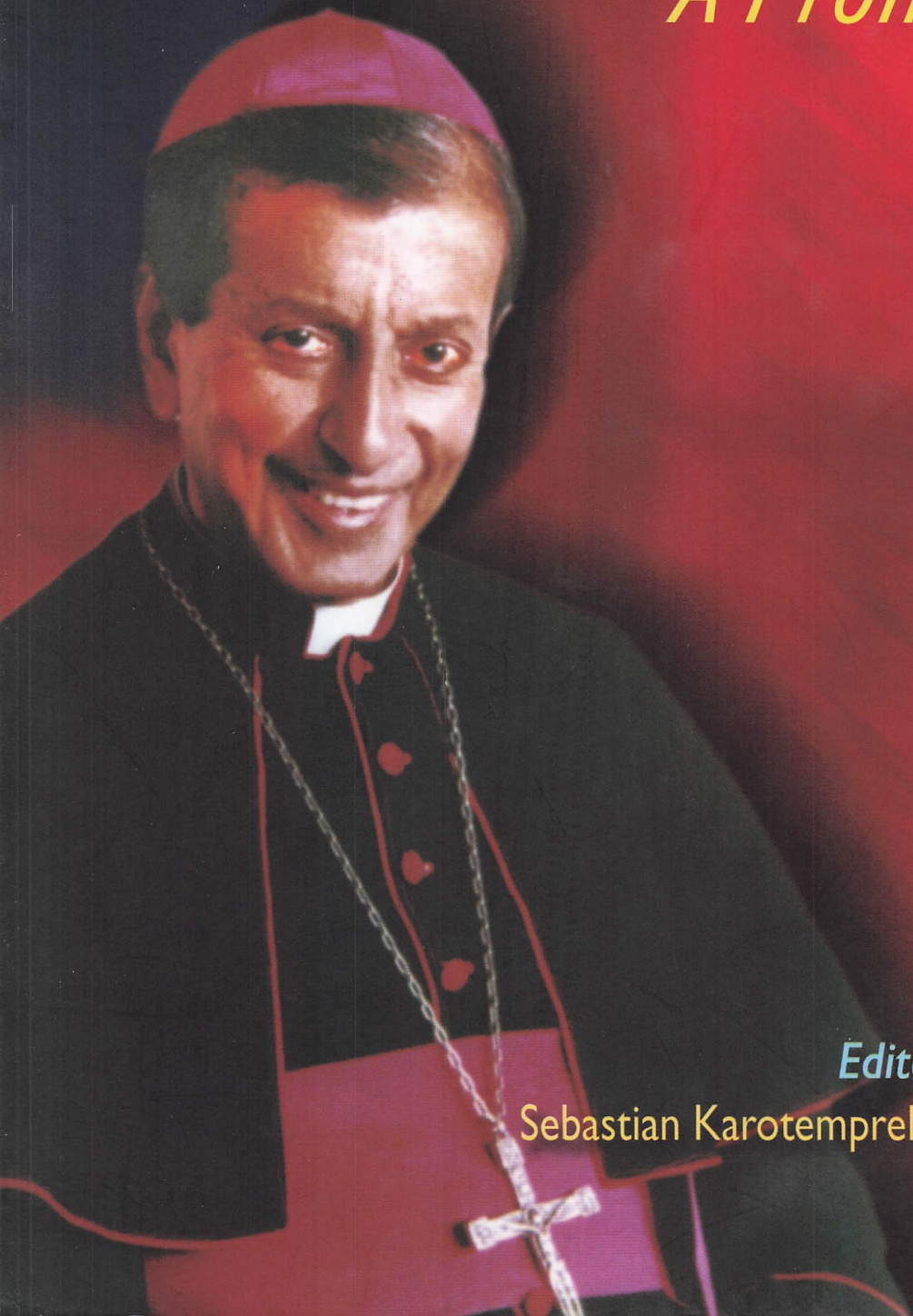


Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario, SDB

A Profile



Edited by
Sebastian Karotemprel, SDB

To Dear L. Percival Cherry

with prayers + good wishes!

K. K. K.
1.11.28/29

Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario, SDB

A Profile

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Edited by Sebastian Karotemprel, SDB

Vendrame Institute Publications
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2013

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Dedicated
to the blessed memory
of hundreds and hundreds of
committed and self-sacrificing missionaries,
Catechists, Youth Evangelizers and Touring Sisters
who are the unsung heroes of mission
in the remote hills and valleys of
Northeast India.

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Introduction

Rev. Fr. Maria Arokiam Kanaka, SDB

Most people, even Salesians, would not know who was the first Indian Salesian Rector and the first Indian Salesian bishop and the first Indian to attend a Salesian General Chapter? It was Most Rev. Dr. Hubert D’Rosario SDB, also the first Archbishop of the Metropolitan See of the Archdiocese of Shillong-Guwahati! He was among the first Indian missionaries to come over to Northeast of India and to play a leading role in the great saga of the evangelization of the area by the Catholic Church. He is a first in several ways, a real pioneer.

There have been two significant waves of missionary movements towards evangelizing Northeast India. The first was of foreigners made up of the Salvatorians and the Salesians. The second was, and still is, the wave of Indian missionaries, particularly from the Kerala and Konkan Coast of India. While the first group laid the foundations of the Catholic Church in Northeast, the latter considerably widened it and consolidated its presence. Today the Catholic Church is a reality to reckon with in this area, a great bulwark for the development of the indigenous people culturally, politically and religiously.

Born in a faith-filled family of Mangalorean-Malayalee origin, and transferred to Tirupattur due to the railway employment of his father, the young Hubert came into contact with Salesians there. Great people recognize the potential for greatness in others. Thus it was the great Fr. José Carreño, SDB, who handpicked him and proposed to him the Salesian ideals. In spite of bumps on the road, he sailed through his period of formation and later worked in Chennai, Vellore and in Mumbai before being once again handpicked by another great Church leader, Cardinal Gracias, as the bishop of Dibrugarh in Upper Assam. It was not easy for a southerner to integrate himself into Northeast India and find acceptance. But the Lord was with him and his motivations sprang from his faith. The Lord worked marvels through him and made him a great and memorable leader of the Catholic Church in this area. Today he is remembered and loved everywhere in the Northeast India. Many institutions and works are named after him. The spread of the Church in this region during his leadership has been enormous.

Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario was thoroughly a Salesian, a missionary and a leader. Those who have lived with him bear ample witness to these qualities. He was a meticulous planner, a keen ecclesial visionary and a daring trend-setter in missionary methods. He participated in the last sessions of the Second Vatican Council and this too gave him a modern, updated and holistic concept of evangelization. He established numerous presences of the Church with a parish centre consisting of religious, educational, health and social services carried out by priests, religious and the laity. He is loved very much for his visits to the villages identifying himself with the people in order to bring them God’s love. He was a “pastor who smelt of the sheep” in the words of Pope Francis. Missionary visits to the villages, a strategy developed by Jesus himself, and practised by his predecessor Salesian

confreres, was seen by him as the vital means of spreading the faith and sustaining it.

Behind an austere appearance and tough character he hid a large heart and a holy and prayerful life. Naturally, he gave primacy of place to the Word of God, Catechesis and the celebration of the Sacraments. Accordingly we see his unstinted and indefatigable works in establishing churches and educational institutions, centres for the training of lay and religious catechists, proper formation houses for seminarians and priests, and the study and development of the local languages. He founded the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco, combining the Salesian missionary spirit and the patronage of Our Lady of Visitation, the first missionary carrying Jesus to her cousin Elizabeth. This congregation is today a living monument to his missionary zeal and empowerment of women. He was also a bishop who valued both the diocesan clergy and the religious as vital parts of one and the same Church and promoted their harmonious existence and work, a lesson probably good for the present and future leaders of the Church in India.

This book in your hands, a profile of Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario, is the fruit of the recognition of his greatness by another great South Indian missionary to Northeast India, Rev. Fr. Sebastian Karotemprel, SDB. It is not just a biography written at the desk, but as the title states, a profile, contributed by people who have known the archbishop personally. I thank him for this effort in spite of his advancing years, and together with him all the contributors. A sense of history is essential for our identity and progress. It is said that we are but dwarfs sitting on the shoulders of our giant forefathers. Without this recognition we will be condemned to ‘invent the wheel once again’ and to lose our great patrimony which we are called to build upon. As a representative of the Salesians in South Asia, I am proud to present

the book, containing a wonderful portrait of his life, his holiness, his sterling qualities and his multifarious works. Besides being a historical remembrance and a tribute to his personality, I see it as an inspiration for the bishops, priests, religious and missionaries in India.

Fr. Maria Arokiam Kanaga, SDB

Regional Councillor of the Salesians in South Asia.

Preface

I must begin this brief Preface to *Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario: A Profile* on a personal note. This is my thirtieth and most likely the last book. What I wrote in my last book *Stay with Us Lord Prayers and Meditations* has become a reality with me. And this is what I wrote:

My energies are spent, Lord.
The mind easily wearies,
And study turns into drudgery.
The memory begins to play truant.
The body flouts orders of the will.
Remain with me, Lord,
Indeed my days are far spent!

At four score and two years, my energies are far spent. Hence I am infinitely grateful to God for granting me health enough to complete this book. It has had a long period of gestation. I began working on this book about five years ago. Other books and works claimed my immediate attention over these years. Besides, this was also held up for reasons of health, and winding up other works already on the anvil.

Much time was also consumed in getting articles from some writers. Every now and then new writers had to be sought out. As it happens with edited books, some articles call for heavy editorial work.

In a work such as this, some repetitions are unavoidable. On the other hand, repetitions also confirm the general consensus on the Archbishop being a very outstanding missionary. Persistent requests from several quarters, however, kept alive the plan to write a profile of Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario.

Since I published a profile of Fr. John Med three years ago, several persons were urging me to write a missionary profile of Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario. This insistence on a profile of Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario was very persistent, as is understandable, from the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco (VSDB).

If we read carefully both the Old and the New Testaments, we find that they contain short or even long profiles of many heroes of the faith. Thus several books of the Old Testament praise Israel’s unshakeable faith in Yahweh. The book of Ecclesiasticus contains a whole chapter on the heroes of faith. Other books celebrate individual heroes of faith. Thus we have the book of Esther, the book of Ruth, the book of Job, the book of Daniel, the book of Ezra, the book of Nehemiah, the book of Maccabees, the book of Samuel, the book of Kings, the book of Chronicles, etc. The New Testament gives also profiles of great men of faith and charity.

The book of Ecclesiasticus tells us to remember and imitate the heroes of our faith:

Let us praise illustrious men and women,
 Our ancestors in their successive generations...
 Some wielded authority as leaders
 Others were renowned for their strength;
 Others were intelligent advisers
 And uttered prophetic sayings.
 Others directed the people by their advice,
 By their understanding of the popular mind,
 And by the wise words of their teaching;

Others were generous and resourceful...
Here is a list of generous men and women
Whose good works have not been forgotten.
In their descendants there remains
A rich inheritance born of them.
Their successors stand by the covenants
And, thanks to them, so do their children.
Their offsprings will last forever,
Their glory will not fade.
Their bodies have been buried in peace,
And their names live on for generations.
The people will proclaim their wisdom,
The assembly will celebrate their praises.
(Adapted from the book of Ecclesiasticus 44:1-16)

The Acts of the Apostles gives us a good profile of Peter and Paul. The Letter to the Hebrews celebrates the great heroes of Israel's history from Abel to Abraham and the patriarchs, from Abraham to leaders such as David and others, both men and women. Thus we read in the Letter to the Hebrews: "These ... were commended for their faith." It carries on to say that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses of faith. The author exhorts his readers to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. It tells us to consider how to endure even persecution and death. (Cf. Heb. 11:4 – 39; 12: 1-24)

We too in Northeast India are fortunate to have had great heroes of faith, hope and charity in the many outstanding missionaries in Northeast India. Their great love for God, the Church and the people of our region should continue to inspire us as successors to great missionaries.

Many of them deserve a missionary profile written on them. Others call for full scale biographies for the edification of contemporary

and future missionaries. As I have said elsewhere in this book, Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario is definitely one of the most successful and outstanding missionaries in Northeast India. Under his leadership, and with the collaboration of the laity, especially the catechists, diocesan priests, the pioneering work and support of religious men and women and the cooperation of his fellow bishops for nearly 30 years, the Catholic Church in Northeast India did make extraordinary progress. During this period, the Catholic Church grew exponentially. At the time of his death, the Catholic Church in Northeast India counted nearly a million and a half.

It is not only in numbers that the Catholic Church grew, but also in infrastructure, seminaries, formation houses, religious congregations, and diverse ministries. He was able to secure and keep the co-workers such as Fr. Ignatius Rubio and others. They all contributed immensely to the growth of the Church, under the leadership of Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario.

Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario was in many ways a most gifted missionary, zealous to the core for the spreading of the kingdom of God. He was not without human limitations. On the other hand, he was extremely well endowed by nature and grace. His endowments far outweigh limitations of character and temperament. He put all his gifts of nature and grace to the service of the Church and the people of God fully. And no one can deny this fact.

Let me now acknowledge the contribution that others have given in the preparation of this book. No book is the product of one single person. This is especially true of an edited work such as this one. In the first place I am truly grateful to the contributors to this book. Without their generous contribution it would not have been possible to publish this book. Secondly I am very grateful to three persons in a

way for the editing of this book and they are Bro. Anand Adaikalasamy, Bah Michael Basaiawmoit and Sr. Martha Masynting. They have typed and retyped the manuscripts and corrected manuscripts several times. They have done this difficult work in a very generous spirit. A very special word of appreciation must be said to Sr. Martha Masynting, VSDB, in helping out in arranging and re-arranging the various contributions to this book. I am equally grateful to three of my colleagues Fr. Tom Polackal, Fr. Varghese Palatty and Fr. K. J. Antony for reading through the manuscripts and offering many valuable suggestions and additions to the text. My special thanks go to Bhabani Offset Pvt. Ltd. for the excellent quality of production of the book. Finally, I am indebted to Fr. John Madur, the Chancellor of Shillong Archdiocese, and to the Archdiocesan archives for the photographs reproduced in this book.

I offer this book as a tribute to a very great missionary Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario. I hope this pioneering missionary will be a source of inspiration to all the catechists, priests, religious men and sisters and brothers working in Northeast India and beyond. I wish we will all be inspired by the single minded self-dedication of Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario to spread the kingdom of God everywhere.

Sebastian Karotempel, SDB,
30th August, 2013
19th anniversary of the death of Archbishop
Hubert D’Rosario, SDB.

1

Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario SDB A Unique Missionary

Sebastian Karotempel, SDB

The Salesian Mission in Northeast India has been blessed with many valiant Salesian missionaries whose missionary profile merit publication. Some of them were outstanding in holiness of life; others have been very resourceful and efficient missionaries. They worked very hard in the hills and plains of Northeast India in extremely difficult situations of inclement weather, absence of means of communication, problem of funds, tropical diseases, etc. Among them we may mention a few here: Archbishop Louis Mathias, SDB, Servant of God Bishop Stephen Ferrando, SDB, Servant of God Bishop Orestes Marengo, SDB, Fr. Louis Ravalico, SDB, Servant of God Fr. Constantine Vendrame, SDB, Fr. George Stadler, SDB, Fr. Leo Piasecki, SDB, Fr. Dominic Barwa, SDB, Fr. Elias Hopewell, SDB, Fr. Edward Gutierrez, SDB, Fr. Paul Taverna, SDB, Fr. Joseph Zubizaretta, SDB, Fr. P.C. Anthony, SDB, Fr. Victor Ampanattuvila, SDB, Fr. Joseph Arokiasamy, SDB, Fr. Anthony Del Col, SDB, Fr. Mathew Tharakan, SDB, Bishop Mathai Kochuparampil, SDB, Bishop Robert Kerketta, SDB, Mgr. Emmanuel Bars, SDB, Fr. Ignatius Rubio, SDB, Fr. Remo Morra, SDB, Bro.

Santino Mantarro, SDB, Bro. Armando Frasson, SDB, Bro. Alfred Topno, SDB, Bro. Eligius Khain, SDB, Bro. Michael Cahoj, SDB, Mother Catherine Mania, FMA, Sr. Josephine Gaod, FMA, Sr. Rina Colussi, FMA, Sr. Nellie Nunes, FMA, Sr. Elizabeth Edattukaran, FMA, Sr. Felicita Syngngoh, FMA, Mother Rose Thappa, MSMHC, Sr. Elizabeth Packumala, MSMHC, and so on. This is an incomplete and random list. There are many more who should be on this list.

Among all these outstanding figures of missionaries, Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario stands out as a giant. There is a story going back to the late 1950s and 1960s of a conversation between Fr. Joseph Vaz, SDB, and Fr. Dennis Duarte, SDB. During the conversation, Fr. Dennis remarked to Fr. Vaz: “We have many good confreres and yet we are all shadows of the Salesian spirit but Fr. Hubert D’Rosario is the very substance of the Salesian spirit.” This is indeed a remarkable admission.

Archbishop D’Rosario’s episcopal motto is *Adveniat Regnum Tuum*, namely, *Thy Kingdom Come*. We can confidently say that he was the concrete embodiment of this motto; he lived the kingdom and for the kingdom and spent his life for the spread of God’s kingdom in Northeast India. His sole interest in life was prompted by the desire to promote the coming of the Kingdom of God. All else mattered little to him; he had no other interest except the Kingdom of God. He identified himself with the Kingdom of God. His only interest was to push forward the frontiers of God’s Kingdom in this fruitful region of Northeast India.

i) A Planning Missionary

By temperament and education he was a planning missionary. He came to Northeast India from a school background from Don

Bosco, Katpadi (Tamil Nadu) and Don Bosco High School, Matunga, Bombay. Secondly, he seemed to have grasped well the complex and rich concept of Evangelization and the entire range of missionary activities to be pushed forward. He was never half hazard or sporadic or partial in planning for mission work in Northeast India.

Recent Church documents of Vatican II and subsequent Post-Vatican documents such as *Ad Gentes*, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, and *Redemptoris Missio* were familiar to him. In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Paul VI defined *Evangelization* as a complex activity. It embraces first proclamation, catechesis, human promotion, healing ministry, education, spread of literacy, dialogue with religions, promotion of well instructed and active laity, establishment and promotion of local clergy, promotion of vocations to diocesan clergy and religious life, promotion of contemplative life, etc.

At the centre of all these varied dimensions of missionary activity, the primacy goes to the proclamation of Jesus Christ. Thus mission is a complex concept and activity. Archbishop D'Rosario understood well this teaching of Vatican II and the subsequent documents of the Magisterium of the Church on Evangelization and missionary activity. This fact is clearly reflected in his planning for missionary activity in Northeast India. He was a planning missionary. He insisted with all the same type of planning in all mission work.

ii) Centrality of the Proclamation of Jesus Christ

At the centre and summit of all missionary activities and Evangelization is the proclamation of Jesus Christ. This insistence on the proclamation of Jesus is in sharp contrast to the confusion in missionary work that was prevalent in India at the time and even today. Hubert D'Rosario insisted on the centrality of the proclamation of Jesus

Christ especially in new areas of Northeast India among the unreached tribes and peoples of Northeast India. Like Paul he proclaimed Jesus Christ in season and out of season. Raison d'être of all evangelization and missionary activity was Jesus Christ. The beginning and end of all missionary activity is the proclamation of Jesus Christ.

iii) Pattern of Missionary Work

Archbishop D'Rosario planned for a holistic mission. Vatican II and post-Vatican documents of the Magisterium have given us a new and wider interpretation of the meaning of Evangelization. The older interpretation concentrated on proclamation of Jesus Christ to those who do not know him, in preaching, catechizing and administration of the sacraments. This is somewhat defective and incomplete definition of the evangelization (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, EN no.17). Today we have a much more complex, rich and dynamic meaning to the word evangelization. The new definition is in accordance with *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Ad Gentes*. The scope of evangelization is wider than baptism and formation of the Christian community. The aim of evangelization is to bring about an inner transformation of society at large (EN 18). The centre of evangelization is always Jesus Christ. There is no true evangelization, if the name, the life, the teaching, the promises, the kingdom and mystery of Jesus Christ, the son of God are not proclaimed (EN 22). It is in the light of this new interpretation of evangelization Archbishop D'Rosario planned for the mission in Northeast India.

One can notice clearly that every mission station has a distinct and a common pattern. Nearly every mission centre in Northeast India is composed of a parish Church, presbytery, a boarding school for boys and another for girls, a high school or higher secondary school and

a dispensary for healing ministry, a convent building for sisters and means of transport. Every mission station or parish reflects a holistic vision of Evangelization. Archbishop D'Rosario wanted every mission centre to be gradually self-supporting and eventually self-governing through its own local priests and religious. Every centre was to be also self-propagating gradually reaching out to new areas and peoples. This is the common mission pattern or mission vision in Northeast India.

iv) Healing Ministry

Modern health care and healing ministry were by and large almost unknown to many village people in Northeast India. Seeing the unhygienic ways of living in villages, the Archbishop insisted that there should be a dispensary in every mission station and whenever possible, even a small hospital. Thus he enlarged the Nazareth Hospital in Shillong started by the Missionaries of Christ Jesus and later on carried on by the Holy Cross Sisters. He also established the Rapsbun School of Nursing for the training of religious sisters and Catholic nurses indispensable for healing ministry in villages. They were to be agents of hygienic ways of living and healing ministry of the Church, for the care of the old and the sickly who had no one to care for. For this purpose the Archbishop established old age homes in Dibrugarh and Shillong run by the Sisters of Charity. Similarly for those affected by communicable diseases he established centres for special care run by the Sisters of Mother Teresa.

v) Proclamation and Catechesis

Proclamation of Jesus Christ is to be followed by regular catechesis. In order to achieve this end Archbishop D'Rosario established centres for the training of Catechists in Dibrugarh, in Marbisu and other places. Trained Catechists carried on the work of catechesis of the

faithful. His regular and lengthy pastoral letters on various aspects on the faith and the life of the Church were of great help for the Catechists and for priests.

vi) The Word of God and Biblical Apostolate

Archbishop understood the importance of the Word of God in the life of the people and its catechetical impact. Thus he had the whole Bible translated into the local language Khasi. Much of the credit of this work should go to the team composed of Fr. Henry Fantin, SDB, Fr. Sylvanus Sngi, SDB and Francis Diengdoh of Nongpoh and others. Within a few years every Catholic family in the Khasi hills could have a Bible in Khasi, in their own language. Thousands of copies were printed at various times and distributed at a highly subsidised rate and copies were to be enthroned in each family. This Bible apostolate was a powerful idea and had served as an incentive for other missionary areas to have the Bible translated into their own local languages. The Archbishop also supported the idea of spreading copies of the New Jerusalem Bible among the priests, Religious and Sisters of the region. Thus he readily supported the idea of importing nearly 2000 copies of the New Jerusalem Bible in the 1980s at almost 1/3 of the prevailing price in India. All Catholic families were encouraged to read a chapter or two from the Bible at the end of the day.

vii) Liturgical Apostolate

Liturgy is the source and summit of all Christian life according to Vatican II. Thus Archbishop had the old *Ka Lynti Bneng* (Khasi hymn and prayer book) revised and updated several times.

The daily missal in Khasi was commissioned. The preparation of the daily missal is still in progress. Its publication has been delayed due

to various reasons. In any case, Archbishop Hubert took special care to promote the dignity and orderly celebration of all liturgical celebrations.

viii) Promotion of the Laity

Archbishop held regular meetings with the laity of the diocese. Laity in general, Catholic teachers and Professors in schools and colleges, Catholic politicians and the youth were taken into confidence about the work of the Church and their contribution to it. Wherever he went, he met with the laity and the youth of especially Class X, XI and XII and college students to encourage them in Christian living and apostolate.

ix) Promotion of Vocations to Religious and Priestly Life

In villages and towns the Archbishop was very regular in meeting with boys and girls in schools and colleges and proposed to them the idea of priestly and religious life. When people asked for a new mission centre and the establishment of a school and boarding house he always said to them, "Give me a piece of land and some of your sons and daughters to become priests and religious and I will establish a mission centre for you."

The existing St. Paul's seminary was expanded and a new structure built to house Class XI and XII seminarians in a separate building. Similarly Christ King College was established below Archbishop's House for the study of philosophy. Seminarians could also do college studies up to B.A. Furthermore he established Oriens Theological College for the students of theology. He also saw to the qualifications of professors of the seminary by sending them abroad for studies.

The need was felt for a year of spirituality before the candidates for priesthood begin their major seminary studies. It is

meant to be something like a novitiate before opting for priestly life. A two-year regency for all diocesan students has been introduced since some years.

x) Common Infrastructure

Every local Church is well established when it has seminaries at various stages. From the very beginning of his episcopal ministry Archbishop D'Rosario was eager to establish a minor seminary and major seminary. Thus he established St. Joseph's Minor seminary in Dibrugarh and enlarged St. Paul's seminary in Shillong. As a result local vocations are promoted and there is a considerable number of diocesan priests today.

xi) Archbishop D'Rosario and the Religious

Archbishop made it a point to meet and encourage the religious on a regular basis. First he took time out to meet all religious communities of Shillong on the occasion of publishing of Pastoral Letters. He met the religious priests and sisters living in Shillong and elsewhere to introduce the Pastoral Letters. These meetings were good occasions to come to know their pastoral problems. Thus he secured the goodwill and collaboration of the religious of his diocese. Unlike elsewhere, Archbishop D'Rosario never had confrontations with the Religious. He showed himself to be sympathetic and helpful to them. He was also very generous with the religious of the Archdiocese. He gave them freedom to engage in apostolic activities specific to their charism; he readily signed letters for funds; he encouraged new ideas of apostolate no matter from which quarters they came.

xii) Contemplative Life in Northeast India

Ad Gentes and other Vatican II documents speak of the promotion of contemplative life in mission areas. Following this recommendation of the council a contemplative community of Benedictine Sisters was established in Umran area. The primary scope of the contemplative sisters is to bear witness to the contemplative dimension of the Church and to pray for the spread of the Kingdom of God in Northeast India and for the success of the missionary work of the Church. They are a hidden wellspring, a hidden spiritual source for the support of active missionary life.

xiii) Social Concerns

Archbishop Hubert was equally interested in the spiritual growth of the Christians as well as their human promotion. To this end he gave permission to establish the Social Forum in Guwahati to push ahead the mission of the Church in human formation and development. He did this even against the reluctance of some Church leaders.

xiv) Personnel for Missionary Work

In the 1960s the government of India took an adverse view about the entry of missionaries into India. Several missionaries were sent away from the Northeast India under the pretext of it being militarily and politically sensitive area. This was only a smokescreen for preventing further missionary work in the region. As a result a number of foreign missionaries were asked to withdraw from sensitive areas. Some were allowed to relocate themselves, others were expelled from the country and others were forced to return to their home countries or other welcoming countries. The Archbishop supported the idea of inviting religious sisters and religious men especially from South India – Kerala,

Goa and Bombay regions. Thus about 40 Salesians were welcomed into Northeast India to carry out the work started by foreign and local missionaries. Apart from these he also invited religious sisters belonging to various congregations especially from Kerala and Mangalore. This influx of missionaries from South India, namely, Kerala, Mangalore, Goa and Bombay regions and from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh have been a great help for the expansion of the Catholic mission in Northeast India.

xv) The Promotion of Print Media

Several Catholic book centres were established in the Assam plains, Guwahati, Meghalaya and other places. The St. Paul's Sisters and St. Paul's Fathers were able to establish them with the help of the Archbishop. They promote the spread of Christian literature, religious films and liturgical articles.

xvi) Promotion of the History of the Mission in Northeast India

Archbishop D'Rosario commissioned a short history of the Shillong Archdiocese prepared by Fr. Orestes Paviotti, SDB, under the title *The Work of His Hands*. When Sacred Heart Theological College published a large volume on the *History of the Catholic Church in Northeast India 1890-1915*, a translation from the original German account by C. Becker, the Archbishop supported the venture by taking several hundred copies of the book. The book is now available in one single volume, *The Catholic Church in Northeast India 1890-1950*. Similarly he supported the publication of the centenary volume of *Catholic Church in Northeast India*.

The news bulletin of the archdiocese called the *Regnum* appeared with clock-like regularity. It practically contains the current history of

the archdiocese. It will serve as a precious sourcebook for future mission historians.

xvii) An Indigenous Missionary Congregation: the VSDB

The background of his mission experience in Northeast India, the situation prevailing in the inaccessible villages and the great distances to be covered by missionaries prompted Archbishop D’Rosario to establish a religious congregation of women called *Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco*. Their main task is direct missionary work, bringing Christ to remote inaccessible villages all over Northeast India and to bring Christ and his healing touch and human promotion to people in villages. They are about 120 (as of May 2013) sisters working in different dioceses of Northeast India and in South Sudan, Africa. Their very existence is a proof that the Church in Northeast India is fast becoming a Local Church as Vatican II says: a self-supporting, self-propagating, and a missionary Church. (Cf. AG.15, 17, 18)

Conclusion

Archbishop D’Rosario identified himself, his life and works with mission of the Church in Northeast India. He had no other interests or concerns. He has left behind a great missionary legacy similar to the missionary legacy of St. Francis Xavier, Fr. Constant Lievens, SJ and Bishop Anastasius Hartmann, OFM Cap. We can see in the following pages the extent and range of mission that he was engaged in. Like Paul, he identified himself with mission. He could have easily written an epitaph on his own life as Paul did, “For me to live is Christ.” Paraphrasing these words of St. Paul he could well define his life as follows: “For me to live is mission.”

2

Biographical Sketch

Fr. Joseph Thelekkatt, SDB¹

As I get down to the task of writing a brief biographical sketch of Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario, memories of by-gone years crowd my mind. I first met him while I was a novice at Sunnyside in 1965, hardly a year after his episcopal ordination. He was then a young and handsome bishop. The next memorable meeting was in the Cathedral of Shillong when he was installed as the first Archbishop of Shillong-Guwahati in 1969. Since then I have had occasions to come in contact with him in various capacities. But it was as Provincial that I had reasons to have close dealings with him. Our meetings were cordial and always very enriching for me. He used to guide and encourage me in my work. I could see that he loved our congregation and was very appreciative of the support he received from it for his ministry and apostolate. Towards the end of his life, when he had to be hospitalized frequently, he impressed me with his spirit of faith, prayer and his willing acceptance of suffering. At his funeral I was deeply touched by the demonstrations of love and affection by his flock.

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Early Life

Hubert D’Rosario was born of Boniface and Isabella D’Rosario on 21 February, 1919, in an obscure hamlet near Calicut, Kerala. Hubert was the fourth in a family of seven children, two boys and five girls. His younger brother was named Claude Mervin while the girls were named Ethel, Stella, Irene, Muriel and Dorothy. His father was a Mangalorean and his mother a Malayalee. Fervent Catholics, they inculcated deep religious values in the young boy. Mr. D’Rosario was a railway officer, and the family moved about a lot on account of transfers and promotions. Soon tragedy was to stalk their steps. At the age of ten, Hubert lost his mother.

All the responsibility of the care and nurture of his children now rested on Mr. Rosario’s shoulders. He loved his children and sought the very best for them. He believed in maintaining strict discipline, and the children missed the loving presence of a mother. However, the family continued to be well-knit, and the members were attached to each other. Tragedy stared into the face of Hubert again, when his younger brother, Claude Mervin, a pilot in the Indian Air Force, was killed in an air crash at a very young age. The loss was a very painful blow to Hubert who loved his brother fondly.

In 1936, Mr. Boniface D’Rosario was transferred to Tirupattur railway station which came under the then Madras Presidency. By then Hubert had passed the Matriculation examination from a Jesuit school at Calicut. The teenager was scouting around for his next step in life when he met the Salesians. He found his way to the church and the Salesian novitiate at Tirupattur, a stone’s throw away from the railway station. There he used to be found watching with bemused wonder and keen interest the animated games of the Salesian Clerics. Being at an impressionable age, he was attracted by the buoyancy and cheerfulness

of those future missionaries. Seeing the lad, the clerics used to invite him for a game. He tried to join in and somewhat enjoyed playing football. Naturally, he was no match for the sheer muscular prowess of the likes of McGlinchey, Corcoran and others. But it was fun.

i) Salesian Vocation

More than the clerics, it was the Rector, Fr. Joseph Carreño who stole the boy's heart. A native of Spain, Fr. Joseph Carreño was a vivacious and amiable priest with a heart as large as the sea, with a wisdom that was truly uncommon, and an ability and enthusiasm that were, in many ways, extraordinary. To add to these qualities, he was proficient in Spanish, Italian, English, Latin and Greek, besides being a gifted musician and scientist.

Fr. Carreño befriended the young Hubert, spoke kindly to him and the boy was instinctively drawn to the Salesian Family. He liked the Salesian community immensely, and had a special love for the affable Rector. The final decision came naturally. One glorious day, Fr. Carreño leaped on to a motorbike, rode to the home of Mr. D'Rosario, picked up Hubert and brought him to the community that became his home away from home. The endearing Salesian priest remained a constant source of encouragement to the young boy on his path to Salesian priesthood.

ii) Life in the Aspirantate

Life in the aspirantate like life anywhere, had its ups and downs for young Hubert. One gloomy cold night, terribly homesick, he cried bitterly under the cover of his blankets. The Rector passed by and heard the sobbing and sniffing. Without saying a word, he took off his coat and covered him. The next morning, not knowing whose coat it was, he

approached the Prefect of Studies and was told that it was the Rector's. He was asked to go and return it to the Rector and thank him. It was a strategy that the Rector sometimes had recourse to in order to banish blues and cement relationships.

On another occasion, most of the boys fell ill and Hubert was one of them. The doctor was promptly summoned, and the sick were lined up for a check-up. At the end of the medical examination, the doctor asked the Rector whether the boys got sufficient food. It appeared that much of the ailment was due to malnutrition. Nourishing diet was prescribed for all; and for young Hubert who was growing up fast, an extra egg a day, along with butter and fruit. In no time homesickness and other ailments vanished into thin air.

Aspirantate life had its frolicsome days as well. A young cleric, Bro. John Med, fresh from Europe, was given the task of teaching Latin to Hubert and his companion, Devadas. It was often an ordeal for the cleric who was struggling with English in which the students were fluent. The teacher and his pupils raced their own language steeplechase. And it would be a moot question to raise whether the boys learned more Latin than the Brother did English. The hilarious part of it was that the class often broke off in stomach-clutching peals of laughter.

iii) Initial Formation

In December 1936, both Hubert and Devadas were admitted to the novitiate, with Fr. Carreño as the Novice Master and Bro. John Med as the Assistant. The story of grappling with languages continued as there were four Italian novices fresh from Italy and four Indians. The novice Hubert enjoyed the fatherly affection of Fr. Carreño who took him as his secretary since he was noted for his exemplary conduct and

fine handwriting. Genuine family spirit reigned in the novitiate. There was 'joie de vivre' all around.

The novitiate year was followed by a two-year course of philosophy in the same house, under the enthusiastic guidance of Fr. Meliga. Hubert absorbed knowledge like a sponge, and grew in good spirit and steadiness of life. He was docile and unassuming, serious-minded, affable to all and active at work.

iv) Vocational Crisis

He was, however, soon to learn that bouquets and brickbats intersperse the human pilgrimage. During the initial year of Practical Training at Broadway, Madras, Hubert experienced a major vocational crisis. His rector-cum-provincial found very few good qualities in the cleric. Hubert felt this way of life was not meant for him. He contemplated leaving the Salesian Society.

It was at this critical juncture that the good Fr. Carreño once again appeared on the scene. He was wont to visit all the young clerics in Practical Training and chat with them as a father does with his growing sons. In the course of unburdening himself, Hubert revealed to his old novice master that he was thinking of leaving the Salesians. The latter encouraged him to stay on, counselling patience and perseverance. His timely help dispelled doubts and anxieties from the mind of Hubert.

I have heard from his contemporaries, that Fr. Carreño encouraged local vocations wherever he found himself. Many like Hubert had been supported in their youthful years by his solicitous care and concern. Later in life, Archbishop Hubert like many other confreres would often reminisce in glowing and loving terms about the great qualities of Fr. Carreño. For him, Fr. Carreño came to epitomize the ideal Salesian and priest. Qualities he particularly admired in him were

his fatherliness, his openness, cheerfulness and an ability to understand and accept those under his charge. “When Fr. Carreño died, a part of me also died with him”, the Archbishop would say, adding that, unfortunately today many do not have a heart that is as large as his.

His First Contacts with Northeast India

During the latter part of his Practical Training, Bro. Hubert came to Dibrugarh as the assistant of the Novices. Fr. Edward Gutierrez a very eminent formator of Salesian India was the Master of Novices and in him young Bro. Hubert had an excellent spiritual guide. After his Practical Training he was sent to Shillong to do his B.T. in St. Edmund’s College. These were his initial contacts with the area that would be the domain of his missionary activities for more than a quarter of a century. He stayed at Don Bosco Technical School and attended the B.T. College. Though a student, he pitched in to help and did his share of “assistance” and teaching as the other “assistants” did. His days as a student of theology seem to have passed off uneventfully as he seldom shared about them.

A Priest For Ever

Bro. Hubert had set his eyes on the day of his ordination and that “dream-day” dawned on 16 April 1947. Hubert D’Rosario was ordained a priest of God at St. Mary’s parish church, Kotagiri by Msgr. Renuus Guega, Bishop of Mysore, to which diocese Kotagiri then belonged. The church was packed to capacity and the Salesian choir added solemnity and devotion. After the ordination service, dressed in his priestly vestments, the new priest blessed his father who, with tear-sodden eyes, kissed his hand. At lunch time, in reply to expressions of gratitude by Fr. Hubert, Bishop Renuus spoke for half an hour. He

expressed his joy for the privilege he had had to ordain a Salesian. He added that he would always consider Fr. Hubert as his beloved son in Jesus Christ. The Bishop expressed great joy and satisfaction at the work done by the Salesians in his diocese and exhorted them to increase and multiply and open more industrial schools.

First Year of Priestly Ministry

Tirupattur was the first posting of young Fr. Hubert. He was appointed Vice-principal in the newly established college which had just been inaugurated with Intermediate courses only. Fr. Hubert was loved by his superiors, staff and students, and esteemed for his fairness and religiosity. He laid a good foundation to the institution and set up a solid tradition. So much so, that when Fr. Murphy took over as Principal of the upgraded college, he found the college on sound footings and easy to manage. Next, he was sent to Trivandrum as Prefect of Studies and Headmaster. Those were not so easy days for that institution. Later the institution reverted to diocesan management.

The first Indian Salesian Rector of the Province

Fr. Hubert's next assignment was as Headmaster and later as Rector at Katpadi. The distinction of being the first Indian Rector of Madras Province was his. He did good work there among the poor children of North Arcot most of whom were orphans or marginalized. That brought him in 1958 to his new port-of-call, Bombay, as Rector and Principal of Don Bosco School, Matunga. Here again, he was the first Indian to be the head of such a big institution. Fr. Ignatius Rubio assisted him ably as he would do later in Dibrugarh and Shillong.

