. He said that he was a good boy and that he was killed instigated by the Baptist brethren. He was baptized by Fr. Scaria Nedumala at the Punanamei church. That he was determined to remain a Catholic was evident from the answer he gave when asked whether he would be steadfast in his faith: "Am I a baby to change my mind?"

Later Fr. Scaria Nedumala along with Deacon Philip Kanjuparambil, Mr. Thomas Dasii and Mr. Aloysius Hraii visited the village. The people were so frightened that no one would say anything about the death of the boy. Finally Fr. Scaria and his group went to visit the father of the boy, who were in the top village. They also met the boys' sister. And on the same tour, at the Lakamei village church, the mother was baptized. The parents of the boy who were ignorant of the Catholic faith had concluded that if their son found it worthwhile to give his life for the Catholic faith, it must be good. That "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christianity" was proved yet once again. Today, Ngari stands out as one of the most numerous Catholic communities of Chiluvei area.

In August 1975 Fr. Mathew Tharakan was transferred to Tamenglong and Fr. Scaria Nedumala was appointed as the Parish Priest. By now Catholic communities had been found in the villages of Lakamei, Mao Mayengkang, Tungamafu, Kattefamei, Maiba, Sirong, Tuen, Upper Sahjouba and so on. New contacts were established with other villages like Kajang.

In 1976, Fr. Pellissery Sebastian left for higher studies to Pune. Fr. Chacko Edamala was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest. The fathers continued to tour the Catholic villages and make new contacts. One of the highlights of this time was the special catechetical

programmes organized during the Catechetical year. The villagers fixed the date when they could all be in the village. The fathers visited the villages and stayed in each village for two days, instructing the people in faith, using audio-visual and other aids.

The Mao mission was very vast and it was not possible to reach out to all the villages. There were only two priests and so it was impossible to reach out to the entire Senapati district. This explains why other groups like the Kukis and the Nepalis were not approached. The need for the division of the Parish was urgent for its growth. Thus in 1976 Fr. John Med was appointed Assistant Parish Priest especially to look after the Maram area. In 1977, Fr. John Med, took up residence at Senapati. He looked after the Maram area together with a few Mao villages that were along the N.H. 39. The parish of Mao now had the 15 villages of Mao, the Paomata area, Leopana area and Chiluvei area.

Don Bosco School, Mao remained a junior high school till 1978. In 1979, Class IX was begun and the school was raised as a full-fledged high school.® Deacon Menampambil George helped in the centre in 1978.

To cater to the ever increasing number of students it was necessary to have a bigger school. A project was approved from Missiore for the same and soon constructions were taken up for a new school building and hostel for boys and girls. Bro. Brahmakulam Antony was put in charge of the constructions. Up to now, classes used to be conducted in the various parts of the house - on the verandah of the Confrères' Quarters, in the present Teachers' Quarters, in the Convent etc. The first batch of eleven students of Don Bosco School, Punanamei, appeared for matriculation examinations in 1981. They were all Catholics and all passed. Fr. Mudakkampuram George (M.C.) joined the mis-

sion in 1980 and stayed for about six months before being transferred to Bhutan.

St. Mary's Parish, Punanamei celebrated the Silver Jubilee of the beginning of the Church between 30th December 1980 to 2nd January 1981. It was a proud moment for the Catholic Church. The event was well planned and the entire celebration was organized by the people. It was the people who raised the funds as well as executed everything in its minutest detail. Each community contributed towards the celebration. About three thousand people, many of them from far away villages and staying at the centre, attended the functions. Mgr. Hubert D'Rosaria Archbishop of Shillong, Mgr. Joseph Mittathany Bishop of Imphal, Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil Bishop of Kohima, Mgr. Robert Kerketta bishop of Tezpur and Mgr. Denzil D'Souza the Bishop of Silchar were present on the occasion along with over sixty priests and many religious. The culmination of the celebrations was the ordination of the first Mao priest, Fr. John Kashpri by Mgr. Joseph Mittathany at which about 12,000 people participated. About 400 people were also baptized into the Church during this occasion. The Jubilee celebrations highlighted the growth the Church had registered among the people of Mao-Maram area, their unity, spirit of self-sacrifice and organizational skills. The Catholic Church had taken roots in the soil and was there to stay and to grow.

In 1981, Fr. Mudakkampuram George was transferred to Bhutan and on 30th May 1981, Fr. Varghese Palathingal arrived as the Assistant Parish Priest. And on 24th June 1981 Fr. Scaria Nedumala was transferred to Imphal as Rector and Parish Priest.

Fr. Joseph Edakudan was appointed as the next Parish Priest. The school at Shajouba was begun in 1982. More land

was bought in Mao Gate, Shajouba and at Punanamei during this period.

In 1984 Fr. Joseph Edakudan was transferred to Maram and Fr. Varghese Palathingal became the Parish Priest. He was assisted by Fr. Akkarappatty Jose who had come in May 1984. In May 1984, Cl. Sunny, was assaulted by some of the youth of Punanamei village, which developed into a major issue and the school was closed for some time. A period of uneasy calm prevailed. Mutual trust and rapport were slowly restored.

On 20th December 1984, the second Mao priest Fr. Linus Neli was ordained at Makhel village during the Parish Congress held there.

On 30th December 1987, Fr. Varghese was replaced by Fr. Mathew Tharakan as the Parish Priest. In February 1988 Fr. Mathew Pottukulam was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest. Fr. Akkarappatty Jose was transferred to Golaghat in February 1989 and Fr. Bosco Periyanyagam was appointed the Headmaster and Assistant Parish Priest. He arrived on 15th February 1989.

On 22nd December 1991, Fr. William Nipuni, the third Mao priest was ordained by Mgr. Joseph Mittathany at the Tadubi Village.

On 14th February 1992, Fr. Bosco Periyanyagam was transferred and Fr. Chittilappilly Varghese was appointed as the Headmaster. In 1992 Fr. Vincent Parumala was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest. Fr. Vincent looked after the school at Shajouba.

Fr. Devassy Kollenkunnel took charge as the Parish Priest in 1994, after Fr. Mathew Tharakan was transferred to Salesian Novitiate, Imphal. In January 1995 Fr. Jose Karippai was appointed the Headmaster. Fr. Jerome Moshary too joined the cen-

tre. When the Salesian Aspirantate for the hills was opened in Mao, Fr. Jerome Moshary was put in charge of the aspirants.

In 1995, the centre of Don Bosco Shajouba was opened with Fr. Peter Bianchi as the resident priest.

In February 1998, Fr. Jose Karippai was transferred and Fr. Kamil Horo took his place. In February 2000, Fr. Kollenkunnel Devassy was transferred to Kohima and Fr. Sebastian Manianchira was appointed Rector and Parish Priest. Don Bosco, Mao is to begin plus two (+2) in 2000.

Today the Parish of St. Mary's can boast of nine daughter parishes - Tadubi, Thunjoy, Phybung Khullen, Makhan, Maram, Purul, Senapathi, Kangpokpi, Pangmol. The parish which once had 52 villages has now the six villages of Punanamei, Pudunamai, Chowanyu, Rabunamei, Kalinamei and Songsong with about 3040 Catholics. In February 2000 there are 827 students in Punamei and 588 in Mao Gate. There are 36 boys and 34 girls in the boarding.

Pioneer:

Fr. Peter Bianchi (1966-1968)

Parish Priests:

Fr. Moolachery Augustine (1969-1971), Fr. Mathew Tharakan (1971-1975), Fr. Scaria Nedumala (1975-1981), Fr. Joseph Edakudan (1981-1984), Fr. Varghese Palathingal (1984-1987), Fr. Mathew Tharakan (1987-1994), Fr. Devassy Kollenkunnel (1994-2000), Fr. Sebastian Manianchira (2000-).

Others:

Fr. Pellissery Sebastian, Fr. John Med, Deac.

Menamparambil George, Fr. Chacko Edamala, Fr.
Mudakkampuram George, Fr. Akkarappatti Jose, Fr.
Mathew Pottukulam, Fr. Bosco Perianayagam, Fr.
Chittilappilly Varghese, Fr. Parumala Vincent, Fr.
Jerome Moshary, Fr. Jose Karippai, Fr. Kamil Horo.

DON BOSCO, MARAM

Maram Khullen can boast of being the first village to invite Catholic missionaries from Imphal.[@] After Fr. Aloysius Ravalico and Fr. Peter Bianchi opened the first missionary station in Imphal in 1956, a group of non-Christians from Maram Khullen who wanted to become Catholics had invited the fathers. The invitation was from a young Baptist named John belonging to the Tangkhul tribe and who was a teacher of the Maram Khullen school. He himself had advised the villagers that if they intended to be Christians they must become Catholics.

Fr. Bianchi visited the village in May 1956 together with Fr. Ravalico. There was a film show in the evening. The following morning the people gathered in the little chapel they had built for the service. As they entered the chapel the fathers were surprised to see only a few men and children. There were no women at all. Fr. Ravalico asked: "What about your wives, are they not becoming Catholics?" The reply was a resolute one: "Surely they will, just now they are too busy to come to church."

From 1956 up to 1968 the Maram area was looked after by Fr. Peter Bianchi at first from Imphal, and then from Hundung. After Maram Khullen, communities were formed at Maram Khuneo, Sadiom Pukhri, Rajamei, Senkhumei, Willong and Khongnem. Thanks also to the hard work of two Tangkhul catechists, Mr. John Longyao, Mr. Paul Yuishi and Mr. Rimien from Tamenglong. Some people of the village settled in new colonies like Maram Bazar (1956), New Maram (1957), Maram Centre (1968) and Ramlong (1968).

After the centre of Mao was opened in 1966, Maram came to be looked after from there. In a significant development in 1979, the centre at Senapati was opened and Maram now came under the Senapati mission.

The site for the school at Maram was given to the Punanamei Parish during the days of Fr. Peter Bianchi and Fr. Mathew Tharakan. The church was built in that place and people used to go there for Sunday service. Later the villagers gave the same plot of land to the military. However, on Sundays, people continued to come for worship, even though it was surrounded by the military outpost.

In 1979, the military built the present church up in the village and the villagers stopped coming down. When the military outpost was withdrawn to the main camp at Lairoching in 1980, Fr. John Med reclaimed the land and the buildings from the army. The military handed over the land to the villagers with the condition that it must be used to open a school. The Village Gaonbura handed over the land to the mission and was bought by the Province in 1981.®

There was already a Middle School at Maram Centre started by (Fr.) Egidius Daniel in 1975. In 1977 when the centre of Senapati was begun, the school was handed over to Fr. John Med who appointed Mr. Ratnam from Tamil Nadu as the Headmaster of the school. Mr. Ratnam also ran a boarding for boys and girls. In 1982 the school had classes up to Class V. The boarding had thirty boys.

Fr. John Med began the construction of the new school building in 1982. It was completed in 1983. On 31st January 1983, Don Bosco School was inaugurated by Mr. Mahajan, D.C. of North Manipur. On the same day the aspirantate which had been going on in Senapati from 1981, was shifted to Maram. Fr. Nangachiveetil Joseph was appointed the priest in charge of the aspirants. Cl. Mathew

Palackal and Cl. Chalangattucherry Mathew were the assistants. There were twenty-five aspirants in all - twelve in Class IX, four in Class VIII and nine in Class VII. Fr. Nangachiveetil Joseph looked after the school as well.

The aspirants took up their residence in the new school building and the old school building was converted into the kitchen and refectory of the aspirants. In June 1983 Fr. Joseph Edakudan joined the community of Maram. On 5th November 1983, new construction work began for the boarding and "Confrères" Residence.

In April 1985, the aspirantate was shifted to Don Bosco Dibrugarh.¹³ Fr. Nangachiveetil Joseph continued as the Headmaster of the school, assisted by Fr. Joseph Edakudan.

Fr. Peter Bianchi was appointed to Maram and on 29th July 1985 he took charge of the school. On 30th October 1985, Fr. Nangachiveetil Joseph was transferred to Tuli. Fr. Mechery Varghese was appointed as the Assistant Headmaster. The Headmaster's office was made into a bedroom-cum-office and Fr. Peter Bianchi remained there. Certain other changes were also brought about. The refectory which was in the old school building up the hill was brought down to the pucca school building and arranged in a classroom. Another classroom became his office.

On 14th June 1987, Fr. Peter Bianchi left for Europe and he was substituted by Fr. Abraham Alex Kaduthodil. Fr. Bianchi returned on 14th November 1987 and Fr. Alex Kaduthodil left for Mon. The work for St. John Bosco church, Maram, was started in 1988.

¹³ The four aspirants who left for Dibrugarh are the following: Moses Kamba, Christopher Thummu, Paul Woshano and Amos Jacob.

On 18th January 1989 it was canonically erected as a Salesian house with Fr. Seabstian Manianchira as its first Rector.

The newly constructed St. John Bosco's Church, Maram, was blessed by Mgr. Joseph Mittathany on 31st January 1989. On the same day, the parish was canonically erected with Fr. Peter Bianchi as the first Parish Priest. Till now Maram was part of the parish of Senapati and was looked after from there. The construction of the new presbytery was completed in April 1989. Fr. Peter Bianchi shifted to the new residence on 19th April 1989. The new presbytery was officially blessed on 7th May 1989.

The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, started the Auxilium Convent at Maram on 22nd August 1990. The first sisters were Sr. Anna Mathai (Superior), Sr. Odelia Kharlakhi and Sr. Jessy Pathiparambil. The sisters stayed in two rooms adjacent to the refectory, adjusted for the purpose, till the new convent building was completed.

In 1990 Fr. Mechery Varghese was transferred and on 16th February 1990 Fr. Chalangattucherry Mathew was appointed as the Assistant Headmaster. On 6th February 1991 Fr. Chalangattucherry Mathew was transferred and Bro. George Perumanoor took over as the new Assistant Headmaster on 3rd February 1991. Class X began in 1991. On 10th February 1992 Fr. Jose Karippai was appointed the Headmaster. Bro. George Perumanoor was transferred and he left Maram on 14th February 1992.

20th July 1994 remains a watershed in the history of the development of Don Bosco, Maram. On that day Don Bosco Higher Secondary School (Plus II) was opened with fifteen students in Class XI. Fr. Nedumattathil Jose was appointed to Maram. He reached on 31st July 1994 and took over as the Principal.

In January 1995 Fr. Peter Bianchi, Fr. Seabstian Manianchira and Fr. Jose Karippai were transferred. Fr. Akkarappatty Jose was appointed as Rector and Parish Priest and he took charge on 11th January 1995. On 2nd February 1995, Fr. Jose Palely joined the community and on 19th March 1995 Fr. Joseph Edakudan took charge as the Administrator. The mosaic work in the Church was completed only on 19th October 1995.

Fr. Jose Palely was transferred and Fr. Joseph Pampackal was appointed as the Vice-Principal in 1996. The first batch of 18 who appeared for Plus II examinations in 1996.® The school bagged the first position in the state and emerged as one of the best schools of the state of Manipur. In 1997 Fr. Joseph Edakudan was transferred and Bro. Benarius was appointed to the centre as the Administrator.

On 18th November 1997, the foundation-stone for the Don Bosco College, Maram was blessed by Mgr. Joseph Mittathany, Bishop of Imphal. Mr. Jonathan, Minister of Horticulture unveiled the memorial slab. Present were also a host of ministers and other dignitaries.®

But a macabre act of violence drowned the school in sorrow and shock. On 22nd November 1997, Fr. Nedumattathil Jose, the Principal of Don Bosco, Maram, was shot dead by an unidentified gunman in the Principal's office. The school was declared closed indefinitely until the culprits were booked and the reason for this horrendous crime made known. All the Catholic schools of the region remained closed. The school was re-opened on 5th May 1998. The bizarre event has cast an indelible shadow of gloom over the Mission of Maram Centre.

In 1998 Fr. Akkarappatty Jose was transferred to Senapati and Fr. Chittiserry Joseph was appointed Rector and Principal. Fr.

Edakudan Joseph was appointed the Parish Priest. In 1999, Fr. Joseph Pampackal was transferred to Jorhat and Fr. Kunnathettu Vincent took charge as the Vice-Principal on 3rd February. Bro. Benarius Topno was transferred to Golaghat and Bro. Orappankal James was appointed the Administrator. He arrived on 6th February 1999. In February 2000, Fr. Kunnathettu Vincent was transferred to Don Bosco, Langjing. Fr. Jose Palely was appointed the Principal of Degree College. Now work is in progress to build a temporary structure for the degree college (Arts). Fr. Paul Maippan was appointed assistant Headmaster and Counsellor.

Maram is situated at a distance of 83 km from Imphal and 22 km from Mao. The parish of Maram has about 6,000[@] Catholics in the five substations of Maram Kullen (3076), Maram Centre (950), Maram Bazar (1536), New Maram, Ramlong (415). The school has about 1270 students and there are 158 students doing the Pre-university course. There are 90 boys and 34 girls in the boarding.

Parish Priests/ Rectors

Fr. Peter Bianchi (1985-1989-1995), Fr. Sebastian Manianchira (1989-1995), Fr. Akkarappatty Jose (1995-1998), Fr. Chittisery Joseph (1998-).

Others:

Fr. Nangachiveetil Joseph, Fr. Joseph Edakuden, Fr. Peter Bianchi, Fr. Mechery Varghese, Fr. Sebastian Manianchira, Fr. Karippai Jose, Bro. Perumanoor George, Fr. Nedumattathil Jose, Fr. Pallely Jose, Fr. Jose Pampackal, Fr. Chittisery Joseph, Bro. Benarius Topno, Bro. Orappankal James, Fr. Kunnathettu Vincent, Fr. Jose Palely, Fr. Paul Maippan.

DON BOSCO, SENAPATI

Don Bosco, Senapati is situated at a distance of 61 km from Imphal and 151 km from Dimapur. The parish consists of a mixed group of tribals namely Maos, Marams, Zeliangs, Lengmei, Zemeis, Nepalis and Kukis. The main languages are Mao, Maram and Lengmei.

The origin of a permanent residence and school in Senapati may be traced back to the year 1976 when Fr. John Med was made the Assistant Parish Priest of Mao in charge of the Maram area. He visited the villages mostly on foot. As conveyance was a problem it was decided to build something in the sub-centre where he could stay. There were two sub-centres namely Maram and Senapati. The Maram land was in the hands of the army whereas Senapati had promised land to Fr. Mathew Tharakan when he was the Parish Priest of Mao.

Since Maram was occupied by the army, it was decided to begin the mission at Senapati Headquarters. Senapati was a small town with only the DC's quarters and a few offices. The village was across the river, where a tiny chapel had been built.

On enquiry regarding the land it was discovered that though Fr. Mathew Tharakan, the Parish Priest was promised a whole slope of the hill, only the top part was available. The lower half had been promised to the DC for a government piggery farm. Fr. John Med approached the DC who was a Punjabi gentleman and he readily agreed to give the land to the mission for the school, but only if the

villagers would find him another place for the project. The people agreed and so the whole slope was handed over to the mission.

The land was registered on 8th December 1977 at Imphal. The whole land was given as a gift by the village of Maram Khonao, mainly because the village Headman was a Catholic. But all his family and children were baptists. A few days after the registration of the land, the village Headman died. Three pieces of land were in the hands of the local people then which explains why the road to the mission is very steep. Later these plots were bought for the mission though at an exorbitant price.

The school and the boarding were begun in February 1977. The villagers built two thatched sheds - one for the school and another for the boarding. Fr. John Med remained in a small room 20"/10" which was divided into two, one of which served as a store-room and the other as the room and office. The school began with KG I, KG II, Class I and Class II. The teachers were Mr. Francis Yongsong who was the Headmaster, his wife Mrs. Albina, Mr. Peter Chetri and his wife Mrs. Agnes. Peter Chetri and Mrs. Agnes also looked after the boarding which had about 20 students in all. The boarding and the school were situated where the convent and the elementary school are now.

Buildings were shaky and miserable. So the need was felt to begin new constructions. Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil, the Bishop of Kohima-Imphal, provided the project for a dispensary. The dispensary was built and was used as the staff quarters. The construction was begun in 1978 and was completed within a very short time using prefabricated structure. Work soon began for the Staff Quarters and one wing of the school. The boarding and school still continued to function in sheds. The Staff Quarters was completed in 1979. In 1979 Fr. Med was joined by Fr. Peter Paul.

The MSMHC sisters were soon contacted. The sisters arrived in January 1980 and Fr. Med shifted to the new building which was still incomplete. In the meantime the school was upgraded every year.

In 1980 the Diocese of Imphal was created with Mgr. Joseph Mittathany as its first Bishop. On 1st January 1980, Senapati was canonically erected as a parish and Fr. John Med was appointed the Parish Priest.

On 15th February 1981, an aspirantate for the boys of the hills was opened at Senapati with Fr. John Med as the in charge. C. Alex Chamakala was appointed as the Assistant. On 20th July 1981, Fr. Peter Paul was transferred and on 29th September 1981, Fr. Kannath Thomas took charge as the Assistant Parish Priest.

After the completion of the "Confrères" Residence the second wing of the boarding was completed. The construction of the new church began soon. Money came through propaganda. One of the first benefactors was Fr. Ignatius Rubio of Shillong. The church was blessed on 21st March 1982 by Mgr. Joseph Mittathany. The work for the school building was begun on 13th May 1982. It was blessed on 31st January 1983.

By now there were about 150 boys and 100 girls in the boarding. The smaller boys who were about 50 were looked after by Mr. Peter Chetri and family. They were housed in a shed near the Staff Quarters. When they reached class V these students were shifted to the main boarding. Fr. John Med administered the finances and gave Rs 150/- to the Boarding Master and the Sisters irrespective of whether he was paid the fees or not. He also helped in procuring things whenever he could.

The next building to be completed was the Chapel for the sisters and the tailoring section. In 1983 Fr. Kannath Thomas was

transferred and Fr. Chittiserry Joseph was appointed as the Assistant Parish Priest. About the year 1985, work began for the new school building near the Confrères' Residence.

Fr. Joseph Chittiserry was transferred to Rua Home, Golaghat in June 1985 and Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest. He did extensive touring. Due to his efforts Iankullen, a Zemei village embraced the Catholic faith. In April 1986, 62 baptisms were administered in the village marking the beginning of the Catholic Church among the Zemeis. In February 1987, Fr. Joe was transferred to Bosco Bible School, Tinsukia. He was replaced by Fr. Savarimuthu Arokiasamy. In 1988 Bro. Romanus Tirkey was also appointed to the parish.

The construction for the bigger church was begun in 1987. Fr. John Med had wanted to construct the church near the town above the stadium, but the government influenced by the Baptist community, gave away the land for a temple. Though the government offered half an acre of land each to the Baptists and the Catholics to build the church, the idea of building the church there was given up as it might lead to religious conflict. Thus the plot where the church stands today was chosen. The newly constructed church was blessed on 31st January 1989 by Mgr. Joseph Mittathany. The ceiling and the façade of the church was completed while Fr. Job Kallarackal and Fr. Murickal Joseph were Parish Priests.

One of the attractions of Senapati was its choir which was the result of insisting on music with the boarding boys and girls right from the beginning. By the time Fr. John Med came away, they were acknowledged as the best choir of the region. Twelve boys and twelve girls of Senapati represented the province during the DB '88 Centenary Celebrations held in Mumbai. During the time of Fr. Med, el-

ementary schools were begun in Kangpokpi, Maram, Bendramai and Wilong.

In February 1991, Fr. Jose Karippai was appointed Headmaster.

Fr. John Med was transferred to Imphal in 1991. Fr. Job Kallarackal took over as the new Parish Priest on 5th February 1991. Fr. Jose Karippai was transferred and in 1992 Fr. Joy Sebastian was appointed Headmaster. Fr. Savarimuthu Arokiasamy was transferred to Salesian College. Fr. Paulus Kerketta was appointed to the Centre in February 1992. In 1993 Fr. Joseph Murickal was appointed the headmaster.

In January 1994, Fr. Joy Sebastian was transferred to Golaghat and Fr. Paulus Kerketta was transferred to Khoupum Valley. Fr. Bernard Topno took over as the Assistant Parish Priest in October 1994. He was transferred on 16th June 1995.

In January 1997 Fr. Job Kallarackal was transferred to Provincial House, Dimapur and Fr. Murickal Joseph was appointed as the Parish Priest. In February 1997 Fr. Mathew Pottukulam was appointed the Headmaster. Fr. Puthussery John took over as the Assistant Parish Priest. In May 1998 Fr. Puthusserry John was transferred to Don Bosco School Dimapur and Fr. Akkarappatty Jose was appointed to the parish as Assistant Parish Priest.

On 23rd February 1999 Fr. Murickal Joseph passed away suddenly after a massive heart attack. His mortal remains were laid to rest at Salesian College Cemetery, Dimapur on 26th February 1999.

In 1999, there are over 1000 students in the school. The parish had twenty nine villages with Catholic communities. The Parish of St. John Bosco, Senapati was handed over to the Diocese of Imphal on 31st December 1999.

Parish Priests:

Fr. John Med (1977-1991), Fr. Job Kallarackal 1991-1997), Fr. Murickal Joseph (1997-1999)

Others:

Fr. Peter Paul, Joe Ngamkhuchung, Fr. Savarimuthu Arokiasamy, Bro. Romanus, Fr. Joy Sebastian, Fr. Paulus Kerketta, Fr. Valiplackal Jose, Fr. Bernard Topno, Fr. Mathew Pottukulam and Fr. Puthussery John, Akkarappatty Jose.

DON BOSCO, SHAJOUBA

St. Joseph's Shajouba, is situated at a distance of about 3 km from Tadubi off the Imphal-Kohima highway. The people in the neighbourhood are mostly Maos.

St. Joseph's School, Shajouba was originally a village school. The people of Tadubi had started a school on their own and wanted the Church to take it over. But Tadubi being not a central location, Shajouba was suggested as the ideal place to put up the school. Being on the border of Makhel, the place from where all the Nagas are said to have dispersed, the place was also thought to be historically important. Besides, Tadubi, already had a College and Government School. So about 15 acres of land adjoining the Kaibi and Makhel Churches were bought for Rs. 20,000[@] and A kaccha building was put for the school. For a year the people themselves managed the school.

St. Joseph's School and boarding were taken over by St. Mary's Parish in 1982 while Fr. Joseph Edakudan was the Parish Priest of Mao. Mr. Joseph was the first teacher and boarding master. Mr. Lolly too was actively involved in the school right from the beginning.

Fr. Vincent Parumala began looking after the centre from 1991. While staying at Punanamei, he visited the school daily. In 1991 there were classes up to VI. The classes were held in a temporary building. The first pucca building was constructed in 1991 while Fr. Tharakan was the Parish Priest of Mao. The foundation stone of

the new building was laid by Fr. Juan Vecchi on 11th February 1992. The building was designed by Fr. Chollamadathil Mathew. There were about 210 students on the rolls. In 1993 there were 260 students. The number increased to 300 in 1994.

Fr. Parumala Vincent was transferred to Science College, Kohima in 1995. There were 360 students up to Class VIII.

Fr. Peter Bianchi was appointed in charge of the centre. He began residing at Shajouba. After the year end classes were down-graded to Class VII for the next academic year of 1998.

The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians joined the centre on 2nd February 1997. They stay in one of the classrooms of the school. The first two sisters were Sr. Louisa Pinto and Sr. Rose Mary Adaphro.

Fr. Jerome Moshary was appointed to the centre in 1997. Fr. Jerome was transferred to Don Bosco, Kohima and Fr. Sebastian Manianchira was appointed to the centre in February, 1999. In January 2000, Fr. Sebastian was transferred to Mao and Fr. Tinglung Francis was appointed Counsellor.

Today the work for the school and the Confrères' Residence is complete. Work is in progress for the construction of the chapel and four class rooms. The school is up to Class VIII. In February 2000, there were about 540 students in the school. The boarding had 9 boys and 13 girls.