Fr. Bosco Pereira, SDB, of Bombay Province narrates the happy recollections of the time when Fr. Hubert D'Rosario was his first Rector,

at Don Bosco Matunga. That was about 45 years ago and little Bosco was just 11 at that time.

“His love was tough, gentle and serious”, is how Fr. Bosco remembers Fr. Hubert. At any given time, anyone would know where to find him. Going to meet him in the office was a pleasure because the little boys came out with a handful of sweets or a postcard or a medal. But had he done some punishable mischief during the day, he dared not approach the Rector’s office; the latter’s piercing looks could kill a bad soul. Otherwise those same eyes radiated love and kindness. He always had a good word for everybody. Being summoned to the office was itself a great reward or punishment.

Fr. Hubert was very particular as to how the boys looked and dressed – one hair style for all, shorts touching knees. Sunday was a holy day; it was a custom to have two Masses for all the 200 boarders, one of which he would regularly celebrate. At 3.00 pm there would be a conference in the Church for all, at which the superiors and the boys were present. Nobody would be distracted that time. His stories from church history and Salesian history and the lives of the saints were narrated with pep, unction and high drama. No kidding, no talking, and no sleeping would be entertained during that hour. The talk was invariably followed by solemn benediction. Everything had a sense of awe. Fr. Hubert gave it that tone. During those days, the boys kissed his hands with reverence.

At interval times, Fr. Hubert would be out of his office, always encircled by a throng of boys. He had a soft corner for the hockey and football players who had won many a trophy for the school. Every victory would be celebrated with a very special Benediction service on the following Sunday. There would be sweets for all, and a special treat supplemented by a rosary and a medal for the winners.

Monthly Recollections and annual retreats received the utmost importance during Fr. Hubert's rectorship. The boarding boys looked forward to these events, also because they were always accompanied by something special at table and ended with an outing or a picnic. Fr. Hubert made these spiritual exercises very refreshing for body and soul. The prayer "For the one amongst us who would be the first to die" sounded deadly, and was recited with awesome fear. It was often a turning point for many.

Fr. Rector made regular rounds in the study halls and dormitories. Those were serious moments. He always had something to whisper to the naughty ones. Anyone punished by the Assistant would hang his head in shame. What compounded the embarrassment was that the Rector witnessed the punishment. The latter would inquire from the others why the boy was standing or kneeling, and would mollify both the boy and the brother with a "kind word in the ear". The boy would be made to sit down. And that passing encounter would ensure that there was no more trouble till the end of the study. The boys saw Fr. Hubert as just and impartial.

Sodalities were popular in those days though not all would be admitted into them. One had to apply and then the Rector with his council and the group Assistant selected those found fit. Fr. Hubert kept an eye on the potential Dominic Savios and Francis Bessucos. Every year he selected and sent some boys to the Salesian aspirantate at Lonavla.

For so much to be emblazoned in an 11 year old's head, Fr. Hubert D'Rosario must have been an arresting personality. Fr. Bosco winds up his memories of Fr. Hubert expressing his delight that Fr. Hubert recognized the signs of Salesian vocation in him and helped him to follow his call.

A member of the General Chapter

In 1958, Fr. Hubert attended the General Chapter of the Salesian Congregation along with the Provincial, Fr. A. Pianazzi. He had the unique distinction of being the first Indian to attend the General Chapter as a delegate. The election as a delegate for the General Chapter was indicative of the esteem and appreciation in which he was held by the confreres of his province. There were rumours that young Fr. Hubert would possibly be the next Provincial. God had other designs for him. When the See of Dibrugarh became vacant, Fr. Hubert was appointed its bishop by Pope Paul VI on 6 July 1964.

His call to be a Bishop

His call to the episcopal ministry reminds me of the call of Abraham. He was called by the Lord to leave the familiar terrain of his own native province and led to the Northeast India frontiers of India. The land, its people, their languages and customs were totally alien to him. He had scarcely settled down in the midst of his people in Dibrugarh giving a fresh impetus to the work of the Church, when further summons from the Holy Father urged him to fold up his tent once more and move on to the newly created archdiocese of Shillong-Guwahati as the first Metropolitan Archbishop of Northeast India in 1969.

When he took over as Bishop of Dibrugarh and later as the Archbishop of Shillong-Guwahati, beyond the fanfare and the festivities, there was also a feeling that an outsider had become the leader of the Church in Northeast India. To make matters worse, he did not know the local languages. He was painfully aware that he would take a long time to make himself fully accepted and loved. As he himself confided to me on more than one occasion, he had felt the isolation and the

loneliness keenly. And yet, he knew that his duty was to prove himself, in course of time, a good pastor and effective shepherd of his people. He tried to learn the local languages and took to touring the villages assiduously. Many missionaries attest that the Archbishop was at his best in the villages. He could have easily sought popularity at the cost of his duties as a Church leader. But he had a resolute will and rock-like faith to hold on to what he considered right, whatever be the obstacles that came on his way. Herein we see the traits of a great religious leader imbued with a deep faith, and commitment to God and to his people.

In course of time, through sincerity of purpose, hard work, and unflinching loyalty to the cause of his people, he came to be accepted and respected by his clergy, religious and the faithful. His funeral was a visible proof that he who had come as a stranger had truly become our “beloved Father in the faith.”

a) Bishop of Dibrugarh

The bishop-elect and Fr. Anthony Alessi, the then Provincial, paid a short visit to Dibrugarh and was given a warm welcome in front of the Cathedral. He was ordained bishop at the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians, Matunga, Bombay on 6 September 1964 by His Eminence Valerian Cardinal Gracias. The motto that he adopted on his coat of arms was the second petition of the Lord's Prayer: “Adveniat Regnum Tuum” (May Your Kingdom Come). Soon after his consecration he flew to Rome to attend the third session of the Second Vatican Council then in progress. Thus, he started off his episcopal ministry as a “Council Bishop”, endeavouring to implement the reforms initiated by the Council and translate into action its vision and guidelines.

On December 12, 1964, Bishop Hubert arrived in Dibrugarh by car, having landed at Jorhat by flight earlier. Bishop Marengo and

a multitude of people gathered in front of the Cathedral to welcome the new pastor. The territory of Dibrugarh diocese at that time was composed of the present districts of Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat, and Golaghat in Assam, the districts of East Arunachal Pradesh, and the states of Nagaland and Manipur. The total Catholic population of the diocese then was approximately fifty thousand.

Soon after his arrival in Dibrugarh, the young Bishop managed to rope in the services of Fr. Ignatius Rubio from Don Bosco Matunga. On February 1, 1965 Fr. Ignatius took charge as the new Vicar General and Mission Procurator of the diocese. Till the end of his life Fr. Ignatius remained a companion, fund-raiser, builder and willing executor of Bishop Hubert's plans and projects. It would be difficult to forget the indelible mark Fr. Ignatius Rubio has left on the present dioceses of Dibrugarh, Kohima, Imphal, Shillong, Guwahati, Tura and Diphu.

Under Bishop Hubert's five year-long pastoral ministry, the Diocese of Dibrugarh witnessed great progress in the field of evangelization. He also took pains to organize and systematize the work of the diocese. Parishes and institutions were established in quick succession. In 1965 Hundung parish in Manipur and Wokha in Nagaland were opened. Moranhat and Jorhat parishes were inaugurated in the following year. In 1969 mission centres of Churachandpur in Manipur and Tuensang in Nagaland were opened. In the same year, prime land was secured in the heart of Dimapur for a parish. Later Punanamai (Mao) in Manipur was started and negotiations were on for obtaining land in Jakhama (Nagaland) for a mission centre.

Projects for the development of the Diocese were drawn up and executed with efficiency and care. Purchase of land for new parishes, irrigation projects, conducting of training programmes especially for catechists, and animation courses for priests and religious went hand

in hand with evangelization. Faced with acute shortage of missionaries, Bishop Hubert invited a number of religious congregations to open new centres in some of the promising areas.

Some of the landmark buildings of the diocese were constructed during the stewardship of Bishop Hubert. St. Joseph's seminary at Lichubari and its lovely campus were carefully planned and executed. Next came the construction of Mercy Home complex consisting of Vincenza Gerosa Hospital, a Psychiatric Clinic and a home for the aged. The renovation of the old Cathedral built by Fr. Leo Piasecki is another project worthy of mention. Magnificent mosaics of the Nativity, the Risen Christ and the fourteen Stations of the Cross were installed to add beauty and to inspire piety and devotion. "This is certainly one of the most beautiful churches I have seen in my ministry throughout the world. You don't realize what a beautiful Cathedral you have here!" declared Fr. Rufus Pereira, a renowned preacher of international repute.

The Catechists' Training Centre in the compound of Bishop's House for the immediate training of the future catechists of Nagaland and Manipur, was the next to be inaugurated. Some catechists trained in this illustrious institution have in recent times celebrated the Silver Jubilee of their ministry after having rendered dedicated service to the Church – thanks to the effective formation they received from the founder-director Fr. Juan Larrea, who passed away recently at the Pastoral Centre in Shillong.

Another epoch-making event of Bishop Hubert's episcopate was the visit of the Pro-Nuncio, Mons. G. Caprio which took place in October 1968. The Pro-Nuncio was very pleased with his stay in the diocese and with what he saw and heard.

All through the five years of his episcopate in Dibrugarh, Bishop Hubert and his collaborators stayed in the old Bishop's House, the

present day St. Joseph's Hostel, where his predecessor Bishop Marengo had lived for thirteen years as Dibrugarh's first Bishop. As the diocese began to grow and develop the need to acquire a more spacious building for the residence of the Bishop, his staff and for the diocesan offices was keenly felt. Hence an ambitious plan was drawn up to shift Don Bosco School from the compound of the Bishop's House to its present campus and to remodel the grand old Don Bosco School built by Fr. E. Zanon in 1961, into Bishop's House.

Shepherding the faithful of Dibrugarh, Bishop Hubert endeared himself to the people. He untiringly toured the Upper Assam valley as well as the rugged tracts of Nagaland and Manipur where the Lord's favourable time had come for many of the tribes. His visits encouraged the clergy, the sisters and the faithful and the work of evangelization forged ahead with success.

In reality what Bishop Hubert accomplished in the diocese of Dibrugarh is much more than what can be recorded in this brief biographical sketch. It suffices to say that he more than fulfilled what Fr. Dal Zovo, the out-going Vicar General, had hoped for when he wrote "The Bishop's House is thoroughly renewed in its personnel and awaits renewal in its organization and buildings. Mary the Helper of Christians will surely lead our successors to greater success for the good of souls."

b) Archbishop of Shillong-Guwahati

On 16 June 1969, Shillong was raised to the status of a Metropolitan See, and named Archdiocese of Shillong-Guwahati. Bishop Hubert was nominated its first Archbishop and he took charge on 5 October 1969. On that day, in front of a large crowd, Archbishop Piccachy of Calcutta presided over the enthronement of

the first Archbishop of Shillong. The Anglican Bishop and the leaders of the Presbyterian Church were also present. At the homily, the new Archbishop spoke in English, and, to the delight of the people, he also spoke a few words in Khasi. In a voice fresh and clear and resonant, he said, "At this historic moment, I hail the heroic missionaries who, from the end of the last century to this day, have spent their lives for the cause of Christ in their land of adoption... They have fallen by disease and hunger and have become one with the soil they have moistened with their sweat and sanctified with their mortal remains. It is ever true that the blood of the apostles is the seed of new Christians". The faces of the throng lit up with pride and joy. The Archbishop extolled the merits and achievements of his predecessor, Archbishop Stephen Ferrando, who had worked selflessly for 34 years as Bishop of Shillong.

Growth of the Church in the 70s

Thanks to the drive and initiative of Archbishop Hubert, very ably assisted by others and especially the missionaries in the field, the decade of the 70s witnessed a phenomenal leap forward, an amazing spurt of new parishes: Resubelpara and Diphu in 1971, Dokmoka, Umsohlait, Mairang, Mawbri, Jongksha and Sonapahar in 1972, Chokihola, Mawkyrwat, Laban and Nongthymmai in 1973, Mawsynram, and Khliehriat in 1976, Umswai and Umsning in 1977, and Sonaighuli in 1978. A total of 17 new parishes were erected in eight years. That is, an average of two parishes a year. An incredible record indeed when we realize that a newly set-up Parish complex comprised the priests' quarters, the Church, the convent, the dispensary, the boys' hostel, the girls' hostel and a school.

On 31 January, 1972, Archbishop Hubert issued a Pastoral Letter, announcing the Golden Jubilee of Salesian missionary activity in the

Northeast India. Placing on record the increase of Catholic communities, the number of missionaries and institutions, and the Church's growth in the region, he recalled the services of some outstanding priests; religious and catechists in the field of evangelization. He informed his flock that the Golden Jubilee was meant primarily to thank God for his plentiful blessings and to renew the resolve to emulate the total self-giving of the pioneering missionaries. Speaking on the occasion of the Jubilee celebrations, to an estimated crowd of 25,000 people, Capt. William Sangma, the then Chief Minister of Meghalaya, said that the Northeast India was fortunate to have the Salesians of Don Bosco, who, with courage, vision and sacrifice opened remote areas to education and development.

In 1976 the Archbishop opened a Catechist-cum-Teachers' training centre at Marbisu. Every year, at the end of the course, the Archbishop sent out the trainees with the *Missio Canonica*: they were commissioned to serve the Church. They were given the Bible and sent forth to proclaim the Good News.

Invited by the Archbishop, the Salesian Sisters (The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, FMA) undertook to open a Nursing School in Shillong. On 24 September 1979, Rev. Fr. Resto, the Vicar General, inaugurated the Rapsbun School of Nursing, though the present set-up and building were completed slowly.

The Archdiocese of Shillong was divided and the new diocese of Tura was established in 1973. The new diocese was created on 7 April, with Bishop Orestes Marengo as the Apostolic Administrator. On 8 February 1979, the Holy Father appointed Rev. Fr. George Mamalassery as the first Bishop of Tura. At his episcopal ordination on 19 March, Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario was the presiding Prelate while Bishop Marengo and Bishop Mittathany assisted at the ceremony.

The Missionaries of Charity of Mother Teresa, the Sisters of Charity of St. Capitano and St. Gerosa, the Daughters of St. Paul, the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (MSFS) were the religious congregations who heeded the Archbishop's invitation and stepped into this vineyard of the Lord to carry on the Church's Mission in Northeast India.

New Frontiers of Growth: The 80s and the 90s

The setting up of new parishes gathered momentum in the 80s and 90s: Namdong in 1980, Rangblang in 1981, Japrajan in 1982, Laitlyngkot in 1983, Mawkynrew in 1984, Umkadhor in 1985, Nonghyllam in 1992, and Balat and Amlarem in 1993. Two more dioceses were born in this glorious era. In a circular dated 30 December 1983, Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario informed the clergy and the faithful about the creation of the diocese of Diphu comprising the districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar, and the appointment of Rev. Fr. Mathai Kochuparambil SDB as its first Bishop. Ordained in Rome on 6 January 1984, by Pope John Paul II, the new Bishop was installed on 4 March 1984 by the Archbishop in a Eucharistic Sacrifice concelebrated by 7 Bishops of Northeast India, about 80 priests, 200 Brothers and Sisters, and 3000 faithful.

The youngest daughter of Shillong-Guwahati archdiocese is Guwahati diocese. Born in 1992, the new diocese is composed of parishes carved out from the Archdiocese of Shillong-Guwahati and the dioceses of Tezpur and Tura. Bishop Thomas Menamparampil of Dibrugarh was installed as the first Bishop of the newly created diocese of Guwahati on August 16, 1992.

An insatiable thirst for the Church's advancement urged the Archbishop to bring more Religious congregations into Northeast India.

The Claretians, the Holy Cross Sisters and the Benedictine Sisters came in during this period. The Archbishop keenly desired having in the Archdiocese a contemplative order that would back up with prayer, the multifarious activities going on in the region. With prayers, sacrifices and contemplation; their presence would also have immense witness value. The Archbishop hoped that they would inspire and lead many to a life of contemplation. The Benedictines at Umran are filling this need, besides running a retreat house open to all.

The Holy Cross Sisters have managed steadily to expanding Nazareth Hospital and Rapsbun School of Nursing. The Claretians in Nonghyllam, Balat and Mawsynram parishes and the MSFS in Amlarem are rendering dedicated service. When he was installed as the Archbishop of Shillong-Guwahati there were only eleven parishes ministering to a population of 80,000 Catholics, while at his death there were thirty parishes catering to a population of 298,000 Catholics.

His Village Visits

Much of the success of Archbishop Hubert's episcopal ministry can be attributed to the emphasis he gave to his programmed visits to the villages. Our revered pioneers did tour the villages extensively. We can certainly include Archbishop Hubert in their company. He perfected this traditional method of the missionaries and reaped a rich harvest. This was his way of understanding Salesian assistance – the presence of the educator among his children. It was through this intimate contact with the people in their own environment that he won their hearts and their affection.

The Archbishop could have easily adopted an arm-chair style of leadership but that is something he just didn't do. In spite of his tight schedules, in spite of nagging ailments, in spite of the hassles of office,

it is no small wonder that he reached the remotest village, the most-far-flung areas, even those beyond where only the most intrepid would have set foot.

He loved touring. He loved the people. "When I am among them," he would say, "I forget all my troubles. They are so simple and loving, and my greatest joy is to be with them. I love touring." In fact, when in the last years of his life, ill health, and sore feet in particular, halted his touring to an extent, it pained him. He would say, "The greatest sorrow I now have is the inability to tour the villages. I miss the people. I must go to them. A Bishop must be a good pastor, a good shepherd in the midst of his flock. They love to see me in their midst. They forget their sufferings and pains. So do I. Our people love the faith. Simple as they are, once they believe, they are ready even to die for what they believe."

On his arrival in a village or parish, the Archbishop would immediately make himself available to hear confessions even though the priests tried to spare him the trouble. After the services, he would invariably be there in front of the Church, to meet the village folk, to chat with them, to listen to their stories, woes and worries, to bless the children, the old and the infirm. When he returned from such village programmes, dead tired at the end of the day, he still looked happy, relaxed and fulfilled. Much of what transpired in the village or parish would surface during the dinner table-talk or the Good Night talk that followed though none of this came easy. It was often an uphill task for him to learn the Khasi language, to adapt himself to places and people. But he kept at it and made the culture of his people his own, trying to identify himself totally with them.

We can rightly conclude that through his village visits, Archbishop Hubert who came as a stranger departed from this life

deeply loved as a father and friend. The words written on his tomb stone in the Cathedral Church of Mary Help of Christians truly echo the sentiments of the large assembly of mourners: "Here lie the mortal remains of an ardent pastor and missionary beloved of his clergy and faithful."

Remarkable Contributions

Archbishop Hubert, an astute planner and administrator, has made many noteworthy contributions to the Church in the Northeast India and to the Archdiocese of Shillong in particular. I shall limit myself to enumerating just a few of the most obvious ones.

i) Project Evangelization

While preparing to write these lines on Archbishop Hubert, I have often wondered as to where I would put in, this section on Evangelization. It could have come at the beginning because evangelization was the inspiration behind all he said and did; the launching pad for all his numerous activities. It could have come in the middle because it was the heart of his life and action, the soul of his thinking and planning. It could have come at the end because it was the goal to which everything tended, the target of all his strivings. He could indeed repeat with St. Paul: "For if I preach the Gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel." (I Cor 9:16)

The spirit of evangelization coursed through his whole life, permeated his entire being. Waking or asleep, healthy or sick, he mused over it, planned for it, worked at it. Evangelization was his greatest preoccupation, his overriding obsession, his single-minded thrust. Treading the footsteps of St. Paul, in season and out of season, he would

drive home to his clergy, religious and laity the pressing urgency of this task. Today, if the Church of Northeast India is known to the rest of the world as an evangelizing Church, it is mainly due to the hard work of the priests, religious and the laity of the region, all of whom drew inspiration from his leadership. Fr. Sylvanus Sngi Lyngdoh describes Archbishop Hubert as “the Prophet of evangelization in the Northeast India region and in the whole of India as well.” It was in recognition of his missionary zeal, that Archbishop Hubert was appointed as Consulter of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. Whatever Archbishop Hubert undertook had Evangelization as its sole motive and goal. It is in the context of this urge to evangelize that we can best understand the meaning and the relevance of some of the great events that took place during his episcopate.

ii) Interest in Education

For a pastor who firmly believed that “we evangelize by educating and educate by evangelizing”, educational institutions, naturally, were of utmost importance. Recalling Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario in the 2 September 1994 issue of the newspaper “Ap phira”, Paschal Malngiang speaks of him as an educationist who encouraged the opening of schools even in remote areas. To minimize the number of drop-outs he advocated, much to the annoyance of the heads of educational institutions, the systematic passing of students at the school stage. Time and again he insisted that boys’ education must receive special attention. According to the Archdiocesan Directory of 1993, the educational institutions in the archdiocese counted: 915 KG and LP schools, 112 ME schools, 55 High schools, 1 Technical school, 3 colleges, 1 Seminary for students of Philosophy, 2 Seminaries for students of Theology, 3 Teachers’ Training and 25 Vocational Training institutes and 72 hostels catering to a total

of about 115,000 students. A well known Protestant historian of the Church in the Northeast India attributes the key to the phenomenal growth of the Catholic Church in the region to their educational policy. For Archbishop Hubert, education was always a means and a method of evangelization. He also wanted those in charge of the educational institutions to bear that in mind.

iii) Health and Social Services

In the 2 September 1994 issue of "The Shillong Times" there appeared an article by J. T. Lyngdoh captioned "Archbishop D'Rosario, the Social Reformer." A social reformer, indeed, he was. His reforms had a purpose and a reason behind them. Archbishop Hubert envisaged health and social services as integral and inextricable elements of evangelization. He was convinced that the spiritual ministry rendered by the Church is in itself a powerful means of fostering social harmony and transformation.

The establishment of Rapsbun School of Nursing, Shillong, and numerous dispensaries throughout the region, the extension and the opening of new departments at Nazareth Hospital in Shillong point to the fact that he considered the Church's ministry to the sick and investment in healthcare as integral to evangelization. The Archbishop frequently monitored the activities of Sisters and others who ran dispensaries and healthcare centres in villages and parishes.

According to the 1993 statistics, the Social Service Centres of the Archdiocese included: 1 hospital, 32 dispensaries, 10 orphanages, 1 leprosarium and 1 home for the aged. They reached out to more than 160,000 people. One can think of other prominent instances of the Archbishop's social concern. In 1971, during the Bangladesh-Pakistan war, Meghalaya was flooded with 800,000 refugees from Bangladesh.

The Government of Meghalaya was prepared to meet the challenge and opened 38 huge camps to house them. Humanitarian aid was widely made available by the Church in Meghalaya in 1987, especially in times of calamities like floods and cyclones. The Archbishop wanted to make spiritual ministry and social work go hand in hand in all the parishes. The Church, led by Archbishop Hubert, was at the forefront of humanitarian services.

iv) Formation of the Clergy, Religious and Faithful

Like his mentor Fr. Carreño, Archbishop Hubert gave serious attention to the recruiting and training of local diocesan clergy. When he took over the Archdiocese, St. Paul's Minor Seminary was filled to capacity with enthusiastic high school students recruited from all over the country. These youngsters were full of promise for the future of the growing Church. Realizing the need to encourage local vocations, he stopped recruiting vocations from outside the Archdiocese even though this invited criticism. In the years that followed this policy ensured the gradual transition of Church leadership into local hands.

The episcopal ordination of Rt. Rev. Tarcisius Resto Phanrang on September 23, 1990 could be considered as a sort of culmination of the missionary efforts of the Church for over a century. At the death of Archbishop Hubert there were 48 priests and 19 major seminarians from the Archdiocese. In 1994 the year of his death, 10 deacons (5 diocesans and 5 Salesians) from the Archdiocese were ordained priests. On 10 September, 1995, in an impressive ceremony which could be considered as the climax of his policy of indigenization of the Church, in the presence of Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil and six other bishops of the region, Bishop Tarcisius Resto Phanrang, SDB, was installed by Archbishop Henry D'Souza of Calcutta, as the Metropolitan Archbishop of Shillong.

Soon after assuming office, convinced of the need to train his clergy *“in loco”*, Archbishop Hubert pushed ahead with the idea of establishing a seminary for the students of Philosophy. He was so convinced of the urgency of the project that he requested for and obtained the use of Sacred Heart College premises to house Christ King College (1970) till he could find a suitable site. The present beautiful premises and buildings, located close to the Archbishop’s house and constructed by Fr. I. Rubio, with the help of Fr. M. Bianchi and Fr. T. Lopez, were occupied towards the end of 1974. Today Christ King College for philosophy and B.A. courses caters also to some of the other dioceses of Northeast India.

Next in his agenda was the establishment of a major seminary for students of theology. Oriens Theological College, serving all the dioceses of Northeast India, was inaugurated on 7 July 1979. It owes its existence to the pragmatism and foresight of Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario who evinced keen interest in it, visiting it regularly and meeting the staff and students. With consummate skill and tenacity of purpose, Fr. Ignatius Rubio and Fr. Thomas Lopez, transformed an uneven and difficult terrain into a suitable place for a monumental, attractive structure. The blessing by his Excellency Luciano Storero, Pro-Nuncio to India, took place on 10 November, 1979. Present were all the eight Bishops of Northeast India, a large number of priests, religious and faithful.

For the first few years the students from Oriens attended classes in Sacred Heart Theological College, Mawlai. Within a few years, the Archbishop saw to the gradual development of Oriens College into an independent studentate of theology. Today Oriens has on its rolls not only seminarians from the various dioceses of Northeast India but also from dioceses outside the region and from religious congregations working in our region.

Archbishop Hubert depended on the Salesians to run the various formation houses he had started for his seminarians. However he was very much aware of the need to have trained formators from among his own clergy. Hence he took care to train a team of formators with adequate qualifications to staff these houses of formation for the diocesan clergy. It is a matter of great satisfaction that before his death all seminaries were under the direction of the diocesan clergy.

The establishment of the Pastoral Centre at Tripura Castle Road in Shillong by the Salesians, through the initiative and foresight of the Archbishop contributed much to the renewal movement of the priests, religious and laity of the Archdiocese and of the entire region.

The Archbishop wrote regular pastoral letters for animation of the faithful. He took personal interest in explaining and introducing these pastoral letters to the priests, religious and faithful.

To foster the on-going formation of his clergy and to ensure cohesive planning and communication of ideas he encouraged regular monthly recollections and meetings of the clergy. Through his insistence and personal supervision, participation at these recollection days and meetings became normal events in the life of his priests. These regular monthly events no doubt contributed much to the spiritual growth and vitality of the clergy.

v) The Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco (VSDB)

On 29 June, 1982, at the monthly meeting of the priests, the Archbishop made an important announcement, "I have been thinking for years how to help our villages get the full benefits of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Most of our Christians live in villages, steeped in poverty, ignorance and disease. There is a pressing need of Sisters living in their midst and helping them rise..." In 'A Short Note on the

Proposed Congregation' Archbishop Hubert detailed the activities of the future Sisters in mission centres, in the villages and in the towns.

Soon, first eight candidates were accepted. An old ME School of Upper Shillong parish was adapted for them and named Madonna Convent. On the feast of Our Lady of Visitation, 31 May, 1983 the Archbishop inaugurated the new society under the name of the "Pious Association of the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco (VSDB)."

The ceremony was impressive. Present were Fr. T. Resto, V.G., Fr. Mathai Kochuparambil, Salesian Provincial, several diocesan and religious priests, Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions (RNDM) and many others. During the homily, the Archbishop officially established the Pious Association of the Visitation (PAV). Stifling emotions of joy and gratitude to God, he said: "These sisters will labour to bring the saving message of Christ, right into the homes of our people. Evangelization and catechesis will hold the pride of place in their ministry. They will care for the health of our people by preventive and curative medicine and hygienic living; they will help remove illiteracy, especially through non-formal education, and will guide the people to increase food production. Mary at her visitation will be their model and patroness."

Archbishop D'Rosario entrusted the fledgling Association to the RNDM congregation. In August 1985, Rev. Sr. Mary John Bosco, RNDM took charge of the new Association. A year later she was appointed Mother President – a post she held for seven years. All these years she did tremendous work to translate the ideas of the Archbishop into reality. The Association grew, and the ceremony of the First Vows took place on 31 May, 1986. Six years later, on 31 May 1992, six sisters of the first batch took their final vows. On the following day, the Archbishop summoned a meeting of all the Professed Sisters and after

due consultation, named Rev. Sr. Cecilia Sad, VSDB, as the Mother President of the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco.

The founding of the Pious Association is yet another proof that Archbishop Hubert did not hesitate to go to any extent to materialize the one great idea that ruled his life – the spread of the Kingdom of God. No doubt in the years to come the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco will continue to be a living testimony of Archbishop Hubert's fervent quest for evangelization. By their untiring labours, they will continue to keep alive the motto of his life and the programme of his episcopate: Thy Kingdom come.

A Few Milestones of His Episcopate

The last decade of his episcopate was marked by many a milestone and the Archbishop took great care to see that the celebrations of these significant events were not merely external. He made every effort to delineate clearly the “evangelization angle” that lay behind these events. That was his way of making these celebrations into occasions for further evangelization and catechesis. The Golden Jubilee of the diocese of Shillong (1984), the Papal Visit in 1986, the General Body meeting of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) in Shillong (1989), and the Centenary Celebrations of the Catholic Church in Northeast India (1990) became effective means of spreading the Kingdom of God. They proved beyond doubt that ‘evangelization’ was the leit motif which governed the life of Archbishop Hubert.

a) Golden Jubilee of the Diocese of Shillong

1984 marked the Golden Jubilee of the canonical erection of the first Diocese in Northeast India, the diocese of Shillong, comprising the then states of Assam, Manipur and the Kingdom of Bhutan. The grand

finale of the Golden Jubilee celebrations took place on 21 April 1985 in Don Bosco Stadium, Laitumkhrah. On that occasion, the Archbishop extended his greetings to the clergy, religious and laity and called upon all to raise their heads in prayerful thanksgiving to God Almighty for all the graces and blessings He had bestowed on the region during the past fifty years.

b) The Papal Visit to Shillong

Pope John Paul II arrived in Shillong at the Golf Links on Tuesday, 4 February, 1986 at 10.00 am and offered the Holy sacrifice of the Mass with about 300,000 participants, probably the biggest gathering Meghalaya had ever witnessed. The Bishops of the region had jointly prepared their flock for this great event through pastoral letters urging them to participate in the programme of spiritual renewal and to pray that the Pope's visit would lead them to a deeper love of Christ and his Vicar on earth.

All the eight dioceses of the region offered symbolic gifts to the Holy Father at the offertory of the Mass. The beautiful and breathtaking traditional dances by various tribes and peoples of Northeast India, variegated in colour, melody and rhythm, provided a rare and rich feast for the eye and mind. A deeply moved Holy Father said: *"Dear Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario, dear brother bishops, dear brothers and sisters in Our Lord Jesus Christ. God is very much a part of your life... He has revealed his love to us... the Salesians of Don Bosco who were entrusted with the Assam Mission in 1921, have contributed in a special way to the growth of the Church in this area... The work of evangelization is also continuing today through the untiring and zealous efforts of the diocesan clergy, whose steadily increasing numbers is a sign of the growth and maturity of your local churches... All of you brothers*

and sisters must become heralds of God's saving presence throughout the hills and plains of Northeast India... I appeal especially to the young: be filled with the spirit of the Gospel. Learn to love and appreciate your own culture, your language, your past history." The visit was yet another "evangelizing milestone" in the episcopal ministry of Archbishop Rosario.

Those who know the background of the Papal visit to India will know how difficult it was to get the organizers both at the CBCI and at the Vatican to include Shillong in the Papal itinerary. That the visit took place speaks volumes for the tenacity of purpose of the Archbishop and his close collaborators and their great power of persuasion.

c) The Meeting of Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI)

Sacred Heart Theological College, Shillong, was the venue of the CBCI 19th General Body Meeting from 9 to 16 November 1989. An impressive public reception was put up for the 106 bishops at the Don Bosco Stadium on Saturday, 11 November. The following day, Simon Cardinal Pimenta of Bombay, the chief celebrant at the Eucharist, greeted the large crowd that had gathered. What captured the Cardinal's attention in a special way was the sight of tens of thousands of Christians taking part in the Eucharistic procession, everyone singing and praying with great love and devotion. It was a tradition Archbishop Hubert had taken pains to cultivate and preserve. The whole experience was a memorable event both for the people as well as for the bishops who were singularly impressed with the active involvement of the laity. Reminiscing on the event, Cardinal Pimenta voiced his brother bishops' sentiments when he wrote, "My visit to Shillong has been a theophany, an unforgettable experience of a young Church...vibrant and dynamic."

d) The Centenary of the Catholic Church in Northeast India

The nine-year novena (1981-90) in preparation for the centenary of the Catholic Church in Northeast India was intended, in the words of the Archbishop, "to rededicate ourselves with renewed vigour to the work of evangelization – to capture the zeal and enthusiasm of the first missionaries and to give concrete expression to it in our lives." The motto adopted for the Centenary was befitting the Archbishop's own episcopal motto, "Thy Kingdom Come."

During the centenary year, the Archbishop saw to it that every diocese, parish, institution and Catholic association held study and reflection seminars and spiritual retreats at different intervals. Not only the faithful, but also bishops, priests and religious participated in these animation programmes. The objective was to engender in-depth reflection on the strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures of the Church in Northeast India so as to pave the way for deeper faith, enthusiasm and commitment to missionary evangelization.

The nine-year novena and the centenary year culminated in the Centenary Week, November 4-11, 1990, in a pageantry of religious and cultural functions, held in the Cathedral Church grounds and Don Bosco Stadium, Shillong. Cardinal Alfons Stickler was a special representative of the Holy Father for the occasion. In the afternoon of the 11th over two hundred thousand people walked in the procession of the Blessed Sacrament, praising and thanking God for his constant, unending love and care, for his countless gifts, especially the gift of faith. At the suggestion of Archbishop Hubert, on that day there took place the consecration of the entire Northeast India to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Entrustment to Mary, Mother and Help of Christians.

Cardinal Stickler was elated by all that he saw and heard. Before his departure from Shillong, he expressed his deep gratitude to

Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario and the 17 commissions that had gone into the arduous work of preparation. He said, “I have a lot to tell the Holy Father when I meet him.”

As Metropolitan Archbishop and President of the Northeast India Regional Council of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop Hubert took keen interest in all matters relating to the Church in the region. He tried to ensure that no opportunities were lost to proclaim the Gospel to all people of goodwill. Today, looking back at these recent milestones of the Church in Northeast India, one can say that the efforts of the Archbishop to use these events as a means of evangelization have borne much fruit. The Church has grown and the faith of the people has been strengthened.

Seen from Close at Hand

It is a difficult task to make a pen-sketch of the personality of Archbishop Hubert. His achievements are too many to recount, but what makes the task even harder is his reticence to discuss anything about himself. Faced with the task of compiling a biographical stretch, I realized how little was written or spoken about him.

As I reflect on the life and times of Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario, I become more and more convinced that he was indeed a great leader of the Church. As the first Metropolitan of Northeast India, Archbishop Hubert has contributed immeasurably to the growth and development of the Church in our region. To my mind, he is truly great, because he allowed himself to be guided by the Lord and put at “the service of the Kingdom” all the natural gifts he had as a person – a very believable mixture of qualities of head and heart, abilities and shortcomings, the likeable and the not so likeable that did not distance him from the rest of us and place him on a pedestal beyond the reach of ordinary mortals.

Impressed by the enormous achievements of his life one may easily be tempted to classify him, at first, as a success-oriented achiever. But I am inclined to believe that more than success or activity he treasured the life of the spirit and the growth of the divine in himself and others. This is evident from the meticulous care he took to grow in union with the Lord through prayer, reflection and reading. The depth of his personal communion with the Lord gave a solid foundation to all his activity and achievements.

There is no denying that Archbishop Hubert was a man of profound faith in God. He possessed a deep spirit of prayer. He used to say, "There was a time when I found prayer very hard and difficult. But as I go on in life, through practice and persevering effort, I must say now prayer comes natural to me. I love and enjoy praying." The Lord's presence was something very tangible and real to him. Archbishop T. Resto vouches for the fact that Archbishop Hubert's devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary Help of Christians was limitless. He loved to name the many churches he had helped to build under various titles of Jesus and of the Blessed Virgin. In all his tours and journeys, he always kept a rosary in his hands and could be seen praying it regularly. When stonewalled by some difficulty in the Archdiocese, he would make a novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus or to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and then confer with his trusted consulters to make sure that his decisions and follow-up actions were on the right track. Similarly, he was fond of saying, "Pull the beard of St. Joseph and he will help us." The oft quoted proverb "As we live so we die" is so very true of Archbishop Hubert. He died praying. During his last days when I spent several hours with him in the hospital, I used to wonder how he found the strength to pray even when his life was at its lowest ebb and his body wracking with pain.

The Eucharist was the centre of his life as it is of the Church: “The most Blessed Eucharist contains the Church’s entire spiritual wealth, that is, Christ Himself... the Eucharist is the source and apex of the whole work of preaching the Gospel... Thus the Eucharistic action is the very heartbeat of the congregation of the faithful...” (PO 6). In his last days at the hospital, when the celebration of the Eucharist was becoming physically an arduous task, he would, often with the help of those assisting at his sick bed, celebrate the Eucharist with great devotion and unction.

As evangelization was the fulcrum of his innumerable activities, Jesus Christ was the focal point of his life-project. Jesus Christ is, “the Alpha and the Omega, who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty” (Rev. 1:8). Jesus Christ “who is before all things and in whom all things hold together” (Col 1:17). Jesus Christ, “in whom we move and live and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

There is a French proverb which goes thus: “God often visits us – but most of the time we are not at home.” The Archbishop was at home with the Lord. His deep faith enabled him to perceive that all things happen according to the design of God and that God’s power is ever at work in us. We know that in everything God works for good for those who love him... (Rom 8:28). Believing strongly in God’s love, he radiated this love all around him. “How precious, O God is your constant love... You let us drink from the river of your goodness. You are the source of all life, and because of your light, we see light” (Ps 36:7-9).

Another salient feature of Archbishop Hubert’s life was his detachment and self-abnegation. He was frugal, abstemious, mortified, and noted for his partan simplicity of life. These qualities were abundantly manifested especially in his village tours when he put up

with inconveniences of every kind. He toured his diocese in the rugged comfort of a jeep and seldom in the luxury of a car. During his visit to Lourdes, in January 1989, he had no overcoat, no muffler nor gloves. His hands were chapped, yet he made no complaints. At Lourdes, he spent most of the day in the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament while the rest of the group went sight-seeing. He was feeling indisposed during the symposium on Don Bosco at the Salesian Generalate; but no one knew of this till he was well again on 31st January.