Those who worked:

Fr. Parumala Vincent (1991-1995), Fr. Peter Bianchi (1995-), Fr. Jerome Moshary (1997-1999), Fr. Sebastian Manianchira (1999-2000), Fr. Tinglung Francis (2000-)

DON BOSCO, TAMENGLONG

Tamenglong, one of the nine districts of Manipur, has an area of 4344 sq. km. and a population of about 86,272 spread out in 204 villages of the district. The three main tribes of this West district are Zemeis, Liangmeis and Rongmeis (Zeliangrong). There are few other smaller tribes such as the Puimei Nagas and Kukis in certain pockets.

It was the village of Awangkhum that led the way for the spread of the faith to the Tamenglong area. The coming of the Catholic faith to the village of Awangkhum had been occasioned by the differences that arose in the Baptist community over the question of drinking. The Baptist Church in the villages had banned drinking and many were excommunicated from the Church on this account. In February 1957, those excommunicated sent a three member delegation led by Mr. K.S. Ponjeipou to contact the Catholic Missionaries at Imphal. They met Fr. Aloysius Ravalico and Fr. Peter Bianchi. More delegations came to Imphal and the fathers were invited to come to Awangkhum.

In response to their request, on 4th May 1957, Fr. Joseph Felix visited the West District becoming the first Catholic missionary to visit the West District. He visited the village a second time on 20th October 1957[@] and this time baptized a dying lady.

It was around this time, that some of the non-Christians from Tamenglong came to Awangkhum village to visit their friends. They were informed immediately about this new-found faith. The village-

ers from Tamenglong too were interested and invited them to come and preach in Tamenglong. 6th and 7th February 1958 were big days for the Catholics of Awanghkul when 273 people of Awangkul (35 families) were baptized by Fr. Joseph Felix and Fr. George Venturoli sdb. The fathers were told about the invitation given by their friends in Tamenglong.

The next day, 8th February 1958 while Fr. Venturoli returned to Imphal, Fr. Felix accompanied by some of the Catholics of Awanghkul, proceeded to Tamenglong on his maiden visit. He reached the Headquarters and halted at the I.B. for the night. On 9th February 1958, he reached Tamenglong Kunjao and stayed in the house of the Village headman Mr. Hurang. In the evening when people came back to the village from their fields Fr. Felix held a meeting in the youth dormitory. He talked about the Catholic faith and answered all their questions. They seemed impressed. The next day he celebrated mass in the open air and invited the people to send their students to Don Bosco School, Imphal.

On 1st March 1958, the first two boys, Remian and Thomas Mepingkamang from the Kunjao Village joined Don Bosco Boarding at Imphal. They were brought by their father, Mr. R.P. Pungsam. Soon many more followed. Some of the first boys to join the boarding were Didah, Disuang, Kadichamang, Ramkhong and Liangjinpou.

On 22nd December 1958 Fr. George Venturoli visited Tamenglong. On this occasion about ten people including the Mrs. Khiuchungliu, Mr. Dita Shri Liangjingou, Keisongding, Inthuigong, and Kungamang were enlisted as catechumens.

The first baptism was administered to Thomas Meipingkamang and Michael Disuang on 28th March 1959 at Don Bosco Imphal by Fr. Aloysius Ravalico. Their example was followed by the other students from Tamenglong.

The fathers continued to visit Tamenglong. In June 1959 Fr. Peter Bianchi visited Tamenglong. By now many were interested in the Catholic faith. In November 1961 the people of Tamenglong were prepared for their baptism with the help of the students of Don Bosco, Imphal.

With the help of the various fathers who toured the Tamenglong region from Imphal, the Catholic Church continued to grow in number and in faith. Fr. Peter Bianchi looked after the Tamenglong area from 1959 to 1963. Arrangements for the purchase of the plot of land for the mission compound where Don Bosco School and Parish Centre are situated was made at this time.[@] Fr. Daniel Rai toured the area from 1964 to 1966. Later Fr. Joseph Edakudan and Fr. O.V. Abraham looked after Tamenglong from Imphal. After the arrival of Fr. Chettupuzha George to Imphal as assistant Parish Priest he toured the Tamenglong area.

The land for the mission was bought on 17th June 1970. The land known as Sanoriniuphai Tamenglong, measured two furlong squares (about 40 acres) and was purchased from Mr. Keirisinang of Kunjao Village. Fr. O.V. Abraham, was the Rector and Parish Priest of Imphal then. Fr. O.V. Abraham was followed by Fr. Manianchira Sebastian as Rector and Parish Priest of Imphal.

The fathers from Don Bosco, Imphal, took great pains in visiting the various villages of the West District. Fr. Paul Bernick narrated how Fr. Maria Selvam and himself went to bathe in the river in Lower Awangkhum one night. The mosquitoes had a veritable feast. Little wonder, Fr. Bernick was hospitalized at Lamphel for ten days before he regained his health.

The appointment of Fr. Maria Selvam to Imphal was greatly responsible for the development of Tamenglong as a separate mission centre. In 1972 Fr. Maria Selvam took up residence in Kunjao,

Tamenglong, paving the way for the eventual opening of the parish. Fr. Maria Selvam stayed in a private house in Kunjao. Three new schools were opened. All the three were opened on the same day - 11th March 1972[@]. The schools were Don Bosco, Tamenglong; Dominic Savio, New Awangkul; and the school at Zeilotzang, near Makoi. Teachers were bought from Tamil Nadu.

Don Bosco School at Tamenglong was inaugurated by Mr. S.S. Sharma, the Subdivisional Officer of Tamenglong. About 500 people attended the function. Delegations from the villages of Katang, Mogulong, Khoupum and Avangkul were present on the occasion. The function was marked by a common meal, with a pig for Rs. 350/- being sponsored by Fr. Maria Selvam. There were 122 students on the roll. The same year, Fr. Maria Selvam also started a boarding for the students. The boarding had only one room, one which served as the study hall, the refectory and the dormitory.

In 1973 he was joined by Fr. Chacko Thazhoor. The same year Fr. Maria Selvam and Fr. Chacko Thazhoor shifted to a room behind the newly built multi-purpose hall (the present church of Kunjao). A shed near the hall served as the kitchen.

In 1975, the CMC Sisters opened their convent in Tamenglong. They arrived on 1st March 1975. They were housed in an old shed in Kunjao village which had previously served as the church. The pioneers were Sr. Cecilia, Sr. Bernard and Sr. Cerenia (Superior). On 22nd July 1975, they were joined by Sr. Fabiola and Sr. Gonzala. But a month later, on the night of 14th April 1975 there was a huge storm and the shed where the sisters were housed was blown away. Only Fr. Chacko Thazhoor and Bro. Brahmakulam were at the mission centre then. All the sisters were evacuated to the new wooden structure being completed to serve as the piggery and poultry, nearly three kilometres away from the village.[@]

Later Fr. Chacko Thazhoor and Bro. Brahmakaulam Antony who was overseeing the work of the convent shifted to the centre where the school was. They stayed in one of the rooms adjacent to the shed where the boarders were staying. @ Fr. Maria Selvam continued to stay in the village. On 23rd April 1975, Fr. Maria Selvam left for a missionary animation course to Rome. @

Between 1972 and 1975, the Church was founded in the villages of Khonsang, Gaidimjang, M. Khunou, Tasong, Tubung and Tuilon. Contacts were made in many other villages. @

On 25th June 1975 the new house was completed and the sisters moved into the new building. Fr. Chacko Thazhoor and Bro. Brahmakulam Antony shifted to the building vacated by the sisters.

Fr. Maria Selvam was transferred to Damra and on 24th July 1975 Fr. Mathew Tharakan was appointed the Parish Priest. He arrived on 6th August 1975. He too began staying in the two storey wooden structure which was built for the piggery and the poultry. The room downstairs served as the store-room and kitchen. The top floor was adapted as a refectory with three rooms.

It may be noted that after the departure of Fr. Maria Selvam for Rome the parish underwent a rather turbulent period as a result of the misunderstanding between the villagers of Kunjao and the Parish regarding the ownership of the truck. @

One of the important events in the parish in 1976 was the common Congress for the Tamenglong District held in Lungleiband village in January 1976. In this Congress many representatives of the people from different newly formed Catholic communities like Leisok, Nungba, Oinamlong, Kangliram. etc. took part.

Fr. Thazhoor Chacko was transferred in 7th May 1976 to Dibrugarh Seminary. Fr. Vadakethannikal Sebastian was appointed

the Assistant Parish Priest and the arrived on 8th May 1976. There were about 15-20 students in the boarding at this time. Along with Fr. Vadakethannikal Sebastian came the first diesel jeep of the Province.

The Parish of Tamenglong was officially erected on 8th September 1976.

One of the first constructions in the mission centre was the boarding. The two-storey building made with wood was completed 1977. This building now serves as the godown. It was while the boarding was being built that the school children undertook their first show of strength, the first in a series to follow. The truck which had just been handed over to the church by Caritas, had fallen into a deep ditch. As the villagers were not on enthusiastic terms with the church, there was no one to help. So the children, about 120 in number, cut a circle in the valley and with jungle ropes pulled the truck up to the top. The story of the adventurous truck was not over. After it was pulled out, Fr. Tharakan took the truck to Imphal to have it checked up. While negotiating a turn in B.O.C. Sr. Cicilia, who was accompanying Fr. Tharakan was thrown out of the truck. Before any one could realize what had happened, Fr. Tharakan managed to scoop her up in his arms and put her back in the truck. She sustained minor injuries and a terrible shock.

On 11th February 1977, the school and the dispensary at Awangkhul were inaugurated by Fr. Vadakethannikal Sebastian. The contract for putting up the structure and building the dispensary was given to a Punjabi, near Chingmeirong. The building was completed with prefabricated material for Rs. 18 per square foot. The dispensary at Khoupum Valley was also built the same year and by the same contractor.

On 4th April 1977, the Don Bosco Social Welfare Centre was registered. In 1978 the Grihini school for girls was started. In the same year the construction of the girls' boarding was also begun. Fr. Joseph Edakudan was the Rector of Imphal at this time. A contract was signed with the Himalayan Tiles to get bricks for Rs 50,000. But the contract was rescinded because of the difficulty of transportation and the cost involved. Only bricks worth for Rs. 16,000 were brought. Cement was supplied for the rest of the money. The present dispensary was also built the same year.

Though various constructions continued in the centre, the mission work was not forgotten. Fr. Mathew Tharakan and Fr. Vadakethannikal Sebastian visited the villages. New villages like L. Khunou, Nungba, Kambiron, Oinamlong, Mugulong, Tamei, Londi Paparam and so on were contacted at this time. Fr. Sebastian would visit the villages and bring more boys and girls for the boarding. On 3rd June 1978 the parish was permanently entrusted to the Salesians.

On 6th May 1979 Fr. Vadakethannikal Sebastian was transferred to Guwahati as Headmaster and Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung was appointed the new Assistant Parish Priest. He arrived on 28th April 1979. More villages especially in the Zemei areas were contacted in 1979.

On 29th June 1980 the new diocese of Imphal was erected with Mgr. Joseph Mittathany as the first bishop. The school at Tamenglong was upgraded from Class Seven to Eight in the same year. New village schools were opened at Khonsang (KG I - II), Akhui (KG I - II), and Awangkhul (KG I - IV). The Tamenglong Circle Women Society was organized on 1st March 1980. A meeting of all the members of the Catholic Action of the parish was also organized.

The girls' boarding and the dispensary-cum-Vocational Training Centre were blessed by Mgr. Joseph Mittathany on 29th September 1980. The new building for the dispensary at Awangkhul was also completed in 1980.

On 4th February 1981 the Fr. Mathew Tharakan who had so far been staying in the shed below the playground shifted to the building constructed for the dispensary. The other fathers had already been staying there. On the same day foundation-stone of the new church was blessed by Fr. Mathew Tharakan. On 9th February 1981, the school which was being run in the dispensary was shifted to the lower ground and the next day the dispensary so far functioning in the convent, was moved to the dispensary building along with the tailoring section.

On 25th January 1982, Fr. Sebastian Thottippatt arrived as the Assistant Parish Priest. In May 1983, Fr. Alex Pulimootil joined as the Assistant Parish Priest. He replaced Fr. Sebastian Thottippatt.

The Church of Mary Help of Christians at Tamenglong is a standing testimony to the work that boys and girls can do when properly motivated. The construction of the new church was begun in 1980 with a contractor from Imphal. But he did the work up to the tie-beam and then left abruptly. Now the work was taken up by the local workers who numbered not more than six. The boys helped in putting cement, breaking stones, cutting mud etc. The villagers too would come from the nearby villages to cut mud and most of the levelling was done by hand. No chips were bought. A group of workers were brought from Bangalore for quarrying work. License was got from Guwahati for acquiring and possessing dynamite sticks. A hydram water tank was installed to pump water.

The boarders worked during the morning-job and work-time. The students from the various classes worked during the SUPW

(Socially Useful Productive Works) . There were about 400-500 boys at the time. The ceiling of the church was also done by the boys. There was only one carpenter to plane the plank for thirty paise per plank. The wiring of the church too was done by the boys. One of the Mao boys who had done ITI in Shillong gave the directions.

The windows of the church were designed by Fr. Jayakumar John and made by Don Bosco Technical School, Shillong. The glasses for the window-panes were cut by Fr. Tharakan and the workers. Benches and the front door were designed by Fr. Cherukareth Raphael (C.V.). These were assembled at Tamenglong by the boys. On 15th December 1984, the new Church of Mary Help of Christians was blessed by Mgr. Joseph Mittathany, the Bishop of Imphal. It may be noted that the Tamenglong church was the first independent architecture of Fr. Chollamadathil Mathew who was in Imphal then, and that he looked after the constructions with a bi-monthly visit.

The new boarding for boys was completed in 1985. The year 1985 also saw admissions to Class IX. The same year, the house was erected as a canonically erected with Fr. Mathew Tharakan as the Rector. The first batch of matric students appeared in 1987.

On 25th May 1985 Fr. Thottappallil George arrived as the new Assistant. On 1st June 1985 Fr. Karumampallil Joseph too joined the community as the Assistant Parish Priest. On 24th June 1985 Fr. Alex Pulimootil left for higher studies to Rome.