His detachment from his family members and relatives was extraordinary. He showed great reluctance to discuss or reveal personal family matters. For example, when his elder sister, Sr. Stella D’Rosario FMM (Franciscan Missionary of Mary) died of cancer in December 1993, at the age of 84, at Coimbatore, the Sister Provincial tried repeatedly to get him to go and perform the last rites. The Archbishop wouldn’t think of it. His elder sister, Irene, and his younger sister Muriel, both spinsters, live in Surrey, Addiscombe, near Croydon airport, England. Irene is a retired nurse, and Muriel a retired teacher. They used to write frequent, loving letters to their “beloved Hubert” ceaselessly complaining that he was not writing to them often enough. He rarely visited his youngest sister, Mrs. Dorothy Birch who lives at Coonoor, Tamil Nadu. Was he totally forgetful of his dear ones? Perhaps, he preferred to consider them as part of his past that he had once willingly given up. On the basis of such heroic personal example of detachment, he could advise with authority that undue attachment to one’s dear ones is detrimental to the apostolate.

A thorough and meticulous planner, he was a tireless and indefatigable worker. It is reported that when the wife of the well-known Hindi author Premchand, remonstrated with him about working too hard, in spite of failing health, Premchand replied, “The duty of the

lamp is to spread light...so long as there is oil and wick in it, it will go on doing its duty. And when the oil runs out, it will go out.” This was also the case with Archbishop Hubert. Sr. Mary John Bosco RNDM, who knew the Archbishop closely for many years, is emphatic, “I do not think he wasted one minute of his working hours...” Bishop Abraham of Kohima would go to the point of saying that he was too hard on himself and over-worked himself to death.

Alert in mind and sharp of wit, Archbishop Hubert was an astute student of people and events. He was an avid reader. Anyone entering his office would not fail to be impressed by the volumes of books stacked neatly on the shelves. Normally, his mornings were fully engaged in official correspondence and receiving visitors, priests, religious and others. In the evening, after finishing his correspondence and other works, he would switch on to reading. At night in his office the lights would be off by 9.00 pm But one could see from outside that the table lamp in his bedroom would be on upto 11.00 pm He would be absorbed in books for nearly two hours before he retired for the night. He never tired of inculcating in his seminarians and priests this healthy habit of reading wholesome books of spiritual and other nature. It was his conviction that this would go a long way in developing depth and maturity, and make our preaching more effective. For all his eagerness to get the latest on theology, science and world affairs, the Archbishop was unrelentingly suspicious of whatever posed as modern and different. He stuck to whatever was time-tested and left “modern and exciting” things to others to experiment with.

Persons in positions of authority are often subject to criticism, not necessarily because they have more faults than others, but often because they are more under the public gaze than others. That he did have his share of human frailties was quite evident to those who came in

contact with him. I am inclined to believe that by temperament, he was somewhat task-oriented rather than person-oriented. This approach tended to make him concentrate more on the work to be done and less on the person doing it. He sought perfection in whatever he did and also expected and demanded the same from others. In the process some got hurt by what they perceived as a lack of sensitivity on the part of the Prelate.

He would be concerned more often, with what he considered were the most essential things in life: spreading of the Kingdom of God, the extension of the Church, the accuracy of the handed-down dogma, moral uprightness and the like. He insisted on decorum in sacred places and services and did not hesitate to show his displeasure whenever these were overlooked.

Those who expected from him a kind word, a warm handshake or an affectionate smile were often disappointed. He was painfully aware that he was not, by nature, and upbringing, an effusive person. As he himself confided, he strove to be more warm-hearted but met with less success than he would have liked to be. He attributed his aloofness and lack of warmth to his early upbringing. He used to say that as his mother had died when he was very young; his character was moulded and influenced more by his father who was a strict disciplinarian. These human frailties show, more than anything else, that Archbishop Hubert was human like any one of us and yet being docile to the plan of God he was able to accomplish much for God and His people.

“Father into Your Hands”

In the morning of 13 August 1994 Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario went for Holy Mass to Madonna Convent. He was looking extremely ill. After breakfast, the Sisters tried to dissuade him from

taking class that day. His reply was: "If I do not die working, I shall die doing nothing." He took the class for the novices. That was his last class. That evening he was admitted to Nazareth Hospital.

Resilience of spirit and patience in suffering were the warp and woof of Archbishop Hubert's faith. He believed with George MacDonald, "Afflictions are but the shadows of God's wings". "What are our sufferings," he would say, "in comparison with those of Our Lord. I have learned to embrace sufferings and live with them to make reparation for my sins and those of my dear people." The most searing pains did not rattle him, "My body is full of needle pricks. There is hardly any place left. But Jesus suffered much more." When he celebrated Mass in the hospital on Thursday 18 August, he was very weak. His body shook, and he shivered uncontrollably. But he didn't skip the little homily. He talked on the inevitability and significance of suffering for a Christian and a religious.

Nettled by discomfort, many abandon prayer when in pain. It was not so with Archbishop Hubert. Many prayers came easily to him. The prayer of Cardinal Newman was a favourite. "Dear Jesus, help me to spread your fragrance wherever I go. Shine through me and be so in me... let them look up and see no longer me but only Jesus." St. Francis of Assisi's prayer was another: "Lord make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love... it is in dying we are born to eternal life." The rosary was his constant companion even in the hospital. He would tell those around him, "Do not pray for me, pray for the diocese, the priests, the religious, the people..." When he was too weak and weary, he would say, "Now you say the rosary for me." He would often break into short intercessory prayers which seemed to inject solace and strength into him. "My Lord and My God, I thank you. My Lord and My God, pardon me my sins...*Ko Maria, to iarap*

ia nga ha ka por ka jingiäp jong nga (Oh Mary, assist me at the hour of my death).”

Even in his bed of agony, the Archbishop was preoccupied with his mission. He even continued to transact business up to a few days before his death. “I am old now,” he would say, “I am sick. There is still a lot of work to be done... you, please continue my work.” He was naturally full of concern for the Visitation Sisters. He would tell them: “Be simple and live simple...be united...live according to your charism and help others. Be with the poor... work for vocations... love Jesus and Mary... Imitate Don Bosco.”

On Sunday, 21 August, Archbishop Hubert suddenly started having severe rigours and was thrown into convulsions. He was highly febrile, but the general condition seemed to improve slightly the next three days. Fr. Dominic Jala, the then Rector of Don Bosco, Shillong, faxed messages to the Bishops of the Northeast India informing them the serious condition of the Archbishop. Earlier in the year when he was admitted in Nazareth on 21 February, his 75th birthday, and was critically ill, the Bishops had come to visit him. The Bishops visited him again at other times. Many of the priests and religious paid visits to him. The Nazareth Hospital took great care of the Archbishop. Two sisters were assigned on special duty round the clock. The sisters, doctors, nurses and the entire hospital staff mustered all possible resources on behalf of the ailing prelate. The VSDB sisters surrounded him with much love and care. Prominent Church leaders, clergy and laity, dropped in to the hospital. As the Archbishop’s condition was critical, many of the faithful were encouraged not to visit him. The Brothers of Oriens Theological College, Sacred Heart Theological College and Christ King College assisted him assiduously.

On Monday, 22 August, when Sr. Cecilia Sad, President of the VSDBs went to see him, he asked her for a report on the Balat Convent which had been inaugurated the previous day. He was all counsel and exhortation even on practical matters, "Tell the Sisters to drink boiled water...red tea...to use mosquito net..." In one of those moments, Sr. Mary Paul recalls, how he prayed in a semiconscious state. "Lord help me... Lord, I offer the Archdiocese into your hands. Please take care of all the people of this diocese...Please take care of all the priests and religious..."

After prolonged hospitalization, when he realized that the time had come for his eternal reward, he accepted it gracefully. He was administered the Sacrament of the Sick by Bishop T. Resto and other priests.

On Monday, 29 August, at 11.00 am the Archbishop had a seizure. Around the same time, Bro. Castellino Fernandes was admitted to the hospital. Bro. Castellino's condition turned extremely critical and in spite of the best efforts of the hospital staff, he succumbed to a massive cardiac arrest and returned to his Lord. He had been closely associated with the Archbishop as his secretary for 16 years. After the death of Bro. Castellino, I was going down to the ground floor of the hospital in the company of Dr. Sethi, when a sudden summons made us return to the bedside of the Archbishop. At 1.30 pm, the Archbishop went into convulsions. The timely medical intervention enabled the Archbishop to tide over the crisis.

On Tuesday, 30 August, in the morning there was still response in the Archbishop to painful stimuli. At 2.30 pm his response to painful stimuli became minimal. At 8.15 pm his condition further deteriorated. At 8.30 pm His Grace the Most Rev. Hubert D'Rosario was called by the Lord to be with him forever.

During his life on earth, Archbishop Hubert had said, "When I die, sing for me *Jesu Dulcis Memoria!*" Those of us who were by his deathbed sang his favourite hymn. But we couldn't proceed far as most of us broke down in tears.

Laid to Rest

As word spread about the Archbishop's passing away, a pall of gloom descended on the hospital. Soon, many priests, religious and others arrived. After the body was prepared, it was taken in a sober procession to the Nazareth Convent Chapel where two concelebrated Holy Masses were offered. Then the body of the Archbishop was brought to the Archbishop's House. It was already 1.00 am

On the morning of Wednesday, 31 August, Holy Mass was offered at the Archbishop's House around his mortal remains. That day and the following two days, all roads in Shillong led to Archbishop's house. School children in unending lines of black, white, red, blue, and green came to pray in the Cathedral where the body of the late Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario was laid in state. People from all walks of life joined the children to pay their last respects to the departed pastor. Representatives of the state Government and various religious and secular organizations turned up in large numbers. The State Governor, Shri Madhukar Dighe sent a condolence message emphasizing the Archbishop's humane approach to the problems of the people. At 5.00 pm a Requiem Mass was offered in the Cathedral in the presence of a vast assembly of mourners. The body was then taken to Madonna Convent, Upper Shillong, where it was kept in the chapel for night-long vigil and prayer.

On Thursday, 1 September, at 7.00 am Holy Mass was celebrated at Madonna Convent, after which the mortal remains were taken back to the Cathedral. At 5.30 pm Archbishop Henry D'Souza

of Calcutta presided over another Eucharistic celebration attended by a large congregation. The Requiem Mass and funeral rites started at 1.30 pm the next day, Friday, 2 September, at a specially constructed pavilion adjacent to the Cathedral. State dignitaries from Meghalaya, and other Northeast India states, priests, religious and faithful from the nine dioceses of the region came in large numbers to pay their last respects to the departed Archbishop.

Glowing tributes were paid to the Late Archbishop by representatives of civil and ecclesiastical organizations. Archbishop George Zur, Apostolic Pronuncio, said: "Your good Archbishop, the shepherd of your souls, the builder of the Church in Shillong, imitated Christ in everything... he will remain in our memory with gratitude... I offer you the condolences of the Pope..." Bishop Joseph Mittathany of Imphal added: "In the death of Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario we have lost a great leader and guide... We thank you, dear Archbishop for your great love, concern for the Church, for the great testimony of your faith and inspiring leadership..." Fr. Sebastian Karotemprel, Jr. Administrator of the Diocese of Dibrugarh rightly observed: "In you the Church has lost a valuable leader, a dynamic missionary... you toured the length and breadth of your diocese, travelling long distances on foot." Bishop T. Resto Phanrang, Auxiliary Bishop of Shillong who had worked with him for over 25 years, said: "Dear Archbishop, we will miss you... Archbishop Hubert fulfilled the tasks of a shepherd and bishop according to the teachings of the Church."

Fr. Hilarius Lamare was the spokesman for the priests of the Archdiocese, "Beloved Father, we your priests bid you farewell. You loved us; you knew each one of us personally. What you have done will speak volumes through us, your priests. Do not forget us. You have been our Father. Continue to help us to do our work. Pray for

us. We wish you a happy journey home. We have only our love to give you.” Sr. Martha Masynting expressed the sentiments of the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco, “In your departure, a light has gone from us... We will stand united and try to live to the full your teachings.” Mr. J. D. Pohrmen, Dy. Chief Minister of Meghalaya, said: “On behalf of the Catholic laity and the Government of Meghalaya, I wish to thank our dear Archbishop. He took the Catholic laity into confidence. His death is a great loss for the Church and for the Northeast India region. He worked zealously for the uplift of the poor, for bringing the benefits of education and healthcare even to the remotest villages. In his death we have lost a great soldier of Christ. We cannot see your great smile now, but we know and believe you are smiling at us from heaven above.”

The Cathedral choir gave a soul-stirring rendering in Latin and Khasi of Archbishop Hubert’s favourite hymn, ‘Jesu Dulcis Memoria’:

*Jesu, dulcis memoria,
 Dans vera cordis gaudia:
 Sed super mel et omnia,
 Eius dulcis praesentia.
 Jisu, ko jingkyndaw bathiang
 Ia dohnud, Me pyndap da jingkyndaw;
 hynrei kham thiang ban ia ka ngap,
 ka long jingdon jong Me bad nga.
 (O Jesus, of memory dear and sweet,
 You fill with joy the hearts you meet:
 But sweeter than honey,
 Is your presence sweet and delicious).*

Local musicians played mournful melodies on traditional Khasi pipes. The Cathedral band played the last songs. The funeral cortege wended its sorrowful way to the Cathedral. The crowd looked on,

distraught and in all stillness. In the Cathedral, Archbishop Zur, the bishops, priests and some of the religious and faithful encircled the grave dug beside the altar of Mary Help of Christians. When he was alive, the Archbishop had said, "If I die in office, you bury me in the Cathedral close to Our Lady. If death takes me as a retired Archbishop, you can bury me in the Chapel of the Madonna convent." Now, his wish was being carried out.

As the coffin was being lowered into the grave, the Apostolic Pronuncio, Archbishop George Zur, prayed, "We commit his body to the earth from which it was made... we commend our brother Hubert to the Lord: may the Lord receive him into his peace and raise up his body on the last day." His Excellency, the Pronuncio, dropped a handful of mud on to the coffin in the grave. The others followed suit. The crowds choking with emotion milled and surged around the grave and put in their handfuls of earth. Mud kept filling up the grave until a mound was formed. Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario had been interred and laid to rest for eternity.

Epilogue

i) Sunday, 11 September, 1994

The nine days that followed the burial of Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario were hectic days as far as the Cathedral was concerned. When the prelate was hospitalized, his condition was so very critical that very few of the faithful had a chance to have a glimpse of him. It was as if they wanted now to make up for what they had missed. It was a tide that just couldn't be stemmed. They came at all hours during the day; they came to thank, to pray, just to be there. The people of Meghalaya have always been noted for their singular veneration of the dead. But the current crescendo of fervour exceeded all previous

records. The tomb of the Archbishop became a rallying point, almost a pilgrimage centre.

And now the ninth day had come. Archbishop Hubert had been fond of novenas. He had even organized a nine-year novena. Here now was the final novena. The tomb was bedecked with cards, flowers, bouquets and wreaths. Candles and incense sticks burned in blazing glory.

ii) Wednesday, 30 August 1995

The first death anniversary of Archbishop Hubert was another fitting tribute of love. The tomb in the Cathedral bedecked in polished granite and brass railings became the focal point of his flock gathered from far and near. The Cathedral was filled to capacity and the milling crowd overflowed into the Cathedral premises. The institutions and parishes of the town were asked not to come in large numbers in order to give preference to the faithful coming from the outlying parishes. Over ninety priests joined the concelebrated Eucharist presided over by Bishop Tarcisius Resto Phanrang, SDB.

3

A Teacher of Faith Par Excellence

Fr. Jose Varickasseril, SDB¹

Introduction

Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario was an extraordinary personality. With qualities of head and heart which were truly exceptional he offered leadership not only to the diocese of Dibrugarh and the Archdiocese of Guwahati-Shillong (later renamed as Shillong-Guwahati and now known as the Archdiocese of Shillong), but also to the entire Northeast India in his capacity as the chairman of the Regional Bishop’s Council. He was a pastor with a vision who carried out the mission entrusted to him with true dedication and commitment. His personal charisma, his sincerity of purpose and love for evangelization gave him an extraordinary moral ascendancy over people from all walks of life.

In this short article we intend to highlight only one aspect of this extraordinary prelate, namely, his reputation as a teacher beyond compare. He was not only keen on ensuring the numerical growth of the Catholic communities but he also wanted to offer Christian doctrine

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for their qualitative growth. Hence he made use of every opportunity possible to impart sound knowledge of faith that would make them into mature Christians.

Pastoral Letters

During the long years of his Episcopal ministry he addressed various groups at different moments. Unfortunately most of his talks, homilies, sermons, conferences, retreats, discourses etc., were not preserved. However many of his pastoral letters have been preserved. In preparing this article I am making use of the collection of pastoral letters of Archbishop Hubert edited by Fr. Vincent Kympat (now Bishop of Jowai) in 1995 to mark the first death anniversary of Archbishop D’Rosario². We would like to present briefly the contents of Archbishop Hubert’s pastoral letters in order to see the teacher that he was as well as his great preoccupation for the faith formation of the people entrusted to his pastoral care.

i) Pastoral Letter on the Church

On November 1, 1970, one year after he had taken charge as the Bishop of Shillong, Archbishop Hubert wrote a lengthy pastoral letter (running into 16 pages) on the Church. In this letter, he touches upon the following themes: the world today, the Church, Vatican II, the people of God, God is active in the Church, Baptism, the Pope, the Holy Mass, the Catholic priesthood, the Religious, participation at Mass, prayer, forgiveness of sins, conscience, love of neighbour, the catholic family, sacredness of life, Our Blessed Mother, the missionary obligation, the call to perfection, etc. While developing these various

2 Cf. Vincent Kympat (Ed.), *Ki jinghikai u Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario, S.D.B., D.D.*, Diocesan Catechetical Commission, Archbishop’s House, Shillong, 1995. This is a voluminous work running into pp xvi + 866. This article is based on the material contained in this volume.

themes Archbishop Hubert shows not only his love for the Church and his wide range of knowledge but also his conviction that catechesis is essential for building Christian communities. These are topics to which Archbishop returned during the course of his long episcopal ministry of twenty five years.

ii) Pastoral Letter on Sunday Obligation

A year after his letter on the Church, Archbishop wrote on the obligation to keep Sunday as a sacred day. The letter that he wrote on Nov 21, 1971 contains the following thoughts: the need for a day of rest, the Sabbath in the Old Testament, the day of rest and worship of God in the old dispensation, the Sabbath in the New Testament, the disciples of Jesus and the Sabbath, St. Paul and the Sabbath, the day of the Lord, the return of Jesus, the Church in the early centuries, the day of the resurrection in the nascent Church, teachings of prominent men on the day of the Lord, the day of worship in the early decades of the Church, the day of rest in the infant church, the church today, listening to the Word of God, courageous witnessing of one's faith, participation in the Eucharist, re-enacting the death of Jesus on Calvary through the Mass, fraternal life through the breaking of the bread, the Holy Communion, obligations arising from the celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday, the rule imposing rest on the day of the Lord, the martyrs of the Eucharist, the magisterial teachings of recent Popes.

The manner in which the Archbishop expatiates on the Sunday obligation shows his spiritual depth. His letter is profound and practical at the same time. He intersperses his writings with episodes and anecdotes. In conveying his thoughts he exhibits his knowledge of Scripture and the Traditions of the Church.

iii) Pastoral Letter on the Golden Jubilee of the Salesians in Northeast India

On January 31, 1972, Archbishop wrote a rather long Pastoral Letter on the history of the Church in Northeast India. In 34 pages he presented in a concise manner the growth of the Church in this region. In presenting the history of the Church he draws the attention of his readers to the following: the earliest missionaries in Assam, the Salvatorian missionaries, the first Prefect Apostolic of the region, the departure (return) of the Salvatorian missionaries to Germany, the contribution of the Jesuits, the Salesians of Don Bosco taking charge of the Assam Mission as it was called, further growth (the creation of the diocese of Shillong in 1934, the transfer of Bishop Louis Mathias to Madras and the appointment of Bishop Stephen Ferrando to Shillong, the spread of the Catholic faith in various places such as new villages in the Khasi Hills, Garo Hills, Mikir Hills, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram and Bhutan.

The Archbishop also highlighted the contribution of several valiant missionaries (Archbishop Louis Mathias, Fr. C. Vendrame, Fr. L. Piasecki, Fr. F. Matta, Fr. Tome, Fr. Elias Hopewell, Fr. L. Ravalico, and Fr. Costa, etc.). He also brought to limelight the contribution made by several prominent catechists (Dominik Muni Mawlot, Cyprian Haïong, Stephen Khonglah, Leo from Shella, Mikhael Khain, Idon, Stephen Pangche, Peter Shem Momin, Dajang Nongbak Sangma). He concluded his letter thanking God for the blessings the regions obtained through the Salesians of Don Bosco.

The grateful heart of the Archbishop towards the contribution made by valiant Salesian missionaries cannot leave the readers unmoved. He appreciated deeply the contribution made by the lay catechists in the far-flung areas of the Archdiocese. He quotes from Pope John XXIII's

encyclical *Princeps Pastorum* to sing the praises of the catechists who brought the faith to thousands of people.

iv) Pastoral Letter on the Word of God

This Pastoral Letter running into about 50 pages is one of the most practical and at the same time deeply pastoral of all his letters. It was written on November 26, 1972. He bases his teaching on the *magisterium* of the Church and on Vatican II in particular. He points out the importance of the word of God by issuing the text of the Bible and the place the Word of God should occupy in the life of the Christian.

Among the more important topics that he deals with when presenting the place that the word of God should occupy in the life of the Christian are: Appreciating God's word, the need to proclaim the word, the meaning of the Bible and Sacred Scripture, the divisions of the books of the Bible, the meaning of the word of God, the word of God in History, inspiration in the Bible, the canon of the Bible, hermeneutics and exegesis, the Old Testament and the New Testament, the word of God in the Church and in the life of the Christian, devotional reading of the Sacred Scripture, some practical suggestions in order to educate the faithful to a greater appreciation of the word of God.

v) Pastoral Letter on the Cathedral Church of Shillong

On August 5, 1973, the Archbishop wrote a letter giving the history of the construction of the Cathedral of Mary Help of Christian in Shillong. He took the occasion to give several details on God's house and on the temple as presented by various sacred authors of the Old Testament. He goes on to speak of the temple in the New Testament. He then speaks of the four basilicas of Rome. The Archbishop writes about the consecration of the Cathedral. He concludes his letter

inviting everyone to remember in a particular manner once a year the consecration and dedication of the Cathedral.

In this letter the Archbishop shows his knowledge of history as well as his keen liturgical sense. He made use of every opportunity in order to establish a community that did not lag behind in any other aspects of Christian life.

vi) Pastoral Letter on the Need to Support and Sustain the Church

In September 1973, Archbishop Hubert wrote this Pastoral Letter in order to prepare the young Church of the region to stand on her own feet. He deals with the offering in the Old and New Testament. He goes on to discuss the present laws regarding contributions that the faithful are invited to make. The Archbishop convincingly argues that the Church in this Archdiocese is a hundred years old, and therefore we need to think of ways and means of supporting the needs of the Church from within. He concludes the letter saying that all are collectively responsible to work towards creating a self-supporting Church. Those who truly love one's religion and faith will learn to contribute generously. The words of Archbishop did not fall on deaf ears for the church in this region is becoming ever conscious of its obligation to generate the needed financial resources for her various pastoral activities and apostolic ventures.

vii) Pastoral Letter on the Sacrament of Baptism

On November 25, 1973, Archbishop wrote a Pastoral Letter on the Sacrament of Baptism. He deals with the following aspect in this letter: what does it mean to be a Christian, baptism as the first great sacrament, the real significance of baptism, the prefiguring of baptism in the Old Testament, the baptism of Jesus, various forms and

symbols used in baptism, a brief history of the development of the rite of baptism, the rite of baptism, the new rite of baptism, the baptism of children, the baptism of grown-ups and the practice of catechumenate.

The letter is dotted with biblical citations. The Archbishop offers to the readers the theological and historical aspects of the sacrament in a manner that all can grasp. He brings to the attention of the readers the need to prepare for baptism and the obligations that one is taking upon himself/herself on receiving baptism. This letter is a witness to his catechetical sensibility as well as the type of pastor that he was.

viii) Pastoral Letter on the Sacrament of Matrimony

On November 24, 1974, the Archbishop wrote a pastoral letter on the sacrament of marriage. As a true pastor the Archbishop had gone the length and breadth of the Archdiocese. He noticed the need to form good Christian families to give solidity to the Church. Hence he wrote his pastoral letter on the sacrament of marriage. He placed before the leaders as well as the faithful the following areas for reflection and study: marriage in the plan of God, God as the originator of the sacrament of marriage, the indissolubility of marriage, the sanctity of marriage, God is love, marriage in the Old Testament, the fall of man, the covenant, marriage in the New Testament, the teachings of St. Paul on marriage, divorce, the consistent and unchanging teach of the Church on marriage, mixed marriage, preparation for marriage (immediate and remote), promiscuity and premarital sex, marriage and virginity, factors contributing to break-up of marriage, the rite of marriage, family as God's gift, the Christian family, family and vocation, widower and widow, family as the gate-way to heaven, education of children, the mother and father as teachers, honouring the parents, obligation to help poorer families, dangers facing the family, on abortion, the feast of the Holy Family.

The reader notices here the wide range of topics that Archbishop Hubert deals within discussing family and marriage. He has based his teaching on the scriptures and the long standing tradition of the Church. He offers clear guidelines on this all important theme in order to have a healthy Church in the region.

ix) Pastoral Letter on the Sacrament of Confirmation

On November 25, 1975, Archbishop Hubert sent to the clergy, religious and faithful his letter on the sacrament of confirmation. In the letter he spoke about the Spirit as presented in the Old and New Testament. He highlighted what Jesus had said and taught about the person of the Holy Spirit. He drew the attention of the readers to what Luke narrated in the text of the Acts of the Apostles and about the Pentecost in particular.

He gives quite a detailed presentation of what the Fathers of the Church have to say about the Holy Spirit in the first five centuries. He summarizes well the teachings of various councils and several prominent Popes and theologians down the centuries. He explains the rite of the conferring of the sacrament of confirmation. Then he discusses the implication of this sacrament in the life of the Christian. Of particular benefit is the section on the gifts and fruits of the Spirit as well as the obligations of the Christians towards the Spirit who is dwelling in his heart. Details are given on the appropriate age required to receive profitably this sacrament. He also reminds the Christian community of the need to have apostles who will bear witness to the faith. He also made references to the Synod of Bishops held in October 1974 which has as its main theme the proclamation of the Gospel and sharing of the faith. There is no doubt that the Archbishop had gone into the kernel of the matter when explaining the sacrament of confirmation.

x) Pastoral Letter on Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick

This letter written on November 21, 1976 is one of the longest of his letters. It is about 87 pages. He begins with the sacrament of reconciliation. He discusses at length about sin, the destruction caused by sin, the healing brought about by the sacrament of confession. The Archbishop also outlines the history of the sacrament of reconciliation. He narrates about the essentials and foundation of reconciliation, the integral element of this sacrament, the qualities of a good confession and mortification. He invites the faithful to approach frequently this sacrament. He also speaks about the seal of confession with moving examples from the history of the Church. He has also dealt with the new rite of the sacrament of reconciliation.

The Archbishop also instructs the faithful about different types of confession (individual confession and general absolution in certain special situations with the permission of the bishop). He concludes by quoting Pope Paul VI who says that frequent confession is the great fountain of holiness, peace and happiness (Apostolic exhortation of Paul VI on Christian Joy).

The Archbishop also discusses the pastoral care of the sick particularly by anointing of the sick and administering the sacrament of the Eucharist (*Viaticum*). He presents Jesus as the healer. He gives the magisterial teachings on this sacrament. He reminds the readers of the passion and suffering of Jesus and the suffering of man in the mystery of salvation.

The Archbishop writes with clarity on the rite of the anointing and the fruits that one derives from this sacrament. Details on the manner of administering this sacrament at the moment of death are also mentioned in the letter. He concludes the letter with a note on the pastoral care of the sick.

With this pastoral letter on these two sacraments the Archbishop instructs both the priests and the faithful. The content of the letter shows that the Archbishop was up-to-date with the latest teachings of the Church on liturgical and sacramental matters. A learned bishop can set the model for the priests in particular for the role that they as ministers of the Church have to play in bringing people to God through the proper frequenting of the sacrament of reconciliation and the anointing of the sick.

xi) Pastoral Letter on the Eucharist

On November 20th, 1977, the Archbishop wrote a 115 pages-long letter on the Eucharist. He has presented the Eucharist under ten main headings: Eucharist and the history of salvation, Eucharist as Sacrifice, the new rite of the Mass (where he explains the entire Mass part by part), the celebration of the Eucharist (where he speaks about concelebration, individual celebration of the Mass, the place for the celebration, the need to avoid improvisation, the servers for the Mass, the sacred vessels and objects needed for the Mass, etc.), the preciousness and fruits of the Mass, the Eucharist as food and nourishment, the Holy Communion (about the reception of communion several times, the ministers of communion), the worship of the Eucharist, the Eucharist in the life of the people of God, the catechesis on the Holy Eucharist.

The details that he has gone into are astonishing. The Archbishop has studied in depth the biblical, theological, liturgical, canonical, historical, sacramental, pastoral and spiritual aspects of the Eucharist. He shares the fruit of his study with the priests, religious, and the faithful so that a Eucharistic community can be formed through a thorough catechesis on the meaning of the Eucharist in the life of a Christian.

xii) Pastoral Letter on Priesthood and Religious Life

In 1978, Archbishop wrote on these two topics which are vital for establishing strong and healthy Christian communities. He starts off with the call of God in the Old Testament. He then presents how Jesus called the twelve. The New Testament emphasis on God's initiative in a call is well set forth by the Archbishop. The call of God to various forms of life and ministry are explained.

Archbishop also discusses the common priesthood of all Christians. Then he presents the specific choice that God makes of a certain individuals to serve as his priests and ministers. An important section is the discussion on the signs of Catholic priesthood.

There is a description of the role of bishops, the college of bishops, the collegiality of the Pope and the bishops, the priests, the deacons, the duties of the ordained ministers, the ordination and the new rite of ordination of bishops, priests and deacons, the effects of priestly ordination, the celibacy of the priest.

The Archbishop also gives details on the ministries of lector and acolyte which are steps in the formation of candidates leading towards their ordination to the priesthood.

In this letter he quotes abundantly the scriptures and the church documents and in a particular manner the teachings of Pope Paul VI given on various occasions. He faithfully transmits what the Church has got to say on the preparation, role and ministry of those set aside to represent God among his people.

The Archbishop also presented his concern for the religious. He traces in detail the history of religious life and the meaning of the call to consecrated life. He has offered the gospel foundations for religious life. The Archbishop also discusses the greatness of this gift that God makes to certain individuals. Different types of

religious life (the vocation to be a brother/sister, contemplatives, the call to be a missionary etc.) are highlighted. He also shares his reflections on the new rite of first religious profession as well as perpetual profession.

The need to look for and nurture vocation along with the obligations that parents and leaders of Christian communities as well as the spiritual directors have in this regard is given due attention. The Archbishop also offers instructions on how to foster vocations through prayer and initiatives undertaken by apostolic groups. Before concluding his letter he also offers some statistics about various religious congregations that are in the Archdiocese. This particular detail also shows his great interest in promoting indigenous vocations.

This letter on priesthood and the call to consecrated life shows values and priorities that are uppermost in the Archbishop's heart. He not only acknowledges the crucial and indispensable role that they play in planting the Church but he also encourages everyone in the Archdiocese to make every effort possible to promote holy vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

xiii) Pastoral Letter on the Missionary Command to Proclaim the Gospel

On September 25, 1979, Archbishop wrote on the theme that was very dear to his heart, namely, the proclamation of the Gospel. The point of departure for his letter was Mt 28:16-20 (Mk 16:15-20). He explained the meaning of the great commission. He proceeded to speak on how the Church down the centuries carried out the final wish of Jesus. He presented the teachings of several Popes in this regard (Benedict XV, Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI).

He spoke of the obligation of the faithful, the priests and the bishops to proclaim the Gospel. He also insisted on the irreplaceable role of the witness of life to be effective in the work of evangelization.

Archbishop reiterated the teachings of Vatican II to bishops, priests and the faithful on their obligation to proclaim the Gospel. He also presented the teachings given by the synod of bishops (1974) on this same theme.

The Archbishop also traced the progress of the Gospel down the centuries. One interesting section in his letter is the presentation of the milestones in the history of the Church in India in this regard. He also gave a short history of the Church in Northeast India. He also gave an analysis of the situation of the Church in the region. A very practical and useful section is the tips that he gives on how to proclaim the Gospel.

The Archbishop presented in his letter several reflections based on Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. He concluded by inviting everyone to intensify the efforts at evangelization during the coming decade when preparing for the centenary of the arrival of the Salvatorian missionaries in Northeast India.

Archbishop Hubert was a learned man who had assimilated the teachings of the Church. His love for the Church found expression in his desire to get everyone involved in the spread of the Gospel. This letter of his is but one of the examples of his great missionary heart.

xiv) Pastoral Letter on the Need to Have Self-sufficient Parishes

On January 31, 1984 (in the fourth year of preparation for the centenary of the Church in Northeast India),³ the Archbishop wrote a

³ The decade (1980-1990) did not have a yearly pastoral letter from Archbishop Hubert as he was doing earlier. This was due to the fact that all the bishops of the region (of Northeast India) were writing a collective letter meant for the whole of

short letter on the need to have self-sufficient parishes. He also backed up his invitation to the faithful to have self-sufficient parishes by quoting the scriptures and the canon law. He communicated the decision arrived at by the priests of the diocese along with the Archbishop in this regard.

In this short letter he showed his concern to model the communities in the Archdiocese on the early Christian community described in the Acts of the Apostles. No aspect of the Christian life escaped the attention of the Archbishop who was a true teacher and pastor.

xv) Pastoral Letter on Prayer

In 1991, soon after the centenary celebrations, Archbishop Hubert wrote a letter on prayer which was thoroughly biblical. He began his letter indicating the importance of prayer for the Christian. Then he spoke of the importance given to prayer in the community of Israel and mentioned men who excelled in prayer. He spoke of personal prayer, community prayer and family prayer.

Archbishop described the intense prayer life of Jesus as well as his teachings on prayer. He quoted from various sections of the New Testament to make the Christian community grasp the importance of prayer. He highlighted in particular the prayer life of Apostle Paul and our Blessed Mother. He also showed that it is when we live a life grounded in prayer that the Church takes roots in a place. He went on to speak of the prayer life of Church leaders, seminarians, religious, the reception of sacraments and the Eucharist in particular, the divine

Northeast India to mark the centenary of the arrival of the Salvatorian missionaries to this region. In his capacity as the chairman of the Episcopal conference of Northeast India, Archbishop did have a major role to play in the drafting of the pastoral letters during the nine-year long novena of preparation to keep the centenary of the arrival of the faith in Northeast India. However, it is beyond the scope of this article to comment on all these letters that were prepared by the team of bishops.

office, meditation, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, charismatic prayer, popular devotions, union with God, etc.

With this letter, Archbishop showed the importance of having quality Christians for whom God is at the centre of their lives. Prayer was to be the most important expression of this dimension of Christian life.

xvi) Pastoral Letter on Proclamation of the Gospel in Preparation for the Year 2000

On January 1, 1992, Archbishop spoke again on the theme of proclamation. He introduced his letter by recalling certain important events which had taken place in the Archdiocese (the visit of Pope John Paul II to Shillong, the CBCI meeting held in Shillong, the Episcopal ordination of Bishop Resto, the nine year long preparation that was held in the entire Northeast India in view of the centenary celebrations, the numerical increase of the Christian community, the publication of the encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio* of John Paul II).

Archbishop highlighted several features of John Paul's II's *Redemptoris Missio* in order to drive home the importance of proclaiming the Gospel. He also emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit in the work of proclamation and evangelization of peoples. It is not merely a human endeavour; it is God's work in which man has to play an irreplaceable role. Baptism is an essential and indispensable element of proclamation and it was to be administered at the moment of decision. He concluded his letter drawing the attention of everyone to the importance of witnessing as well as the need for a systematic and methodic catechesis for the Christian communities.

Archbishop Hubert was not one who would rest on his laurels after the centenary celebrations. He continued his teaching ministry.

In season and out of season he continued to exhort, teach, inspire and put enthusiasm into everyone in the Archdiocese.

xvii) Pastoral Letter on Christian Life of Perfection and Practice of Virtue

On February 24, 1993, the Archbishop wrote on the call to perfection and the need for cultivating virtues which would be the path to follow in order to attain to this goal. He has offered a beautiful synthesis of different types of virtues. He also expatiated on the virtue of religion and the sins against religion (faith).

In this letter the Archbishop comes across as a moral theologian who wants to inculcate in his community the various virtues which are indeed the true decoration of an authentic Christian.

xviii) Pastoral Letter on Christian Family

On February 16, 1994, Archbishop Hubert returned to the theme of the Christian family. On an earlier occasion when writing about the sacrament of marriage, he had spoken much on the theme of the Christian family.

Archbishop based his catechesis mostly on the scripture and the encyclical letter of Pope John Paul II (*Familiaris Consortio*). The UN had declared 1994 as the year of the family. That was an additional reason for Archbishop Hubert to present his thoughts on the family. He spoke of marriage as at the heart of the family. He communicated the authentic teachings of the Church on this theme. He insisted on the need to have good marriages.

The Archbishop spoke of the core of the family in the design of the creator. He spoke of the need for practice of virtues and good behaviour in order to render beauty to the Christian home. He offered also practical guidelines for parents and children highlighting in a special

manner the centrality of love. In the mind of the Archbishop, the Trinity as well as the Holy Family at Nazareth are to serve as inspiration for the Christian family. The family is the domestic church where children who are growing up learn the fundamentals of religion. The parents are the first teachers and their role cannot be replaced.

Archbishop Hubert also touched upon the school which is an indispensable educational institution. He mentions in the letter several perils that the family is facing in the present day world. He has offered suggestions for families that find themselves in difficult circumstances. He drew the attention of his readers to providing vocations from the Christian families as well as their responsibility in the field of evangelization.

Archbishop had toured widely in the various parishes and centres and villages of the Archdiocese. Hence he was able to offer timely guidelines on crucial areas related to Christian life.

Conclusion

Archbishop Hubert has offered food for thought for leaders of communities as well as for the faithful at large through his well-written letters. The topics have been chosen with pastoral insight and great care. His style of writing shows that he was an erudite person. In his letter he comes across to the readers as a person really conversant with the guidelines given by the Church's *Magisterium*. His knowledge of the scriptures and familiarity with the Church law and Church history give depth to his expatiation of the subject matter. He was able to lead since he found time to read. He taught and wrote prolifically so that faith would take deep roots in the newly established Christian communities of his Archdiocese as well as the whole of North-eastern region. The praise that St. Paul has given to one of his collaborators

(with all probability to St. Luke), can be given to Archbishop Hubert due to the letters that he wrote: “the brother whose fame in the things of the Gospel has gone through all the churches” (2 Cor 8:18).

There is no doubt that Archbishop Hubert was a multi-faceted personality who excelled in several fields. Among his many qualities one of the foremost is that of a teacher. It will be difficult to supersede him in his capacity and dedication as a teacher of faith. With Apostle Paul, Archbishop Hubert can say, “Him [Jesus] we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ (Col 1:28).

4

A Man of Faith and Prayer

Fr. Jose Nadackal, SDB¹

Introduction

Every once in a while God, in His infinite wisdom, sends into our midst men and women of exceptional calibre and capacity. They come as God's own response and solution to particular needs and wants within His Church and the world in general – persons possessing great personal integrity of character, uncommon courage, great vision and foresight, singleness of purpose and total commitment to the task at hand. The history of the Church and the world at large is replete with the commendable lives of many such eminent men and women who, it appears, came onto the world scene to contribute their share of God's own goodness to humanity at large.

Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario, SDB was certainly one such man of God who arrived on the Church-scene in Northeast India at a moment in its history when the Church required a leader and guide to take over its reins and to channel its growth and development along the right direction in order that the Church and its activities may benefit

¹ Fr. Jose Nadackal, SDB, was personal secretary to Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario for several years. He now works at Don Bosco Rongkhon, Tura.

everyone who came into contact with it. He was a man of extraordinary missionary zeal and vision for the cause of God and for the furthering of His kingdom here on earth. A man of intense personal convictions and totally committed to seeing these convictions realized, he spent himself unsparingly for the cause of spreading the name of Christ and the values of God's kingdom here on earth.

At the outset, I want to state that the sources for what I put down in writing here are nothing other than what I have come to know personally from the Archbishop during my frequent contacts with him during the years I was with him as his secretary. This being so, the reader will not find in these pages anything scholarly or professional. Neither do I have any documents that can be offered as proof to corroborate and confirm the veracity of what I write here.

i) A Pastor among his Flock

Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario is today remembered as the man, the moving force behind the very great spurt of growth and development in the area of evangelization and catechesis in the Archdiocese of Shillong and in Northeast India in general. The period of time between the years 1970 and 1995 can certainly be looked upon as the time during which great growth and expansion of the Catholic Church in this area was effected. The increase both in the number of believers and the consequent opening of many new parishes and sub-stations testify to this fact. The arrival on the church-scene of a large number of Religious, men and women, belonging to diverse religious families, and the commitment and enthusiasm with which they plunged themselves into the work at hand contributed to enhance the presence of the Church here and added to its missionary dynamism.

The man behind this tremendous growth of the Church and its missionary activity is none other than Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario. He achieved this by the example of his own life, first and foremost – a life of missionary dynamism and courage as well as by his untiring insistence with his clergy and religious to be aware of and to live out their role as missionaries and evangelizers.

ii) A Frontline Missionary

As he began his ministry as pastor of the Church in the Archdiocese, the Archbishop became more and more convinced of the great effectiveness of the apostolate of village-visiting and village-evangelization, of taking the good news of the Gospel to people in their own home and village settings. Because of his deep-rooted conviction that a priest and missionary and his/her evangelical message is welcomed and accepted much better by people in their home environment, the Archbishop made himself a tireless touring and visiting missionary. He was not satisfied with merely conducting church services in parish centres alone. As the priests in the Archdiocese can testify, he wanted that they arranged for him programmes in all the villages of the parishes, even if this meant that he would have to walk long distances. On arriving at a parish or village, the Archbishop would immediately make himself available to hear confessions and to offer the other sacraments when necessary. And when the service was over, he would make it a point to be there to meet and talk with the village folk, to listen to their simple conversation, to bless their children and in general, to spend some moments in their company, listening to their woes and worries, to understand and appreciate their day-to-day lives and to offer a word of comfort!

On several occasions I met the Archbishop returning late on Sunday evenings from village visits. He was tired; and there were also

occasions when he was certainly not in form as could be gathered from his poor physical condition. But he never allowed his health and the many ailments that were part of his life to come in the way of his missionary enthusiasm. Even though tired and worn out on his return, he always looked happy, relaxed and fulfilled. And all that took place in the parish and village that day would normally be shared with us during conversation at supper that night or during the “Goodnight” talk that followed it.

However, as he once confided to me, making himself accepted and loved was a very hard and uphill task, by both the clergy and faithful. This was the case in particular when he first arrived in Shillong soon after his appointment as Archbishop of Shillong-Guwahati. During his first months and years in office, he felt that Catholics in out-station parishes he visited, looked at him as an outsider and a stranger, and naturally would not come close. He then decided that he would not allow himself to remain a stranger and foreigner among his own people. He resolved then and there that if his people would not come to him, as they were not familiar with their new pastor, he would then go to them, to their homes and villages, and thus make himself one among them and thus be accepted by them. With this in mind, he gradually intensified his village-touring programme along with his efforts to learn the Khasi language, something he found extremely difficult to master, coming as he was from an altogether different linguistic and cultural background.

iii) A Model and Example

His gradual success in making himself accepted and welcomed by one and all wherever he went, convinced the Archbishop of the great effectiveness of the apostolate of village visits: approaching people

and coming to know them and their life-situation, from their own home environment. His faith in the effectiveness of this method of evangelization made him the first and best example of a missionary, who made himself available to his people in their homes and villages.

The missionary dynamism in him prompted him to write extensively on the special apostolate and ministry of village-visiting, to insist with priests and religious that they must enhance the effectiveness of their ministry by taking up much more earnestly this form of apostolate.

So convinced was he of the power of this method of evangelization, that he wanted religious congregations in the Archdiocese, especially those of women, to be willing to move out of the security and comfort of their convent structures in order to enable them to spend at least a part of their time and their lives in direct village settings. He wanted that they make themselves available for the teaching of catechism, healthcare for women and children and for bringing to the village set-up much-needed medical and health facilities.

iv) Founder of a Religious Institute

Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario’s decision to found a congregation of Religious women was not an inspiration that was arrived at on the spur of the moment or sudden enlightenment. The idea was but the natural consequence of his dynamic missionary programme and his desire that there be in the Church in his Archdiocese, religious women who were willing to totally devote themselves to people in their actual life-situation and in their home surroundings.

The idea regarding the foundation of such a religious institute was supported by the Bishops of the region during the meetings of the Bishops’ Council held at Shillong. However, it was only after extensive

consultation with other Bishops, seeking the valuable advice of major superiors of other Religious Orders, guidance from eminent churchmen and moralists, and above all, after meeting with the representatives of the Holy See, that he proceeded and ventured into this initiative of founding a religious institute for women.

It was truly an initiative of momentous significance and import, not only for himself and the would be members of this institute he was soon to found but also for the Church in the entire north-eastern region. The members of the society-to-be would grow from the initial stages of their foundation and gradual development to the point where they would spread out into an effective network of communities. But all this was still at the stage of a dream and a vision, as the Archbishop struggled to bring to fruition his dream. The vision and efforts of the Archbishop did reach fulfilment and saw the light of day on 31st May, 1986, when the first group of religious sisters, the first fruits of God's initiative and man's generous response, entered the institute as members by giving over their lives and all they were to God, through the public profession of the religious vows. The 31st May, 1986 remains a red letter day in the annals of the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco (VSDB), a day that signalled the beginning of a new and special vocation and charism for the Church of the region.

The vision of the founder was realized in great measure due to the enthusiastic support, help and encouragement he received from people at every level of the Catholic Church and society. The initial growth and development of the religious society, both in the number of its members and the variety of its activities, was no doubt brought about by the helpful and supportive presence of many generous, selfless and good-hearted people, among them many religious and priests. These went out of their way to ensure that the divine inspiration received and

cherished by the founder was visibly realized and fructified among the people of God.

Conclusion

It is quite a sobering thought, particularly for the members of the institute and for those in positions of authority and responsibility, that they now hold in their hands the future of this young Religious Congregation. At the death of the Archbishop in 1994 they felt orphaned at an early stage of their growth due to the untimely departure from this world of their Father and Founder, Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario, SDB. One can only visualize and dream of the very positive achievements that would have been accomplished and the new paths the institute would have treaded, had the Founder been able to continue to be present among the members as an inspiring and enlightening guide, teacher and formator. However, that was not to be.

The responsibility now rests on the members of the institute to continue to focus their attention and efforts on the special spirit and charism given them by the Founder. They will thus allow themselves to evolve and grow by means of the commitment and fidelity with which they will live out their daily lives. It will be to their credit to ensure that the newly founded institute and its members remain ever loyal, relevant and meaningful to the Church in Northeast India and to its needs. The members will find meaning and fulfilment in their lives as consecrated persons only as long as they allow the inspiration and dream of the Founder to grow, mature and become well established.

Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario was a genuine human being, an authentic priest, a zealous pastor and bishop fully dedicated to his people and priests. He has left behind a shining example of a great missionary for the Church in Northeast India to follow.



At the Vatican Council II



Visiting a Naga Village



Being carried across on a Bamboo Chair



Christ King College, Shillong

5

My Association with Hubert D’Rosario, SDB

Sr. Marie Therese Marbañiang, RNDM¹

Introduction

I came into contact with Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario from the year 1976. However I came to know Archbishop Hubert more personally from August 1983 until the time of his death in August 1994, altogether 11 years of close collaboration with his work of founding the Congregation of the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco, the VSDB.

Archbishop Hubert, in 1983, made a request from our then Superior General, Sr. Marie Benedicte Ollivier, RNDM, for Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions (RNDM) to help with the work of formation of the young women who responded to the call of God and the invitation of the Archbishop to become aspirants, then postulants and novices in order to prepare themselves to form the first group of the newly founded congregation of the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco. Sr. Marie Benedicte Ollivier and her General Councillors took the urgent request of the Archbishop as an indication of the will of God for the Church of

¹ Sr. Marie Therese Marbañiang, RNDM, was Provincial of the RNDM and Directress of VSDB Novices.

Northeast India and responded positively to this extraordinary request. The Archbishop wanted to officially initiate the new Congregation on 31st May, 1983, the feast of the Visitation of Our Lady to St. Elizabeth. At that time I was still in Rome, completing a course of studies. Sr. Marie Benedicte sent for me and communicated to me the Archbishop's request and also told me that the Congregation's leadership, in India and in Rome had proposed my name for this mission of collaborating with the formation work of the new congregation to be founded by Archbishop Hubert. After asking for time to pray, to reflect and to seek spiritual direction, I said YES to this obedience from my Superior General.

I could not, however, be present for the inauguration of the new Congregation on 31st May, 1983 at Madonna Convent, Upper Shillong. I returned to India in July and to Shillong in August 1983. Archbishop Hubert met me in St. Joseph's Convent, Jaiaw and gave me his blessing and I went to Madonna Convent on 13 August 1983 to begin my mission and take charge of the formation of the ten young women who had been accepted as aspirants, six of whom made the Final Profession on 31st May, 1992.

Sr. Mary John Bosco Shadap, RNDM, our then Provincial, took very keen interest in this work of preparation for the inaugural day of opening Madonna Convent at Nongkseh, Upper Shillong. The RNDM Sisters, under Sr. Mary John Bosco's direction, undertook the task of cleaning up the old school building offered by Rev. Fr. Virgilius Albera, SDB, Parish Priest of St. Paul's Parish, Upper Shillong and transformed it into a habitable place, renamed Madonna Convent.

Sr. Mary John Bosco also sent Sr. Mary Pius Syngkon and Sr. Mary Martin Chyne, to supervise their initial programme of formation and the daily running of Madonna Convent. Later Sr. Mary Candida

Khriam joined Sr. Marie Therese Marbañiang to help with the formation programme of the postulants. The RNDM Superiors recalled Sr. Marie Therese to the Province in August 1985 and replaced her by sending Sr. Mary John Bosco, after her term as Provincial ended who stayed in Madonna Convent until the first batch of Sisters made their final vows on 31st May, 1992. Other RNDM Sisters who were sent to Madonna Convent to assist Mary John Bosco with the formation programme and to accompany the young candidates at their various stages of formation were Sr. Biola Shadap, Sr. Clarissa Wahlang and Sr. Rita Shati. The RNDMs completed their nine-year contract with Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario in August 1992.

i) My Impressions about Archbishop Hubert as a Person

I saw in Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario a man who had totally given himself to God and His service. He was also a true missionary and a Salesian at heart. He had great love for the people especially the young, the poor and those who lived in isolated villages deprived of the advantages of people who live in towns. Archbishop Hubert was a man of exceptional abilities. He possessed a keen and perceptive intellect. He was definitely a man of action: a leader, an initiator, a great planner and an administrator of a very high order. Whatever he undertook to do, he brought the projects to a very successful end, employing all his energies and talents with great generosity and personal commitment. I believe he was destined to be great, whatever way of life he might have chosen. We have been blessed abundantly because he answered God’s Call to dedicate his life completely to God’s service. I also found Archbishop Hubert very human and understanding of human frailties. As he himself was very thorough, hard working, well organized and very punctual, he would get impatient with persons who did not show

dedication and seriousness of purpose. However, he would also show humility and often realized that he had been hard and impatient with his priests and other persons in the course of his working relationships with them. He personally practised the virtues of poverty, simplicity and frugality. I would even say that he was austere with himself and generous with others.

ii) Plan to Found a Religious Congregation

I came to know about Archbishop Hubert's plan of founding a religious congregation in the month of April 1983 when I was in Rome and my Superior General, Sr. Marie Benedicte Ollivier communicated this information to me. I personally met Archbishop Hubert in Shillong in August 1983 when he spoke to me about his new congregation. A few days after that, I began my work in Madonna Convent, (Nongkseh, Upper Shillong) as Directress of Formation.

iii) The Purpose of Founding the Congregation

Archbishop Hubert Rosario founded the Congregation of the VSDB because he saw the urgent need for evangelization especially among the people of the rural areas, beginning from North East India. He was an outstanding missionary himself and found great joy in being among the poor in all the scattered villages of his far-flung Archdiocese. He knew and understood the needs of the Church and of the people first hand. I believe he felt deep down in his heart the prompting of the Spirit to answer this call of forming and sending well prepared missionaries to the mission field. He was thoroughly convinced after much prayer and seeking sound advice that a missionary congregation of religious women will best respond to this need of evangelization and formation in the faith, in a very dedicated manner and that they would be the best instruments

in God's hands for this purpose. Therefore he launched out courageously, with a deep spirit of faith, to accomplish this work for God.

iv) The Special Mission of the Congregation

In my conversations with Archbishop Hubert, I understood that the specific mission of the Congregation of the VSDB is first of all to form persons who would be "Other Christs": young generous women who would be willing to go through the process of personal transformation into Christ so that they can be instruments of the specific mission of carrying the Good News of Jesus to the people of rural areas, the neglected poor of the urban areas, the youth and their evangelization and formation in the faith. They will give priority to these groups.

v) The Task of Founding the Congregation

Archbishop Hubert told me that he spent time in prayer, he took advice and spiritual direction; he consulted the Bishops of the North East India; he made a pilgrimage to Our Lady's shrine in Knock, Ireland, and he personally met Sr. Marie Benedicte Ollivier, RNDM, the Superior General of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions (RNDM) to request her for Sisters to guide the young women in their initial formation into religious life. He received positive encouragement and response from all of them. Archbishop Hubert took this as a sure sign that God wanted him to found the Congregation. Once he was convinced that his inspiration was from God, he set about the practical aspects of realizing his project with characteristic zeal and vision.

vi) The Initial Challenges and Difficulties

There were many initial challenges and difficulties. The main ones were the location of the Congregation and formation personnel.

There were several questions to be answered. Where to find a suitable place and property to begin the initial formation for the young women to become the future VSDB? Who will take care of the initial formation from aspirancy to final vows?

Both these challenges were met by the positive response of Rev. Fr. Virgilius Albera, SDB, who made over the old school building at Nongkseh, Upper Shillong, to the Archbishop to be converted into a house of formation with the name Madonna Convent. Rev. Sr. Marie Benedicte Ollivier, RNDM, Superior General, sent RNDM sisters to take charge of the formation of the future VSDBs for nine years (1983 – 1992) until the first group of six VSDBs made the final vows on 31st May, 1992. Archbishop Hubert was exceptionally good at finding good benefactors to support his project financially. Thus the project did not suffer delays due to lack of funds.

It is to be noted that Archbishop Hubert met every challenge and difficulty, big or small, with a great spirit of faith and tremendous courage. Nothing would stop him from doing what he was convinced to be for the greater glory of God and the good of souls entrusted to his pastoral care. He had great faith in Our Lady Help of Christians and Our Lady never failed him.

(vii) The Initial Collaborators in Founding the new Congregation

- (i) Rev. Fr. Virgilius Albera, SDB, was a great collaborator of Archbishop Hubert as well as the Parish Priests of different mission areas.
- (ii) Rev. Br. Castellino Fernandes, SDB, was a friend and the right hand man of Archbishop Hubert. He took great interest in Madonna Convent and the young Congregation and assisted the Archbishop in many things.

- (iii) Rev. Fr. Ignatius Rubio, SDB, in renovating the old school buildings and in developing the property.
- (iv) Sr. Mary John Bosco Shadap, RNDM, then Provincial Superior, with a team of RNDMs worked hard to prepare for the inauguration of the new Congregation and for the next nine years (1983 – 1992) collaborated with Archbishop Hubert to establish it on firm foundations.
- (v) Other significant collaborators in the early years were the spiritual directors and a dedicated team of teachers who gave of their time and talents to help in the formation programme. Among them we may mention Rev. Fr. C. Guidotto, SDB, spiritual director and also teacher of Missiology. Rev. Fr. Leonard Kharkongor, SDB, (then Rector of St. Paul's Minor Seminary) was also a spiritual director and teacher of music. Sister Marie Celine Pinto, IBVM (Superior of Loreto Convent, Shillong) took classes in psychology and personal development.
- (vi) Mr. (Bah) Marshall, Head Catechist of St. Paul's Parish, Upper Shillong, trained the future VSDBs in skills of public speaking and in the preparation of homilies, thoroughly based on biblical and doctrinal foundations.
- (vii) The RNDM sisters took the rest of the classes that were part of the formation programme which consisted of upgrading academic studies, Catholic doctrine and catechism, scripture, spirituality, the constitutions (framed by Archbishop Hubert) studies in the foundations of the religious life and other areas of personal and community development.

viii) The Emphasis on Formation

Archbishop Hubert insisted on a thorough all-round education for the young candidates which included the continuation of their academic studies at all stages. He also made sure that their formation programme would include a solid foundation of Catholic doctrine, of the scriptures, of spirituality and religious life, especially the vows and the constitutions. He himself would take classes regularly three times a week when he was not out in the missions. Archbishop Hubert also laid great emphasis on extra-curricular activities in the form of music, games, gardening, care of animals, poultry rearing and other forms of recreational activities.

Above all, Archbishop Hubert called on the young aspirants, postulants, novices and later the temporarily professed Sisters to give great emphasis on the absolute necessity of a life of prayer, a life of virtue, a life of sacrifice generously lived in a happy community atmosphere in good relationships with one's companions and those placed in-charge of them.

From the very beginning, Archbishop Hubert also insisted that the future VSDB be trained to become good missionaries by having direct experience in the mission field on a regular basis. The aspirants, postulants and second year novices all had time set apart to go to the villages and live among the people. They would be sent there after a thorough preparation of how they would instruct the people in living the sacramental life and other important aspects of their Catholic faith. The first year and the canonical year of the novitiate were held sacred by spending time in deepening the life of prayer and in cultivating a deep, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The young temporarily professed were immediately sent to a mission area to form a community there with a community leader in charge and everyone taking a share of community responsibilities and the needs of the mission among the

people. In this respect, the VSDB worked in close collaboration with the parish priests and the catechists so as to ascertain the real needs of the people and make relevant plans to meet those needs.

(ix) Some General Observations

Perhaps the Archbishop could have founded the Congregation ten years earlier. However, I do believe 1983 was God's own time. From what I personally saw and experienced I can say that Archbishop Hubert had done God's work in founding the VSDB. He accomplished a super-human task in spite of ill health and declining years. Between the years 1983 and 1994, in just eleven years he put his fledgling congregation on a sound footing.

I do believe that the founding of the VSDBs was very relevant to our times. I believe it was God's special gift to the Church of Northeast India and Archbishop Hubert was instrumental in bringing about the birth of this young and dynamic missionary congregation.

The Founder's plans and dreams, as I know them from my frequent conversations with him, are not restricted by geographical boundaries. He saw the VSDB carrying the Good News of Jesus beyond Northeast India and beyond national frontiers to the wider world. He believed that this would happen in the future. Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario, the Founder of the VSDB, was a man with a great vision who dared to dream big and had the capacity to make the dreams come true. This was because he was a man of very deep faith and prayer. Even in those very early days and years of the foundation, he passed on to the VSDBs that spirit of doing great things for God and believing that all will be well in spite of every kind of trial and setback. The VSDB possess this spirit of their Congregation, as bequeathed by their Founder. They have the capacity and the grace to carry the Gospel to the very ends of the earth.

6

Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario The Founder of the VSDB

Fr. Francis Cheeramben, SDB¹

I came in contact with Archbishop Hubert when he first came to Shillong as its Archbishop of Shillong in October, 1969. At that time I was doing my practical training in Don Bosco Technical School, Shillong. He used to come to Don Bosco frequently and very informally. He was friendly with all, even with us young brothers he would stop and chat. For me it was a surprise that the Archbishop would stop and talk with simple ordinary clerics. Later on when I was in Christ King College (CKC), Shillong I had the privilege of having him like a father and guide. He told me that I could go and see him any time and ask his advice. He kept his word; whenever I needed to talk to him he would make himself free for that, often he would come down to CKC to meet me instead of asking me to go up to the Archbishop’s House. In the years 1989-1991 I was also his personal secretary.

¹ Fr. Francis Cheeramben has known the Archbishop for many years as Rector of Christ King College, as a personal secretary of Archbishop and as a Vice-Provincial of the Salesians of the Guwahati Province.

As a person, the impression I got was that he was a very orderly man. He allotted time for various daily activities. In the morning up to 10.00 am he wanted to be alone in his office to attend to correspondence and other personal matters. After that he would leave his office door wide open. This was the signal that anyone who wanted to meet him could go to his office and meet him. That would be up to 3.00 pm. The evenings were reserved for people who wanted to meet him by appointment.

The Archbishop was a man of prayer. At night when everybody had retired to their rooms or office, Archbishop would be in the chapel in deep prayer. After night prayers he did not want anyone to disturb him, unless it was urgent. The time in front of the Blessed Sacrament was very dear to him. The daily Mass and the Hours of the liturgical prayer were very sacred to him; he would not leave them out except when he became seriously sick.

Above all Archbishop Rosario was a missionary. He liked to tour villages. In his last years, even when his legs were swollen and walking was very painful, he insisted on touring the villages. He enjoyed being with simple people in the villages. He could put up with any inconvenience and hardship during these trips to the villages. When I was in Sonapahar parish for two years, I found out that each and every village of that parish cherished the memory of Archbishop Hubert's visits. Some of those villages are not easy to reach; we have to walk six hours to reach even now.

I am not sure of the years and the dates of the founding of the VSDB congregation. From 1980 onwards Archbishop Hubert used to tell some of the Fathers his intention of founding a society of sisters. He took some of the senior fathers into confidence and asked their opinion: Fr. Cajetan Guidotto, SDB, Fr. Virgilius Albera, SDB, Fr. Nicholas

Tuligi, SDB, and a few others. He had previously asked the advice of his brother bishops, especially the advice of Bishop O. Marengo. Then in the priests' meeting he informed the priests of his plan, sought their advice and asked them to pray that the Spirit of the Lord may enlighten him.

I have mentioned that Archbishop Hubert was a missionary at heart. He liked to be with the people in the villages. He wanted a group of sisters imbued with missionary spirit. In his talks he said he wanted his sisters to live in the villages and to bring the light of the Gospel to them. Hence he chose the title Visitation Sisters. He wanted the "Visitation" to be the icon of the new congregation. He explained to us on very many occasions his vision for the new congregation: a group of sisters who could live in the villages, share the simple life of the village people and in return to be able to offer them "salvation in Christ." He felt that other congregations were burdened with the mission of education, so they could not spare sisters to go to the villages. In fact, the original idea of the Archbishop was to base his sisters exclusively in rural areas.

The specific mission of the congregation is found in the motto of the congregation. This is taken from the mandate that Jesus gave to his apostles before he was taken up to heaven, "Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations." (Mt.28:19) In fact, Archbishop took only two words from the above quotation – "Go, Disciple." He wanted every sister of his congregation to be an apostle of Christ. Every sister has the same mandate, 'Go'. So the congregation is a missionary congregation; a congregation of women who are to bring the good news to families. This is made clear by the name of the congregation, the "Visitation Sisters." Mary, going to the house of Zachariah to meet Elizabeth to bring good news to that family, is the icon of the VSDB congregation.

Being a son of Don Bosco, the Archbishop wanted his daughters to have the spirit of Don Bosco, the missionary. Don Bosco's motto was, "Give me souls and take away the rest."

Next, the Archbishop tried to identify a congregation of women who could help him initially in forming and establishing the new congregation. He selected the Sisters of Our Lady Queen of the Missions (RNDM) to help him in forming the first batches of sisters. Among the first RNDMs were Sr. Mary Pius Shadap, Sr. Mary Martin Chyne, Sr. Mary Candida, Sr. Marie Therese Reynold Marbañiang and finally Mother John Bosco Shadap and other sisters who came and helped for a few years. These formed and established the infant congregation.

The Archbishop himself was the spiritual director of his spiritual daughters from the beginning. But he also asked Fr. Cajetan Guidotto, SDB, to be his collaborator and confessor. Br. Castellino Fernandes, SDB, his secretary and companion for twenty two years helped the newly recruited young women to acquire Salesian characteristics of cheerfulness and optimism.

The greatest initial difficulties were to form a group of young country girls to become the pioneering sisters of the new congregation. These were simple young souls from the villages of Khasi hills. Luckily for them, the RNDM sisters were very generous and gave the best formators to begin this new congregation. Mother John Bosco Shadap was provincial superior for two terms; she served in the Generalate of the congregation as a council member of the mother general of her congregation for a term. Bishop Orestes Marengo gave a lot of encouragement to Archbishop D'Rosario in founding the new congregation.

When new convents were opened, Fr. Guidotto used to visit each convent once a month to give them an opportunity for confession

and spiritual direction. Bro. Castellino Fernandes, SDB, was a constant support to the sisters from the beginning till his death. Fr. Edmund Gomes, SDB, who was the financial administrator of the Archdiocese then, was also a collaborator of the Archbishop in founding the new congregation. The most important work of collaboration was done by Sr. Mary Pius, Sr. Marie Therese, and Mother John Bosco Shadap and their companions, who formed the first batches of candidates to be the corner stone of the new congregation.

Archbishop Hubert insisted that they be God-centred persons. He gave great importance to the Holy Eucharist, the daily meditation and other practices of piety and especially union with God. The Eucharist was the centre of his life and he wanted it to be the centre of his daughters' lives too. He gave them permission to carry the Blessed Sacrament when they went to tour the villages so that they could have daily communion.

The Archbishop insisted simplicity of life. He wanted that his daughters have very ordinary food. In the initial stage when I used to visit their Generalate I thought their life was too austere. Even now their life style and food habits are very simple and austere. He insisted that they have love for the people and love for going to the villages to bring them the Good News. I am happy to note that that spirit is very much alive in the congregation now. I do not know how the first groups of sisters were recruited. I had the privilege of meeting them when they were novices under Sr. Marie Therese, RNDM.

God's spirit works in marvellous ways. The Spirit inspired Archbishop Hubert to found the congregation. God gave him special talents and abilities. He made use of the gifts that God had given him to found the congregation. I do not think he could have done anything better. We have to say it is all God's marvellous ways.

The founding of the VSDBs was very relevant. The Church in Northeast India needed a congregation that was entirely missionary in its orientation. The congregation has lived up to the ideal till now. They are very much appreciated because they are totally missionary in their outlook. They have the ability to meet people, become friendly with them and win them over to Christ.

A True Disciple of Christ

Fr. Varkey Chittoor¹

Introduction

Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario was a great son of Don Bosco and a missionary of rare qualities of head and heart. A disciple after his own master’s heart, he opted for and showed first preference of love, concern and compassion to the poor and down trodden, those who are in the margin of society and those in the rural and neglected urban areas. His concern extended not only to the spiritual welfare of the people, but to the development of the whole person as well. He wanted to uplift the quality of human life and sought to know and love his flock through his regular visits to the far-flung villages, even the most interior ones.

i) A Person after the Heart of Jesus

Jesus lived at a given time and place while taking upon himself the form of a human being. Like any other human being, before his public ministry, he led an ordinary man’s life at Nazareth as the son of a carpenter. What made Jesus different from others

1 Fr. Varkey Chittoor has been a frontline missionary for many years among the Khasis.

was his sensitiveness to the needs and sufferings of his fellow beings, no matter who they were, -a Jew, a Samaritan, a Roman, a man, a woman or a child. But one thing is clear, Jesus opted for the poor, the outcastes and the downtrodden in view of relieving their pains and suffering; these people are also the children of God. All Jesus' miracles were an evidence of his desire to rid the world of pain and suffering.

Closely following the footsteps of his Master, Hubert showed total commitment to his mission. He fully made use all his human talents and qualities: intellectual, spiritual and administrative for the welfare and growth of the flock that he shepherded. Completely dedicated and devoted to his Master, Hubert was able to transcend certain human weaknesses and rise above ordinary human standards of life. The growth of the Church and the establishment of many institutions to serve the needs of people are obvious signs that like his Master he was sensitive to the needs and sufferings of humanity. He was a true disciple after the example of the Master.

Archbishop Hubert not only wished and commanded those under his authority that the Gospel should be preached but also put it into practice by helping the people. He also loved to be in their company. He himself went to stay in their midst. He often said that when he was with the people especially the simple people in the villages, he forgot his own sufferings and difficulties. He always enjoyed a chat with the parents of Catholic children and would always tell them: "God gives you children, give them to God." He stressed that children should go to school, and speaking in the Khasi social context he strongly appealed to people that not only girls be given education but also boys.

ii) A Hunter of Souls

Archbishop D’Rosario was rightly called ‘Hubert’ meaning hunter. He hunted souls for his Master in the hills and plains of Northeast India and remained undaunted and unshaken in his pursuit even in the midst of great challenges. His vision of spreading his Master’s Kingdom was so burning in him that personal interest mattered little or not at all. He knew full well that only God’s Kingdom in the hearts of people will bring peace, joy, harmony and fulfilment; and he knew also that this is the ultimate thirst, aim and aspiration of each and every human soul. The peace and joy he experienced within him was so great that he wanted all people to experience the same.

The Archbishop loved to meet young people, so that he could talk with them and pass on to them the message of Jesus Christ. Often in visiting schools and parishes he would particularly meet the Class IX and Class X students. To them he imparted the ideas of spreading the Gospel message and sowed the seed of religious vocation and priestly life. To the young people in general he would say: “*Samla* (young people) plan for your future, face problems, don’t remain poor, lazy, uninterested and ignorant. Work hard, pray well. Look at Jesus...be leaders...God needs you, the Church needs you. Make yourselves useful for your country, family and the Church.”

Archbishop Hubert in the company of Fr. Attard, Fr. Tony, Fr. Albizuri and Fr. Premoli walked three days to reach the place for the Eucharistic procession of the Lyngngams. They started on Thursday entering the forest that was full of wild animals, crossing dangerous rivers and reached Saturday evening. They again took another three days’ journey to reach back.

The Archbishop knew too that the people of Rangblang walked to Shillong for the First Friday Mass starting from Wednesday and

reaching Shillong Thursday evening. Next morning they attended the First Friday Mass and then they walked back and reached by Saturday evening to be ready again for Sunday Mass *Khlem Lyngdoh* (Sunday service without priest) at Rangblang. The Archbishop appreciated this very much.

At one time the Archbishop was visiting Balat-Dangar area. There were 25 school children together with their teachers, as well as parents and villagers, altogether around 1000 people waiting to welcome him. He was very happy and enjoyed the day with the people. But after travelling for 105 kms on roads that were not tarred and the hot weather, from Shillong to Balat, the Archbishop was very tired. So during the reception half the time he slept off. Parents, teachers and children had refreshments in honour of Archbishop Hubert. The Archbishop was very happy and said to Fr. Chittoor: "I shall give you Rs. 40,000.00; you build the school for these children." In fact Fr. Chittoor never asked the help. The existing school was just a shed covered with a tarpaulin borrowed from Fr. Julius Kurbah. Fr. Chittoor was very happy and thanked the Archbishop profusely. The money was enough for the roof of the school while the existing shed was made into a parish house chapel and part of it into class rooms.

Love for people burnt in the heart of Archbishop Hubert. He was people-oriented and this could be seen clearly in opening new parishes and the kind of places he chose. When Fr. Albizuri, then Parish Priest of the Cathedral Parish, proposed in the meeting that a parish be opened in Jongksha, all other priests in the meeting opposed to the idea saying that there was no road to Jongksha and that Smit was better for a parish since it was close by and a good road already existed. But Archbishop liked the idea of opening a parish at Jongksha that would cater to many

villages around. He said: "If our priests are interested in the people of 45 villages, who so to say are cut off from the main road, then Jongksha should be the centre." Archbishop added, "Roads will come and we Catholics will bring development to help the poor villagers, through religion, education, healthcare and other developmental programmes. We will choose Jongksha."

Archbishop's interest in people was clearly evident. He knew every village and all the Rangbah Balang. He himself asked Fr. Chittoor to arrange programmes for touring the villages saying, "Saturdays and Sundays I am busy; other days I am free, arrange some tourings."

At one time Archbishop was suffering from severe cold and cough but did not cancel the touring programme to Nongjiri (a village in Lailyngkot parish) and he had to walk through hills and valleys. On returning back from there he said: "I got rid of my cold and cough by walking and sweating."

iii) A Person of Depth

Archbishop Hubert's life was strengthened and nourished by prayer and trust in his Divine Master and Our Lady. He prayed always and everywhere. While travelling he was always seen praying the Rosary, so fitting with his name 'Rosario'. He did not stop praying until out of fatigue and tiredness he dozed off. In the villages he would call the people to pray together. He always said of the people, "They must learn to pray." He would tell priests and sisters, "Teach the people to pray" and added, "one who prays well always wins God's favour."

The Archbishop had great devotion to the Little Flower. He said to Fr. Chittoor: "I have great confidence in the Little Flower in all my apostolate as bishop. In all problems and difficulties I turn to her and she always helps me. I am confident in her intercession and support."

iv) A Leader who planned Ahead

Fr. Chittoor heard the Archbishop saying: "I am not a PWD minister. I learn many things by doing." It was true. Archbishop never did anything by himself. He consulted others. He would ask, "How are we going to do it? How are we going to solve the problem?"

At one time Archbishop Hubert and Fr. Chittoor went for touring to Mawkyrwat area. At that time there was no parish centre yet. People came to talk to him and asked him to open a parish there. Archbishop straight away said: "Give me your young sons and daughters to be priests, religious and sisters and I will open a parish for you here." That idea materialised. After some years Mawkyrwat gave to the Church many priests and religious. They are all working now in different parts of the diocese of Nongstoin and outside.

In fact at first Fr. Chittoor had told the Archbishop in the beginning that Mawkyrwat would be a future parish. The Archbishop told him that there were no personnel yet but all the same Fr. Chittoor should look for land. Next day while the Archbishop was praying, Bah Phridolin Syiemlieh came to wish him. Fr. Chittoor met Bah Phridolin and introduced him to the Archbishop saying: "This is our teacher. This land belongs to him and he is planning to sell it." "You give it to us," Archbishop replied. There and then the land was bought.

Archbishop Hubert appreciated very much the apostolic zeal and enthusiasm of the Maharam people. He said that they were an apostolic minded people who carried and proclaimed the faith to their relatives and friends wherever they went. They loved their priests and always supported the Church. He was surprised to hear that together with Fr. Matta (who baptized the first Lynggam) the Catholic youngsters and the Catholic leaders were the apostles of the Lynggam tribe. The Archbishop knew all the villages and people of the West Khasi Hills. He

knew they are hard working; they trust in God; they are faithful to the Church and would give their children generously to the Church.

Archbishop Hubert always dreamed of future centres. He did it through careful planning and by enlisting the help and collaboration of priests and lay people. In this way he opened many new parishes and centres in the Archdiocese. When any priest complained of difficulties or lack of rest he would tell them: "Get people to cooperate; share with the laity your apostolate and responsibilities; make people partners in your work; pray and teach people to pray." He often uttered: "We do our best; you do your best and God will do the rest. If we are faithful we shall be successful."

Conclusion

Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario proved himself to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ who worked ceaselessly to make others disciples of the Master. He founded the congregation of the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco, giving them the Jesus' own command, "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations." (Mt 28:19) He made the command their motto in a simple with ambiguous meaning: "Go, Disciple." The VSDB should first be themselves intimate disciples of Jesus Christ. In turn they are being given the command 'you, my disciple, go and make others disciples too.'

Lasting Impact on Evangelization in Northeast India

Fr. Thomas Puliparambil, SDB¹

Introduction

The revered Salesian Archbishop, Most Rev. Hubert D’Rosario, was bishop of Dibrugarh diocese for five years, from 1964 to 1969. When Shillong was raised to the status of a Metropolitan See named Archdiocese of Shillong-Guwahati, Bishop Hubert was nominated its first Archbishop and took charge on 5th October 1969. He served in this capacity for twenty-five years till his demise in 1994. Having rendered episcopal service in two dioceses of Northeast India for full 30 years, his impact on evangelization in the region was spectacular. In this article, I intend to highlight, what I believe were, the salient features of his method of evangelization.