The construction of the hostel began in May 1986. The work for the Confrères' Residence began in 1987. Fr. Chollamadathil Mathew designed the building. The construction of the school too commenced in 1987. It was during the construction of the residence and the hostel that one of the boys kicked another injuring him fatally. The one who kicked only intended the other to work harder.

But unfortunately the boy died, after a few days in the local hospital. The parents of the boy filed a case in the court after having agreed to a compromise on the insinuation of two catechists Mr. Alfred and Mr. Mark . Fr. Tharakan had to appear before the court. Later it was settled out of court, the boy's father having to pay Rs. 20,000 as compensation.

On 30th December 1987 Fr. Tharakan was transferred to Mao. He had during his tenure helped change the entire landscape of Tamenglong. His trust in the youngsters and in what they could do perhaps sets him apart. Between 1975 and 1987, Catholic Church was established in the following villages: Zeilatjang, Leisok, Charoi II, Akhui, Satudai, Pongringlong, Longjon, Kambiron, L. Khullen, Nungba, Pongringlong and Tankonjang.®

On 1st January 1988, Fr. George Menampampil was appointed the Parish Priest.

The Confrères' residence was completed by 1988 and the fathers shifted to the new building. The school constructions which had been stopped after the first floor was completed was resumed in July 1988. The village schools of Tamenglong Headquarters, Oinamlong and Awangkhol were constructed; up to now they were run in thatched sheds. A new venture of offering an 'Intensive Course' was introduced at the centre to help over-aged students to begin studies.

Fr. Menampampil George left in July 1989 as the world chaplain of MIJARC. On 2nd November 1989 Fr. Karumampallil Joseph who had already taken charge on 18th July 1989 was officially installed as the Parish Priest.

In June 1989 Fr. Thottathimyalil Francis joined the community as the Assistant Parish Priest. And in 1990 Fr. Parappilly Jacob

was appointed as Assistant Parish Priest. On 16th September 1990 the foundation-stone of the new convent was blessed.

The construction of the school progressed slowly. As in the case of the other buildings, it was the boys and girls who did most of the work like breaking stones, unloading trucks, casting etc. Both the fathers and sisters worked side by side with the students. It may be noted that there were only ten workers and these too were not trained workmen. The school building was completed by 1991.

In 1991, the new parish of Awangkhul was created from Tamenglong. Fr. Thottappallil George was appointed its first Parish Priest on 18th August 1991. Fr. Thottappallil George had been in Tamenglong for six and a half years.

In 1992 the science lab was inaugurated. In this case too the shelves, tables etc. were designed and constructed in the house itself.

In February 1992 Fr. Thottathimyalil Francis was transferred to Khoupum Valley as the Assistant Parish Priest. Within his two years of stay he had learned the language and compiled the first Rongmei dictionary (1991), and published the Holy Week Liturgy in Rongmei and the Rongmei Grammar. Fr. Mathai Kottarathil replaced Fr. Thottathimyalil Francis as Assistant Parish Priest.

The Teachers' Quarters with an accommodation for five families was completed in 1993. October 1993 was marked by the teachers' strike. The low salary was the apparent grievance that prompted them to strike though personal reasons and strained relationships seem to have been the graver factor. They resented when asked to pay Rs. 50/- towards hostel facilities and Rs. 18/- towards the electricity bill. Besides, the fact that they were not allowed to conduct tuitions in the teachers' quarters also contributed to the agitation.

The teachers struck work for about fifteen days. However, the turn of events led to a settlement in favour of the school management. The villagers of Kunjao and Tamenglong Headquarters also helped to resolve the issue by taking disciplinary action on the local teachers.

In 1994 Fr. Parappilly Jacob was transferred and Fr. Jose Palely was appointed Headmaster. Fr. Mathai Kottarathil was transferred 1995 and Fr. Jose Chacko became the Assistant Parish Priest.

To promote the education of children up to Class V in the village itself, seven zones were set up and semi-pucca constructions were put up with the help of NEG, a branch of IGSS. Such constructions were undertaken in Wairangba II, Balok, Atengba (Makoi) and Katang. Nungba and few other centres were given C.I. Sheets to roof the schools. The students from these sub-centres were taken to Don Bosco School at the centre, after they were given an intensive course in English and Mathematics for about a month. Sports and cultural events were also organized in the parish school for these various sub-centres annually.

Leadership training, health awareness, planting of fruit trees, setting up of kitchen garden, common piggery farm etc. were introduced. In 1994, four government projects for plantation were introduced in the villages of Oinanmlong, M..., upper Awangkhum and Tameng. The cash awards were utilised for relief works, building of schools etc. The Bible Quiz held annually was another important feature. The winners were awarded free schooling. It also served as catechetical instruction as different themes were taken up and Bible Camps were organized to coincide with the event.

In February 1995 Fr. Karumampallil Joseph was transferred to Salesian Novitiate, Imphal and Fr. Tony Pellissery was appointed the Parish Priest. On 14th June 1996 Fr. Thettayil Jose was appointed

the Assistant Parish Priest. Fr. Kaippallimyalil Joseph arrived as the Headmaster in February 1995.

Fr. Thettayil Jose and Fr. Kaippallimyalil Joseph were transferred in February 1998 and Bro. Perumanoor George and Fr. Francis Tinglung took over as Headmaster and Assistant Parish Priest respectively.

St. John's Parish, Nungba was inaugurated on 10th March 1998. The villages of Khonsang, Nungba, M. Khunou, Muktikhullen, Rongpang, Kambiron and Okoklong have become part of the new parish.

In 1999 Fr. Perumanoor George was transferred to Tinsukia Bible School[@] and Fr. Devassy Palatty was appointed to the Centre. He arrived on 11th March 1999. In February 2000 Fr. Alex Manayil was appointed assistant Parish Priest.

Today the Parish of Mary Help of Christians, Tamenglong has about 3600 Catholics in the 22 villages of Khunjao, Tamenglong Headquarters, Keikao, Kahulong, Zelilat, Atengba, Impankang, Wairangba I, Wairangba II, Bhalok, Sibilong, N. Chingkao, Rengikiulong, Jeribam, Tamei, M. Katang, U. Katang, Oinamlong, Gadailong, Dailong, Magulong and Thiulon. There are about 1300 students in the school and 100 boys and 50 girls in the boarding. The parish has been divided into Khoupum Valley, Awangkul and Nungba Parish.

Pioneer:

Fr. Mariaselvam (1972-1975)

Parish Priests and Rectors:

Fr. Mathew Tharakan (1975 {1976-1987}), Fr. Menamparampil George (1988-1989), Fr.

Karumampallil Joseph (1989-1995), Fr. Tony Pellisery (1995-)

Others:

Fr. Thazhoor Chacko, Fr. Vadakethannikal Sebastian, Fr. Joe Ngamkhuchung, Fr. Sebastian Thottipatt, Fr. Alex Pulimootil, Fr. Thottappallil George, Fr. Mathai Kottarathil, Bro. James Orapankal, Fr. Parappilly Jacob, Fr. Jose Palely, Fr. Thottathimyalil Francis, Fr. Thettayil Jose, Fr. Jose Chacko, Fr. Francis Tinglung, Bro. Perumanoor George, Fr. Palatty Devassy, Fr. Alex Manayil.

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Arunachal Pradesh, the "Land of the Dawn-lit Mountains", is situated in the North-Eastern corner of India bordering on China, Tibet, Burma and Bhutan and lying between 26.28N to 29.30N latitude and 91.31 to 97.30 longitude. According to 1991 census, it has a total area of 83,743 sq.km. and a population of 8,64,558.

The population of Arunachal Pradesh is predominantly tribal. There are about 20 major tribes which are divided into a number of sub-tribes. The prominent tribes which occupy the state are Adi, Nishi, Apatani, Tagin, Mishmi, Khamti, Nocte, Wancho, Tangsa, Singpho, Monpa, Sherdu-kpen, and Aka. There are also a number of minor tribes with their own divisions. The various religions practised in the state are Doni Polo, Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity.

Recorded history of Arunachal Pradesh can be traced to the period when Ahom Kings began to rule Assam in the 16th century. The British took possession of Assam in 1838. British government had brought Arunachal Pradesh also under its administrative control. Originally known as North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), it was placed under the administration of the Union Government in 1948. It was declared a Union Territory under the name of Arunachal Pradesh on 20th January 1972 and was renamed Arunachal Pradesh. On 15th August 1975, an elected legislative assembly was constituted and the first Council of Ministers assumed office. The first general election to the Assembly

was held in February 1978. Arunachal Pradesh became a full fledged state on 20th February 1987.

The State of Arunachal Pradesh consists of thirteen districts: Changlang, Dibang Valley, Lohit, Tirap, East Kameng, West Kameng, Upper Siang, East Siang, West Siang, Upper Subansiri, Lower Subansiri, Papum Pare and Tawang.

The first efforts by Christian missionaries to contact the people of Arunachal Pradesh were made during the time of Fr. Aloysius Cerato sdb who was resident in North Lakhimpur in the early forties. Fr. Cerato continued to keep in touch with the people of Arunachal Pradesh, although being an Italian, he could not enter their territory. However, his efforts were rewarded, as on 1st June 1963 he had the privilege of baptizing the first three Arunachalis in the parish Church at Lakhimpur. As per the Baptism Register, all three belonged to the Apathani Tribe and hailed from the same village- Mudang Tage. Their names are William Tatum Tage, Joseph Muda Tage and Athanasius Taju Tage.

Today, the work of Evangelization in Arunachal Pradesh is being carried out in two different Dioceses - Dibrugarh (1951) and Tezpur (1964). The districts of Tirap, Changlang, Lohit and Dibang Valley fall under Dibrugarh Diocese while the rest fall under the Tezpur Diocese.

Though the first of the Arunachalis were baptized as early as 1963, a concerted effort at evangelization began only in 1977. The main reason was the anti-Christian policy of the Central Government - Christian missionaries were prevented from entering Arunachal Pradesh and those who became Christians were persecuted. In spite of heavy odds the missionary work gathered momentum and led to phenomenal conversions in Arunachal Pradesh. In the Diocese of Dibrugarh direct efforts at evangeli-

zation started when some tribal boys from Tirap were sent to Don Bosco School, Shillong in 1977. In the Diocese of Tezpur the actual work of Evangelization began when a centre was opened for the Arunachalis at Harmutty thanks to the initiative of Fr. Kulandaisamy in 1977.

BORDURIA

Don Bosco School and the Parish of Mary Help of Christians, Borduria are located at a Distance of 107 km from Tinsukia and 8 km from Khonsa, the major town and district headquarters. To understand the emergence and development of the parish of Borduria in perspective, it is essential to consider the development of the Catholic mission in East Arunachal Pradesh. The Catholic Mission in East Arunachal Pradesh, was to a great extent, spearheaded by Borduria.

The glittering backdrop to the beginnings of the Catholic Missions in Arunachal Pradesh goes back to the visit of Fr. Krick to the Adi area, his visit to the Mishmi country, and the martyrdom of Fr. Krick and his companion Fr. Boury, of the Foreign Missions of Paris (MEP) in 1854, at the Somme village, now in Tibet. It can be said that for all practical purposes no direct effort had been made to evangelize the people of Arunachal Pradesh under Dibrugarh Diocese till 1977 nor was it possible to do so with the situation and the circumstances existing then.

Fr. Thomas Menamparmpil sdb, then Rector of Don Bosco School, Shillong, was greatly responsible for the beginning of Catholic Church in Arunachal Pradesh. Fr. Thomas Menamparmpil was appointed Rector of Don Bosco, Shillong, in 1974. In 1975, he came in contact with Mr. Wanglat Lowangcha, a young Chief from the Nocte tribe. Mr. Wanglat had come to admit his brother to the school and the hostel. Although admissions were closed, his brother and one more boy,

Tero Kakho were given admission. They were followed by others. Slowly many students from Arunachal Pradesh were baptized in Don Bosco Shillong. Among them were Tero Kakho and Wangjem Lowang a young Chief from Luthong who were baptized in 1978.

In the meantime, Mr. Wanglat invited Fr. Thomas to open a school at Borduria and offered land for the purpose. Later Mr. Wanglat brought him an Inner-Line Permit valid for a month for visiting the Tirap district. Fr. Thomas Menamparpil accompanied by Mr. Wanglet set out for Longding but at Kapu they met with an accident. Fr. Thomas who suffered a knee injury was brought back to Mr. Wanglet's house. He had to abandon the plans for the visit of Tirap district but before he left he baptized Mr. Wanglet and family. It was 18th August 1978. The baptism of Mr. Wanglet and family marked a new beginning in the history of the Church in East Arunachal Pradesh.[@]

Mr. Wanglet and his first group of Christians from Arunachal came down to Naharkatiya on 24th December 1978 to celebrate their first Christmas. After the feast, Mr. Wanglat met Mgr. Robert Kerketta, who with some fathers and sisters decided to take tribal boys and girls from Arunachal Pradesh into the different schools of the Diocese. On 2nd February 1979, the first batch of tribal boys and girls from Arunachal Pradesh came down to study in the different schools of the Diocese like Don Bosco, Little Flower and St. Mary's, Dibrugarh.

The missionary work gathered momentum and several people began to come over to the Catholic Church. On Easter Sunday, 1979, twenty persons from Arunachal Pradesh were brought down by the Catechist, Mr. Denis Tero Kakho and were baptized in the Dibrugarh Cathedral Church. Mr. Tadar Taniang, of Nishi tribe, who later be-

came a minister in the Arunachal Government was baptized the next day and given the name Robert.®

In May 1979 Fr. Job Kallarackal was appointed by Fr. Mathai Kochuparambil, the Salesian Provincial of Guwahati to look after the Arunachal Missions. The appointment of Fr. Job ushered in a new era of missionary dynamism and remarkable growth in the history of Church in Arunachal Pradesh. Fr. Job Kallarackal began his work from Bishop's House, Dibrugarh. Later he shifted to Naharkatia Parish where Fr. Puthusery George was the Parish Priest. As per the agreement Fr. Job had to pay Rs 300/- per month towards his stay. He was assisted by the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians. Sr. Angela Tirkey, Sr. Alma Joseph, Sr. Francisca Bage, Sr. Gracy Mathew, Sr. Jacqueline Viegas and Sr. Albertina Tirkey deserve special mention. The sisters instructed the people who came down to Naharkatia, looked after the boys and girls from Arunachal Pradesh and so on.