When the See of Dibrugarh became vacant, Fr. Hubert D’Rosario, SDB, was appointed its bishop by Pope Paul VI on 6 July 1964. In 1969 he was transferred to Shillong as the Archbishop of Shillong-Guwahati Archdiocese. He died in harness as the Archbishop

¹ Fr. Thomas Puliparambil, SDB, has been a missionary and educationist in Khasi-Jaiñtia Hills.

of Shillong Archdiocese at 8.15 pm on Tuesday, 30 August, 1994. His mortal remains were interred in the Shillong Cathedral, beside the altar of Mary Help of Christians.

i) Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario’s Impact on Evangelization in Northeast India

At his episcopal ordination at the shrine of Mary Help of Christians, Matunga, Mumbai, on 6 September 1964, by His Eminence Valerian Cardinal Gracias, the motto that Bishop Hubert adopted on his coat of arms was the second petition of the Lord’s prayer, ‘*Adveniat Regnum Tuum*’, ‘Thy Kingdom Come’. Archbishop Hubert understood God’s reign as being active and dynamic, and enlisting human collaboration, as suggested by George Soares-Prabhu: “...God’s Reign is both a gift and a task.... We are not passive receptors of God’s Reign, but active collaborators in its growth.... The task of the mission is to enter into the process of the Reign of God inaugurated by Jesus and to further its movement towards the end time community.”² Archbishop Hubert’s entire life was a translation of that motto, ‘Thy Kingdom Come’, into concrete action as seen from his valiant efforts in the field of evangelization.

ii) Building the Kingdom

In his encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II speaks of “a great springtime for Christianity... a new missionary advent.”³ Thanks to the drive and initiative of Archbishop Hubert, ably assisted by others, especially, the missionary in the field, the decades of the 70s and the 80s

2 George Soares-Prabhu, ‘Expanding the Horizon of Christian Mission: Biblical Perspective,’ in *Paths of Mission in India Today*, ed. Augustine Kanjamala, (Mumbai: St. Paul’s, 1997), p. 46.

3 *Redemptoris Missio* (RM), 86.

witnessed a great springtime, a new missionary advent. Since parishes constitute the nuclei of evangelization, the Archbishop chalked out a scheme to open new parishes, and this resulted in an amazing spurt of them, in fact, 17 parishes in the decade. It is an incredible record indeed when we realize that a newly set up parish complex comprised a church, convent, the priests' quarters, a dispensary, a boys' hostel, a girls' hostel and a school.

The phenomenal leap forward forged ahead into the 80s and the 90s when nine more parishes were established. When he was installed as the Archbishop of Shillong-Guwahati, there were only 11 parishes ministering to a population of 80,000 Catholics, while at his death there were 30 parishes catering to a population of 2,98,000 Catholics. During his episcopal ministry, the Shillong-Guwahati Archbishop mothered three new dioceses: Tura in 1973, Diphu in 1983, and Guwahati in 1992. All these are indicators of the Archbishop's extra-ordinary enthusiasm in building the Kingdom.

iii) The Primacy of Missionary Evangelization

Soon after his episcopal consecration, Bishop Hubert flew to Rome to attend the third session of the Second Vatican Council then in progress. Thus he launched into his episcopal ministry as a 'Council Bishop', endeavouring to implement the reforms initiated by the Council and translate its vision into action. Attending the last two sessions of the Council as a young Bishop made an indelible impression on him. All his future dreams and plans as a bishop sprang from the Council. The latter's underscoring of the fundamental missionary character of the Church gripped him passionately: "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very

nature.”⁴ “The Church...receives the mission to proclaim and to establish among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God.”⁵

In this preoccupation for evangelization, the Archbishop's concerns were in consonance with those of Pope John Paul II who considers missionary evangelization as “the primary service which the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity in the modern world.”⁶ The Holy Father's clarion call reached him well in advance: “We must revive in ourselves the burning conviction of Paul, who cried out: ‘Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel’ (1 Cor 9:16).”⁷ For him too, faith was the most precious gift to be shared: “The Church's faith in Jesus is a gift received and a gift to be shared; it is the greatest gift which the Church can offer to Asia.”⁸

The over-riding obsession with evangelization, this single-minded thrust, absorbed all of the Archbishop's energies. He had little time for glitz and glamour, socializing with friends or family visits. He would insist with religious institutions, even to the point of irritation and boredom, that they had no *raison d'être* if not for evangelization. Most of the institutions in the diocese revamped their outlook drastically due to his influence. Rev. Fr. Sylvanus Sngi Lyngdoh, SDB, a well-known Khasi missionary, Scripture scholar, preacher, writer, social worker and exorcist (all rolled into one) described Archbishop Hubert as “the prophet of evangelization in the North-eastern region and in the whole of India as well.” It was in recognition of his missionary zeal that the Archbishop was appointed member of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

4 *Ad Gentes* (AG), 2.

5 *Lumen Gentium* (LG), 5.

6 RM, 2.

7 *Nuovo Millennio Ineunte* (NMI), 40.

8 *Ecclesia in Asia* (EA), 10.

Evangelization in Northeast India has often come in for scorching criticism. Speaking at a plenary session of the CBCI's six-day consultation on 'Paths of Mission in India Today', at Pune in 1994, one advice of a noted journalist, and currently, Minister for Northeast India, Arun Shourie, to the Church was to keep away from unsettled areas like Northeast India. Giving a response, J. Rosario Narchison, said that "as for Christianity's renewed determination to uplift the poor and the needy, the oppressed and the marginalized, Shourie fails totally to recognize the spiritual basis of such determination."⁹ Arun Shourie also perhaps ignores the fact that the Palestinian situation in which Jesus accomplished his mission was very much unsettled and fluid: "In the context of the dismal Palestinian situation of those days of Roman colonialism, increasing poverty, corruption among the religious leadership of the Hasmonean dynasty,"¹⁰ the rise of zealots, etc. Archbishop Hubert steered clear of such polemics, and stormed ahead in his missionary ventures.

iv) The Proclamation of Jesus Christ

As evangelization is of the essential nature of the Church, Jesus Christ is the essence of evangelization. This may seem axiomatic. But today many activities which have no relation to the proclamation of Jesus appear to be brandied about as evangelization. Pope John Paul II is eager to clarify the misconception: "No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all."¹¹

9 J. Rosario Narchison, 'Missionaries in India: An appraisal of Arun Shourie's Book,' in *Mission and Conversion: A Reappraisal*, ed. Joseph Mattam and Sebastian Kim, (Mumbai: St. Paul, 1996), p. 211

10 L. Leframd, 'Good News, Kingdom and Conversion,' in *Kristu Jyoti*, ed. Jose K, (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti, 2001), p. 107.

11 RM, 3.

He is emphatic on the powerful appeal of Jesus Christ: "No individual, no nation, no culture is impervious to the appeal of Jesus who speaks from the very heart of the human condition."¹² He is even more clear and forceful in the post-synodal Exhortation: "There can be no true evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord."¹³

That last categorical statement is well worth a repeat: "There can be no true evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord." This was also the life-programme of Archbishop D'Rosario. In his numerous talks, sermons and exhortations, he always proclaimed Jesus Christ.¹⁴

v) The Celebration of Liturgy

In Ecclesia in Asia Pope John Paul II speaks of the intimate bond between evangelization and liturgy: "The Liturgy is the source and summit of all Christian life and mission. It is a decisive means of evangelization, especially in Asia, where the followers of different religions are so drawn to worship, religious festivals and popular devotions."¹⁵

All through his Episcopal ministry, Archbishop D'Rosario was also keenly aware of this link. He also considered liturgy as the privileged moment of evangelization. Liturgy, he believed, supplied the spiritual energy required for the task of evangelization. The celebration of the saving mysteries of Jesus Christ in liturgy must naturally lead to the proclamation of Him in evangelization. The grasping of this truth prompted the Archbishop to demand devotion and decorum at

12 EA, 14.

13 Ibid., 19.

14 Cf. *Ki Jinghikai u Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario, SDB, DD*, ed. U Ph. Vincent Kympat, (Shillong: Diocesan Catechetical Commission, 1995), pp. 93-127, pp. 141-656.

15 EA, 22.

liturgical celebrations from his priests, religious and laity so that these might become vital instruments of evangelization. In fact, numerous are the instances in Northeast India when non-Christian individuals, communities, and villages have come over to the Church because they were touched by its liturgy.

vi) **Grass-Root Evangelization: Village Tours**

In the process of delineating the characteristics of an Indian method of evangelization, Augustine Kanjamala, SVD notes: “India is a highly person-oriented society. Personal contact must become an important method of evangelization. With the availability of modern transport facilities, the contact between missionaries and the people are on the decline...”¹⁶

In the same vein, speaking of Mission Theology and Missionary Method in Northeast India, George Kottuppallil, SDB, points out: “The personal contacts with people by the missionaries has been the main method.”¹⁷

The well known, dynamic and multi-faceted missionary, Archbishop Thomas Menampampil, SDB, of Guwahati, corroborates the above two writers:

It is frequently affirmed that evangelization is an encounter between cultures. But it is essentially an encounter between persons: the encounter between the believer and the searcher. And it can also be described as

16 Augustine Kanjamala, ‘Trends and Issues in Evangelization in India: All India Survey Report,’ in *Paths of Mission in India Today*, ed. Augustine Kanjamala, (Mumbai: St. Pauls, 1997), pp. 222-223.

17 George Kuttuppallil, ‘Catholic Church in Northeast India: A Brief Evaluation of Evangelization of the Region,’ in *Paths of Mission in India Today*, ed. Augustine Kanjamala, (Mumbai: St. Pauls, 1997) p. 115.

a triangular encounter, between Christ, the believer and the searcher, each conditioned by the culture with which each has been associated.¹⁸

Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario was an ardent subscriber to the above truth whole-heartedly. In spite of his tight schedules, the difficulties of the terrain, nagging ailments, and the hassles of office, it is no small wonder that he reached the remotest of villages, where few but the most intrepid would have set foot.

Besides being an effective mode of grass-root level evangelization, Archbishop Hubert’s village visits were a tangible manifestation of his love for his people. Thus, perhaps, there was a fusion of love resulting in evangelization, and evangelization producing more love, creating a rich salvific, cyclic process. The Archbishop would often say, “When I am among the people, I forget all my troubles. They are so simple and loving, and my greatest joy is to be with them. I love touring.” In fact, when in the last years life of his life, ill health, and sore feet in particular, halted his touring to an extent, it pained him. He would say, “The greatest sorrow I now have is the inability to tour the villages. I miss the people. I must go to them. A bishop must be a good pastor, a good shepherd in the midst of his flock.”

Felix Wilfred argues that “the future of Christianity in Asia will depend upon how it is able to vibrate with the dreams of the people.”¹⁹ Through his village contacts Archbishop Hubert was able to connect with the dreams and aspirations of the people and help realize them to a great degree. His village tours also embodied his spirit of reaching out in

18 Thomas Menamparampil, *Thoughts on Evangelization*, (Mumbai: St. Pauls, 1997), p. 35.

19 Felix Wilfred, ‘A Vision for the New Century: Role of Religious and Approaches to Christian Mission,’ in *A Vision of Mission in the New Millenium*, ed. Thomas Malipurathu and L. Stanislaus, (Mumbai: St. Pauls, 2001), p. 104.

service. They epitomized what the internationally acclaimed theologian, Fr. Sebastian Karotemprel, SDB, would call 'servant-ecclesiology': "Closely related to *kenosis* ecclesiology is servant-ecclesiology. Jesus Christ came to serve and not to be served. This is equally true of the Church."²⁰

vii) Evangelizing Witness

It cannot be gainsaid that the authentic Christian life and example of the evangelizer constitute the first and foremost evangelization. As Pope John Paul II remarks, "A genuinely religious person readily wins respect and following in Asia."²¹ Fr. Paul Vadakumpadan, SDB, terms it 'being mission': "The good news is communicated as much by what one 'is' as by what one 'says' and 'does'. One could speak of 'doing mission' as well as of 'being mission.'²²

Archbishop D'Rosario inspired people because he not only exhorted his priests, religious and laity to be spirited missionaries, but he himself reached the most far-flung areas with the message of the Gospel. Above all, the holiness of his life, and his unflinching commitment to Christ and his values came across brilliantly to everyone as evangelizing witness.

viii) Entry of Religious Congregations

The Church has always been enriched by the missionary activity of religious congregations. In keeping with this tradition,

20 Sebastian Karotemprel, 'New Orientations in Ecclesiology in Asia,' in *Mission, A Service of Love: Essays in Honour of George Kottuppallil, SDB*, ed. Francis Fernandes, and Jose Varickasseril, (Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 1998), p. 35.

21 EA, 23.

22 Paul Vadakumpadan, 'Reflections on Seventy-Five years of Salesian Missionary Commitment in Northeast India,' in *Mission, a Service of Love: Essays in Honour of George Kottuppallil, SDB*, ed. Francis Fernandes and Jose Varickasseril, (Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 1998), p. 365.

Archbishop D’Rosario invited numerous religious congregations into the Archdiocese: the Salesian Sisters, the Missionaries of Charity of Mother Teresa, the Sisters of Charity of St. Capitano and St. Gerosa, the Daughters of St. Paul, the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (MSFS), the Benedictine Sisters, the Holy Cross Sisters, the Franciscan Brothers, the Claretians, etc. According to their own charism, these congregations reaped much fruitful harvest in the vineyard of the Lord.

In this context we may mention the founding of the Congregation of the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco (VSDB) by the Archbishop. In 1983, on the feast of Our Lady of Visitation, 31 May, with eight fresh candidates, he inaugurated the new society under the name of the ‘Pious Association of the Visitation’ (PAV). During the homily, he announced:

These Sisters will labour to bring the saving message of Christ, right into the homes of our people. Evangelization and catechesis will hold pride of place in their ministry. They will care for the health of our people by preventive and curative medicine and hygienic living, will help remove illiteracy, especially through non-formal education, and will guide the people to increase food production. Mary at her visitation will be their model and patroness.

The Congregation, now a Diocesan one, with 119 professed members working in 19 mission centres, is admirably living out this prophetic vision of their founder.

ix) Promotion of Lay Involvement and Leadership

The vital role of the laity in evangelization is much more than ever before being recognized today. In *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John

Paul II declares: "...there is a new awareness that missionary activity is a matter for all Christians..."²³ In *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, the pontiff asserts:

This passion will not fail to stir in the Church a new sense of mission, which cannot be left to a group of 'specialists' but must involve the responsibility of all the members of the people of God. Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him.²⁴

Augustine Kanjamala, SVD, re-affirms the essential need and urgency for a committed laity who is in a better position to influence every sphere of society with the values of the Gospel.²⁵

In the community-centred tribal society that Archbishop Hubert shepherded, lay involvement came in naturally. The Archbishop promoted this trend, associated frequently with lay leaders and gained their support and collaboration for his multifarious evangelization projects. To further enhance lay involvement in evangelization, in 1976, he opened a Catechist cum Teachers' training centre at Marbisu. Every year, at the end of the course, he entrusted the trainees with the *Missio Canonica*: They were commissioned to serve the Church; they were given the Bible and sent forth to proclaim the Good News.

x) Rallying the Young

The significant part the young ought to play in evangelization is underscored by Pope John Paul II: "The Synod Fathers were particularly sensitive to the theme of youth in the Church...If young people are

23 RM, 2.

24 NMI, 40

25 Augustine Kanjamala, pp. 222-223

to be effective agents of the mission, the Church needs to offer them suitable pastoral care....”²⁶

As a true Salesian, following the footsteps of Don Bosco, the father and friend of the young, Archbishop Hubert had a special predilection for the young. He encouraged the conducting of youth retreats, seminars, conventions, etc., and attended them whenever possible. On these and other occasions he sought to make the young “agents and co-workers in the Church’s mission in her various apostolic works of love and service.” (EA, 47)

xi) Formation of Evangelizers

Ecclesia in Asia places the formation of the evangelizers in the context of inculturation: “Another key aspect of inculturation upon which the future of the process in large part depends is the formation of evangelizers.” (EA, 22) Realizing the need to foster local vocations, the Archbishop stopped recruiting vocations from outside the Archdiocese even though this invited criticism. In the years that followed, this policy ensured the gradual transition of Church leadership into local hands.

Convinced of the need to train his clergy in loco, Archbishop D’Rosario established Christ King College and Oriens Theological College, serving all the dioceses of Northeast India in 1979. The Episcopal ordination of Rt. Rev. Tarcisius Resto Phanrang, SDB, on 23 September, 1990 was a high point on these lines. At the death of Archbishop Hubert there were 48 Diocesan Priests and 19 major seminarians in the Archdiocese. In 1994, the year of his death, 10 deacons from the Archdiocese were ordained priests.

²⁶ EA, 47.

The Archbishop wrote regular pastoral letters for the animation of the faithful. He took personal interest in introducing and explaining these to the priests, religious and the laity. To foster the on-going formation of the evangelizers and to ensure cohesive planning and communication of ideas, he encouraged regular monthly recollections and meetings of the clergy. Through his insistence and personal supervision, participation at these recollections and meetings became normal events in the life of his priests. These regular monthly events no doubt contributed much to the spiritual growth and vitality of the evangelizers.

xii) Evangelizing by Educating

According to Fr. Joseph Puthenpurakal, SDB, “Education is the ministry with the single largest investment of personnel and resources by the Churches in the Northeast.”²⁷ The intimate link between education and evangelization in the region has been widely acknowledged. Fr. Sebastian Karotemprel observes:

The Churches have also been instrumental in producing thousands of civil servants, government leaders, teachers, social workers, etc. This is acknowledged by scholars such as Chaube, Mankekar, Downs, etc. Thus Downs remarks: “...the key to Roman Catholic success was their educational policy....The impact of the schools cannot be over-estimated.”²⁸

For a pastor who firmly believed that “we evangelize by educating and educate by evangelizing,” educational institutions, naturally, were

27 Joseph Puthenpurakal, ‘Vision of Mission: A North Eastern Perspective,’ in *A Vision of Mission in the New Millennium*, ed. Malipurathu and L. Stanislaus, (Mumbai: St. Pauls, 2001), p. 141.

28 Sebastian Karotemprel, ‘The impact of Christianity on the Tribes of Northeast India,’ in *Impact of Christianity on Northeast India*, ed. J. Puthenpurackal, SDB, (Shillong: Vendrame Institute, 1996), pp. 31-32.

of utmost importance. Reminiscing on Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario in the 2 September, 1994 issue of the Khasi newspaper '*Apphira*', Pascal Malngiang pays glowing tributes to him as an educationist who provided the fillip and the logistical support needed for the opening of schools even in remote areas. To minimize the number of drop-outs, he advocated, much to the chagrin of the heads of educational institutions, the policy of not failing students at the school level. Time and again he insisted that boys' education should receive greater attention.

According to the Archdiocesan Directory of 1993, the educational institutions in the Archdiocese counted 915 K.G. and L.P. Schools, 112 M.E. Schools, 55 High Schools, 1 Technical School, 3 Colleges, 1 Seminary for students of philosophy, 1 Seminary for students of Theology, 3 Teachers' Training and 25 Vocational Training Institutes, and 72 hostels catering to a total of about 115,000 students. For Archbishop Hubert, education was always a means and a method of evangelization. He also wanted those in charge of the educational institutions to bear that in mind.

xiii) In the Vanguard of Health and School Services

Dwelling on the broad vision of evangelization opened up by *Redemptoris Missio*, Joseph G. Donders observes: "We are equipped with a wider concept of the Church's evangelization, comprising besides the proclamation of the Gospel, other elements such as human promotion and liberation and inter-religious dialogue."²⁹ The Holy Father himself provides the rationale behind the Church's ventures in the areas of education, health care and social services: "The Synod repeatedly noted that indigenous or tribal people often feel drawn to the person of Jesus Christ and to the Church

²⁹ Joseph G. Donders, 'Broadening the Mission Vision,' in *Mission Today*, July-Sep 2001, p. 254. (Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications)

as a community of love and service. Herein lies an immense field of action in education and health care, as well as in promoting social participation.”³⁰

In keeping with the above praxis of the Church, Archbishop D’Rosario was in the forefront for the promotion of health and social services. In the 2 September, 1994 issue of the newspaper ‘The Shillong Times’ there appeared an article by J.T. Lyngdoh captioned ‘Archbishop D’Rosario, the ‘Social Reformer.’ He being an enlightened, Christian social reformer, his reforms had a purpose and a motive behind them. He envisaged health and social services as integral and inextricable elements of evangelization. He was convinced that the spiritual ministry rendered by the Church is in itself a powerful means of fostering social harmony and transformation.

The establishment of Rapsbun School of Nursing, Shillong and numerous dispensaries throughout the region, the extension and the opening of new departments at Nazareth Hospital in Shillong point to the fact that he considered the Church’s ministry of health care as integral to evangelization. The Archbishop frequently monitored the activities of Sisters and others who ran dispensaries and health centres in the parishes and villages.

According to the 1993 statistics, the centres of Social Service of the Archdiocese included: 1 hospital, 32 dispensaries, 10 orphanages, 1 leprosarium and 1 home for the aged. They reached out to more than 160,000 people. One can think of other prominent instances of the Archbishop’s social concern. In 1971, during the Bangladesh-Pakistan War, Meghalaya was flooded with 800,000 refugees from Bangladesh. The Government of Meghalaya geared up to meet the challenge, and opened 38 huge camps to house them. Humanitarian aid was widely extended for them in Meghalaya in 1987 by the Church in times of

calamities like floods and cyclones. The Archbishop wanted to make spiritual ministry and social work go hand in hand in all the parishes. The Church led by him, came to the forefront of human service and love.

xiv) As Metropolitan Archbishop

As Metropolitan Archbishop, Hubert D'Rosario provided direction and leadership to the Church in Northeast India for nearly three decades. Periodically he convened meetings of the Bishops of the region to discuss issues confronting the area and propose suitable solutions. Plans were chalked out for common programme like the ones treated below under 'A Few Milestones....' For instance, in the years preceding the Centenary Celebrations of 1990, all the dioceses of the Northeast took turns to hold their own celebrations and renewal programme.

In this process of common planning and formulation of strategies, Archbishop Hubert respected the autonomy of the dioceses. The Bishop in turn esteemed him as a pioneer and leader, and looked up to him for guidance and counsel. A good share of the success of evangelization work in Northeast India can be attributed to the concerted and well-orchestrated action plan set in motion by Archbishop Hubert.

xv) A Few Milestones of Archbishop Hubert's Episcopate

The last decade of his episcopate was marked by a number of important events, but the Archbishop took great pains to ensure that the celebrations of these significant events were not merely external. He made every effort to delineate clearly the 'evangelization angle' that inspired these events. That was his way of making these celebrations, occasions for further evangelization and catechesis. The Golden Jubilee of the diocese of Shillong, the 19th General Body meeting of CBCI at Shillong (9 to 16 November 1989), and

the Centenary Celebrations of the Catholic Church in Northeast India (1890-1990) thus became effective channels for spreading the Kingdom of God.

Conclusion

Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario who stepped into Northeast India as a relative stranger departed from this life deeply loved as a father and friend. He was a dynamic and charismatic Church leader filled with drive and vision, and his impact on evangelization in Northeast India is enormous. The epithet etched on his tombstone in the Cathedral Church of Mary Help of Christians in Shillong echo the sentiments of the priests, religious and laity of the region: “Here lie the mortal remains of an ardent pastor and missionary beloved of his clergy and faithful.”

9

Pastor of the Archdiocese of Shillong

Fr. Thomas Manjaly^{1*}

The following are my personal reminiscences of Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario, SDB. I am aware that there are others who are doing more systematic study of his person and different areas of his involvement in the affairs of the Church in Northeast India for more than a quarter of a century. This sharing is limited to the period that he was the chief pastor of the Archdiocese of Shillong-Guwahati.

i) My Contact with Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario

Though Archbishop Hubert took charge of the Archdiocese in 1969, my first meeting with him took place only in the latter part of 1970, when he visited the Papal Seminary, Pune. I was then in the third year of Theology. Later during the summer holidays of 1971, I had the opportunity to meet him, and he also conferred on me the order of Deaconate.

On both these occasions he showed great interest in all aspects of formation, especially the spiritual and intellectual. He went through

1 Fr. Thomas Manjaly, holds a doctorate in Scripture and is professor at Oriens Theological College.

thoroughly the mark sheet and seminary report. He enquired from me what my area of interest was. The same question was asked a few times during the early years of my pastoral ministry. Though I had been entrusted with different ministries, I was given the opportunity to pursue higher studies in the subject of my interest.

My first appointment was to Nongpoh (1972). Three months later, I was asked to move to Mawbri, the newly opened mission centre (1972-76). My next posting was to Mawkhar (1976-78). Later I was transferred to Archbishop's house as Chancellor and secretary (1978-80). This was followed by studies in Rome (1980-84; 1991-93). I was appointed to be on the staff of Oriens Theological College in 1984. It was mainly during my stay at Archbishop's house (1978-80; 1990-91) and at Oriens that I had more personal contacts with him and come to know him more closely. I have given the above information because my memory of an association with Archbishop Hubert is closely linked with my ministry.

ii) My Reminiscences

a) Personal Interest

The first thing that I would like to mention is that he was interested in his priests. I mentioned above how he followed up a seminarian regarding various aspects of his formation. He also tried to identify areas of interest of priests in order to equip and prepare his priests for different ministries. He would meet the priests during his visits to the parishes, and the institutions and seminarians in the seminaries, to discuss various aspects of their ministry and life. He was also able to identify suitable persons as the work required.

b) A keen Observer and Mentor

He was supportive of both his seminarians and priests. He would entrust others with responsibilities, easily delegate, encourage personal interests useful for ministry, support initiatives and offer whatever help that was possible in realizing them. This was because he trusted his priests and other co-workers. He had his own ways to test and try the persons regarding obedience, perseverance, sense of duty, commitment and responsibility.

Archbishop Hubert was a keen observer of persons and events and took note of everything that was happening. He adopted the golden rule of silence, while keeping an alert mind and sharp wit. He supportively intervened and when found necessary suggested corrective measures, without arbitrarily interfering in the work. Of course, he demanded responsible stewardship. In this way, he showed his leadership qualities.

c) A Perfectionist

Throughout his life, he remained a perfectionist to the last details: punctuality, preparedness for any programme, prompt correspondence, timely execution of projects and programmes. “Anyhow” or “Somehow” did not exist in his vocabulary and in his style of functioning. This was further strengthened by his habit of hard work, often keeping him at his table till late into the night. Bro. Castellino Fernandes, SDB, a very close associate of the Archbishop for many years used to say, “If Archbishop worked late into the night, I will have two days of work.” Of course, when he demanded the same from others, it made the life of his close co-workers a bit too hard and tense. I remember the number of times I had to re-write pastoral letters with a manual type-writer, and other important documents, which ultimately proved to be of great help for me!

He was able to organize some great events in Shillong because of the above qualities: the visit of the Holy Father Pope John Paul II to Shillong in February, 1986, the General Body Meeting of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) in November 1989, and summing it all, the nine year preparation (1981-89) and the final week long celebration of the Centenary of the Catholic Church in Northeast India in November 1990.

d) Wide range of Interests

He was well-informed and familiar with new currents in theological and pastoral fields. Endowed with knowledge on a wide range of subjects, he could engage himself in meaningful discussion on any such matters. But he had his own views, often differing considerably from those of others. He had the honesty and courage to voice them especially when they seemed to adversely affect evangelization, pastoral care or faith formation. He thought with the Church. Creative and critical was his approach to contemporary thinking.

He wanted his clergy too to be well-informed and updated. This was particularly important since he took charge of the Archdiocese soon after the Second Vatican Council. He was fortunate to attend the last two sessions of the council and to become part of its new spirit and outlook. He was truly a Council bishop and wanted to share its spirit with others, particularly with the clergy. With this in view he organized numerous updating programmes on theological and pastoral subjects and encouraged priests to attend similar programmes elsewhere in the country. He often gifted to priests very valuable books, especially various church documents.

e) Emphasis on Pastoral and Spiritual Dimension

In everything he emphasized two elements: The spiritual and pastoral. His frequent visits to the parish centres, and even to the remotest villages on foot, regular circulars especially on special occasions, very educative Pastoral Letters on important themes dealing with Christian life, training programmes for priests, publication of the first complete Catholic Bible in Khasi, and its subsequent revision, prayer books, catechism texts, etc., are only some indications of his pastoral concern. It was also his principle that priests should pursue further studies only after a minimum period of direct pastoral ministry. In line with the thinking of Vatican II, he wanted to train his priests in the local context. It was for this purpose that he founded Christ King College and Oriens Theological College.

He was meticulous about the practices of spiritual exercises, first and foremost in his own life with regular participation in monthly recollections, and the annual retreat which he used to make with the diocesan priests. Promotion of various devotions in the parishes, annual parish Eucharistic processions, and meaningful celebration of important liturgical events were his priorities. In this area too, he was demanding on the priests that they take their spiritual life seriously.

In keeping with the pastoral and spiritual orientations of his ministry, the important events that he organized were not just external mega events. He insisted on the spiritual preparation of the people in order to be fruitfully involved in these events, and exhorted all to make use of these occasions for catechesis and faith formation.

f) Spirit of Simplicity, Austerity and Detachment

Further, what struck me in a special way was his spirit of simplicity, austerity and detachment – be it with regard to persons

or things, which at times seemed to border on cruelty. He lived the spirit of the Gospel with all its demands. He did not want to have anything to do with what family and possessions he left behind. His relationships with persons and the use of material goods had spiritual and pastoral orientations. In his own way, he showed consideration for his co-workers. Easy availability especially to priests and religious both at Archbishop's House and in the parish centres, some of them quite remote and difficult to reach, and making regular visits to the centres and institutions (not only to preside over functions), enabled him to establish a rapport with them. But over-familiarity was a strange word for him. Healthy distancing from persons made it possible for him to give corrections, when necessary, at times may be a bit harsh.

He made use of material things for the good of the people – especially for the needy and the poor. He was generous toward the needy, while remaining very frugal in personal life. He could have had everything, but owned little except a large collection of books (necessary for his pastoral work). He kept nothing for himself and for his personal comforts – he gave away to the formation houses his rich collection of books a few weeks before his death. He told me as I was sorting them out, “Keep only a few spiritual books (for his personal use) and those dealing with catechesis.” He had planned to write a few booklets for faith-formation.

g) Prayer Life

All the above mentioned qualities reflected his deep faith and religious spirit. His intense prayer life and regularity in spiritual exercises remained proverbial. He would hardly miss any community spiritual practice, nearly always present and often animating the

monthly recollection of priests, and participating in the annual retreat of the diocesan clergy. This provided him with the necessary inner strength to face many a problem and crisis in the Archdiocese. It is enough to look at the beautiful chapels and churches in the institutions and parish centres – the best for God for a worthy liturgical celebration and conducive atmosphere for prayer.

h) Evangelizing Northeast India

Above all, he had a vision for the Archdiocese and for the Church in Northeast India: evangelization of the Northeast India. He pursued it with determination and single-minded dedication. He had a precise strategy and very definite and concrete plans for realizing his vision. He planned everything systematically. He would leave nothing to chance. This was nothing but an expression of his motto as bishop, “Thy Kingdom Come.” Everything he did was to some extent closely connected to it. Whether one would agree with everything that he did or the way he went about is a different question.

He pursued his vision of evangelization with single mindedness. The only commission that he headed at the national level, if my memory is correct, was that of the CBCI commission for Evangelization. He was also a consultant to the Congregation for Evangelization of peoples. To further this vision, he emphasized the need to train priests, religious and lay evangelizers. His many initiatives emerged from this vision. Establishing Christ King College and Oriens Theological College to train future missionaries ‘in loco’, the Catechists’ Training Centre to prepare lay evangelizers, and finally the founding of the Religious Institute of Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco for evangelization and faith formation in rural areas, to name a few, bear ample testimony to his vision of evangelization.

His vision was not restricted to the archdiocese alone, but to the whole Northeast India. He provided the necessary leadership to the region, especially as the president of the Northeast India Regional Bishop's Council until his death. He inspired his brother bishops and provided the necessary guidance. This he did without neglecting the needs and concerns of the archdiocese, be it in supporting the work of evangelization or in the formation of leaders, especially the priests or any other common concerns.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude these personal reminiscences with the following words, which I wrote on the occasion of his death, "He has left behind a vision to realize, a tradition to follow, and a path to tread. He lived his life in its fullness, and of this fullness he shared with others. He died in harness as a good shepherd, and will be more fruitful in his death like a grain of wheat that dies in order to bear abundant fruit."

His passing away has left a void. But we can pray that he may continue to inspire with this vision, support us with his intercession and guide the destiny of the Church in Northeast India.

10

My Memories of Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario

Archbishop Thomas Menampampil, SDB¹

Among the early missionaries of Northeast India, Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario, SDB, stands out exceptionally tall. Without wanting to diminish the importance of the pioneers of the heroic era that went before, he brought fresh dynamism and new thinking into the mission field. He was very conscious of entering into a great missionary heritage that he was standing on the shoulders of giants but he wanted to take the work forward. He brought planning into his mission work, and the Church grew.

In the history of the Christian mission we will notice that some had zeal, some competence, some knowledge, but not all gave much thought to systematic planning. Archbishop Hubert began his work with a difference. Not only did he plan his work carefully, but also mobilized the needed personnel and resources, opened institutions with a sense of timing, followed up his collaborators with enthusiasm, pursued his goal with drive and determination and achieved many goals considered unachievable at that time.

1 The Most Rev. Thomas Menampampil, SDB, is Archbishop emeritus of Guwahati Archdiocese. He is a frequent writer on matters related to mission.

Archbishop Hubert had a way with his younger colleagues. I came close to him when I was the Warden of Stephen Hall hostel for college boys from 1969. He had just taken over as the Archbishop of Shillong and was beginning to work at a pace that amazed his co-workers. He had a flair for entering into warm relationship with his junior helpers and instilling enthusiasm in them. I had heard about the dynamism and creativity he manifested in Mumbai where he had been rector and Dibrugarh where he had been bishop. I am not sure whether I was doing a good job at Stephen Hall or not, but he had only encouraging words for me and about my way with the boys. Not that he ever compromised on values when appreciating others, but his warmth was evident. It was always a pleasure to meet him and his chief helper Fr. Ignatius Rubio.

Archbishop Hubert was particularly eager to encourage my initiative in giving special care to the Catholic boys in Stephen Hall. I wanted to increase their proportion in the hostel year after year and I succeeded to do so to some extent. He was extremely happy about it. He was very pleased to be with us whenever I invited him. In those days Catholics who reached the college level were very few. It was an absolute duty to assist them when they did arrive. Fortunately the young people whom I admitted into the hostel cooperated with enthusiasm and it was a pleasure working with them. We launched the AICUF in the hostel in those days and opened its units in Shillong, Guwahati, Tura, Dibrugarh, Kohima, Imphal and Aizawl. We conducted bible and leadership camps in places like Imphal and Guwahati. I still remember a camp for Catholic college students we organized in Dibrugarh in which Mr. Purno Sangma, who as a teacher at Don Bosco, Dibrugarh those days, took part. Whenever I returned from such events, I would meet Archbishop D'Rosario,

and he would have kind words for what had been achieved and suggestions for the future.

Meanwhile the Church work was making headway. In 1969, Bishop Hubert was promoted as the Archbishop of Shillong-Guwahati from Dibrugarh. He was eager to take forward the Garo apostolate after he had taken over Shillong. It was his goal to put the Garo Church on its feet as early as possible and have Tura erected as a diocese. His creative imagination led him to invite Bishop Orestes Marengo in his retirement at Tezpur to take up the responsibility for this new unit as Administrator. As he had invited new congregations to Nagaland-Manipur such as the Jesuits, Apostolic Carmel Sisters, Bethany Sisters, Clarists, CMCs, and Adoration Sisters, he began inviting new apostolic workers to the new diocese. Thus the Blessed Sacrament Fathers and DSTs came to Tura. The Franciscan Brothers, Clarist Franciscans, Charity Sisters, Apostolic Carmel Sisters, St. Paul's Sisters, Holy Cross Fathers, MSFS Fathers and others took up work in different parts of Shillong Archdiocese. The Missionaries of Charity initiated activities in Shillong and Guwahati.

Once the diocese of Tura came into existence, Archbishop's next goal was to elevate Diphu into a diocese. It meant hard work. Fr. Balavoine had pioneered missionary work among the Karbis and the Tiwas, and Fr. John Marie was the pioneer of evangelization in Sojong, Diphu, Chokihola and other places. New centres came up in Karbi Anglong and the Christian community grew. Archbishop made long and tiresome visits to the Karbi and Tiwa areas, as he was continuously doing in Khasi Hills itself. His intense tours of villages will always remain a great inspiration for active missionaries in the years to come. There will be many interesting stories of his crossing rivers, walking in slush, getting drenched, shivering in the cold and staying overnight in

huts under different weather conditions. They can become themes for thrillers.

Archbishop Hubert was beginning to realize that the old 'Assam Mission' was moving onto another stage of its development and becoming a full-fledged Church. He realized that it needed houses of formation at various levels of training. Many congregations had set up their own houses of formation. Most dioceses in the region already had their own Minor Seminaries, but Northeast India did not yet have its own Philosophate and Theologate. So it happens one day that the Archbishop walks into Stephen Hall and asks me whether I can host some 16 young students of philosophy. I said I would do everything possible to provide the space required, but the decision depended on Fr. Joseph Arokiasamy, the Principal of St. Anthony's College. He had already spoken to Fr. Joseph, and all that was needed was to take the next step. Thus came into existence Christ King College. Archbishop D'Rosario had his own way of giving names, a great novelty in those days: Resurrection Church, Oriens College, Christ King College and others.

Fr. Sebastian Karotemprel SDB, reputed as a great scholar even in those days, took over charge of Christ King College as the Rector. The Archbishop had an extraordinary ability to scout out for talent. He chose the best available persons to head his works. The brothers occupied only a small area of Stephen Hall, but they settled down quite fast. I myself was taking some classes for them and everything seemed shaping well, when the Archbishop found the possibility of shifting the institution to the vacant building at Sacred Heart College, Mawlai. There, of course, the brothers had more space, more playing grounds and more facilities. Meanwhile, a building was coming up with many more possibilities just below the Archbishop's House, which now houses about 100 brothers. I can still recall walking around on those

slopes with Archbishop Hubert trying to locate the site for the future building. What that institution has already contributed to the Church in Northeast India is impossible to calculate.

After the Philosophate was up, the next thought was about the Theologate. In our own days now when for resources we are in a better position, we are not able to understand the difficulties of the pioneers who strained every nerve to bring even a humble institution into existence. Resources in that era were meagre, personnel few, talents over-tapped, community's horizons limited. But there was no limit to the Archbishop's imagination. With the help of Fr. Rubio he mobilized the resources, bought land in Mawlai, found personnel, launched the work, and brought Oriens Theological College into existence to the amazement and pride of Northeast India. At the first stage it was a residential institution, but later it became a regular theologate for the region.

With the same determination Archbishop Hubert brought up the Pastoral Centre near Tripura Castle and other training centres at other places. He bought land in Guwahati for a future Bishop's House and another plot for a house for a contemplative community. This latter dream did not come through, and so the plot of land hosts today the present Social Forum, Women's Development Centre, Don Bosco Institute for youth apostolate and many other activities. Similarly, Sonaiguli parish came up. So did the Generalate of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians. The Archbishop always remained far-sighted, acquiring property and establishing presences in different areas. He visited periodically Guwahati, toured the interior villages of South Kamrup and laid the foundation for a future diocese. I am extremely grateful to him.

But there is another of my activities for which he offered full support. I had left Stephen Hall and Shillong in 1972, but returned

again as the rector of Don Bosco in 1975. Once again I was close to Archbishop Hubert. He was very happy when I told him that I was eager to raise the number of Catholic boys in the boarding house. Some 160 young men belonging to more than 40 tribes made life in the boarding house extremely exciting. My Salesian confreres gave me full support. Our community was big with nearly 40 Salesian priests and brothers helping in the work. I tried to take students from the forgotten corners of the region and those that were new to the faith. Those were the days when we helped a large number of young people from Arunachal Pradesh and trained them to share their faith with others. I took a number of the boys from Fr. Kulandaisamy of Harmutty and tried to make of them dynamic lay missionaries in carrying the Gospel to remote areas. Similarly I initiated contacts with young people from Tripura who had fled homes during the ethnic riots. The Archbishop was supportive of these efforts and did not oppose the idea of allowing young people to baptize the people they had instructed, but under proper guidance.

The Archbishop kept following such efforts for the undeveloped areas and forgotten corners of the region. When I was in Dibrugarh, he was very supportive of my initiative in bringing into existence Bosco Bible School at Tinsukia in order to pioneer the faith into Eastern Arunachal Pradesh through young people. Miracles did take place. The spirit of the early pioneers lived on in Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario, and he wanted to impart the same zeal to others. It was this eagerness that took a concrete form when he decided to found a sisters’ congregation with the name “The Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco.”

Archbishop Hubert had consulted Father Pio before he launched himself into founding this congregation. He remembered Don Bosco’s advice to some of his contemporaries not to venture into any such endeavour unless God had given some unmistakable indication that

that was his will. There was a context in which he thought it important to found a new religious institute. He was beginning to feel that the commitment to the villages was going out in our missionary team. He always believed that the pastoral care of rural Christian communities and further evangelization ought to be the central concern of all missionaries. Of that, he had no doubt. He attached great importance to Church growth, also in numbers. He respected every other theological point of view, but about certain of his convictions he remained unshaken. He did not mind even if some of his colleagues considered him outdated or one-sided in this regard. And his consistency in this matter proved its worth through the results it yielded. Many generations will call him blessed, because he is the father of their faith.

Archbishop D'Rosario had an amazing skill for organizing events that would encourage the Christian community. One remembers well the determination with which he prepared the Northeast India Catholic community for the Jubilee of 1972, the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1986, the millennial celebrations of 2000 and similar great happenings. He not only moved his diocese, but stirred the entire region. He had common pastoral letters written, translated and widely distributed. He had resolutions taken, plans drawn up, projects carried out. He had apostolic goals set, animation programmes conducted and catechism classes launched in a big way. The same themes would be discussed in the whole region, the same songs sung, the same goals pursued.

Archbishop kept close to the laity, to the lay associations, political leaders and other significant persons in society. However, he did not distract himself from his main mission of religious animation of Christian communities and evangelization work. After the Arunachal Freedom of Religion Bill was passed and when Tyagi bill was in

parliament, the Christian leaders in Northeast India came together to discuss the problem. Archbishop Hubert was the Co-Chairman along with the Anglican Bishop. They appointed Rev. Basaiawmoit and me as secretaries. It was a very exciting period: on the one hand opposing the bill in the parliament and the act in Arunachal, on the other, building stronger ecumenical relationships among the Churches of Northeast India. We printed leaflets, organized protest meetings, contacted people, wrote letters to the editor in such a way that things improved in Arunachal and the Government changed in Delhi. Meantime our ecumenical bonds grew stronger. I was able to build and strengthen them in later years and develop the old team into a Peace Team.

There are many more things that I could tell about Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario. I must say, I learnt much from him: his love for the Church, his commitment to his flock, his drive for evangelization, his skill for holding a team together; and even his love for maps and paintings. His optimism was contagious. His hard habit of work holds out many lessons for his followers. But more than anything else, his deep convictions about the Christian truths, his attachment to Catholic traditions, his fidelity to priestly and religious duties, prayer habit, radically committed life...these were bound to leave memories behind.

I met Archbishop Hubert just a day before he died in Nazareth hospital. He had worn himself out. He left us before he could retire. But he had fulfilled his mission. He changed the face of Northeast India. He set things in such a way that the dynamism he had planted into the ecclesiastical machinery would last a long time. We are still running on the energies and resources he has left behind. We ought to have a tremendous sense of responsibility to keep alive his memory, treasure his

heritage, and hand down this patrimony to coming generations. When many years later people will look back with eagerness for the reasons for the growth and performance of the Church in Northeast India, historians will trace them to this giant of a missionary who handed on the treasure of his Christian faith to a vast number of people at the turn of the century and the beginning of the new millennium.



Oriens Theological College, Shillong



CBCI Meeting in Shillong



Catechist Training Centre, Dibrugarh



Nazareth Hospital, Shillong - Inset: Foundress of the Hospital, Sister Dr. Angeles

11

A Catechist's Impressions about Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario

Bah Marshal Susngi¹

Hubert D'Rosario was the Archbishop of Shillong Guwahati when I was catechist of Upper Shillong Parish. I came to know him since the time he came to Shillong. At that time we were having Christmas celebrations. He came to our parish and he visited almost every village in the parish within a short time.

My personal contacts with him became closer gradually. In this way we came to appreciate him as a bishop and missionary. He was a great missionary who always wanted to go to the villages and also spent the nights there because he wanted to know people and their problems in their own context. He came many times to spend the night in Pomlakrai, Mawpynthih, and Mawkhar Myllem, and other places especially in the sub-district of Pomlakrai. He would celebrate Mass and after Mass we took breakfast and we went to visit as many families as we could. It was not at all easy at that time since there were no proper roads connecting the villages. We had to walk

¹ Bah Marshal Susngi is the Head Catechist of St. Paul's Parish, Upper Shillong. He has been a close collaborator of Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario.

over hills and valleys but still he would visit every family and pray for the members of the family.

Archbishop had true missionary spirit in him and he had only one aim in life, namely, the progress of the Church and of his faithful in the archdiocese. He did the touring of the villages on foot for many years. Being a man who toured the Khasi Hills from place to place he gathered first hand information about all the needs of his people. They had no leaders in the villages to guide them. He began to think about new ways of coming to their assistance. That is how he came to the idea of starting a religious congregation. Through this congregation he thought he could send sisters to the villages where there were no leaders to guide and to help them. They would help the people in faith formation and bring them the benefits of literacy. The sisters could teach the people hygienic ways of living. They were to be agents of healthcare and education in distant villages.

Thus Archbishop founded the Congregation of the VSDBs in 1983. In doing this he had the help of Fr. Virgilius Albera, SDB and other priests. Whenever the Archbishop came to our area he used to speak of his congregation. He used to say that he wanted his sisters to go to the villages, stay with the people and teach them the Christian faith and everything which was relevant to their life and welfare.

But not all priests were agreeable to the idea of founding one more congregation of sisters. The priests told him that there are already many congregations to do the work he envisioned and therefore what was the need for another congregation? They felt that there was no need to start another congregation. But the Archbishop was determined to go ahead with his plan because he saw with his own eyes the needs of the people in poor villages. So he decided to found the congregation.

The Archbishop was supported in his plans by Fr. Virgilius Albera. So we looked for a suitable place since 1981-1982. At last we offered the house where the Madonna Sisters are at present. The house was used for the parish school. But we did not need the house any more since we intended to rent the house and use the money for the needs of the parish. Because the Archbishop needed that place, the parish council and Fr. Albera were willing to give the old house and land to him in order to start the new congregation.

This was the origin of the VSDB congregation. The scope of the new congregation was to work for the spiritual and material well-being of the poor in villages. The Archbishop was well focused on this goal. He wanted only that. The sisters that he wanted to train as religious should be ready to stay in villages and help the poor people of the villages. This is the novelty and originality of the VSDB congregation and the VSDB sisters. It is not one more congregation like other existing congregations.

The VSDBs are expected to live like the people in villages. That is what he wanted from the very beginning of this undertaking. For this purpose their formation was village oriented. From the very start he sought the help of volunteers to train the candidates. I was one of them who volunteered to train the young girls and sisters. Because the sisters were to go to villages to teach catechism, they had to know their catechism, learn the art of preaching the word of God, and put up with the inconveniences of village life. I helped them for some time. I taught them how to teach catechism and how to preach the word of God so that they could later go to the villages and catechize people and help them lead better lives. The sisters are doing good work now and I see that their work is flourishing.

The sisters are growing in number and in the quality of their apostolate. The number of mission stations and centres they are working in has grown. They are happy to be in villages and be helpful to people. This is indeed a great encouragement for village people.

The Archbishop was really a zealous missionary. From the moment he came to our villages we recognized the great missionary spirit he had. Let me illustrate what I want to say with a small anecdote. When he went to the villages, he used to go and give the sacraments to the sick people. He went to hear confession for those who could not walk to the church. He was always glad to sit for confessions and bring the Eucharist to those who were sick. I found him doing this ministry many times. On one occasion he visited the father of Fr. Sebastian Kharmawphlang in the village of Rangbihbih. He heard his confession and gave him Holy Communion. He did this a number of times, whenever he came to Rangbihbih. He visited him and prayed for him. Later on when Fr. Sebastian's father died in peace, I was present and he told me how happy he was because the Archbishop came and gave him the Sacraments. Again it was a matter of great surprise for me to see a bishop sitting for confessions and bringing communion to the sick. I have never seen any Bishop in my life who sits for confessions. I was also astonished to see that the Archbishop asked me to teach the VSDB candidates how to go about visiting the village families, preach the Gospel so that they could learn how these could be done.

The Archbishop said that he was in need of a helper to teach his candidates who will be going to the villages the art of village visiting. He knew me since I was always going with him for touring many places in parishes like Mawbri and Mawsynram and in my own parish for prayer meetings and other functions. And I said, "Why not; I am willing to do so since we are all meant for the people."

The Archbishop often came by himself to meet Fr. Albera. As far as I knew the two were not always in good terms with each other. They had different ways of thinking and different ways of doing mission work. But they respected each other. Sometimes they would shout at each other speaking different languages. On one occasion at Dew saw (a village in Shiliang-um) they sat together and they talked loudly to each other in Italian, English and Khasi and we could not understand what they were talking about. The main reason for their disagreement was on policies. Fr. Albera had too many children in the boarding house and he sent them to study in the parish school. The sisters who were looking after the school complained to the Archbishop because there were too many students in the class. When the complaint reached the ears of Archbishop he agreed to speak to Fr. Albera and tell him not to take too many children. But Fr. Albera said: "I am a son of Don Bosco and Don Bosco said that we should help and take care of them all. So I help them." Because of this problem there were misunderstandings between the two. Later on the Archbishop understood the problem.

There was a girl who wanted to join his congregation. But she could not get admission in any school. So that girl came to tell Fr. Albera about the matter. Fr. Albera said: "I have plenty of place here," and accepted that girl in his hostel. From that time on there was good relationship between them. They loved each other and began to help each other together. They agreed to start a new congregation. From that time on their misunderstandings ended.

In the beginning, the Archbishop did not understand or know the situation of our people here. Afterwards he saw that his own student could not get admission in their own school. But when they came to Fr. Albera he would accept them. This made him realize that mission school is for our people.

The Archbishop toured almost all the villages of the Archdiocese. He understood that to go to the villages by jeep, celebrate Mass in the morning, then go for breakfast and then come back home was of little use. His main purpose for going to different villages was to go and visit each and every family as far as he could. If he stayed for two days in the village he could visit 12-15 families. Before he entered people's houses he would ask information from me about them. How they were; whether they go to church or not. After gathering information about each family he would enter their houses and talk to them. In the beginning he would speak only a few words because he could not speak Khasi fluently. He talked to them and gave them advice according to their need.

Those who had entered into irregular marriages were advised to rectify their marriage; those who were not going for Sunday Mass were persuaded to go to church. I informed the Archbishop about the situation of each family and he understood the matter immediately and he advised the people to be good and responsible Christians.

Archbishop Rosario did not need to be invited to visit villages. He would offer himself to come to our villages. He arranged the programmes to go to different places. He would just inform that on such and such a day he would come to the parish and stay for a specified time. On one occasion we went to Mawblah (a village in Upper Shillong Parish). At that time we had to walk on foot for long distances. Jeeps could not reach there. We had to climb the over hills. At one time Fr. Albera, the Archbishop, I and some children were walking together. The Archbishop fell down suddenly and Fr. Albera said, "*La ur ka Balang Katholik*" (the Catholic Church has fallen down).

Archbishop Rosario was a man of prayer. When he went for Church services in different parishes, Bro. Castellino Fernandes, SDB,

also used to go with him. Being a man of prayer he could not bear to see Bro. Castellino not praying when there was free time. So one day he told Brother: "You should pray the breviary." And from that time on, Brother Castellino would carry his breviary everywhere and when there was time he prayed the breviary. People could see in their Bishop that he was really a man of prayer. Thus he taught the people also to pray.

When we reached too early in a village and had nothing to do, he would spend his time in prayer. In prayer life we could not compare ourselves with him. He could sit hours and hours praying. Being a person of prayer he could do so, in spite of many pressing works. The Church flourished very much during his time.

12

A True Shepherd of the Flock

Fr. Nicholas Tuligi, SDB¹

Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario, SDB, was first of all a man of prayer. He was devout during the celebration of the Eucharist. During meetings and other gatherings, he would always insist that we should pray together. He was very careful in praying his regular prayers especially saying his breviary. He felt that prayer was his duty and he enjoyed fulfilling it. As a Salesian he was faithful in his daily prayers – rosary, breviary, meditation and in the celebration of the Eucharist. He did not have any special ways of praying. He accomplished his ordinary prayers in an extra-ordinary way. He made frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament. When he visited the different parishes or anywhere at all, he would sit inside the church reading the word of God and pray. He was a man of prayer, yet he was not showy.

i) Responsibilities and Duties

Archbishop D’Rosario was very faithful and careful about his duties. He understood his work as a bishop in the diocese. He put his

¹ Fr. Nicholas Tuligi, SDB, was a frontline missionary for many years, and collaborator of Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario. He passed away a few years ago. RIP.

heart and soul into his duty. He gave himself totally to it to the best of his ability. He took great care of his priests and people as a good shepherd should. He trusted his priests and his co-workers. When meetings were held when he was sickly, he would ask them to discuss and decide upon matters. Later on he would ask for the decisions taken.

The Archbishop triumphed in the success and fruitfulness of the apostolate. He never looked for his own convenience or for his own glory. He worked for souls and with great joy spread the Church and established the Kingdom of God here on earth.

ii) His Tactfulness and Prudence

Archbishop Hubert was very prudent in dealing with people. This was seen in his impartiality towards all priests, religious and people; as much as possible he dealt with them equally. He loved his, priests, religious and the laity as well. He trusted the Diocesan Council members. Several times he sent them to settle the problems faced by either priests or lay people.

Archbishop Hubert made great efforts for the welfare of the Archdiocese, the faithful and the priests under his care. Anything that he had decided, he would carry out meticulously: whether it was the case for promotion to diaconate or to the priesthood, in assigning personnel to different mission stations or in making decisions about new parishes and buildings. He really put his whole self, heart and soul into the work he did.

Archbishop understood what he did and did his work convincingly. He gave himself completely without reserve for the smooth running of the Archdiocese in the field of administration, particularly in the establishment of God's Kingdom.

iii) The Problems and Difficulties that He Faced

Archbishop faced lot of problems and difficulties. He came across rebellious priests who were against the decisions that he made. Some of them wanted to tell him what to do, some said, "We are of this place, we know better. He should do what we say." But as a shepherd he knew what had to be done. He felt that it was his duty together with the Council to run and to see to matters in the Archdiocese.

At a particular time Archbishop Hubert was also accused of helping others that are not of the Khasi community. I was the Parish Priest at the Cathedral at that time and it was my duty to make people understand about our Christian duties to help anyone in need and that people should support him instead of accusing. Trying to make people understand I said: "Why are you attacking the good Samaritan because of the help he rendered to a fellow traveller on the road?" The majority supported the Archbishop while few of them were still against him; and for sometime the talk against him continued.

There were also some obstacles in the usual management of the Archdiocese regarding the different parishes. There were some people in some parishes who sent letters to the Archbishop against some priests. In solving these problems he tried always his best to do justice. He inquired first and then would see and decide.

Sometimes, Archbishop Hubert really got angry, and so some people said, "How is that he is angry with us?" They expected a bishop not to get angry. He was angry because he was feeling terribly upset and at times he could not bear it. He was a man; he was not a piece of wood, so, there were occasions when he used strong words, for either priests or lay people. Some people wanted to have a bishop, like a piece of wood without any sentiment. Those who knew the reality said that he was

patient in spite of the hardships and the obstacles in every way. He met opposition from some priests who reacted to him badly and who refused to obey him. In this way he was compelled to transfer them or to ask their superiors to take them out of the Diocese. Because of this, a few blamed him for removing them. Some suggested bringing more priests who were non-tribal to work in Northeast India. But he strongly opposed the idea saying that here in Northeast India there are only simple Christians, with simple faith; and if more are coming from outside, it will cause division and it might create confusion. He even opposed the idea in the Northeast India Council of Bishops.

He was not spoken well of by some. They did not like him because he was a non-Khasi. Many Khasis wanted to have a Khasi bishop. This was not because a Khasi bishop was better but because of ethnic considerations. It was a great humiliation for him but he bore it with great patience. He never got offended about it. He understood that and so the Diocesan Council was looking for a priest fit to be his Auxiliary. He did not have any unsolvable problems because many priests supported him.

Regarding the formation of the clergy, he was the one who began to send diocesan priests to Rome for studies. He felt the need of forming them well. He felt also that it was the duty of the Diocese to form the clergy in order to get qualified persons from our own priests to meet the different needs in the Diocese. He objected to some Khasi priests who were not so happy when non-Khasi priests were sent for studies. They questioned him why was he sending only the Non-Khasi for studies. But he replied to them that everyone has a share in the Diocese and everyone serves the Diocese. All were equal. There should be no ethnic groups in the Diocese.

Some priests realized that we need to be self-sufficient. The people should start contributing to the Diocese so that the Archbishop could meet the needs of all in the whole of the Diocese. Some suggested buying some land and making houses so that it could be rented out and the money could be used for the Diocese. As a result a house was bought at Malki for that purpose. But due to the carelessness of some priests about the documents, the house was lost.

iv) A True Pastor and Missionary

Archbishop Hubert loved souls and sacrificed himself for their good. But he never boasted of the sacrifices he made. Yes, he was a true pastor and missionary. He was ready to do anything for the good of souls. He would encourage priests in the parishes during the meetings as well as in the Diocesan Council. He was a bishop who loved touring the villages. He went for touring very often, even sometime when he was sick. He seemed as if he was getting better in the midst of the people. This was because he loved them very dearly. He was not proficient in Khasi; and this was one of his penances because naturally he had a feeling of inferiority complex when he did not know the language. But he bore with it. He overcame this shame by trying to talk a few words in Khasi. When he went to the villages, it was not for him to preach much by words but by his example and the witness of his very life.

The Archbishop offered Mass in villages and baptized people in the places where he visited. He usually had a short conversation with people as he moved from place to place. The people too, did not expect much from him as an expert speaker and preacher because he did not know the language very well. He tried his level best to learn Khasi. He accepted corrections when he made mistakes in speaking. He could not

succeed much in learning Khasi may be because of the heavy schedule of work in the Archdiocese. He had less time to study the language and so also to talk with people in Khasi. He was appreciated and admired for these regular visits to the different parishes and villages.

His touring did not end only in the parish centre or in the places where he could go by vehicle. He went also to the places where no vehicles could reach. He walked with priests and people to remote villages. He had also an ulcer in one of his legs and at times, the pain was unbearable. Many were astonished how he could bear it without complaining. This showed his readiness for making heroic sacrifices.

It happened one day that on the way to Mawkhap – a village in Pynursla Parish, when the pain in his leg was so much that he could not walk anymore. So people carried him. This happened in many other parishes like Nongpoh, Sonapahar (Lyngngam), etc.

He was a dynamic missionary. He never looked for his own glory. He looked always for the glory of God. When he went for touring he stayed on for five or six days. He did not wait till the Parish Priest called him. He offered himself to come when he was free.

v) Manifestations of Love for the Church

His love for the Church was always visible. It was manifested in his efforts to let the Church grow. He looked after the needs of the Church whether spiritually or materially. He worked for the glory of God. Even in the midst of pain and sickness he offered all and everything to God for the welfare of the Church. He never complained or lamented over his ailments. He kept working with love and joy. All his life was totally dedicated to God. The Church came first before all other things even his relatives. He never asked his relatives to visit him because he did not want to be disturbed by them. He did not want to

be occupied by them. He wanted to be free only for God, the Church and God's people.

The manifestation of his love was the totality of his self-giving. He was detached from his family members. Even when his sister passed away while he was in touring in Byrnihat and when he was told about it, he did not pay much attention. He just said, "Pray for her soul."

From the beginning till the end, The Archbishop was ever true to his motto: "Thy Kingdom come." He spread the Kingdom of God almost in the whole of Northeast India especially in the Dioceses of Dibrugarh and Shillong where he was working as a Bishop. He spread God's Kingdom by governing, moulding and through the decisions he made for the Diocese. He inspired and motivated the priests, catechists and lay people to do the same. He extended the Kingdom through his relationships with the government and the Holy See. He was a great organizer of the diffusion of faith here in Northeast India.

Archbishop Hubert saw the need of the people through his close contacts with the priests and the people in parishes. He went to visit people to see their situation. In governing the Diocese, he used his own ideas and he accepted ideas given by others. The leadership of the Bishop is very important. He could be a brake or he could be also a motor or an engine. The priests usually collaborated well with him. He got also a lot of financial help from abroad. So, he could do many things in the Diocese for the good of the people.

The Archbishop used all the money he received for the benefit of the Archdiocese. He constructed many churches, opened seminaries and other training centres and institutions. He knew what to do and what not to do.

When the vineyard grew big, he could not plough it alone. So, he ploughed together with many other collaborators. He was lucky to

have priests who worked together hand in hand with him. They worked hard knowing their own duties and their love for souls. He directed them and they worked for the development and growth of the people. He saw the longing of the people for spiritual food and nourishment. That was why he opened parishes in many parts of the Diocese. For example in Laitlyngkot there were few Catholics, only 1500 faithful approximately. But even then he felt the need of opening a parish. He knew that those people there will not be fervent in their faith if there was no one to take care of them.

vi) Events Leading to the Foundation of the VSDB Congregation

Archbishop Rosario expressed and talked several times about his desire to found the VSDB congregation. During those times, the people in the villages were left to themselves without anyone to take care of them. They were like sheep without a shepherd. When Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario came to Shillong in 1969 only the Sisters in Pynursla Parish were working together in the parish; all other Sisters in the Diocese were independent. They did their own work of education. Archbishop wanted to follow the pastoral way where the Sisters and the Priests work together for one purpose, for the good of the parish. The school must be run by the Sisters together with the Priest.

So, wherever the Sisters were invited to work, he made an agreement that they serve the parish. But he could hardly find any congregation that would take up such work especially to be in remote areas of the parish. So, he planned to look for Sisters who would help him begin a new congregation of Sisters. Such a congregation would work mostly in villages. They would proclaim the Good News, teach and work for their conversion. He wanted the Sisters to live a simple life with the people. They would help the people in the best way possible. He

really felt the need for such sisters for the simple and ignorant people. His plan was for the development and growth of the people. He said that his plan was that the Sisters adapt themselves to the situation of the people.

(vii) A Lover of Vocation

In spite of all the difficulties that he faced the Archbishop encouraged local vocations. Consequently many Khasis opted to be priests during his time. Today the Archdiocese of Shillong has more diocesan priests than the other Dioceses in Northeast India.

He worked for vocations to religious life and priesthood. He tried his best to get more clergy in Khasi-Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills and Mikir Hills. His pre-occupation was to take care of his flock with much love and concern.

13

A Multi-faceted Personality

Fr. Henry Manar¹

In 1964 while studying in Mawkyndeng-Raliang Middle English School, as it was then known, our teacher late Babu Cyril Chympa told us that he would go to Bombay to participate in the International Eucharistic Congress to be held in Bombay when Pope Paul VI would be present. Our teacher accordingly left Raliang with some other participants and came back to tell us that one bishop meant for Dibrugarh was ordained during the Eucharistic Congress held in November 1964. In 1965 when I joined St. Paul's Seminary, Upper Shillong, I came to know that the bishop who was ordained in Bombay in 1964 was Bishop Hubert D'Rosario of Dibrugarh. He came to visit his young seminarians of Dibrugarh and celebrated Mass for all the inmates of the seminary. Many young seminarians were very much impressed and taken up by his enthusiasm and cheerful personality.

On the 29th September 1969 when Bishop Stephen Ferrando, SDB, left Shillong for Italy, we were told that Shillong diocese would be

¹ Fr. Henry Manar, holds a doctorate in Moral Theology and is at present the Parish Priest of Upper Shillong Parish.

raised to the status of Metropolitan See and Bishop Hubert D'Rosario of Dibrugarh would come to Shillong as Archbishop of the new Ecclesiastical Province known then as Shillong-Guwahati. True enough before the end of the year the Catholic community of Shillong had the happy privilege of welcoming him as the first Archbishop of Shillong-Guwahati. At the time that he took charge of Shillong-Guwahati in 1969, Shillong-Guwahati Metropolitan See consisted of a very vast territory of present day Dioceses of Tura, Diphu, Guwahati, Jowai and Nongstoin.

Initially Archbishop Hubert availed himself of the services of the old team of Bishop Stephen Ferrando, such as his Secretary Rev. Fr. Mario Bianchi but slowly and steadily he brought a new team who would help him spread the Gospel and expand the work of the Church in Northeast India according to his particular gifts and vision for the Church.

The most prominent persons of the new team of Archbishop Hubert were, Fr. Ignatius Rubio, Fr. Sebastian Karotemprel and Br. Castellino Fernandes. Each of the above mentioned persons contributed their own special gifts and talents towards the growth of the Church in Shillong-Guwahati Archdiocese under the able leadership of Archbishop Hubert. The four persons and their respective dedicated successors symbolized the various types of services that Archbishop Hubert intended to provide for the spread of Catholic faith in Northeast India especially in the Archdiocese of Shillong-Guwahati.

i) A Builder and Planner for the Spread of the Gospel

Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario had already some good and fruitful experiences as bishop of Dibrugarh and understood very well that the spread of the Gospel would depend much on the number

and quality of the Church's personnel. He realized that it would be very difficult for him to visit frequently the very vast territory of the Archdiocese. Hence, with the help of Fr. Ignatius Rubio, SDB, as Mission Procurator, he would soon see to the preparation of starting new Mission Centres by acquiring new plots of land to build Parish Houses, schools, convents and dispensaries for would be new centres. People who knew him report that he would work till late into the night with his correspondence and would rise up early morning for each day's apostolate. No wonder within a span of a few years, and with the help of his team, he was able to erect many new parishes, mission centres and other institutions and in due time he was able to prepare for the erection of new dioceses such as the Diocese of Tura in 1973, the Diocese of Diphu in 1983 and the Archdiocese of Guwahati in 1992. He was also responsible for the appointment of Bishop Resto Phanrang, SDB, as Auxiliary Bishop of Shillong in 1990, who would ultimately succeed him after his death as Archbishop of Shillong in 1995.

ii) A Pastor who Formed Future Pastors

Archbishop Hubert understood very well that the Gospel could only be spread more effectively by priests and missionaries who know and love the people and are familiar with their customs, languages, religions, traditions and cultures. In order to achieve this purpose he made sure that, seminarians should be trained in loco and accordingly entrusted to Rev. Fr. Sebastian Karotemprel, SDB, as someone who would see to the formation of Diocesan clergy. Fr. Sebastian single-handedly started Christ King College in present day Stephen Hall and combined in himself the job of Rector, professor, administrator, spiritual father and the overall in charge of the new philosophate known as Christ King College, Laitumkhrah, Shillong. The humble beginning of Christ King College in

1972 in a rented building has now developed into a big structure which is the present day Christ King College, a house of formation for future diocesan priests and missionaries of Northeast India.

Archbishop Hubert also took a bold step in starting Oriens Theological College in 1979. Initially it was used as a Study House for students of Theology who attended classes in Sacred Heart Theological College. Later on it became a full-fledged Theological College. He not only started the two Major Seminaries but also saw to it that they have trained personnel and took active part in the welfare of the staff and of the seminarians by visiting them regularly, gave them quality time and provided for them whatever was required for their growth and all-round development.

His love for the Church gave him the required strength to find out means and ways to start these two important institutions to make sure that they continue to serve the needs of the Church of Northeast India. At present both Institutions have a good representation from all the dioceses of Northeast India. He took special care of the formation of future priests. He visited the seminaries and St. Paul's Apostolic School often and spent quality time with the seminarians in order to encourage and prepare them for their future ministries. He remained keenly interested in the seminaries and houses of formation till the end of his life.

The care and attention that Archbishop Hubert gave to the staff and students of Christ King College and Oriens Theological College, was by all means exceptional. But he gave equal attention to all the other houses of formation such as St. Paul's Apostolic School. He made it a point to visit regularly all the parishes and Catholic schools and institutions such as the Lum Jingshai Catechists Training School, Marbisu. He loved to visit and interact with the Catholic teachers and

senior Catholic boys of all the parish schools and institutions. He would always insist that no child should fail and no Catholic child should be refused admission in a Catholic institution. He was also responsible for sending religious priests and sisters to work in such missions or at least gave his permission and blessings for starting such institutions in the case of Religious Congregations. His goal was very clear for all such institutions, namely, they existed in order to serve people and spread the message of the Gospel.

In order to make sure that priests maintain their spirit of enthusiasm for the mission, Archbishop Hubert insisted that every priest should come regularly to the monthly meeting in the Archbishop's House, besides participating actively in the annual retreat of priests. He would prepare well his talks every month and after prayer and afternoon tea, monthly meeting would be held with all the priests working in different parishes and institutions, where important and relevant matters are discussed for the good of the Christian community and the cause of education and apostolate. He would also make sure to arrange before hand for the annual spiritual retreat and invited competent preachers to animate the retreats and he would be the most faithful participant. He would also remind priests to pray well, relax and even eat well so as to be able to go back renewed in every aspect of life. He was very human in every aspect.

The inscription in the episcopal coat of arms of Archbishop Hubert was: "Thy Kingdom Come." It clearly indicated his desire to spread God's Kingdom. He wanted to follow the saying of Jesus: "I am the good shepherd...I know my sheep and my sheep know me." (John 10: 14-15) Hence, he spent most of his time in visiting different parishes and mission centres which took him to every nook and corner of his vast Archdiocese.

As a young seminarian and later as a major Seminarian I had the happy privilege of accompanying him occasionally, during holidays, to different villages of Jaiñtia Hills. Later as a priest I came to know that he planned his own touring program and informed priests concerned when he would be available for their parishes. When he visited any parish or village he gave complete freedom to the priest to organize their programme. He would never interfere with the programme. He would come in time and leave according to schedule.

The Archbishop would always make it a point to visit village chapels on reaching any village and say a short prayer with the faithful who came to welcome him. In the evening he would hear confessions and preach to the faithful. In the following day he would gladly baptize, bless marriages and administer the Sacrament of Confirmation to Christians who were prepared. But he always insisted that Christians should be properly prepared for the reception of any sacrament. One could see his joy and happiness when people are prepared well. He would willingly visit families especially the sick if there was a priest or a catechist to accompany him. Many are of the opinion that Archbishop Hubert had visited practically all the parishes of the Archdiocese and toured most of the villages of the different parishes of the Archdiocese.

iii) Promoter of Holistic Health and Well-being

He also took great interest in the promotion of health, prevention of sickness and the curing of diseases. Initially he encouraged Fr. Joseph Rubio to make use of his special knowledge in dispensing homeopathic medicine and to take care of the office of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) at Archbishop's House. As one in charge of the CRS he was able to provide relief to very many poor children staying in the boarding houses in most mission centres. He was also responsible for procuring relief

material such as wheat, oil, milk powder and sending them to different centres according to their respective needs and requirements. Thus the sick and the poor had a special place in the Archbishop's heart.

All these persons and their successors who perform different types of apostolate did so with the blessings and support of Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario.

Archbishop Hubert made sure that Nazareth Hospital, the only Catholic Hospital of the Archdiocese is modernized in every way. He started Rapsbun School of Nursing attached to Nazareth Hospital with the sole purpose of training Catholic Nurses who would be trained in Christian Nursing principles and who would be ready to work even in interior villages with the view of helping the poor and the illiterate who live in remote villages of Northeast India.

In the beginning, the Archdiocese of Shillong sponsored many poor girls from rural areas in order to be trained as nurses in Rapsbun School of Nursing. If Nazareth Hospital is what it is today, it was mainly due to his foresight and patronage. Moreover, he was very concerned for the health of people living in rural areas. For this purpose he constructed a dispensary practically in every new parish that he erected. He wanted that women Religious who work in the parishes of his Archdiocese should also have trained nurses on their staff.

iv) Promoter of Social Work

Archbishop Hubert was interested in the general welfare of every human person, whether physical, spiritual or material. He seems to follow the saying attributed to St. Irenaeus "Man fully alive is the glory of God." He was a very jovial person, who could enjoy fun and laughter during recreation or during his free moments. Hence he included in his team Bro. Castellino Fernandes with his own special talent for magic and

through them to reach many persons especially the poor and abandoned youths in need of special love and care. Through the presence of Bro. Castellino Archbishop Hubert wanted that people serve God with joy.

The love and interest that Archbishop Hubert demonstrated in preaching and visiting his flock was guided by his love for Jesus. Jesus loved every human person especially the sick, the outcaste, the abandoned and the voiceless. He definitely took a strong stand on behalf of the poor and the sick. He knew that only good health and education would enable people to provide for themselves their basic needs such as shelter, food, clothing, education and other emotional and physical needs that would help them become better human beings.

The Archbishop knew from his first hand experience that Catholics in general were less educated and were poorer than others. He understood that if they were well educated they would be able to influence society for the better. Actually for a few years he encouraged the setting up of a special fund in order to sponsor bright students to study science in view of encouraging them to become doctors, engineers and journalists.

v) An Educator

Archbishop Hubert came from a school background. He understood the social and missionary value of schools. Hence, whenever he erected a new Parish, he made sure to construct a school, a convent, separate hostels for boys and girls and a dispensary. He often reminded all the priests and heads of Catholic institutions to give preference to Catholic children during admission time. Actually, he had every right to do so, for most of the parishes that he erected had schools that he had constructed. He was directly responsible for procuring the land and appeal to different agencies for financial help. It was only right that he

should insist on that, since he was directly involved in the construction and in some cases even in the maintenance of the parish infrastructure. After building schools he made sure to visit every school run by the parish. He felt most at home with Catholic children for he knew that they would listen to him.

Archbishop Hubert also called upon parents to take special care of the education of boys since the Khasi society seemed to neglect the education of boys and care more for the education of girls. The Archbishop loved to visit Catholic institutions on an annual basis, which would enable him to meet all the senior Catholic students of the schools and speak to the Catholic teachers. He realized that in order to make an impact upon society, he had to start with a few dedicated teachers. He thought that he could depend on Catholic teachers to help transmit Christian values to the student population.

The Archbishop loved to see that every boy and girl became literate. He always insisted that teachers should never fail any one especially in the lower classes, whether they listened to him or not was a different story. In any case, he would repeat that if children fail in lower classes, they would lose hope and become drop-outs. Instead, if they are helped to pass every year, the mere fact that they stay in the classroom and listened to the teachers for a couple of years more that would enable them to become literate. With regard to his insistence on passing children, in lower classes, he was ahead of his time. Now with the Right to Education Act, every child has the right to be promoted at the end of the year at least up to class VIII.

vi) Archbishop Hubert as a Writer

Archbishop Hubert understood very well the power of pen, hence he issued regular pastoral letters on different topics with a view

to preach, teach, preserve, profess and share the faith with others. His pastoral letters were supposed to be read and explained in all the parish churches during Sunday Masses and prayer services in different village chapels and Sunday gatherings. He wrote on a variety of subjects but mostly on the Sacraments. He wrote about 18 pastoral letters from 1970 to 1994. His pastoral letters on relevant topics revealed his love for the Church. His first pastoral letter issued on 1st November, 1970 was on the Church and the last one issued on 16th February, 1994 was on Christian Family. He insisted that every Christian should be proud of his or her faith and strive to deepen it by sharing it with others.

It was also incumbent upon the local Church to strive for self-sufficiency even in matters of finance. For this purpose he issued two short pastoral letters on this important topic in September 1973 and January 1984. In 1995 the Diocesan Catechetical Commission compiled in book form all the pastoral letters of Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario known as the “Teaching of Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario, S.D.B., D.D.” or “*Ki Jinghikai U Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario S.D.B., D.D.*” It was prepared by Fr. Vincent Kympat.

vii) Founder of a Religious Congregation

Perhaps his lasting contribution for the spread of the Church in Northeast India in particular and the Church in India was his courage and foresight in starting a new religious family in the Church known as the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco which is now a Diocesan Congregation.

It was in the beginning of 1983 that Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario openly informed priests during their monthly meeting that he had discussed with the bishops of Northeast India the various problems faced by the people living in rural areas of Northeast India such as socio-

economic, cultural and religious and that he had approached different Religious Congregations to help people in the interior villages but none was ready to start new approaches that were not envisaged in their rules. Hence, he decided to start a new pious Association in the Church whose members should know Jesus, love Him and be ready to share their love for Him with others, by their own way of life as well as by their supportive presence in the midst of people. They should be ready to adapt to the simple life style of people without rejecting what is good in modern life and technology but without being slaves to them. They should be ready to live in simple houses, with simple food habits like the rest of people in rural areas but with a big difference, namely, they are doing that voluntarily for the love of Christ and in order to follow his example of love who wants to save all. They should also be able to live without the privilege of having daily Mass just like ordinary Christians in rural areas.

The specific mission of the new Congregation is to witness to the saving mission of Christ in rural areas and enhance human dignity especially in the context of Northeast India among its tribal population. In such areas mission centres and parishes are few. Most people live far away from parishes and mission centres. They live in poverty, without the basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, clothing, education and health care facilities.

The members of the new Pious Association are to live with such simple people and together with them make every effort to advance in every walk of life but always being guided by their living faith in Jesus. They are not to compete with other existing religious congregations of women who work mostly in towns to run schools or live close to existing parishes or mission centres. Their main aim, instead, is to be living witnesses of Christ among rural population so as to influence them at the grass roots level.

Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario was a very good and zealous pastor who visited the length and breadth of his Archdiocese and experienced the urgent needs of his flock in the areas of literacy, catechesis and other socio-economic needs. He had a firsthand experience of the many problems of the area and as a pastor and father and after much thought, consultation and prayer came up with a possible solution to some of the problems. That solution is the new religious congregation in the Church who would try to light a candle without blaming the darkness.

As pastor Archbishop Hubert was convinced that only the love of Christ and the Gospel will change peoples' lives and make them compassionate towards others. He understood clearly that no one will be able to improve others unless human hearts are changed. To that end he was trying to form a new group of dedicated young girls who come from good and fervent Catholic families and would like them to be fired with the love of Christ, zeal for the good of other human beings, and be ready to share their lot so as to help them.

The Archbishop knew that good laws and good structures alone cannot change people unless there is internal transformation of human hearts touched by God's grace. Hence, Archbishop Hubert often insisted on sanctity, learning, spirit of sacrifice and even good health. It is true God is able to make use even of ill health in order to show his strength, but humanly speaking, good health is very important in order to lead a more fulfilling human life especially in the rural setting.

Conclusion

Archbishop Hubert for many years appeared to be very healthy. But as time went on it was found out that he was suffering from diabetes. He took care of his health and was able to continue working till the last year of his tenure as Archbishop of Shillong. Finally he succumbed to

this disease in Nazareth Hospital on the 30th August 1994. His funeral service two days later was attended by big crowds of people who came from far and near and from different walks of life. Many remembered it as a special day where they could feel the presence of God in a very mysterious way in the death of his servant.

May Archbishop Hubert continue to inspire others to love Jesus and try to do something for others in a practical way. May he continue to live and work through his spiritual daughters, the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco.

14

My Experience of Working with Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario

Bah Marbok George War¹

I have known Hubert D’Rosario since the time he first came to Shillong during the critical period when the foreign missionaries were sent away from Assam. He was at that time the Bishop of Dibrugarh. We had several meetings with various Church leaders. Bishop D’Rosario gave us words of encouragement and exhorted us to stand united and to fight against the discrimination against Christians and particularly the missionaries. This was around the year 1966, 1967.

Since the year 1969 I had the privilege of participating in several meetings held in Shillong. Apart from official meetings, we had informal meetings with the Archbishop during which we talked about the Church in Northeast India and the services the Church was rendering to the people of the Northeast India. In these meetings and conversations I realized that Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario was a man of deep thought and also a man of strong principles. As an Archbishop he was also a man of authority who commanded respect and obedience

1 Bah Marbok George War, is a prominent Catholic layman. He has collaborated closely with Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario in many works.

from others. He was strict and firm in principles but his firmness went hand in hand with gentleness.

There were two major events for which I collaborated with Archbishop D'Rosario. One was the visit of the Holy Father Pope John II to Shillong in the year 1986 and the other was the preparation for the celebration of the Centenary of the coming of the Catholic faith to Northeast India in the year 1990. Several committees and sub-committees were formed in preparation for the visit of the Holy Father to Shillong. Together with Fr. Francis Kharwanlang, I was in charge of the cultural programme. I acted as an assistant to Fr. Francis Kharwanlang. Together with him we used to prepare reports of the preparations which were given to the Archbishop. The Archbishop would call different committees for tea at the Archbishop's House. He would express his gratitude and appreciation for the work done by the different committees. Thus we felt good and satisfied with our work since the Archbishop was always appreciative of our work.

The coming of the Holy Father Pope John Paul II to Shillong was one of the greatest events in the history of the Catholic Church in Northeast India. Everything went very well and the Archbishop expressed his appreciation and gratitude for the work well done. After the visit of the Holy Father the Archbishop organised a get together at the Archbishop's House and he thanked all the various committees consisting of priests, sisters and lay people.

During the Holy Father's visit we had to prepare many cultural programmes by the different tribes of Northeast India. It was not possible to present them all one after the other. So the only possible way was to combine three or four items or dances at the same time. As a matter of fact it turned out that combining several items together was a very good idea. Under the bright morning sun the grounds of the

Golf-links glittered as never before. The visit of the Holy Father was a great event for the whole city of Shillong. All this was possible because of the ability of the Archbishop Rosario to organise the event in every detail. It was a great event because Archbishop was able to persuade those in charge of the papal visit to include Shillong in the itinerary. It was not an easy matter at all since many were of the view to drop Shillong out of the itinerary of the Holy Father. Post factum the Holy Father was very happy to meet the huge crowd of the faithful in their exotic traditional attires and costumes in different colours and hues. Dancing and performing before him with great love, pride and joy in their faith. All the different items though performed at the same time blended together in harmony. The Holy Father was very happy and deeply grateful to Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario for all the work done.

As I mentioned earlier it was not at all an easy matter to bring the Holy Father to a small city like Shillong at that time. There were logistical problems for the Central and the State Governments of India to organise the visit. But through the collaboration and hard work of many Church and political leaders we were able to bring the Holy Father even though only for three hours. This was indeed a remarkable work that Archbishop Rosario and his collaborators accomplished.

After the coming of the Holy Father, intense preparation began for the celebration of the Centenary of the Catholic Church in Northeast India in 1990. Under the leadership of Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario many meetings were held and several committees were formed. Again, I was given charge of the cultural programme which were organised and held at St. Anthony's School playground.

There was something that I liked in the Archbishop, namely, on important occasions and events, he would always form committees of priests, religious and lay people to work together. All were involved in

the preparation of different programmes. Thus all events were the result of a collaborative effort.

The Archbishop was a man who worked very systematically and wanted others to do the same. He did everything at the right time. He gave us time to prepare things so that everything would go in a smooth manner. All these celebrations helped the growth of the Catholic Church in Northeast India and they gave the Catholic community a sense of pride and joy in their faith.

Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario was a far-sighted person. In view of the needs of the society and the Church in Northeast India he founded several associations of Catholics, such as the Catholic Government Servants' Association, the Catholic Journalists' Association, the Catholic Doctors' Association, the Catholic Lawyers' Association, etc.

Being very systematic in everything he did the Archbishop would make sure that meetings would go according to the agenda proposed. Thus all works would go as planned. The Archbishop had a very sharp mind and personal moral authority which was respected by all.

Archbishop Rosario opened many parishes over the years. This helped the growth of the Church in different areas. He would go and visit all these parishes and sub-centres and villages. He would make use of occasions such as Eucharistic processions and Marian processions to meet the faithful in their own villages and parish centres whenever possible. He would even go for important *jingiaseng iing* (prayer meetings at people's houses). Whenever he was free he would go for Sunday evenings' *jingiaseng* both in Shillong and in distant parishes.

The Archbishop's last visit to my house was in the year 1994 during the wedding of my daughter. He was already a sick man. But in spite of the pain he walked slowly to my house. I was extremely happy at this. He came and blessed my children and prayed for the family.

This was in the month of May 1994. Soon after in the month of August he passed away.

The Archbishop always walked on foot to people's houses here in town and around Laitumkhrach. As he was suffering from diabetes it was very painful for him to walk. But in spite of this and other ailments he never let his works and activities be disturbed. Everything went on well as if he was in perfect health. He was a man who worked hard and never bothered about his ease and comforts.

The Archbishop's House was always open to all if any one, especially leaders of the Church or of the State felt the need of meeting him, they could always do so. Before deciding or doing anything important regarding the works in the Archdiocese he would always consult us. The Archbishop was a very good administrator and a good financial administrator of the Church. We were very lucky to have had a person like him as leader of the Archdiocese.

We are grateful to him for founding the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco (VSDB) at Upper Shillong; this congregation has sprung from among our own people and land – *Ri Khasi, ka Ri u Hynñiew Trep Hynñiew Skum* (Khasi land, the land of Seven Families). The VSDB sisters, a being daughters of the soil, have the advantage of knowing and understanding the psychology of the people better especially those in neglected rural and urban areas. They are also the pride of our people when they are able to spread the faith far and wide, even across the seas. The Archbishop's exhortation to priests and religious was that they should go to the villages and not remain only in towns. The VSDBs are doing exactly this. Archbishop loved his people and faithful. He loved his people because he loved God. This was the secret of his greatness.

On my part I liked meeting the Archbishop. I felt that every meeting with him was a great benefit. He was like a father to me who

gave me good advice, bringing joy, hope and encouragement into my life. His death was a great loss for the Church and for me personally.

We the different lay leaders working together in the Church saw in him a man of deep prayer who had immense trust in Mary the Mother of God. He used to tell us always to entrust our family, our work and activities to the protection of Mary our Mother.

A Tribute from the Diocesan Priests of the Archdiocese of Imphal

Fr. Linus Neli^{1*}

Introduction

If anyone seeks knowledge of the great missionary, Most Rev. Hubert D’Rosario SDB,² especially his early missionary life in the Northeast India, then he or she should not fail to turn to the senior priests of the Diocese of Dibrugarh,³ who worked *in solidum* with him in the same *presbyterium*. Some of them have died, while many are now resting in the Priests’ Home of the Archdiocese of Imphal, as unsung heroes. With the bifurcation of Dibrugarh diocese in 1973, many of them opted for Kohima-Imphal diocese, with Bishop Abraham Alangimattathil, SDB, as its first bishop. Then, in 1980, when Kohima-Imphal diocese was further divided, with Archbishop Joseph Mittathany as the first Bishop of Imphal, these senior priests opted to join the Imphal diocese.

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- 1 Fr. Linus Neli, holds a doctorate in Canon Law. At present he works in Imphal Archdiocese.
 - 2 In this article, he is addressed as Bishop Hubert, since he is affectionately known so by the people of Manipur.
 - 3 The Diocese of Dibrugarh (Assam) was established in 1951 with Msgr. O. Marengo, SDB, as its first bishop. When Bishop Marengo was transferred to Tezpur diocese, Bishop Hubert was appointed as his successor.

It was when he was appointed Bishop of Dibrugarh that Bishop Hubert set his foot in Northeast India for the first time as bishop. He was consecrated Bishop on 6th September 1964 at Don Bosco Matunga, Bombay. At that time, the Catholic Church in Manipur was only some ten years old, in so far as the commencement of active missionary life is concerned. What Bishop Marengo started in 1951, Bishop Hubert took over in 1965 in Manipur until 1969.

Below is a synthesis of testimonies collected from individual interviews of those diocesan priests who lived and worked with him. This article is dedicated to Most Rev. Hubert Rosario as a loving tribute from the diocesan priests of Imphal Archdiocese.

i) A Human Profile

a) Early Contacts

From among the diocesan priests in Imphal Archdiocese, Fr. T. J. Chacko⁴ was the first person to come to know Bishop Hubert D’Rosario. “Bishop Hubert was a dashing and energetic Salesian,” Chacko recalled, “and I was a Salesian aspirant in Tirupattur, recruited for Southern Salesian Province. I was reading in Class IX, and Fr. Hubert taught me English.” Archbishop Joseph Mittathany (emeritus)⁵ had seen him occasionally in Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamallee (Tamil Nadu), when he came to preach spiritual recollection/retreat, and as a resource person during seminars.

4 Rev. Fr. T. J. Chacko came to Assam in 1964. He was ordained on 6th June 1965 at Dibrugarh by Bishop Hubert. Now he is running 79 years of age, and resting in the Priests’ Home, Archdiocese of Imphal, quite disabled with arthritis. As a missionary he worked in Nagaland and Manipur.

5 Most Rev. Joseph Mittathany (Emeritus), born on 12 July 1931 at Kalikavu, Kerala, was ordained priest on 23 April 1959; elected Bishop of Tezpur on 26 June 1969; consecrated on 27 September 1969; appointed Bishop of Imphal on 21 April 1980; appointed Archbishop of Imphal on 1 August 1995. Currently he resides at St. Joseph’s Home, Cathedral complex, Imphal.

Most of our senior priests from Imphal Archdiocese came to know Bishop Hubert after he became the second Bishop of Dibrugarh diocese. In January 1965, Most Rev. Dominic Lumon⁶ joined St. Joseph Seminary, Dibrugarh, while reading in Class IX. That was the first time he beheld the countenance of Bishop Hubert D’Rosario and to this day it has not faded from his memory. “We lived in the same big compound,” he said, “comprising Bishop’s House, Cathedral Parish, Pastoral Training Centre, Don Bosco School, and the Seminary (not at the present location).” Mark Thang Khan Ai,⁷ recalling his naughty and curious childhood describes, “On a cold January night in 1966, a tall, young and handsome Bishop descended from a jeep. He was Bishop Hubert D’Rosario. The Parish community of St. Joseph’s Parish, Sugnu, was waiting to welcome him.” After two years, Fr. Mark joined the seminary at Dibrugarh, and he continued to see this handsome bishop who made a deep and lasting impact in his life.

What Mgr. Joseph Kachiramattam⁸ (popularly known as Fr. Mattam) appreciates most in late Bishop Hubert is, in his own words, “I like his dynamism in touring and visiting the villages, keeping up his interest for the expansion of mission.” Fr. P.C. Mani⁹ refreshes

6 Most Rev. Dominic Lumon, was born on 1 June 1948 at Monsangpantha, Manipur; ordained priest on 6 February 1977; appointed Coadjutor Archbishop of Imphal on 18 January 2002; consecrated on 7 April 2002; became Archbishop of Imphal on 12 July 2006.

7 Rev. Fr. T. Mark joined St. Joseph’s Minor Seminary, Dibrugarh in 1968. He was ordained on 16 December 1983 at Sugnu, Manipur.

8 While studying at the Sacred Heart Seminary Poonamallee, for Madras-Mylapore diocese, three months before his ordination, Msgr. Joseph Kachiramattam joined Dibrugarh diocese (1957). After his ordination on 24 March 1958 (at Madras), he was appointed Assistant Parish Priest at Chingmeirong, Imphal, to work under Rev. Fr. Ravalico, SDB. He reached Manipur on 27 July 1958. He was already working as Parish Priest in Sugnu Parish, Manipur, when Bishop Hubert came to Dibrugarh in 1965.

9 Rev. Fr. P.C. Mani was studying in Sacred Heart Poonamallee for Shillong diocese. He came to Assam in 1960 as deacon; he was ordained in 1961 and

his memory saying that it was during the Eucharistic Congress held in Bombay (November-December 1964) that he met Bishop Hubert. He had gone with forty Tangkhul Nagas from Manipur to participate in the Congress. He says that Bishop Hubert was a dashing type of person who made sure that anything that he took up was done to perfection and though at first often his judgments used to be clouded by the reports of others, later he learnt from his mistakes.

With regard to his personal popularity, Fr. T.J. Chacko remarks: Unfortunately Bishop Hubert came at a time when the saintly Bishop Marengo was there too. Bishop Marengo was such a saintly, kind person, like Jesus Christ. There was a difference between them. So we were fascinated by Bishop Marengo. When Bishop Hubert came, he told us that he accepted to be bishop because he wanted to work here in Northeast India. Once he was given the charge he took it up courageously – unknown people, unknown places. But he took up the challenge courageously. Then with full zeal and enthusiasm for the Church, he worked very hard, touring the far flung villages on foot. Though he came from Bombay, the best school in south India, with a secular background, he took up the great challenge to be a missionary in Northeast India.

was appointed as Assistant Parish Priest of Tezpur. Later, Bishop Marengo asked Bishop Ferrando to give a diocesan priest for Dibrugarh (then there were five of them); so Fr. Mani was given to Dibrugarh diocese in 1961; he worked mostly in Nagaland and Manipur. He has completed 79 years of age and is currently working as the chaplain of Catholic Medical Centre (Hospital) at Koirengei, Imphal, Manipur.

Fr. M.C. John,¹⁰ who formerly opted for Madras diocese, was recruited by Bishop Hubert while studying in the third year theology at Sacred Heart Poonamallee in 1967. He told his Rector that he wanted to go to Northeast India as a missionary to which his Rector told him to write to Bishop Hubert D’Rosario. He wrote to him and Bishop Hubert replied him saying, “You come. But come and see me first.” After his meeting with the Bishop, Vicar General, Fr. I. Rubio, SDB, invited him to spend his holidays in the seminary. During his three weeks of holiday, he went with Bishop Hubert to Tuensang (Nagaland) and to a few other places. After this tour Bishop asked him if he liked the place and wanted to join to which Fr. John gave a positive reply. Bishop told him, “You will be taken, but the excardination papers have to come. Then I will let you know.” In the meantime, the papers reached from Fr. John’s Rector giving him permission and recommendation. Finally he was asked to go to Manipur for ordination. Bishop Hubert ordained him a priest on 19th December 1968 in Sugnu, Manipur.

b) Approachability

Bishop Hubert was known as the “handsome Bishop” in Manipur. We can still recall some of his human qualities vividly as we listen to some missionaries who lived with him. Archbishop Mittathany fondly recalls:

Bishop Hubert was a perfect gentleman and man of God. He was very broad minded and generous. I remember very well when I was bishop of Tezpur. I could approach him as my elder brother. Whenever I went to Shillong

10 Rev. Fr. M.C. John came to know Archbishop Hubert in 1967, when he joined Dibrugarh diocese in the third year of theology. He was ordained on 19 December 1968 at Sugnu. Due to his ill health, Fr. John is now residing in the Priests’ Home, Imphal. He is 72 years old.

for meetings, I had to get up very early morning to go back; otherwise I would not reach Tezpur for lunch. When I got up early in the morning and came for a cup of coffee he would always be there. He was very happy personally to see that I got something to eat. I was very much impressed by his hospitality. And normally he'd see that everything was prepared and ready and he himself would be there. Today you may not find such an attitude from many of us. We were very close and intimate friends. Bishop Hubert had a great love for me.

Fr. Mattam says that he was a straight forward man and open-minded. Fr. Mattam furthermore says, "In a very friendly manner, he used to call me, 'Mattam, Mattam.' If he made any mistake, he'd say, 'Mattam, excuse me.'" Archbishop Lumon adds that even as a young boy he could approach him. As a matter of fact, he had approached him once in his village where he had to give a speech in a youth conference. As a young seminarian he didn't have any subject matter. He approached him and Bishop gave him some points. He says: "Anyone could approach him with ease."

Fr. Devassy Pudussery¹¹ says that somehow Bishop Hubert's missionary personality had influenced him very much. He had the ability to appreciate people. In Fr. Devassy's own words:

Bishop Hubert's conversation or whatever that came out of his mouth had a certain degree of dignity. His personal cleanliness was exemplary. He oversaw everything to the last detail. This also influenced those who were with him. But one thing the Bishop could not wield was his

11 Rev. Fr. Devassy Pudussery joined Dibrugarh Diocese in 1965 as a Regent. He was ordained on 19 December 1970. He has completed 66 years of age and is now residing in Priests' Home, Imphal.

power. His weakness was that power was in the hands of those who had money. And sometimes being new to the area, he was taken up by the first impression. So when he liked someone, he raised him to the sky and in particular the local priests.

Of his human qualities, Fr. P.T. Paul¹² says, “Bishop Hubert was a very human and humorous person. He had a driver and companion, Mr. Jerry, a stout person; they used to exchange a great deal of jokes and they seemed to have had a lot in common. Mr. Jerry was also a jovial person.”

c) Some Endearing Words

Whether his words were endearing or harsh, Bishop Hubert expressed his thoughts and feelings in a straightforward manner. “He was very duty conscious,” recalls Fr. M.C. John, “that even if one has to struggle, he would say, ‘Go there and do it.’ He used to say to me, ‘John, remember that I ordained you!’ He liked cricket, so he used to ask me the latest score.” At times Bishop Hubert used to utter prophetic words. Fr. Devassy heard him say, “Priest so and so, put him anywhere, he will come up!” This was his oft repeated phrase.

In 1969, a young diocesan priest was appointed Bishop of Tezpur. It was Bishop Mittathany, who was nearing 38 years of age and ten years as a priest. He says of Bishop Hubert:

When I was made bishop, I was the only diocesan bishop; all other bishops were Salesians. But he had a great love and interest in me that I should grow; I should become a zealous missionary bishop and he was always

12 Rev. Fr. P.T. Paul joined Dibrugarh diocese as a seminarian in 1963. When he was doing his regency at the Pastoral Training Centre, Dibrugarh, Bishop Hubert took him to Nagaland and Manipur to make him understand the hard life of a missionary.

helping me. So, personally I am very grateful to him for the way he taught me and allowed me to grow. He always encouraged me.

Bishop Hubert gave the right motivation to many young missionaries with encouraging words. Fr. Mattam recalls, "He encouraged and praised everyone, saying 'Go ahead. Extend the boundaries.'" Fr. Mattam has been a missionary in Manipur for a long time and Bishop Hubert was so much appreciative of his work. Fr. Mattam continues: "I remember when a centre was opened in Churachandpur, he was so happy to see the Church expanding." Bishop Hubert not only encouraged people, he also placed confidence in them. "Bishop Hubert used to tell me," narrates Fr. K.C. George,¹³ 'George, I have confidence in you' and he appointed me as Parish Priest of Sugnu."

The arrival of Bishop Hubert in Northeast India created some uncertainties in some missionaries who volunteered from south. When Fr. T.J. Chacko learnt that Fr. Hubert (Bishop-elect) was made the successor of Bishop Marengo, he was in some anxiety. Prior to his consecration as Bishop, the Bishop-elect made a quick visit to his would-be diocese in Dibrugarh. While making swift rounds, he reached Doom Dooma parish (Assam), where Fr. Chacko was placed for mission experience before his ordination. On meeting him, Fr. Chacko started to recount his past story. The Bishop-elect, however, cut him short saying, "Chacko, don't worry, I know your story by-heart. Don't worry about the past." These assuring words fell upon Chacko's cloudy heart like the first showers of rain in summer season. Then the Bishop-elect continued, "Let me go and get ordained first (as Bishop). Then I will come and ordain you (as priest)." Soon after his

13 Rev. Fr. K.C. George joined Dibrugarh diocese in 1960, as a student of Philosophy in Poonamallee. Without doing Regency, he continued his study of theology. He was ordained on 2 December 1964 at Bombay. He worked mostly in Manipur. He is 74 years old and residing at the Priests' Home, Imphal.

Episcopal consecration, as promised earlier, Fr. Chacko was also ordained priest on 6th June 1965 in Dibrugarh. Thus, according to Fr. Chacko, he became the first diocesan priest to be ordained in Northeast India.

When Bishop Hubert was reaching the evening of his life, Fr. M.C. John paid a filial visit to him. He says, "I met him in his office in Shillong in the year 1994. He was sick. I knew he would not last long. So he told me to kiss him and he also kissed me."

ii) Spiritual Life

"The tree is known from the fruits," (Mt 7:16) so it is with great missionaries. "Bishop Hubert was a man of prayer," echoes Archbishop Mittathany in his baritone voice and continues narrating that Bishop's Hubert dedication and commitment came from his love for Jesus. His exemplary zeal is the result of his union with the Lord. It doesn't come simply. What I have seen in him was that he was filled with the Spirit of God. His main preoccupation was that Christ's kingdom should expand. And his motto was 'Thy kingdom come.' Even right from his younger days, as seminarian and priest, Archbishop continues to say that he was full of zeal for the expansion of God's kingdom.

Reflecting on his seminary days, Archbishop Lumon says, "In our seminary days, we saw him absorbed in prayer." Fr. Mattam, a lover of liturgy, observes, "Liturgically, he was very exemplary. He always kept the time to pray the Breviary and the Rosary. Even while on tour, he never missed these prayers. He was a well disciplined person. I was only a simple young priest but he used to come to me for confession."

One more thing Fr. M.C. John noticed in him, "He was very punctual for prayer. Even in the villages he used to go early to the church and pray. And we found him very often walking and saying the rosary." Fr. Devassy observes about him:

I had the good fortune of living with him in the same house especially when I (as a cleric) was in the Catechists Training Centre, Dibrugarh. Bishop's house was our house and we had all our prayers together. I was the only non-Salesian. They were very hard working. They were all workaholics. But they were very regular for the practices of piety. All of them came together for meditation, prayers and Eucharistic celebration. We had a small chapel. He would be with the community for prayers and rosary. Even when he returned from extensive tours, he would pray and say the rosary together with the community.

iii) Missionary Zeal

When our priests from Manipur speak of Bishop Hubert's missionary life, they would start with the phrase; "all the way from Dibrugarh" (the distance between Dibrugarh and Imphal is about 500 km). Fr. K.C. George beginning with the phrase says, "All the way from Dibrugarh, Bishop Hubert used to tour round the Manipur hills. In 1967, two of us went for an eleven-day tour on foot from Moreh to Sugnu. We visited many Kuki and Anál villages. We went to the jungles for our needs just as the villagers did in those days."

"From the experience I had with him and working together for long," said Archbishop Mittathany, "I can really say that he was a great missionary. He was really a zealous missionary, always interested in furthering of the kingdom of God. For that I have seen him always encouraging the priests, the sisters and the catechists. He was not sparing time, energy and money when it was a question of spreading the kingdom of God." Although Dibrugarh was the see of the diocese, with an eagle's

eye Bishop Hubert perceived a great harvest of souls in the two fertile states of Nagaland and Manipur. He would trek the hills in search of souls. "I have heard from fathers, sisters and people that he had practically toured all the parishes and villages, even to the parishes and villages that were situated in most difficult areas," remarks Archbishop Mittathany.

In those days there were a lot of insurgent groups and it was not safe for missionaries to move around. At one period of time in those days, particularly in Mao and Poumai areas, there was a prohibition from a particular underground faction that no one should enter the village without their permission, yet he took the risk to visit the villages and be with the people. He established new mission stations and saw the Church grow. We all bow our heads to him for his great missionary zeal.

Could he be compared with other missionary bishops? In the words of Archbishop Lumon, "I would say he did better than other Bishops in visiting the villages. Bishop Marengo had to get inner line permit to visit Nagaland and Manipur, but Bishop Hubert was an Indian; he could take this advantage and stay any length of time to visit the village communities. If we invited him for a programme, he never refused." For that matter, even Fr. Marrocchino, one of the pioneering missionaries of the area, did not have permit to go around and so he was confined to Kohima civil hospital as a chaplain.

Fr. Mani narrates:

In 1966, when Bishop Hubert came to Hundung (Ukhrul district, Manipur), he told me to go to Tuensang (Nagaland); so I went to Tuensang in 1967. My appointment in Tuensang was as a parish priest and the entire Catholic parish community consisted of one priest, five sisters and a Tangkhul boy. These were the first parishioners. At that time there were no strict

canonical norms as we have today. It was the Holy Spirit that was moving every missionary activity. He was a man of great enthusiasm. He pushed the mission forward and was responsible for the growth of the Church.

In 1977 when Fr. M.C. John celebrated the silver jubilee of Sacred Heart Parish, Hundung, (Manipur East) where he was parish priest, he went to Shillong and invited Archbishop Hubert to be the chief guest. At first Archbishop declined. But Fr. John insisted saying, "You have to come. You are the Archbishop." He also requested Bishop Abraham to give an official word to Bishop Hubert. With that Bishop Hubert came for the jubilee and blessed the Parish school.

Fr. Devassy compliments that Bishop Hubert had the ability to pick up his team and had an eye for people who could take up missionary work. According to him one dynamic step Bishop took was in 1966. He went down to Kerala to preach a retreat in Palai diocese. The Retreat was not anything wonderful as was heard from the priests there, because he could not speak Malayalam properly. But he met the Mother Generals of four very important Congregations in south and made them understand the Northeast India situation. One fine day, three Mother Generals turned up together in Imphal. He sent them to three different directions – Hundung in Tangkhul area, Sugnu in Kuki-Chin area and another one to Punanamai in Mao area. That had a tremendous impact in the work of evangelization.

Fr. P.T. Paul did his regency at the Catechists Training Centre, Dibrugarh, in 1966. He says that Bishop Hubert took him to Nagaland and Manipur, in view of making him understand the hard life of a missionary. He himself travelled in difficult places and faced tough life as a missionary. During the ordination of Fr. M.C. John at Sugnu (Manipur) on 19 December 1968 and of Fr. C.M. Joseph at Kohima

(Nagaland) on 21 December 1968, he toured many centres and villages continuously for about a month.

iv) His Love for Seminarians

Everyone speaks of Bishop Hubert in euphoric terms when it comes to his rapport with the seminarians. “He really mixed very well with the seminarians,” says Fr. P.T. Paul, “Although he came from Bombay as a bishop, his attitude towards the seminarians was very admirable.” Fr. Paul recalls how Bishop walked on foot for 11 kms in hot sun with the seminarians for an outing from Dibrugarh Seminary to Mohanbari. He wanted to walk back, but the Fathers picked him up by vehicle. Fr. Peter Haokip¹⁴ speaks of his Catechism lessons in the Xth class in Dibrugarh, “I remember vividly, how His Lordship used to teach us catechism. After the school hour, we would sit around his desk in the office, and he would teach us catechism.”

Bishop Hubert never missed the monthly conference with the seminarians. “When he gave talks to us he would put across his points with clarity and authority,” said Fr. John Kashiiprii.¹⁵ Archbishop Lumon notes:

Bishop Hubert would advise us saying, ‘Missionaries must be adventurous. You must eat well, you must sleep well, and you must work well. Preserve your health so that you can work better. We cannot afford to keep sick missionaries.’ He insisted with us saying, ‘Build your

14 Fr. Peter Haokip hails from Sugnu Parish, Manipur. He joined St. Joseph’s Minor Seminary in 1962. He was ordained on 26 March 1977 at Sugnu. Currently he is teaching Scripture at Oriens Theological College, Shillong.

15 Fr. John Kashiiprii hails from Punanamai Parish, Manipur. He joined St. Joseph’s Minor Seminary in 1966. He was ordained on 31 December 1980. Currently he is the Parish Priest of Awangkhum Parish, Tamenglong District, Manipur.

personal prayer life right from your younger days. Now onwards cultivate the spirit of personal prayer.’

Fr. Peter Haokip narrates the story about when he and his companions the seminarians from Manipur and Nagaland were on their way home for winter holidays. They had boarded the train in the third class compartment at Dibrugarh railway station. Bishop Hubert, too, was going to Manipur and had bought a first class ticket. But after having learnt that the seminarians too were going there on the same train he cancelled that ticket and joined them in the third class. Fr. Peter says: “We were all surprised. All throughout our train journey, he cracked jokes and talked to us in a very paternal and friendly manner. He even took out his episcopal chain and put on the neck of one of us, saying ‘Who knows, you may become a bishop one day!’ We felt at home with him.”

Fr. Linus Neli¹⁶ recalls his days at Christ King College, Shillong, saying that Archbishop Hubert regularly came down to the seminary for Holy Mass and for conference with the brothers. All the brothers had great respect for him as a loving pastor and they always beheld his dignified appearance with awe and admiration. Archbishop’s advice oft repeated to the seminarians was, “The Seminary is the heart of the diocese and the consolation of the Bishop.” When they were nearing Regency, Archbishop advised them, “Let your superiors say about you, ‘Here is a Brother, put him anywhere he will persevere.’” Fr. Peter continues that every time he talked to them, he would inevitably mention the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, and the necessity of developing one’s talents in view of the mission.

16 Fr. Linus Neli, former Vicar General of Imphal Archdiocese, used to meet Bishop Hubert in his parish, Punanamai, Mao, much before he joined St. Joseph’s Minor Seminary, Dibrugarh in 1970. He was ordained on 20 December 1984.

v) Contributions to the Church in Northeast India

To understand his achievements in the building up of the Church in the Northeast India, we have to look at the places where he worked. Archbishop Mittathany recalls with affection:

I am grateful to Bishop Hubert because he was one of my co-consecrators on 27th September, 1967. From that moment onwards, we started planning and working together. He would always insist upon the proper formation of the seminarians. His talks, sermons, conferences and speeches to the seminarians at Sunnyside or to students at Oriens Theological College always had a missionary touch. He was very careful in selecting seminarians to the priesthood. He never wanted any bishop to induct seminarians who were sent away from other seminaries. He was very keen to select genuine vocations to priesthood and to bring them up as authentic missionaries. He opened seminaries, looked after them, nurtured them, and saw that they produced full-fledged missionaries. He took personal care of his priests. This is one of the best lessons I learnt from him, 'when you care for your priests they, in turn, give you their support'. In order to open new missions, he opened the seminaries and trained the students so that he may have sufficient priests. In Shillong I personally heard how he expanded St. Paul's seminary; and the greatest mark of pride in his interest in the Church was the Oriens Theological College.

Archbishop Mittathany goes on to say that it was under his leadership that Northeast India Bishops organized the mega-events of

centenary celebrations of the coming of the Catholic faith in respective dioceses of the whole of Northeast India as well as the visit of Pope John Paul II in February 1986. When important events happened he used to get not only the people of Shillong, but the whole of Northeast India.

As a missionary Bishop, he was interested in opening new dioceses. He had a keen sense of the identity and direction of the Church in Northeast India. Archbishop Lumon recalls vividly, "He gave the Northeast India Church an identity. As a Bishop he gave direction to the Church. The Northeast India Regional Bishops' Council was started under his leadership."

Fr. Mattam writes about the collaborative ministry of Church personnel saying that Bishop Marengo gave a strong foundation to the Church in Northeast India. But being a foreigner he could not remain there for many years because the central government did not allow. So, Bishop Hubert, being Indian was called to work in Northeast India. He was very enthusiastic about mission work and under him the work of evangelization was carried out in full swing. New centres were opened and parishes established and in doing so he organized the mission work. Parishes were organized in a more systematic way. He could go and visit everybody, everywhere. Constant visits to the flock were one of his achievements. God's spirit was working through him. He was very open to God's Spirit and to people.

Fr. Devassy says:

Bishop Hubert was a man who had a tremendous capacity for bringing together people who could constitute the basic structure of the administrative wing. I really admired his astuteness for bringing along with him Fr. Ignatius Rubio from Bombay. He was good for fund raising and making appeals for help and to take care of

all the administrative and financial works. So the bishop had no botheration about them. He devoted all his time for the missionary task. He had time for reading and preparing his homilies and talks. In that way he was an able administrator. Once he picked the type of people he wanted, he fully trusted them. And his main orientation was very clear, that is, to go out to the communities and instruct them well in faith.

vi) Missionary Tales and Adventures

A missionary without adventures is not a missionary. Bishop Hubert's adventures can be compiled into a series of episodes. For economy of space, we will limit ourselves to only a few.

Fr. K.C. George had a spine-tingling adventure with Bishop Hubert in the Awangkhum hills in Manipur. There was a Catholic Congress (or Convention or *Sabha*) at Awangkhum village (the original Catholic village was situated right on top of the hill, in Tamenglong District of Manipur), on 15th to 18th December 1967. Bishop Hubert attended the Congress and Fr. George, then Parish Priest of Sugnu, accompanied him. Since there was no jeepable road to the village, they left the jeep at the house of a Meitei at Lukhambi, near the Manipur Rifles' Camp (now known as Noney), and walked up to the village. On 18th December (Monday) they returned, accompanied by some small girls and boys, to the same spot to get into the jeep. It was already dark about 6.00 pm. The road was narrow and steep, and the driver was not used to hill roads.

Let us hear from Fr. George himself:

All of us were reciting the rosary while the driver manoeuvred the vehicle. At one stage, after 3 kms or

so, the jeep was not pulling further; the driver released the clutch to go back a little to engage the lower gear. In the process the jeep rolled down the precipice with all of us inside it (about 120 ft). I managed to jump out earlier and caught hold of a wild banana stem. Then I shouted anxiously, 'Monsignor, Monsignor!' Down the cliff was the distressful voice of Bishop Hubert, saying, "Fr. George, come..." I rushed down to him in his direction. The headlight of the jeep still burning directed upward. I found Bishop Hubert struggling to rise, holding the rosary in his right hand and a torch in his left. Meanwhile, the two girls, the driver and one boy were minding their own injuries; while another boy was found missing. I went further down where the jeep was. The last boy was still in the jeep. Thank God! Nothing serious happened to anyone of us. All could get up and walk. We left everything there, and picked up only the bedding of the Bishop and walked back to Lukhambi, the nearest human habitat. By then, it was pitch dark. Now and then we looked up at the sky to get a sense of direction. When we reached the Meitei house, we woke up the family. I told them what had happened and the family prepared some food for us. It was around 9.00 pm. The winter was very severe. We did not have enough warm clothes or blankets. For warmth, we helped ourselves with sacks and straw and slept until dawn.

One day Bishop Hubert came to Hundung village (Ukhrul Dt, Manipur) sometime in mid 1960s. The people asked him: "Are there not any Sisters in the Catholic Church other than the Little Flower

Sisters (meaning the Salesian Sisters at Imphal)?” When Bishop asked why, they replied: “We sent so many of our girls to Little Flower School. They were either sent away or came back by themselves. We don’t want this to happen.” To this the Bishop replied. “You give land to the Church, I shall arrange for new Sisters.”

After sometime, Fr. Mathew Planthottam, the then parish priest of Hundung, informed the bishop saying: “The land is ready. They have donated some 20 acres of land at Hundung.” Bishop Hubert was perplexed. He discussed this news with Fr. U.V. Mathew, SDB in Dibrugarh. Fr. Mathew made a trip to Kerala and approached three Congregations of Syro-Malabar Rite: the Congregation of Mother of Carmel (CMC), the Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (SABS), and the Franciscan Clarist Congregation (FCC). These Congregations readily accepted the invitation and landed up in Manipur in 1966, the CMC Sisters at Punanamai (north Manipur), the SABS Sisters at Hundung (east), and the FCC Sisters at Sugnu (south).

By taking young clerics or clergy along with him for missionary tours, Bishop Hubert instilled missionary zeal into them. Fr. Devassy has this to say:

He took me along with him to tour the villages so that I could learn from him. I remember once he took me to Punanamai village, near Mao Gate. There were 150 baptisms. He was very meticulous about liturgy. During the baptismal ceremony, he asked one girl in Manipuri ‘*Baptism pambra?*’ (Do you want Baptism?). The girl laughed and said something. He scolded her for laughing. All the same he baptized her, but he remembered the face of the girl. After the service somehow in the crowd

he spotted that girl and called her and asked her why she laughed when he asked her, 'Do you want baptism?' This was interpreted to her and to which the girl replied, "You are an intelligent man. I have been standing in the sun for one and half hours waiting to be baptised and you asked me, 'Do you want baptism?'" Then Bishop Hubert also had a good laugh.

To the missionaries going for toilet needs in the tribal villages in those days used to be quite an adventure. Fr. Devassy witnessed an incident which strikes us even today, he writes that he had gone with Bishop Hubert to Hagrutampak village (Chandel district, Manipur) for the Catholic Congress in 1967. Bishop had come all the way from Dibrugarh. It was quite far and after long journey, he was tired. The next day he woke up late and asked the catechist where the toilet was. Then the catechist showed with his hand pointing the whole jungle saying, "My Lord, all what you see is your toilet." That was the situation of the villages in the 1960s.