2nd August 1979, was an important day for the Church in East Arunachal Pradesh. On that day the first church in Arunachal Pradesh was blessed by Mgr. Robert Kerketta sdb, the Bishop of Dibrugarh. The baptism of 651 people¹⁴ from Borduria and from the surrounding villages on the occasion transformed the event into an unforgettable experience. Present on the occasion were also Fr. Mathai Kochuparambil, Fr. Job Kallarackal, Fr. Thomas Menamparampil, Fr. Puthusery George, Fr. Terrence D'Souza of the Diocese of Dibrugarh, Sr. Regisinta fma (Superior, LFS Dibrugarh) and Sr. Jacqueline Viegas (Superior, St. Mary's Dibrugarh). The church (30'x12') had been built by Mr. Wanglat with the support of the people of Borduria. Arunachal Pradesh

¹⁴ The number is as per the Baptism Register of Catholic Church, Borduria.

being a forbidden territory to the missionaries, the permit was obtained by Mr. Wanglat after much effort and struggle.

As if to crown the series of events that marked the day, in a letter dated 1st August 1979, Fr. Job Kallarackal sdb was appointed the first parish priest of East Arunachal Pradesh which come under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Dibrugarh. The Arunachal Mission was all set to go.

Fr. Job Kallarackal built up contacts by meeting the villagers who came down to Naharkatiya from Arunachal for marketing purposes. Later after a sizeable number of Noctes had become Catholics, the work of contact became easier. He also contacted the Wanchos. A few Wanchos had already been baptized in Don Bosco, Shillong. In December 1979 many Wanchos were baptized in the village of Nokfan. A plot of land was leased from an Adivasi Catholic at Borhat and a small shed was built for the purpose of contacting them. Christian literature was sent to various parts of Arunachal Pradesh especially to Kameng and Siang districts, in the address of Naharkatia Mission.

More youngsters were baptized in Shillong, one among them Mr. Jatti Pulu, son of an Idu chief who was baptized at Sunny side, Shillong by Fr. Archimidez Pianazzi on 15th December 1979. Through the efforts of Mr. Wangjem Lowang, the young Chief of Luthong who was baptized in Shillong, the entire village converted to Christianity between December 1979 and January 1980. Luthong thus became the first village in Arunachal to be entirely Catholic.

The boys were brought down to Naharkatia and separate classes were held for them there. Their number usually ranged between 15-20. The smaller students were sent to the different boardings in the Diocese of Dibrugarh as well as outside the Dio-

cese eg. to Shillong, Mawlai, Kohima, Dimapur, Imphal and Senapati. Special mention should be made about the help given especially by Fr. Philip Kokkappallil and Fr. Paulinus Chempalayil of the Cathedral Parish, Dibrugarh and the Missionary Sisters of Mary Christians (MSHC) at Dibrugarh and Naharkatia.®

Given the difficult situation, Fr. Job visited the villages in Arunachal Pradesh in disguise - as a teacher, worker and so on. He crossed the jungles and mountains on foot. He was caught and summons were issued to him by the courts. In fact, many cases of illegal entry were filed against Fr. Job, in Arunachal Pradesh.

In 1980, Fr. Theophilus Ganlari was appointed to parish of Naharkatia to assist Fr. Job. Due to practical concerns,® he was appointed also as the Assistant Parish Priest of Naharkatia. The Salesians had handed over the parish of Naharkatia to the Diocese in 1980 and Fr. Joy Pallikkunnel was the Parish Priest. Fr. Theophilus could visit Arunachal Pradesh more easily as he could pass of as one of the tribals. But being also the Assistant Parish Priest of Naharkatia, he could visit Arunachal only four times® during which he visited Borduria, Paniduria, Khonsa, Luthong and so on. While staying at the centre, he helped the missions by taking singing classes for the catechumens and children who came down from Arunachal and by translating hymns. He began learning Wancho but was transferred to Doom Dooma in August 1981.®

Fr. Thomas Menampampil, was appointed as the new Assistant to Fr. Job Kallarackal. But it was difficult to make arrangements for his stay and he never came.® In December 1980 Mgr. Robert Kerketta was transferred to Tezpur and during the interim period Fr. Variathukalayil Joseph, was the administrator of the Diocese. Fr. Thomas Menampampil was appointed the Bishop of Dibrugarh on 13th July 1981.

In 1982 Sisters of Charity opened a grihini school for the Arunachali girls at Hijuguri, Tinsukia. The grown-up girls who came down from Arunachal were now sent there. Here they were instructed in religion, taught home science, knitting and tailoring and so on by the sisters before they went back to their villages. The reason why these students were sent for Grihini training was that their parents were not happy to send them to the school. Besides, it was easier to instruct them in the faith, within the short span of two years. Fr. Job Kallarackal paid for their stay at Tinsukia.

After Mgr. Robert Kerketta was transferred to Tezpur, Fr. Job Kallarackal came in contact with and baptized many Tangsas.® They were contacted from Margherita - Jagun area. It was Josham Longphi of the Tangsa tribe, baptized in Burma who was greatly responsible for the starting of the Catholic Church among the Tangsas. A few Tangsas had been baptized before. The contact with Josham was made at the end of 1982. On 31st January 1983 Fr. Job Kallarackal and Fr. George Palliparambil visited the village of Lungthoi, during which the first church in the Tangsa area was blessed.

On 3rd July 1983 Bosco Bible School was opened in Tinsukia for the Arunachal Mission with Fr. Palliparambil George as one in-charge. The opening of the Bosco Bible School was a major step towards the expansion of Catholic Church in Arunachal Pradesh. Now onwards the boys who could study, were directly sent to Bosco Bible School. The boys on their return to the villages would instruct the others and thus spread the faith.

The Church continued to enter into new tribes and villages. The Singphos, the Miju Mishmis, the Padams and the Khamtis were contacted. The first Singphos were baptized on 3rd September 1983 at the Tinsukia Parish by Mgr. Thomas. They were students of Bosco

Bible School. The first Miju Mishmi was baptized by Fr. Zacharias Panamattamparambil, sdb at Tinsukia on 6th November 1983. In 1984 Robert Boko, a Padam from Dibang Valley was baptized. Fr. Job baptized the first ever Khamti in August 1985 and named him Charles.® The villages of Namsang area (Deomali circle) were also contacted and many Noctes were baptized.®

With the permission of Mgr. Robert Kerketta, the Bishop of Tezpur, Fr. Job also visited East and West Siang and established communities in the Adi area.® The work for the Adis began when Fr. Job was put in contact with two Adi couples of Dibrugarh. With their help an Inner-Line Permit was obtained and Along in West Siang was visited. About 200 people from the Adi tribe were baptized by 1985. These contacts were left out after the MSFS fathers in Silapathar and Jonai began moving in as the area was officially handed over to them.

In October 1985, Fr. Job Kallarackal who had pioneered the work in Arunachal Pradesh was transferred to Ravalico Hostel, Imphal.® The contribution of Fr. Job to the evangelisation of Arunachal Pradesh is noteworthy. In spite of the stringent restrictions, Fr. Job was successful in visiting even the far-flung villages of East Arunachal Pradesh. No wonder, even today, he is fondly remembered by many as one who planted the Church in their villages.

After the transfer of Fr. Job in 1985 the mission work in Arunachal was followed up Fr. Palliparambil George from the Bosco Bible School, Tinsukia. Fr. George had been actively involved with the Arunachal missions even before he was appointed to Bosco Bible School.

Now, the Pailibos, the Boris and the Bokars (sub-tribes) were contacted. In 1985 a Pailibo prayer book® was published and programmes were organized in All India Radio for Christmas 1985.

Fr. Palliparambil George visited Basar, Along, Kambang, Kaying etc. Bosco Bible School helped greatly in the task of evangelizing and catechizing the south Bank of Arunachal. The fathers and brothers from the Bible School visited the villages along with the students especially during the Christmas and Easter Season. The fathers visited the various areas also on Sundays. The missionary zeal of the boys and girls brought many into the Catholic Church. For instance, the entire village of Yapuik (Siang)[@] was baptized by boys from the Bible School.[@]

The government restrictions and opposition continued and permit could not be obtained to visit the Christians even at Christmas and Easter. In 1985 Fr. Palliparambil George was allowed to visit Borduria as a pharmacist and in this way he could say mass there once a month. But in 1986 his pass as pharmacist was cancelled. Despite these difficulties, the mission work in Arunachal continued unabated.

In a bold step towards evangelization, in June 1986 Bro. Mariadas M.C. and Bro. Sevanand M.C. were posted in Borduria. But in 1987 they were sent out of Arunachal Pradesh by the police. In the mean time Fr. Palliparambil George got another permit through his friends. But in 1988 he was arrested and was declared persona non grata. The photo of Fr. George was put up at the Hukanjuri check post with "Wanted" notice. In 1991 Fr. Paul D'Souza was arrested and put in prison.

On 9th November 1991, Fr. Palliparambil George visited Arunachal and stayed in Khonsa circuit house with minister Tanyang. At that time the minister of industries T.L. Rajkumar requested him to start a school. Mr. Wanglat readily offered the land.[@]

The first Upper Wancho Catholic Conference was held at Mintong on 17, 18 and 19th April 1992. It may be noted that it was

here that Mgr. Thomas Menampampil made his first visit as Bishop to Arunachal Pradesh.[@] The first Upper Wancho Catholic Conference and the visit of the Bishop had a far-reaching impact on the Church in Upper Wancho area.

By now the possibilities for starting a school in East Arunachal was being seriously considered. In a bold initiative, Don Bosco School, Borduria was started in 1992 setting off a new era in the history of the Church in Arunachal. The school was located at Turu Lamchi, about two and a half kilometres from Borduria. There were 83 students in K.G. The boarding had 17 boys. Mr. George Joseph Nedumala and Ms. Martha Kapalome took up the task of teaching and looking after the children of the new school. Fr. Karottupuram Sebastian, Fr. Jerome Minj and Fr. Palliparambil George saw to the pastoral care at Borduria. In February 1992 some of the people of Nampong were baptized by Mgr. Thomas Menampampil. February 1992 also marked the beginning of Rajanagar mission with Bro. Sevanand Lugun, dbla residing there.

In April 1992, the transfer of Mgr. Thomas Menampampil to the diocese of Guwahati was announced. The contribution of Mgr. Thomas Menampampil to the establishment of Catholic Church in East Arunachal Pradesh cannot be exaggerated. It was his vision and support which contributed greatly towards the planting of the Church in East Arunachal Pradesh. On 5th July 1992, Mgr. Thomas Menampampil blessed the first Catholic school and boarding (though incomplete) at Borduria. On 6th July 1992, the very next day, he blessed the site for the new and the first pukka church in Arunachal.

The sisters of the Missionaries of Charity of Mother Teresa opened their convent at Borduria on 20th December 1992, marking yet another milestone in the history of Borduria. Sr. Florette

(Superior), Sr. Rose Veena, Sr. Filixa and Sr. Hilaria were the pioneers. They visited villages, distributed medicine and catechised the people.

On 11th February 1993 Fr. Joseph Kindo sdb reached Borduria as the Assistant Parish Priest, becoming the first resident priest of Arunachal Pradesh.[@] He stayed at Turu Lamchi where the school was, while belonging to the community of Bosco Bible School, Tinsukia. In 1993 he was joined by Deacon Kamil Horo.

2nd August 1993 is a red letter day in the annals of Borduria Parish. Fourteen years after the first church at Borduria, on 2nd August 1993, the Parish Church at Borduria dedicated to Mary Help of Christians was blessed by Mgr. Thomas Menampampil sdb. Mother Teresa and many other dignitaries present solemnised the function. On this occasion, Mother Teresa laid the foundation stone of Ahoon Kope, the rehabilitation centre run by the Missionaries of Charity.

After the blessing of the church, Fr. Joseph Kindo shifted his residence to Borduria and stayed in the school. Deacon Kamil Horo left for his studies to Shillong.

The Church in Arunachal continued to expand. The church at Khonsa was completed and blessed on 8th December 1993. And on 19th December 1993, Mgr. Abraham Alangimattathil, Bishop of Nagaland blessed the newly constructed church at Nampong. Fr. George Mukala looked after the centre for a year.[@]

The beginning of the Social Service Society - *Seva Kendra* - was a major event in the history of East Arunachal. It was registered in 1993, though it was established as early as 1990. It has contributed greatly towards the development of East Arunachal. Some of the activities of Seva Kendra include helping victims of fire acci-

dents, conducting health camps, providing scholarships for boys and girls and discouraging customs like chang burials². Seva Kendra has also started self-help groups and sent youth for non-formal training. The first auto-rikshaw in Tirap was sponsored by Seva Kendra in 1995.

On 26th January 1994 Fr. Palliparambil George arrived in Borduria and took up residence there. Till then Fr. George Palliparambil had been looking after the centre from Bosco Bible School. Fr. Joseph Kindo was transferred to Don Bosco, Dibrugarh as Administrator on 28th January 1994.[@] On 20th March 1994 Fr. Kamil Horo arrived as the Assistant Parish Priest. In 1995 he was transferred to Rua Home, Jorhat as the Counsellor and Fr. Augustine Kuzhikannam was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest. On 29th April 1995 Fr. Kalapurayil George too joined the mission. When the new centre of Rajanagar was begun, Fr. Kalapurayil George was put in charge and he left for Rajanagar on 1st November 1995.[@]

The newly built convent of the Missionaries of Charity was blessed by Fr. Sebastian Karotemprel, the V.G. of Dibrugarh on 31st January 1995. Nirmal Hriday, a rehabilitation Centre for patients suffering from tuberculosis and mental illness run by the Missionaries of Charity was inaugurated at Tura Lamchi by the Minister of Fisheries on 2nd December 1995. 1995 also saw the opening of Shishu Bhavan. The contribution made by the Missionaries of Charity towards the development of the parish and transformation of the society are noteworthy. Their contribution

¹⁵ Chang burial is a custom among the tribals of Arunachal Pradesh. According to this custom, the dead body is left on a bamboo-mat (chang) outside the village, instead of being buried or cremated.

especially in ending the custom of killing twins and deformed children need special mention.

In 1996 a hymnal-cum-prayer book "Sing Praise Arunachal" containing hymns in English, Nocte, Wancho, Tangsa, Nepali, Hindi and Assamese was published. Rangh Oh Joban a cassette of hymns was also brought out. A Nocte prayer and hymn book had already been published in 1987. Joban Rangsom, a prayer and hymn book containing 100 hymns, prayers and blessings as well as selected Bible Readings from the lectionary were published in 1988. The same year also saw the publication of "Wancho Gangsom Lai" in Wancho and "Hewa Achuto Likdap" for the Tagsas.

In 1996 the F.M.A. sisters began their convent in the parish with Sr. Beatrice and Sr. Anna Mathai as the pioneers. The sisters of the Disciples of Don Bosco also joined the mission. In 1998 there were two sisters each of the Disciples of Don Bosco, staying and working in four villages. Sr. Bethel (Missionaries of Charity) and Sr. Leknon Rita (Disciples of Don Bosco) are vocations from the parish. After Fr. Augustine Kuzhikannam was transferred, Fr. Mathai Kottarathil was appointed the Assistant Parish Priest. He arrived on 13th June 1996.

On 20th July 1997 Fr. Palliparambil George was transferred to Literature Centre, Khonsa. Fr. Mathai Kottarathil took over as the Parish Priest on the same day. Fr. Menamparampil George was appointed as the Assistant Parish Priest followed by Fr. Neeranal Francis.

The role of Fr. Palliparambil George in establishing Catholic Church in East Arunachal Pradesh as a relatively open entity and his contribution in making the Church a numerically formidable community in East Arunachal Pradesh cannot be overlooked. In fact,

during his time, the number of Christians in East Arunachal Pradesh increased considerably.

In August 1997 the parish was divided and different independent centres were established.[@] All the centres of Borduria, Mintong, Kanubari, Deomali, Roing and Sadiya and Rajanagar were given the letter of separation on 2nd August 1997. The other centres that have been divided from Borduria are Rajanagar[@] (29th August 1993 - 39 villages), Mintong (19th March 1996 - 31 villages), Deomali (20th April 1997 - 16 villages), Kanubari (1996- 23 villages), Roing[@] (12th December 1995 - 4 circles). Sadiya looks after the two circles of Dambuk and Pugalam. The remaining villages have been attached to Khonsa.

With the division of the parish and the establishment of the various centres, it may be said that the thrust of the parish has now moved from being one of expansion to one of consolidation. Catechesis and deepening of faith are the priorities.

In December 1997 a prayer book and the Infancy Narratives were published by Fr. Mathai Kottarathil in Nocte language. In 1997, the parish also began a Parish News Bulletin called Jyoti. In 1998, a Quiz on Jesus, was published. The Gospel of Mark has also been translated. A Quiz on Sacraments and a Nocte Hymn Book are in the process of preparation.

In 1998 Fr. Neeranal Francis was transferred to St. Vincent's school, Jagun, Fr. Jerome Minj was appointed as the Assistant Parish Priest. He arrived on 13th July 1998. In February 2000 Fr. Cyriac Pulinthanthumalayil was appointed as the assistant Parish Priest.

In 1998 there are 100 students who stay at the boarding. 5 boys of Class IX and X who attend the local Government School also stay at the boarding. The school has about 300 students from

K.G. to Class V. The high school has been shifted to Kheti (Hanguangtong), 4 km from Khonsa. The parish which had about 33,000 Catholics and 68 substations, today has 26 villages and about 14000 Catholics. Since 1998, spoken English classes are also organised for the children of the village school during the summer vacation.

Parish Priests

Fr. Job Kallarackal (from 1st August 1979 to October 1985 staying at Naharkatia), Fr. Palliparambil George (1985-1997 [1985-1994 at Tinsukia Bible School]), Fr. Kottarathil Mathai (1997-)

Others:

Fr. Joseph Kindo, Deacon Kamil Horo, Fr. Augustine Kuzhikannam, Fr. Kalapurayil George, Fr. Menampampil George, Fr. Neeranal Francis, Fr. Jerome Minj, Fr. Cyriac Pulinthanathumalayil

DON BOSCO, ITANAGAR

Beginning a Catholic centre at Itanagar, the capital of Arunachal Pradesh, was a long-standing dream. But given the anti-Christian policy of the Government, it was not likely to be realized in the immediate future. The Catholic convention of Arunachal Pradesh held in Itanagar in January 1992, however, changed such an attitude. About 10,000 people mainly from Arunachal Pradesh turned up for the gathering. The Convention proved that the Catholics were no longer a non-entity in Arunachal Pradesh but a public presence. It pointed to the changed scenario of Arunachal Pradesh. For the first time there was the possibility of beginning a centre in Arunachal Pradesh.

A significant decision was taken towards the opening of a Catholic presence in Itanagar, when in 1992, Mgr. Robert Kerketta, the Bishop of Tezpur wrote to Mother Teresa requesting her to send the M.C. sisters to help in touring the villages of Arunachal Pradesh. The invitation was favourably considered and on 20th June 1992 Sr. Suma M.C., the regional of the Missionaries of Charity, informed Fr. Jose Chemparathy, that Mother Teresa wanted to start a convent in Arunachal Pradesh. 26th June 1992, was proposed by Mother Teresa, as the date for beginning the mission.

There were no houses ready in Arunachal. So initially it was thought that they could remain in Harmutty. But on 23rd June 1992, Mr. Nabam Tukey introduced Fr. Jose Chemparathy to Mr. Tok Botam. Mr. Botam was completing a house at Pappu Nala and he agreed to give the house to the sisters for a month. Thus, as planned,

the first house of the Sisters of the Missionaries of Charity of Mother Teresa (M.C.) was blessed on the feast of the Sacred Heart, on 26th June 1992 by the V.G. of Tezpur, Fr. Abraham Kuttillampel.

The opening of the convent of the Sisters of the Missionaries of Charity of Mother Teresa at Pappu Nala hastened the process of opening a Salesian presence in the capital. Various places were considered and finally the Jully Village of Itanagar was chosen as the venue for beginning the first Don Bosco School in West Arunachal Pradesh. The Catholics of Jully Village had earlier offered land and appealed to the fathers to begin a school in their village. A meeting was held with the people concerning this in July 1992. The land was obtained at Daath, Jully about 4 km from Itanagar on 14th September 1992. The work to clear the place for starting the school began near the village church of Jully.

Initially the school ran into difficulties with the villagers of Jully demanding that their children be given first preference in taking admissions to the school. As a result further work for the school was stopped and things like uniforms and books were brought back to St. Xavier's School, Harmutty. The villagers were told that the school would not be run on their conditions. Later on 14th January 1993 few representatives came down to Harmutty and agreed that the school will be allowed to function independently. By February 1993, a shed was constructed for the school.

Don Bosco School was inaugurated on 11th February 1993 by the Minister of Civil Supplies Mr. Tardar Taniang. The dream of beginning a Don Bosco Centre, at the capital of Arunachal Pradesh was thus realized. The classes began in June 1993 with K.G. There were about 30 students on the rolls and most of them were boarders. Class I began in the second semester and fresh admissions were made to the nursery. During the first six months,

the school was looked after by teacher Ms. Jacinta Mercher. Later Sr. Lissy Varghese and Sr. Elsy Francis from Holy Cross of Chavanod from Harmutty, came to stay at Jully to look after the school and the boarding. In June 1994, they were joined by Sr. Jayanti and the sisters of Holy Cross of Chavanod took up permanent residence at Jully.

The work in West Arunachal Pradesh received a fillip when on 18th February 1994 Fr. Chemparathy Joseph was appointed for the Arunachal Missions together with Fr. Thurithiyil Sebastian, and Fr. Francis Tinglung. Fr. Francis Tinglung's sdb, stayed at the school in 1994 seeing to the spiritual animation of the sisters and helping get ready the new land for the Confrères' Residence.

In October 1994 forty bighas of land was negotiated for the purpose of the Mission Centre, where soon a link road to Itanagar was to be constructed. It was decided to establish the school here as the previous land was too small. The land was donated by the G.B., Mr. Taying Kerab. A compensation of Rs. 20,000 was paid to him.

In February 1995, Fr. Chemparathy Jose and Fr. Thurithiyil Sebastian shifted to Daath, Jully. In May 1995, Fr. Karottupuram Sebastian who was doing his doctoral studies joined the mission. The foundation-stone of the new Don Bosco School was laid in the new land by Chief Minister Gegong Apang and blessed by Mgr. Robert Kerketta on 17th August 1995. The presence of the Chief Minister was considered a silent sanction for the school.

The work began for the Confrères' Residence in November 1995. It was completed by the beginning of 1996 and Fr. Chemparathy Jose and Fr. Karottupuram Sebastian moved into the new building on 31st January 1996. Fr. Thurithiyil Sebastian stayed on in the old residence at Daath till Fr. Karottupuram Sebastian left for St. Xavier's School, Harmutty. Fr. Alaventhara Sebastian joined

the centre in August 1996 and assisted in the school, parish and boarding.

The construction work for the school met with difficulty as it involved a lot of levelling work. Providentially a new plot of plain land was available at Jully Hokah, and the construction of the school was begun at the new site in 1997. In February 1997 the new plot of eight acres was acquired for 3.75 lakhs. The negotiations for the land was done by Mr. Langbia Tama with Mr. Tad Poko, the owner of the land. Two other plots of land were obtained from the G.B. of the village. On 26th February 1997 Fr. Kuttikadan Paul from the province of Guwahati joined the community having volunteered for the Arunachal missions.

Two buildings which are to serve as the future boardings have already come up at the site. The school building is to begin soon. In 1998 classes III to V are conducted at the new site while K.G. to Class II are conducted at the old site, Daath Jully. There are 113 students in the old school and 150 at the school in the new site. The school is looked after by Fr. Maippan Paul who took over from Fr. Alevanthara Sebastian in 1998.

Don Bosco Centre, Itanagar has also brought out some publications. During his stay at Itanagar, Fr. Thurithiyil Sebastian published *An Introduction to Nishi - a dictionary-cum-grammar in Nishi Language* (1994), *Ngulung Ab*, an audio cassette of devotional songs (1995), *Augeda Yab Lamta*, a hymn and Prayer book (1996) and *The Message of Salvation*, a charismatic prayer book (1996).

The sisters of Holy Cross Chavanod left Jully on 16th May 1998.

The work for the church at Papu Nallah is nearing completion. Fr. Kuttikadan Paul is looking after the constructions. Mass

began to be celebrated there from 26th July 1998. In February 2000 Fr. Scaria Nedumala was appointed as assistant Priest. Fr. Maippan Paul was transferred to Don Bosco Maram and Fr. Cyriac Manipadam was appointed assistant Priest.

Plans are afoot to begin a Youth Centre, College Hostel and a Literature Centre at Itanagar and a new Salesian Presence at Upia, near Doimukh. Land has been purchased and permission has been obtained from Mgr. Robert Kerketta, Bishop of Tezpur, to begin these new centres.

In February 2000, the school had 430 students from K.G. to Class VII. There are 265 boys in the boarding. Though officially Harmutty is the parish it has about 79 villages and a total Catholic population of approximately 18,000.

Those in charge:

Fr. Chemparathy Jose (1995-)

Others:

Fr. Tinglung Francis, Fr. Thurithiyil Sebastian, Fr. Aelevanthara Sebastian, Fr. Sebastian Korottupuram, Fr. Kuttikadan Paul, Fr. Maippan Paul, Fr. Scaria Nedumala, Fr. Cyriac Manipadam.

JORAM

Joram is situated at a distance of 22 km from Zero and 153 km from Itanagar by the side of the road that leads to Zero and Palin. The land here was purchased in 1999 by Fr. Thurithiyil Sebastian and the work of levelling the land for construction began in 1999. It is thought of as a training and animation centre for catechists and lay leaders. Along with it also is planned a non-formal vocational training centre and a hostel for high school students. The work is being looked after by Fr. Sebastian Thurithiyil from Yachuli.

LITERATURE CENTRE KHONSA

The Catholic Literature Centre at Khonsa, the headquarters of Tirap District, was blessed on 23rd April 1997. It was inaugurated in June 1997 by Mgr. Joséph Aind sdb. On 20th July 1997 Fr. Palliparambil George took up residence there.

Seva Kendra, has also its office at the Literature Centre. Fr. Palliparambil George is assisted by Mr. George Joseph and Mr. Joy Varghese.

Fr. Dennis Panipitchai who was to look after the new centre at Kheti, joined the centre on 7th February 1998. On 1st July he shifted his residence to Kheti.

DON BOSCO HIGH SCHOOL KHETI

Don Bosco School and the F.M.A. convent was blessed on 15th June 1998 by Fr. Varghese Palathingal, the Provincial of Dimapur.

Fr. Dennis Panipitchai who was staying at Catholic Literature Centre took up residence at the school on 1st July 1998. The F.M.A. sisters also arrived on the same day. The school was inaugurated on 3rd July 1998 by Mgr. Joseph Aind sdb, the Bishop of Dibrugarh.

In February 2000, there are 78 students in Classes VI and VII of which the majority are boarders.

LONGDING

Longding is the subdivisional headquarters of the Wancho tribe in Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh. It is located at a distance of 62 km from Khonsa and 18 km from Minthong.

The land has been purchased two years ago and work is in progress to begin a formal school especially for the Wancho tribe. Presently the work is being looked after from Minthong, by Fr. Thomas Vattoth. The classes are to begin in June 2000.

MINTONG

Don Bosco, Mintong, the second Salesian presence in the Tirap District of East Arunachal Pradesh, is situated about 78 km from Khonsa and 29 km from Longding. The centre here was begun with the purpose of catering to the upper Wancho area. Fr. Thomas Vattoth was appointed to the centre in 1996. The village of Mintong has about 165 Catholic families. Being far out in rural Arunachal, the people are poor and very backward.

Mintong, meaning 'a place marked by bamboo' in the Wancho language, was first marked by the Cross in 1979 by Fr. Job Kallarackal from Naharkatiya. Fr. Job sent Taiwang Wangham who is the Chief today, and Pongham Wangpan to study in Don Bosco, Mao. Two others Lona and Lipha were sent to St. Anthony's College in the early 80's. In 1983 Pongham and Taiwang came away from Don Bosco, Mao and were admitted to Bosco Bible School along with Wangtho Wangsu. These and a few Catholics were present in the village till 1985.

In 1985 Fr. Job was transferred to Ravalico Hostel, Imphal and Fr. Palliparambil George took over the reins of East Arunachal mission. Fr. Palliparambil George made his first visit to Mintong, in December 1985, along with Mr. James Sumnyan of the Hongkan Village. They walked from Khonsa to Longding and after spending the night there, proceeded to Longphong and the next day along with some leaders like Pongbo and Pullai, to Mintong. Christmas was celebrated at Longphong where they were joined by the people

from Mintong. Together with Fr. Chittilappilly Varghese and Fr. James Poonthuruthil who had come to Longding via Mintong, the Eucharist was celebrated and baptisms were administered. But the fathers had to come away quickly, cutting their visit short, as they received a warning letter from Mr. Bowang Wancho, the secretary of the Wancho Cultural Society.

Pongham, Taiwang and Wangtho Wangsu - boys from Mintong Village, left the Bosco Bible School by the end of 1985. But the contact was kept up. In 1986 many were baptized by Mr. Pongham who by then had become a very active catechist in the Wancho area. A big celebration was held at Mintong in 1986 with an anticipated Christmas and the blessing of the first church (25x60 feet). Fr. Palliparambil George officiated. Mr. Timpong Wangham (now a Baptist MLA) helped a lot in this. The numbers continued to swell with Mr. Pongham bringing many other villages of the area to the faith. Fr. Palliparambil George continued to visit the village regularly till 1989 when his Inner-Line Permit was cancelled and his photo was placed on the "Wanted" list at the Hukanjuri check-post.

From December 1987 to March 1988, Fr. Kurien Joseph originally from Khandwa Diocese[@] stayed at Mintong Village. He had been serving as a teacher in the staff of Bible School for two years. Pongchau and Bonia villages had become Baptist and the influence from the Konyak region was too much for the people to resist alone. So the presence of a priest was thought helpful. Besides, Mintong had a sizable Catholic community with the possibility of ministering to the Catholic communities of Longphong, Kamhua and other places. Fr. Kurien stayed in the house of the Chief saying mass, visiting villages and families, teaching catechism and so on. He remained on till March 1988. It may be noted that the idea of opening the missions of Mintong and Kanubari was born because of the need to seal the borders of

Arunachal with Nagaland so as to prevent Baptist takeover of the area.

Fr. Karottupuram Sebastian, Fr. Jerome Minj, Mr. Pongham Wangpan and Jeevan Tacho, an Idu Mishmi boy from Anini have undertaken a number of tours of the Upper Wancho area. Their contribution to the Church in this area can never be exaggerated.

The Mintong community was always known for its hospitality. Each time the area had to be toured, the fathers halted the night in Mintong to begin next morning for villages like Kamhua, Khasa, Jagan and so on.

The first Upper Wancho Convention at Mintong in April 1992 was an event to be noted. About 5000 Catholics gathered for four days during the Holy Week. All assembled on Holy Thursday. Fr. Palliparambil George, Sr. Rachel, and Sr. Lucy Horo of the Sisters of Charity, along with the catechists and the Bible School students conducted the programme. Fr. Karottupuram Sebastian joined on the second day. Mgr. Thomas Menamparambil came for the concluding mass on 19th April, Easter Sunday. It was his first official visit as the Bishop. All his other visits were in cognito. He was visibly moved at the Catholic crowd and the very disciplined and devout behaviour. Mr. L. Lochia MLA, who was the chief guest, Mr. Wangnam Ex-MLA, Mr. Ponglaham and the leaders from Borduria who were present at the gathering spoke of it as the biggest gathering of Wanchos ever.

Soon the idea of beginning a second centre at Longding was mooted. But it never came through. Later, the idea of beginning a centre at Mintong was considered. Various factors influenced the decision in favour of Mintong. First of all, beginning a centre at Mintong was more useful in preventing Baptist infiltration into the Wancho area. Besides, of the 54 families of Catholics in Longding,

the majority were government servants and hence liable to be transferred. So if a mission were to be opened first at Longding, the possibility of local support was limited whereas if it were in the village, the chief, the council, the G.B. etc have the say. As our purpose in opening a centre at Upper Wancho area was religious and developmental it was decided that the centre for the time-being would be Mintong and not Longding. This discussion about the beginning the centre at Mintong took place in the circuit house with Fr. Varghese Palathingal, Fr. Alex Pulimootil and Fr. Joseph Variathukalayil and Fr. Palliparambil George participating.

Fr. George was deputed to make the necessary arrangements for opening the centre at Mintong. Accordingly Fr. Kuzhikannam Augustine and Palliparambil George visited Mintong a number of times. The people of Mintong too were happy to hear about it.

Fr. Thomas Vattoth who had previously been requested to make a documentation of the Arunachal Missions for Rome, was asked to take over the Mintong mission. He came to stay at Mintong on 19th March 1996.[@] He had previously visited the village on 4th August 1992. The village community hall near the church was readjusted by the villagers under the supervision of Fr. Palliparambil George. The house with bamboo matting and tin roof had three small rooms and a kitchen. It was situated in the middle of the village near the village Church. The hall near the road, which was to be used by the sisters too was re-adjusted by the people.[@]

On 5th May 1996, Sr. Gemma and Sr. Karmala of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians (MSMHC) joined the Mintong mission. They occupied one of the three rooms of the small house. A dispensary was opened and they supplied medicine and food to babies. Fr. Joseph Thottappilly joined the community on 24th February 1997.

In August 1997 Mintong was made into an independent centre with 31 villages. Till then it had been functioning as a sub-centre of the parish of Borduria.

Fr. Varghese Palathingal and Fr. Leander Kerketta, the V.G., blessed the Confreres' residence, the convent and the school building at Mintong on 30th March 1998. There were 12 Priests, 30 Sisters and over 500 Wancho Catholics of the village who were present for the function.

In February 2000, Fr. Thottappallil Jose was transferred to Rua Home, Jorhat and Fr. Shantilal Kujur was appointed as Assistant Priest.

In 1998, there were 22 Catholic villages and about 10,000 Catholics. About 25-30 people attend the Dispensary daily. Primary classes were begun at the Centre on 6th June 1998 with about 147 students on the roll.

Priests who have worked in the centre:

Fr. Thomas Vattoth (1996-), Fr. Joseph Thottappallil (1997-2000), Fr. Shantilal Kujur (2000-)

PALIN

Don Bosco, Palin is situated at a distance of 220 km from Itanagar and 185 km from Harmutty on the road to Sangram. It takes a gruelling journey of twelve hours by bus to reach the spot.

The beginning of Catholic Church in the Palin area goes back to the year 1978, when a few people of the Rakso village became Catholics. They had to meet with stiff resistance from the Baptist community; the converts were chased out of the village and the Catholic Church was burnt twice between 1978 - 1980. But at the end, the Catholics prevailed. Mr. Tassar Takar, a pagan priest became Catholic and he helped immensely to spread the Catholic Faith. By 1987 the Church was well-planted in the area. The Christians were looked after by Fr. Kulandaisamy, and later by Fr. Jose Chemparathy and others from St. Xavier's School, Harmutty.®

In 1994, Fr. Jose Chemparathy, Fr. Thurithiyil Sebastian, and Fr. Francis Tinglung were set apart to work for the West Arunachal Missions, giving a fillip to the expansion of mission work in Arunachal Pradesh. In January 1995 Fr. Thottathimyalil Francis too reached Harmutty having been appointed to Itanagar for the Arunachal Mission. In a meeting held at Harmutty in January 1995 however, Fr. Thottathimyalil Francis and Fr. Francis Tinglung volunteered to start the Palin Mission. Situated at about 185 km from Harmutty and a seven hours drive from Harmutty, it was obviously a daunting venture.

Many reasons prompted the opening of the centre at Palin. First and foremost it was thought of as a contact point because of the numerous villages around. Besides, Palin had a flourishing population of 300 Catholic families. They had written to Fr. Matthew Pulingathil and Fr. Scaria Nedumala, Provincials of the Salesian Province of Dimapur, requesting them to open a school. The centre also held a privileged place as it was from here that the other areas of Arunachal were evangelized. The fact that most of the people are poor, and the Salesian priority of working for the poorest of the poor also contributed towards opening the house at Palin.

The Sisters of the Missionaries of Charity of Mother Teresa had already opened their convent in Palin on 7th October 1993, the feast of the Holy Rosary. The date is significant as the first chapel in Palin dedicated to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary was blessed on the same day in 1989 by Mgr. Hubert D’Rosario, Archbishop of Shillong. Fr. Kalapurayil George, then stationed at St. Xavier’s School, Harmutty, had accompanied the sisters to Palin and stayed with them for about three weeks. He left for Harmutty on 31st October. The first sisters who came to reside in Palin were Sr. Christopriya, Sr. Maizie, Sr. Godline and Sr. Maria Rebecca. They stayed in the shop of Mr. Taring Kumar, situated at about a kilometer from the present site till 27th July 1996 when they shifted to the convent at New Palin. Fathers came from Harmutty occasionally to cater to the sisters before the Don Bosco School was opened.

The foundation stone for the school and the residence was laid by Fr. Chemparathy Jose on 8th June 1994 and work progressed swiftly. By February 1995, the Confrères’ Residence, Teachers’ Quarters though with bamboo mats, were ready and the school was nearing completion. And on 2nd February 1995, Fr. Thottathimyalil Francis and Fr. Francis Tinglung came to stay at Palin marking the beginning of Don Bosco Centre at Palin.

Soon the centre suffered the initial jitters with Mr. Taniya the owner of the land refusing to part with the land. He had already been paid Rs. 15,000. Mr. Taniya demanded that two of his children be educated gratis in Harmutty and that he be given 25% of admissions to the school. However, he relented and the land document was signed through the good offices of Mr. Para, the catechist. As a mark of gratitude Fr. Chemparathy Joseph agreed to educate two of his children till class X.

The initial days were very tough due to the inaccessibility of the area and the inclement weather. There was no water facilities but electricity was available at night from the street connection. The fathers took their meals at the Sisters' Quarters, walking about a kilometre four times a day in the rain and in the cold.

Fr. Provincial, Varghese Palathingal visited the centre on 25th March 1995 and the future plan for the school was chalked out. It was proposed that the K.G. school and a boarding for the boys of X, XI, and XII classes be begun from July.

On 12th March 1995, the announcement was made in the church regarding the admissions to the school. The forms of admission were given out on 13th March. Of the 150 students who applied, 140 were chosen. The School was blessed on 25th March 1995 by Mgr. Robert Kerketta, Bishop of Tezpur amidst a mammoth gathering of 1,500 people. The school began on 27th March 1995.

Adult education was introduced in the school in 1995 and about 70-80 adults attended the evening classes in three sections. The goal of keeping a boarding for senior students could not be materialized as there was no place and food was a major problem. But the centre kept five boys in the first year, three in the second and two boys in 1997. In 1998 there were only two board-

ers, as there was no place to accommodate more. Plans were afoot to open a boarding for Class II - V.

On 21st December 1995, the first ever Youth Convention of Chambang, Palin, Koloriang and Nyopin was held. On 2nd August 1997, Fr. Paul Maippan sdb reached the centre to substitute Fr. Thottathimyalil Francis who had gone to the States. Fr. Maippan Paul left Palin on 3rd October 1997. On 1st December 1997 Fr. Luciano Odorico, the Mission Superior visited the centre. On 19th January 1998 a new school building was constructed with two classrooms and a Teachers' room to accommodate the new classes.

On 26th January 1998, Fr. Tinglung Francis was transferred to Tamenglong after nearly three years of stay in Palin. He had toured the villages intensely and built up communities. On 24th February 1998, Fr. Jose Karippai, reached Palin to take the place of Fr. Francis Tinglung, as the Assistant Parish Priest. Fr. Jose Karippai left for Bangalore on 16th of June for his M.Th. studies. In September 1998 Fr. Nazarius Lakra was appointed to the centre. Fr. Nazarius was transferred to Yachuli and in February 1999 Fr. Dominic Pendanam was appointed to the centre. In February 2000, Fr. Robert Alphonse of Chennai Province was appointed to the centre as assistant priest.

Don Bosco, Palin, has about 150 Catholic villages in nine circles. The farthest villages are in the Sarli Circle which borders China. Mili, the last village on the outpost leading to China (Tibet) is situated at about 90 km from Palin and takes three days' walk from Koloriang. There are about 24 villages in the Palin Circle and has a population of about 6,000 Catholics. With about 31,000 Catholics and 10,000 non-Christians, the centre is faced with a challenging task. The school has classes from K.G. to V with six teachers and 250 students. 70-80 people attend the Adult Education programme.

Don Bosco Centre, Palin, has emerged as a leading social centre. The centre helps victims of calamities like fire, storm etc., to pick up the threads of life once again. It also encourages people to begin alternate means of livelihood by promoting orange cultivation, tea plantation, Thoku Patha plantation, tapioca and pepper cultivation etc. Towards this end, exposure programmes and training camps are organized. Since 1996, Health Camps have become an annual feature of the centre. Twice a year camps are conducted on rural health promotion.

Faith development is the priority of the mission. Most of the villages are toured at least four times a year. The visit itself is turned into a sort of Bible Camp and concludes with the Mass in the evening. In three years, twenty village churches have been built and most of the churches are provided with tin roofs. Difficulties in communication and the hostile terrain are major problems. The centre also helps fight social evils like child marriage, ill-treatment of women etc. Work is in progress for a parish church and the hostel at Palin. In 1999 the school has over 300 students from K.G. to class V. A boarding for the students of class II to class V was begun on 1st May 1999. There are about 67 students in the boarding - 44 boys and 23 girls.

Those who have worked at the centre:

Fr. Francis Thottathimyalil (1995-), Fr. Francis Tinglung (1995-1998), Fr. Jose Karippai (1998), Fr. Nazarius Lakra (1998), Fr. Pendanath Dominic (1999-), Fr. Robert Alphonse (2000-)

RAJANAGAR

Rajanagar is situated about 73 km from Tinsukia and 44 km from Digboi. It is the only Catholic Centre in the Changlang District. The nearest town is Bordumsa in Arunachal Pradesh, 9 km from Rajanagar. Bordumsa serves as the check-gate from Assam to Arunachal Pradesh. The people are Noctes, Tangsas, Singphos, Kamtis, Adivasis and Nepalis. The centre has 8 bighas of land. There are about 40 villages that can be catered to from Rajanagar. At present there are 19 Catholic villages nearby which are being looked after from the centre. Of these 13 are Adivasi villages, four Noctes and one Ponthei. Eight out of the 19 villages are in the Lohit District and the rest form part of the Changlang district.

The centre was begun as a sub-centre under the Parish of Borduria. Today it is an independent centre though it is yet to be declared a parish. There are about 3,600 Catholics in the region under Rajanagar.

The village of Rajanagar was inaugurated in 1976 by Lt Governor K.A. Raja of Arunachal Pradesh and the village was named after him. The land was allotted by the King and the people were brought (about 120 families) from Dadem, Chinkoi, Hoakham village of Khonsa circle. The people had approached the government for land. Under the tribal development scheme it was thought expedient to bring another stronger tribe to protect the fast dwindling number of Singphos.

Theamwang Hakhun (Peter), Joseph Chopha and Francis Tichan Hakhum were the first Catholics from Rajanagar. They had joined the Naharkatia school after passing class V from Wagon-Panthei primary school in 1981 when Fr. Job Kallarackal was stationed in Naharkatia. About 10 people went down to Naharkatia and were baptized by Fr. Job Kallarackal. Theamwang joined the Bible School and wrote the matriculation examinations from there. Chopha and Tichen did their studies in the government school. However they could not make much headway in the village.

Khunlo Nokbi, who now stays in Cinkoi was the one who introduced the church to Rajanagar. He had his relatives in Rajanagar. In 1983 he took Fr. Job Kallarackal to Bordumsa and they tried to meet Mr. Sinai Wangnow who was a member of the Church of Christ, baptized by a Yobin pastor from Vijoynagar. Since Sinai was not there Fr. Job came away. In December 1983, Fr. Palliparambil George visited Rajanagar along with Khunlo Nokbi and the first two Singpho Catholics, Chowing Singpho and Khaku Gam Singpho of Kherem village. Though from 1984 Fr. Palliparambil George visited Rajanagar once a year very few were baptized.

A major breakthrough came in 1988 after Khampian Sumnyan, a boy from Dadam village, who had his uncle in Rajanagar joined the Bible School in 1987. In 1988, he volunteered to go to Rajanagar with Theamwang and two grihini girls. They brought 15 youngsters to the Bible School for a Bible camp. Some of these were baptized at the end of the camp. They went back to the village with Cl. Sanjiv Linda sdb, one of the animators of the camp from Salesian College, Dimapur. After teaching in the village, he baptized more than a hundred people during Christmas that year. Soon the first thatched church was also put up.

From the beginning of 1989, the staff of the Bible school visited Rajanagar at least once a month for mass. Fr. Palliparambil George, Fr. Joseph Ngamkuchung, Fr. Nestor Guria, Fr. Jerome Minj and Fr. Karottupuram Sebastian shared this task. Bro. Mathew Kaliyaden visited the community twice a year during the holidays.

The Sisters of Charity has contributed a lot to the growth of Rajanagar. For instance when Joseph Chopha, was sick with ulcer and the doctors in the Indian Oil corporation hospital, Digboi, and St. Luke's hospital had given up hopes for his recovery, it was the initiatives of the sisters which nursed Joseph Chopha back to health. This greatly influenced the subsequent developments in Rajanagar.¹⁶

The return of a healed Joseph was a turning point in the history of the three villages and Joseph's own personal life. This was in the beginning of 1990. Baptisms followed. As the interest was great in the people, the students of the Bible School who wrote the matriculation exams in 1990 launched a movement called "Operation Mithir" and went to Rajanagar on 20th May

¹⁶ When Joseph Chopha was declared terminally ill, word was sent to the Bible School, Tinsukia for a priest to give the last rites. As no priest was available Sr. Thomasina D'Souza and Sr. Joyce went to assist him (of course, they could not go in their habits.); they prayed there and gave him communion. But impressed by the faith of the people, they brought Chopha to Tinsukia the next day. He was admitted to Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh. The doctors took up the challenge and he was restored to health. The sisters of the medical college community took untold trouble in looking after him as well as the villagers who came to see him. This opened the eyes of the people of Rajanagar and disposed them favourably to the mission.

1990. They prepared the people and Mgr. Thomas Menampampil sdb, along with Fr. George went to Rajanagar and stayed there on the night of 31st May, 1990. Prem Bhai and Mr. James Sumnyan of Hongkan village (a student of the first batch in the Bible School and a popular catechist by 1990) visited Rajanagar and from 27th November 1990 they conducted a Bible camp. They also contacted Makantong, a nearby Tangsa village. Three families were baptized there.

In 1991 the entire village became Catholic. On 25th December 1991 Fr. George Mukala baptized about 300 catechumens. Fr. Mukala narrated how a zealous old man came for confession. As the man knelt down and started confessing (Father did not know what he was saying), the children began applauding and cheering him. The old man was irritated; he got up and walked to the noisy youngsters and gave the prominent among them a few kicks, before returning to continue his confession! In January 1992, Fr. Jerry Pathikulangara from Don Bosco, Dibrugarh baptized over 250 people. In 1992, Fr. Cyriac Kochumpambil, sdb of the Guwahati Province spent the Christmas at Rajanagar.

Bro. Sevanand Lugun (DBLA) began residing at Rajanagar from 11th February 1992. The construction of the present Church was started soon after that. The new church was completed and blessed on 10th July 1992 by Fr. Pallipambil George. Mr. Colin Calmiano and Edwyn D'Souza of "Evangelization 2000" group from Bangalore along with a group of students from the Bible School prepared the people with a charismatic retreat-cum-Bible camp. It may be noted that Mr. Samsing Gam Singpho and his family as well as the other Singpho Catholics formed an important part of the Rajanagar church. However, there was also a setback when Kampian Sumnyan who was one

of the most apostolic-minded catechists, died of blood cancer in 1992.¹⁷

St. Joseph Lower Primary School was started in 1993. It was inaugurated on 29th August 1993 by Fr. Sebastian Karottupuram sdb of Bosco Bible School. Fr. K.C. George, a Jesuit priest and the former principal of Loyola College baptized seven people from Ponthei village, thus founding the Church in that village. Fr. Sabu from Kanduwa Diocese also looked after Rajanagar for two months. As the contacts increased with the Singphos, the Tangsas, the Pontheis and the Adivasis, and as the school was doing well in the number of students, it was becoming difficult for Bro. Sevanand to manage the centre alone. The need for a priest was felt.

There were also other reasons that prompted the opening of the mission at Rajanagar as the second mission centre in East Arunachal Pradesh. The possibility of a large group of Singphos coming over to Catholicism was very real. Mr. Bisa Gam, a Singpho leader whose two sons are Catholics had visited his people in the Kachin area in Myanmar. He was surprised to see that most of his Kachin brethren were Christians. Mgr. Paul Grwng of Mytkhina, many priests, nuns and Catholics impressed him. On his return, he brought the address of the Pro-nuncio and wrote a letter to him telling how, if they could be Catholics in Myanmar, the same could happen in India. The Pro-nuncio forwarded the letter to Mgr. Thomas in Guwahati who in turn wrote to Fr. Palliparambil George asking him to do the necessary follow up.

¹⁷ His brief life along with his contribution to the Church in Rajanagar are printed in the souvenir that was published in 1993 on the occasion of the Blessing of the church at Borduria. The article titled "From Our Midst" describes the lives of Kampian and Khamlung Manang.

Secondly there was also the possibility of the evangelization of the Tangsas. There were many smart and zealous Tangsa past pupils in Kharsang and Miao circles, just behind Rajanagar. The disenchantment of the people with splinter groups in the Protestant churches and the possibility of getting the Tangsas across the river through our past pupils was another dream for this mission.

Rajanagar being a gateway to the Lohit district, the mission was also to serve as a buffer to the Lohit district. This was because, the neighbours, the Khamtis and Khmyangs are Buddhists and the Mishmis are rather slow to accept the faith. It was thought that the Mishmis could be contacted through a Nocte Catholic who spoke the Miju Mishmi and the Digaru Mishmi (Taraon) dialects.®

These possibilities were discussed in the concluding meeting of the Provincial Visitation of October 1995 attended by Fr. Varghese Palathingal, the Provincial, Fr. Alex Pulimootil, the Vice Provincial, Fr. Variathukalayil Joseph, the Economist, Fr. Kalapurayil George, Fr. Augustine Kuzhikannam and Fr. Palliparambil George.®

Fr. Kalapurayil George was asked to look after the mission. He took charge on 1st November 1995. There were two thatched sheds of which one served as the school and the other as Confrères' Residence. In early 1996 Bro. Sevanand Lugun who had pioneered the work left the mission after four years of stay.® The foundation stone for the new school building was blessed on 14th November 1995. Fr. Kalapurayil George who was staying alone till now, was joined by Fr. Lazarus Kujur on 23rd July 1996.

The new school building was blessed on 12th June 1996 by Mgr. Joseph Aind sdb. It was inaugurated on 10th October 1996 by the Minister for Food and Civil Supplies Mr. C.C. Singpho. Fr. Lazarus Kujur was transferred to the Tinsukia Parish on 2nd January 1998. On 18th February 1998 Fr. Devassy Palatty

joined the Rajanagar Mission. In 1999 Fr. Devassy Palatty was transferred to Don Bosco, Tamenglong. Fr. Theophilus Ganlari was appointed in charge of the centre with Fr. Kalapurayil George as the Assistant. In February 2000 Fr. Kalapurayil George was transferred to Dibrugarh.

In 1998 the school had 58 students in five classes (K G, I, II, III and IV) and four teachers. The fathers stay in one of the classrooms of the school which is a pucca building.

Those in charge:

Bro. Sevanand Lugun, dbia (1992-1996), Fr.
Kalapurayil George (1995-1999-2000), Fr.
Theophilus Ganlari (1999-)

Others:

Fr. Lazarus Kujur (1996-1998), Fr. Devassy Palatty
(1998-1999)

YACHULI

Yachuli is 145 km from Itanagar on the National High Way No. 54. It is at a distance of 30 km from Zero. The work is in progress for a new road linking Hojj and Yazali reducing the distance from Itanagar to Yachuli to three hours. Yachuli has been started with the purpose of catechizing and consolidating the Catholic presence in and around the area.

The Catholic Church established itself in the Yachuli area only in 1984. It was through the instrumentality of Ms. Joram Yalin and Ms. Taba Yajar, students of St. Francis Xavier's School, Harmutty, that the Catholic Faith came to Yachuli. In 1984, when they returned home the family of Ms. Joram Yalin was converted and became the first family ever to become Catholic in the Yachuli area. Slowly the Church took root and spread to the other parts of the region.

The convent of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians called "Ferrando convent" was inaugurated on 12th February 1997 by Mr. Neelam Taram, the ex-Home minister and was blessed by Mgr. Robert Kerketta, the Bishop of Tezpur. The church was also blessed on the same day. Sr. Milani Guria, Sr. Josephine Bareh and Sr. Nisha Hembrom were the pioneering sisters. One of the works the sisters started immediately on their arrival was tuition classes in the evening for about twenty boys.

Most of the work of the parish church and the two rooms adjacent to the church had been completed by February 1997. Fr.

Thurithiyil Sebastian was asked to take charge of the centre at Yachuli. On 19th February, Fr. Palathingal Varghese, the Provincial of Dimapur, announced to the people that Fr. Thurithiyil Sebastian was appointed in charge of the centre. But he did not take charge of the centre as the house was yet to be furnished. On 24th May 1997 Fr. Thurithiyil Sebastian was installed at the centre by Fr. Abraham Kutilampel, the Vicar-General of the Tezpur Diocese. Present on the occasion were also Fr. Variathukalayi Joseph, the Economist and Fr. Chemparathy Jose.

Fr. Sebastian came to stay at the centre on 28th May 1997. For about a week, he stayed at the Ferrando Convent and looked after the construction work. Soon after he reached he also started the construction of a temporary shed for a primary school. Work was also begun for the extension of the Confrères' Residence. Water connection was brought from about one and a half kilometre away. Fr. Sebastian also acquired about five acres of land for the centre.

On 26th May 1997, Mr. Jose Mulakari joined the centre. He helped in looking after the buildings, touring etc. On 27th August 1997, a test was conducted to take admission to the school. The school began on 3rd September 1997 with 31 students in Class I and 61 students in K.G. On 30th November 1997, the school and the presbytery were inaugurated by the Minister of P.H.E., Mr. Tadar Taniang. The Guest of Honour was Luciano Odorico, the Superior Councillor for the Missions.

In 1999 Fr. Nazarius Lakra was appointed as assistant Priest. In February 2000 Fr. Nazarius Lakra was transferred to Tongna and Fr. Joby Mattappally was appointed the assistant Priest.

Today, the Mission at Yachuli has about 58 Catholic villages and about 12,000 Catholics. There are new villages coming over. The farthest village is four days' walk from Yachuli in

the Mangio area. The closest village is Yachuli with twenty-five families and about 200 Catholics. There are also five other villages near the centre. The school has about 175 children in four classes - Nursery, K.G., Class I and Class II. Class III is to begin in June 1999.

Those who have worked at the Centre:

Fr. Thurithiyil Sebastian (1997-), Fr. Nazarius Lakra
(1999-2000), Fr. Joby Mattappally (2000-)

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