On another occasion Fr. Devassy recalls that the Catholic leaders were instructed to make a special toilet as His Lordship the Bishop would be spending the night in the village. The villagers did make a nice shed, fully covered with banana leaves. Early next morning His Lordship went towards the direction of the toilet for his needs, only to find that a buffalo had devoured it by night. The past missionary experiences are relived with a smile and laughter.

To His Grace, Fr. Linus Neli was the representative of the Mao Naga people. Whenever he saw him, his mind would flash back to his experience with the Maos. "Oh! Come here, Linus," he would start. "I remember once going to your village, Punanamai. I was returning from Imphal. I had to rush back to Dibrugarh. But since the Punanamai

people were so kind and loving, I said 'let us go to Punanamai' (2 kms away from Mao Gate, NH 39)." Then Bishop narrated to him, how they reached his village and some elders started shouting for their friends and neighbours to welcome him. In no time they assembled around and greeted him. Bishop noticed they were talking and murmuring among themselves for some time. He did not know what it was. But after a little while, they caught a young pig that was nearby, tied it up and stuffed it in Bishop's jeep (*Willy Canvas jeep in those days*). Of course Bishop did not want to carry it. But what to do! He had to take it, because the people had given it to him with love. By the way, Punanamai people never let Bishop go empty handed. This time they did not prepare anything to give him. Bishop also was in a hurry and he had not informed them of his coming. So the best ready gift they could find to give him was the pig. The animal started grunting all the way. Bishop got so tired of it and gave to the Fathers at Kohima. Bishop himself said that, that was unforgettable experience.

Although Fr. Linus heard this account over and over again, he was thrilled hearing Bishop Hubert's sense of oneness with his people for whom he opted to be a bishop. In Fr. Linus' own words:

He made a deep impression on me, so much so, I should also find my own missionary tale to tell the younger generation! On 30th August 2009, on his death anniversary, I happened to be in Shillong; and I paid a visit to his tomb in the Cathedral. In silence, I asked His Grace to recount 'our story'. Closing my eyes, I listened to him. His inspiration was great: "To be a missionary means to tell the Story of Jesus to all and compose your own stories by living with the people. They will become your sources of joy and strength!"

vii) Challenges and Difficulties

“Sometimes some priests must have been tough. He had some problems with a few priests but I think that is bound to happen in the life of all bishops or superiors. Minor things will be there too,” remarks Archbishop Mittathany.

Fr. Mattam says that in the beginning Bishop Hubert did face some difficulties. The language was new and the place was new, too. There was problem of communication with the people. But he was a straight forward person, and he believed that as humans, everybody could go wrong. At the beginning he did not know much of the entire Northeast India, and he trusted in some persons in taking some decisions which might not have been very correct. In that way he might have had some difficulties. Once he knew the people there was no such problem.

Towards the end of his life he became diabetic. It disturbed him and his temperament also changed. Added to that, it was not easy to understand the condition of people in places like Northeast India, and especially in Manipur. This was a serious obstacle that he faced, since he came from outside. But Bishop Hubert Rosario was found to be enthusiastic and happy to come and tour in Manipur.

What about his financial difficulties as a missionary? “Fr. Ignatius Rubio backed Bishop Hubert up financially,” says Fr. Mani. “He promoted the Diocese and established the Church. The Salesians’ vision of Manipur and Nagaland was not a positive one at that time. The superiors sent troublesome confreres to these areas. But the work of God developed.”

Bishop Hubert had some reservation with regard to co-education in major seminaries. As a matter of policy, he was not in favour of allowing women religious to study theology in major seminaries, as was already the trend in other major seminaries in India. I would think

it would have worked well in the context free society in Northeast India. But he wanted to protect seminarians and religious candidates. Although he was sufficiently aware of the fresh openings and the new trends set by the Second Vatican Council, he was greatly constrained by the strict upbringing of the conservative views of some Salesians. As a bishop he shepherded the diocese well. He remained true to his Salesian identity till the end.

viii) Vision for the Church in Northeast India

Bishop Hubert envisioned the entire Church in Northeast India as an organic whole. According to Archbishop Lumon, “He wanted the Church in Northeast India to be one single unit. He lived for the spreading of the Gospel and to bring people into the Church.” His fidelity to Christ and the Gospel was seen both in his prayer life and activities. He had a great sense of the Church, too. His sole desire was to build up the kingdom of God, the Body of Christ. He concentrated all his energy on the building up of the diocesan seminaries, the formation of the diocesan priests and, without doubt, to promote local religious vocations to address the indigenous missionary issues and needs.

Fr. Neli recalls that Archbishop Hubert had deep eyes that searched for zealous missionary qualities in his seminarians, who one day would have singular zeal and love for God and for the people. He wanted that they would one day give themselves graciously to the service of the Church. This vision of building up a local Church was sometimes misconstrued by certain people as anti-non-local. But from the many conferences he gave us, we could sense that he was conscious of the urgent need of building up a true local Church. He emphasized often on the need of promoting local bishops, local priests and religious and of generating indigenous resources to hasten the birth of a truly Local Church.

However, this does not mean that he failed to accommodate the vocation coming from other parts of the country. He had a large heart to understand the vital contribution of non-local vocations in the Northeast India. His conviction was that this factor alone would not be a permanent solution for the local Church.

Another vision Bishop Hubert had, was of Christian family apostolate. He envisaged women religious with the charism that would suit this approach of evangelism.

Archbishop Mittathany perceived his vision and expresses it very vividly:

Well, he wanted to found a new Congregation, and he discussed his vision with us in the Bishops' meeting. In the beginning we were surprised that he had that idea because he had a lot of cooperation from the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians (MSMHC). He expressed his plan for a new group of Sisters who would be more with the people. They would remain one with them and make the presence of Christ in their cultural milieu more effective. He was fully convinced of the need for such a group of Sisters. We, the Bishops, said, 'Go ahead' and gave our wholehearted support to his plan. In a few years' time, he founded the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco (VSDB).

Conclusion

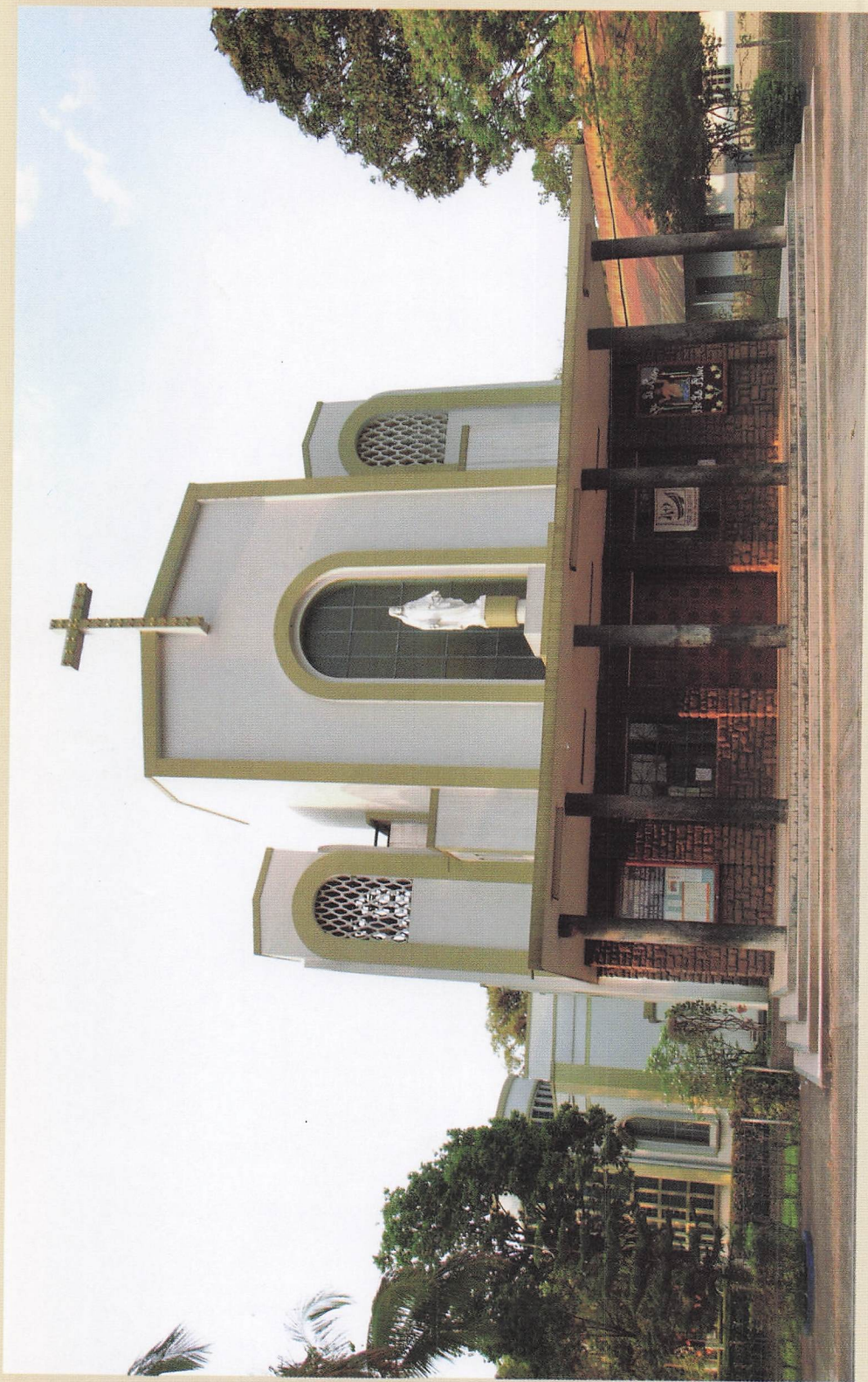
From what has been said above, we can gather some precious gems of the convictions and principles of Most Rev. Hubert D'Rosario. In fact, his life, words and deeds can be summed up as a life lived entirely for the church in Northeast India. Over and above his zeal for

evangelization and for the growth of the local Church in Northeast India; it is vitally important for us to rediscover the spiritual patrimony and legacy he has left behind as our heritage. Acknowledging the enormous contribution of the pioneering missionaries from the south and elsewhere, the courage and inspiration which Bishop Hubert instilled in them made a great difference in the establishment of God's kingdom in Northeast India. This legacy still continues to be operative even in the younger generation of missionaries. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Mk 13:31). Likewise, some of the words of Bishop Hubert are unforgettable. They continue to resound in our ears and they will be so for all times. Fr. Mattam, in his old age recalls his words, 'Courage, go ahead.' He was happy that many people were coming to join the Church. The extension of Christ's kingdom was his constant refrain. He was interested in expanding the work of the Church and he used to say, 'Our missionary Frontiers should be expanded.'

As missionaries we must always anchor our trust in God and be faithful to him alone. That was the life of Bishop Hubert D'Rosario.



Shillong Cathedral



Dibrugarh Cathedral



Visit of Pope John Paul II to Shillong



The first group of VSDB with Archbishop D'Rosario and Sister Mary John Bosco, RNDM

The Foundation and Growth of VSDB Congregation

Sr. Cecilia Sad, VSDB¹

Introduction

God in his goodness raises up from time to time persons of rare quality of head and heart so that through them his kingdom of peace, justice, love and brotherhood may continue to reign on earth. Such persons are found to be after God's own heart, in their life, example and teachings. They show us the right path to God. Though they come from any part of this globe, their contribution to the progress and welfare of that given place or community is much more than any of our closest relatives bound by birth or blood.

One such person is Hubert D'Rosario. His contribution to the all round development of the people of Northeast India in general and the Archdiocese of Shillong in particular is invaluable. He came as a spiritual leader but his concern for the people did not limit itself only to the administration of the sacraments. He empathized with the various problems and needs of the people. This concern for people is seen in different social upliftment programmes that he initiated in the Archdiocese.

¹ Sr. Cecilia Sad, VSDB, belongs to the first batch of VSDB Sisters. At present she is the Mother General.

In God's plan Hubert D'Rosario was destined and prepared for the people of Northeast India. We believe that it was so. He was born in a Mangalorean-Keralite family. His father was a Mangalorean and his mother a Keralite. His family was sufficiently affluent.

i) New Venture

Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario was a pastor who devoted his life to serve his flock till the end of his life. His personal love for Christ is manifested in his episcopal motto "Thy Kingdom come." His missionary zeal and pastoral concern was very much seen in the regular visits he made to the mission centres in far-flung villages to meet his flock. Because of his regular contact with the flock, he became keenly aware of their needs. He had a heart attentive to the needs of people living in the villages, far away from big centres, and often knowing so little of the faith. He never blamed them. But he understood their condition. He admired their simple faith and their staunch allegiance to the Church. Yet he wanted to answer the needs of his flock for instruction, for their growth in the faith and their overall human development.

The spirit of evangelization coursed through his whole life and permeated his entire being. Waking or asleep, healthy or sick, he mused over it, planned for it and worked at it. Evangelization was his greatest preoccupation, his over-riding obsession, and the single-minded thrust of his life. Evangelization was the inspiration behind all he said and did and the launching pad for all his numerous activities. It was the heart of his life and action, the soul of his thinking and planning. It was the goal to which all his strivings tended.

The Archbishop's sole desire was to bring the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to the people. He had only one driving force in his life:

the progress and development of the poor people. He wanted to do something for the poor people in the far-flung villages of Northeast India.

ii) Advice and Support from Others

When the Bishops of North East India met to plan for the Centenary Celebration of the arrival of the Catholic Church in North East India in 1890, Archbishop Hubert shared with them his project for founding a new missionary congregation. The other bishops supported his idea of founding a new Congregation of Sisters, as they too felt the same need in their respective dioceses.

The Archbishop sought the opinion of the higher authorities of the Church. He also met significant persons to get advice and approval. He said, "When I met Cardinal A. Rossi, the Prefect of the Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples and its general secretary Archbishop D.S. Lourdasamy, in 1981, they gave me the green light to go ahead and to inform them of the progress."

The Archbishop wanted a religious congregation which would take upon itself the burden of training the members of the proposed Pious Association. He approached the Superior General of the Sisters of Our lady of the Missions, Sr. Benedicte. The Superior General after prayer and consultation agreed to help him in the work of formation. He made a contract for nine years with these Sisters.

iii) The Archbishop's Plans

On 29 June, 1982, at the monthly meeting of the priests, Archbishop Hubert made the following important announcement, "I have been thinking for years about how to help our villages get the full Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Most of our Christians live in villages

steeped in poverty, ignorance and disease. There is a pressing need for Sisters living in their midst and helping them rise...”

Below is a lengthy quote from the letter of Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario, sent to all the priests of the Archdiocese on 31 January, 1983. In it he gave a general view of the whole project for the new congregation that he would found:

God willing, the group that will be formed in due course, in May 1983, will be called Candidates to the Pious Association of the Visitation. The Pious Association will be officially erected by the Archbishop. After three years of spiritual formation (six months as aspirants and six months as postulants and two years as novices) the candidates found willing and worthy will take private vows, wear a habit and live as religious women. They will, then, continue their professional training according to their talents and prepare themselves for pastoral work. Their life as members of the Pious Association will be in accordance with the Constitutions and Regulations approved by the Archbishop. The spiritual and religious formation of the members will continue through their life.

A few years later, when the number of the members will have grown, the Archbishop, with the permission of Rome, will raise the Association to the level of a Diocesan Congregation. The members of the Association, while striving after Christian perfection, will strive to become signs and bearers of God’s love to the poor, especially the youth in villages and towns.

Activities of the Congregation

In Mission Centres

The Sisters will run hostels for girls, dispensaries and help in the parish schools. They will have two sisters set apart in the community to tour the village areas of the mission, according to a program drawn up together with the parish priest.

In Villages

With an understanding with the Archbishop and parish priest, they will set up a village uplift-centre. They will visit the houses of the people and bring them the love, joy, justice and peace of Christ.

This team will be the pioneer missionaries in the villages chosen to be future mission-centres which do not have priests at present.

In Towns

The Sisters will gather together those Catholic children who are too poor to attend school and are dropouts from our Catholic schools due to failure in the annual examinations and shall prepare them to pass the government examinations privately. They will use non-formal education method to eradicate illiteracy.

The Sisters will teach poor girls some profession as sewing, knitting, typing, etc., which will enable them to earn a simple livelihood.

The Sisters will undertake the translation of religious books and pamphlets into the local language and see to its publication for the use of ordinary Christians. They will use all available media of communication, dance and music to bring the Good News to non-believers.

As teams of catechism teachers, they will help the parish priests to catechize adults and children and to prepare them to receive the

Sacraments .They will visit the homes of our people regularly and will animate the parish associations, with the knowledge of the parish priest

Finally, the Sisters will be ready to do any other work for the poor according to their charism that may be found necessary by the Church

The Sisters will have their own houses in important towns with their activities.

For the first few years, only Matric-passed or higher educated [sic] girls will be recruited. But later, girls who have passed class VI will be admitted as aspirants. The girls will be admitted under the recommendation of the parish priest.

The bulk of our Catholics live in the villages. They are by and large illiterate, prone to diseases, short of food and left to themselves. The Sisters will labour to bring Christ right into their homes. They will care for their health by preventive and curative medicine and hygienic living; remove illiteracy through non-formal education and will help grow more food. Evangelization and Catechesis will hold the pride of place. Mary at her Visitation will be their model and patroness. As Mary "went with haste into the hill country" to visit and help Elizabeth (Lk.1,39), the Sisters will rush to attend to the spiritual and other needs of people in the villages and will live with them. They will be other Marys to our people in the far-flung villages and towns and will bring love, joy, peace, strength and hope to them.

iv) A New Congregation is Born

Through prayer, discussion and dreaming, the vision outlined above came to fruition in God's good time. On 29th May 1983, 10 young women came to Madonna Convent, Upper Shillong to be the nucleus of the new Congregation.

On 30th May 1983, on the eve of the feast of Our Lady of the Visitation, the ceremony of admission of girls to the Aspirantate was held and the House was blessed. During the reception, His Grace gave the aspirants a medal, the book of Psalms and the Imitation of Christ. The Archbishop celebrated the Holy Eucharist along with Rev. Fr. Virgilius Albera, SDB, the then Parish Priest of St. Paul's Parish, Upper Shillong.

On 31st May, 1983, the Feast of Our Lady's Visitation, was the occasion for the solemn inauguration of the Pious Association of the Visitation. It took place at Madonna Convent. It was a memorable day for the members of the infant Congregation. A festal procession started from the study hall to the chapel. A hymn to Christ was sung after which the introductory words were given by Reverend Father V. Albera, SDB, Parish Priest of St. Paul's Parish. After the introductory talk, there was a reading from the Gospel (Mk 1: 16-20: the calling of the Apostles by Christ). A hymn to Our Lady was sung followed by the second reading, from the Gospel of St. Matthew 27:55-56, about the women who followed Jesus from Galilee and looked after him. Then, the Archbishop spoke a few words to all those present and lighted a large candle. The Archbishop lighted eight small candles from the big candle and gave them to the candidates saying "Christ is the Light of the world. Carry Christ, the Light, to our people." Then the second joyful mystery, the Visitation of Our Lady, was recited and all walked in procession from the hall to the chapel singing the Magnificat. On entering the chapel, candles were placed before the statue of Mary Help of Christians. The Mass then began with the singing of the Gloria in Khasi. After the Gospel reading, His Grace gave a short, inspiring homily (see the appendix for the homily) touching on the situation of the people and the Church in India in general and in Northeast India in particular.

Among those present for the function were: Fr. Mathai Kochuparampil, SDB, Salesian Provincial, Fr. Tarcisius Resto, SDB, Vicar General, Fr. V. Albera, SDB, Parish Priest St. Paul's Parish, Fr. Michael Devalle, SDB, Fr. Robert Majaw, Fr. Cornelius Khyriem, Parish Priest of Mawbri, Fr. Francis Kharwanlang, Parish Priest of Mawkhar, Fr. Vincent Kympat, Parish Priest of Marbisu, Fr. Edwin Kahit, Parish Priest of Laban, Bro. Castellino, SDB, Sr. Mary John Bosco, RNDM, Provincial, Sr. Mary Henrietta, RNDM, Sr. Mary Martin, RNDM, Sr. Mary Pius, RNDM, Sr. Mary Olga, AC, Sr. Magdalene Mary, AC, Sr. Celine Pinto, IBVM and Sr. M. Candida, RNDM. The Archbishop then, as the head of the Archdiocese, recognized the first group and others who will join later under the superior, as a private pious association to be called the Pious Association of the Visitation and approved it according to Church Law.

Being a true son of Don Bosco and a devout Salesian he wanted his newly founded Congregation to be in the Salesian family. He requested the Salesians of Don Bosco to help out in the work of formation. Rev. Fr. Mathai Kochupurampil, SDB, who was the provincial at that time agreed to send Salesian priests to be chaplains and to teach the young candidates the life and spirit of Don Bosco. Right from the initial stage of the Congregation, the Salesian Fathers were involved in the works of formation. Communities from nearby places like St. Paul's seminary, Don Bosco Sunnyside Novitiate, Sacred Heart College, Mathias Institute and Pastoral Centre have come for chaplaincy, monthly recollections, confessions and classes for the novices on a regular basis. They are still doing so even now.

The candidates were housed at Madonna Convent, an old, renovated school building. During those initial stages of the

Association, Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario came to Madonna Convent for Mass and classes regularly. Our Founder would insist that all the members should strive for holiness of life and all should become saints.

v) The Motto of the Association

Go, Disciple (Mt. 28: 19) is the goal of the apostolic work of the congregation.

Evangelization is at the heart of the life and mission of the congregation. “Go, make disciples” is the motto of the congregation that was chosen by our founder. It is the missionary mandate of Jesus given to all the baptized Christians and especially to us VSDB (See the appendix for the Motto).

Evangelization and catechesis through family apostolate are the principal aim, objective and mission of the members. Preaching the word of God holds the pride of place in the ministry of the congregation not only by mere words but by examples as we daily recite in the prayer of Blessed Cardinal Newman.

The main purpose for which Archbishop Hubert founded the congregation of the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco is to meet this urgent need of India and Northeast India in particular and to reach out to the poor and needy in the far-flung and neglected rural areas and bring the Good News of salvation to them.

There are people in need of support and guidance not only spiritually but also materially, intellectually and psychologically. The Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco render their services to such people. Making Christ present among the poor and the needy in villages and neglected urban areas was the unique vision of Archbishop Hubert.

(vi) Source of our Spiritual Life

Eucharist: The Eucharist is the source of spiritual strength for its members. In the convent chapel Blessed Sacrament is kept and the members are given the privilege to receive Holy Communion by themselves when there is no Holy Mass celebrated.

Holy Scripture: The members read and meditate on a passage from the Holy Scripture every day.

Spiritual Reading: It is read from books by recognised spiritual masters.

Devotions and Practices of Piety: Adoration, Rosary, morning and evening prayers, novenas and other practices of piety. Monthly recollections are conducted at the congregation level for the sisters on a regular basis.

vii) The Progress of the Congregation

Before the Association's first anniversary, on May 1984, new candidates joined the group. The first anniversary of the foundation of the Pious Association and the feast of Our Lady of the Visitation were celebrated in a fitting manner. On this day the first batch of candidates after a year of formation was initiated into the novitiate. Archbishop Hubert was the main celebrant.

The long awaited dream of Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario became a reality on May 31st 1986, when the first batch made their first profession after a six-day retreat with him. The Most Rev. Hubert D'Rosario accepted their vows in the name of the Church and of the Pious Association of the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco. This joyful occasion marked the beginning of the history of the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco. On 8th December 1987, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, four second year novices of the second

batch made their first profession. His Grace who was the main celebrant received their vows.

viii) General Assemblies of the VSDB

There were six General Assemblies during the Founder's life time. The main purpose of these assemblies was to review the past, study the present and plan for the future growth of the Pious Association. Those were the occasions when the Archbishop inspired the members, breathed new life into them and strengthened them in the face of discouragement and difficulties.

It seemed that the hand of God was there blessing us at every step we took. The successive Assemblies served to motivate and strengthen us. Assemblies were also occasions which took us into a deeper understanding of religious life. And our Founder always used them to instil in us the spirit of our Pious Association.

In one of the Assemblies His Grace exhorted the sisters, saying: The year 1983 in which you were born was a Jubilee Year of the redemption of our Lord. The first group came together as a result of many prayers. From that time onward, things started growing naturally. So the hand of God is leading and guiding you and next year on 31 May, 1992 there will be the first batch ready for final vows and by the end of that year the RNDM Sisters will complete their contract with this group so you have to stand on your own feet and be prepared to take responsibilities. You have to stick to your charism and aim. If you lose sight of your aim you will no longer be relevant in the Church and nobody will want you.

Another time our founder reminded us that God is the first community. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – that is the example of all community life. The Holy Family of Nazareth, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, is the example to all Catholic families including religious communities. Quoting the words of Pope Pius XII to superiors of women religious he said: “Be generous to the members of your congregations. They have left their respective homes to join you, so they must find in your houses that love which is found in ordinary natural families.”

Again and again our Founder used to impress on us the need of being kind and gentle with the younger members, particularly on their return from weeks of touring the villages and proclaiming the Good News. He continued saying that we have to pray seriously for more vocations and pointed out that if we did not pray we would become mere social workers. Our deportment in public, he said, must always be beyond reproach.

His Grace exhorted all of us to love and accept people who will then come to us and seek advice. “Sisters” he added “must observe religious modesty when going out ... be cheerful but reserved.” Again he reminded us: “We are speakers, teachers and witnesses not only by our words, but particularly by our lives. Our very presence must bring Christ and His gifts of love, peace and hope to all.”

ix) Significant Events in the First Few Years

a) Opening of New Mission Centres

Four years after the foundation of the Pious Association, the congregation held its First General Assembly on 4 June, 1987, where all the professed members and novices participated. From then on every year there was a General Assembly of the Sisters till 1997. After the First

Chapter in 1998, the General Assembly is held once in three years, i.e., in between the General Chapters.

We marked the Golden Jubilee of the Religious Profession of Archbishop Hubert, at the Madonna Convent, on 22 December, 1987. During the felicitation for his jubilee our Founder gave away the missioning cards to the four pioneers of the first mission at Pomlakrai.

Archbishop Hubert, our Founder, was very happy that his aim had materialized and his dream was fulfilled on 31 January, 1988, when the first batch of Sisters set out for the first mission centre at Pomlakrai. The inauguration was on the feast of St. John Bosco. He visited the community once a month to give the Sisters spiritual support and guidance.

The date 17 March, 1989, was another milestone for the budding congregation, when the second new mission centre was opened at Sacred Heart Convent, Umden under Nongpoh Parish.

A year later on 2 September, 1990, a third mission centre was opened at Ka Syiem Jingsuk Convent, Amlarem, under Jowai Parish.

The last mission centre during the Founder's life time was the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary Convent, at Dangar, Palat. It was opened on June, 1994.

b) Final Profession of the First Batch

On 31st May, 1992, six years after they had set their hand to the plough, the first batch of Sisters made their final profession of the three vows of chastity, poverty and obedience in the Cathedral of Mary Help of Christians, Laitumkhrah, in the presence of their parents, relatives, and loved ones and other religious and priests. His Grace, the Founder, presided over the function.

c) End of the Contract with the RNDM Sisters

We the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco will never forget the Congregation of Our Lady Queen of the Missions (RNDM) who gave their best Sisters to our congregation during its initial stage of formation for nine years (1983 – 1992).

On 1st June 1992, a new series of changes for the Pious Association of the Visitation took place. The nine-year contract with the RNDM Sisters came to an end. This transition was foreseen and prepared for. In the General Assembly of 1991, the Founder informed the members of the Congregation to shoulder the responsibility of training and formation of the candidates and to stand on their own feet. We struggled with the new responsibilities but we kept going, learning from mistakes, and gaining experience from one meeting to another, and constantly being enriched by our beloved Founder's vast wisdom.

d) Appointment of the First Office Bearers

When the first batch made their final profession and the contract with the RNDM Sisters was terminated, His Grace the Archbishop, our Founder, appointed the following persons as office bearers for three years, i.e., from 1992 to 1995

They were:

1. Sr. Cecilia Sad: Mother President
2. Sr. Elis Mary Lamin: Vice President
3. Sr. Angela Kharkongor: Councillor
4. Sr. Biolinda Jyrwa: General Bursar and Councillor
5. Sr. Martha Masynting: General Secretary and Councillor

x) Characteristics of Our Founder

a) The Founder's Faith in His Spiritual Daughters

The Archbishop had great faith, trust and confidence in his spiritual daughters. He saw the variety of talents and capabilities where perhaps we ourselves saw none. And in his trusting ways he put us into situations where we could bloom and flower and be the persons that God had designed us to be. Our Founder never thought that we were too small and insignificant for the great work he wanted us to do.

We saw in our Founder a man of profound faith in God and a deep spirit of prayer. All of us were aware that he prayed ceaselessly on his many journeys and we often had the privilege of praying with him on trips to far-flung villages. His life of prayer led him to have great trust in Divine Providence. He taught us to have the same trust. The Eucharist was the centre of our life, evangelization the pivot of our many activities and Jesus Christ the epicentre of our life and mission.

From all that has been written above, it might seem that the good Archbishop's life unfolded smoothly. Far from it. He met with opposition from certain quarters, when he founded the Congregation. But he was not discouraged. He said, "If it is the Lord's will, it will succeed. If we seek the best for the growth of the Kingdom of God and not for our own glory and personal enhancement, the Lord will not allow us to go wrong. He will send vocations to join the new Congregation as well as the finance we need."

b) The Founder's Strong Will Power

Archbishop Hubert was a man of tremendous determination and strong will. Once he was convinced of the need for something,

he set himself fully to the achievement of the same, at times even to the point of being insensitive to opposition. It was because of this characteristic of his, perhaps, that he achieved so much. Some did not understand him; quite a few did not share his ideals. But to those who understood and shared his vision, he was a leader of tremendous calibre. He was affectionate but tough, loving yet demanding, understanding though strict. Yet in his dealings with the Sisters, much of the paternity that lay hidden in the brazen exterior did find a field for expression.

xi) Archbishop Hubert's Last Days with Us

The last time he came to Madonna Convent to offer Holy Mass was on 13th August 1994. After breakfast, we had a short meeting with him. He was looking extremely ill. After the meeting, he was too weak to get up from the chair. In spite of his ill health, he was ready to take class for the novices. He said, "If I do not die working, then I will die doing nothing." That evening he was admitted to Nazareth Hospital. From then on, he was in and out of hospital.

We, his beloved daughters, kept visiting him during his final illness. His constant topic of conversation with us would be matters that concerned us most. He spoke of having 30 professed Sisters in the Congregation, so that he could proceed towards the approval of our Constitutions by the Holy See, and get the Association recognised as a Diocesan Congregation. He spoke of the growth of the Congregation and of the great things he wanted us to do. He spoke of plans to go to Umpling after his retirement and write down all that he had spoken to us. His constant exhortation was that we should love one another.

xii) The Death of the Founder

On Tuesday, 30th August, 1994, in the evening at 8.30, Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario went to his eternal reward. He was 75. Our Congregation was only 11 years old. His death shocked the whole Congregation as he left at its initial stage. We felt the loss very acutely. His mortal remains were brought to Madonna Convent for a night on 1st September, 1994. He was buried inside the Cathedral beside the altar of Mary Help of Christians.

When he was alive, the Archbishop had said, “If I die in office, you bury me in the Cathedral close to Our Lady. If death takes me as a retired Archbishop, you can bury me in the Chapel of the Madonna Convent.” His wish was carried out.

xiii) Congregation Surges Ahead

With the death of our Founder, some people thought that the Congregation too would fade away. But the members took up the challenge to persevere in their vocation. God in his providence came to our assistance. With God’s grace and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Congregation kept growing. God sent us new guides in the person of Archbishop T. Resto Phanrang, SDB, and Archbishop Dominic Jala, SDB. We continue growing in strength, numbers and in diversity of apostolate within the Archdiocese, in the region and even outside. We cannot but thank God for His goodness and mercy. We continue to walk bravely under his guidance.

On June 1st, 1995 Bishop T. Resto Phanrang, the Archdiocesan Administrator of Shillong appointed the new office-bearers for three years, 1995 – 1998. They were:

1. Sr. Angela Kharkongor: Mother President
2. Sr. Cecilia Sad: Vice President

3. Sr. Biolinda Jyrwa: Councillor
4. Sr. Edwiges Kharpan: Councillor
5. Sr. Martha Masynting: Councillor
6. Sr. Justina Kahit: General Secretary

xiv) General Chapters

It was always the desire of our Founder to have 30 professed members during his life time, so that he could request for the approval of the Constitutions from the Holy See, and the Congregation to be recognised as a Congregation of Diocesan Right. The dream materialised on 8th December 1997, when the Pious Association was officially recognized as a Congregation of the Diocesan Right by Archbishop Tarcisius Resto Phanrang, SDB.

Two years after the approval, the Congregation held its first General Chapter in September 1998, during which the election of the Superior General and the Councillors took place. The following were elected as office bearers for six years from 1998 to 2004:

1. Sr. Biolinda Jyrwa: Superior General
2. Sr. Cecilia Sad: Vicar General
3. Sr. Angela Kharkongor: Councillor
4. Sr. Martha Masynting: Councillor
5. Sr. Edwiges Kharpan: Councillor cum Secretary

Six years later in October 2004, the Second General Chapter of the Congregation and election of Superior General and Councillors took place for the term of six years (2004 – 2010). They were:

1. Sr. Cecilia Sad: Superior General
2. Sr. Bibiana Nongsiej: Vicar General
3. Sr. Biolinda Jyrwa: Councillor

4. Sr. Edwiges Kharpan: Councillor
5. Sr. Angela Marbañiang: Councillor

Six years later in August 2010, the 3rd General Chapter of the Congregation was held at Madonna Convent, with the theme “Growing in VSDB Vocation.” Towards the close of the Chapter, on 30th August, a day after the election of the new office bearers, we received the shocking news of the passing away of Sr. Closia Clare Samayang, who was stationed at Amguri, Guwahati Diocese. She was the first member of the congregation to leave for the heavenly abode. That took place in the evening at 4 pm while we were having Mass at the Cathedral of Mary Help of Christians on the occasion of the 16th death anniversary of our beloved Father and Founder, Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario.

The following were the office bearers:

1. Sr. Cecilia Sad: Superior General (second term)
2. Sr. Mabel Dhar: Vicar General
3. Sr. Angela Kharkongor: Councillor
4. Sr. Otilia Nongrum: Councillor
5. Sr. Kerydian Lyngdoh: Councillor

xv) The Silver Jubilee of the Congregation

The Congregation entered the 25th year of its foundation on 31st May, 2007. To mark the opening of the silver jubilee year a solemn Eucharistic celebration was held at Madonna Convent grounds. Added to the solemnity were the first and final religious professions of our Sisters of the three evangelical counsels. The conclusion of the Silver Jubilee Celebration was held a year after on 31st May, 2008. Apart from the annual professions of the Sisters the occasion was made grand by the participation of many priests, religious, sisters, brothers, our parents, thousands of faithful and several distinguished guests. The Jubilee Mass

was solemnized at Magnificat Convent, Umpling, and presided over by His Grace, the Most Rev. Dominic Jala, SDB. The theme reflected on during the Jubilee was “One in Mind and Heart.”

xvi) New Foundations

Over the years many bishops have invited the VSDB to their dioceses. At present, the Congregation has nineteen presences spread across the Archdioceses and Dioceses in Northeast India and one abroad in South Sudan (Africa). The following are the names of our centres and the dates of opening:

1. **Madonna Convent:** Inaugurated on May 31, 1983, (Mother House) Upper Shillong Parish
2. **Pomlakrai:** Our Lady of Good Health Convent, Upper Shillong Parish, January 31, 1988
3. **Umden:** Sacred Heart Convent, Nongpoh Parish, March 17, 1989. (The VSDB left the mission in December, 2012)
4. **Amlarem:** Ka Syiem Jingsuk Convent, September 2, 1990 Jowai Diocese,
5. **Balat-Dangar:** Our Lady Queen of the Most Holy Rosary Convent, June 1994, (it was the last mission opened during the life time of our Founder)
6. **Umkadhoh:** Our Lady of Lourdes Convent, February, 1995
7. **Laitumkhrach:** Visitation Convent, June 8, 1996 (a study house for the sisters)
8. **Kynrut:** Rosario Convent, July 31, 1996, Mairang Parish, Nongstoin Diocese
9. **Nangbah:** Assumption Convent, December 15, 1996, Jowai Diocese

- 10. Deifler:** Exaltation Convent, Deifler, September 13, 1997, Diphu Diocese
- 11. Umpling:** Magnificat Convent, October 10, 1997 (Candidate/ Aspirantate house), Nongthymmai Parish
- 12. Ktichhawiar:** Bosco Convent, October 13, 1998, Umwahlang Parish, Nongstoin Diocese
- 13. Krang:** St. John's Convent, September 23, 2001, Marbisu Parish
- 14. Asalu:** Xavier Convent, December 14, 2003, Diphu Diocese
- 15. Khrang:** Hiamlang Convent, November 26, 2006
- 16. Amguri:** Epiphany Convent, January 4, 2009, Guwahati Archdiocese
- 17. Tyrso:** Divine mercy Convent, April 18, 2010, Mawlasnai Parish
- 18. Barato:** Fatima Convent, July 18, 2010, Jowai Diocese
- 19. South Sudan:** St. Therese Convent, Manguo, Maridi, November 10, 2012
- 20. Zero Point:** Ka Syiem Jingkyrmen Convent, Umshorshor, May 20, 2013, Umsning Parish

These mission centres are the places where the members live out the aim and spirit of the Father and Founder. The Sisters in the mission centres constantly tour villages, stay in villages for weeks, visiting and praying for and with the people in their homes and take time to prepare the faithful for the reception of various sacraments. The Sisters join the faithful for the Sunday prayer service. They call such prayer service Sunday-Mass-without-Priest.

Some of the mission centres have dispensaries, where besides giving people medicine the Sisters also conduct health-awareness

programmes for the villagers. Quite a number of our mission centres are malaria prone; a number of our Sisters too are affected by this disease.

xvii) Numerical Strength of the Congregation

There were 27 professed members in the congregation and 20 novices when our Founder died in August 1994. The Congregation is growing gradually and steadily. Now the strength of the Congregation after the 3rd General Chapter has gone up to 119 professed sisters, with sixteen novices, seven postulants, and a good number of candidates.

xviii) Our Dreams for the Future

1. Further growth in quality and numbers
2. Care of vocations
3. New formation houses and mission centres

Conclusion

The Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco are ever grateful to Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario, their Father and Founder, and to all those who have been accompanying them from its inception till today.

Personal Reminiscences

(i) Intrepid Herald of the Gospel

Cardinal Ivan Dias¹

A Memorial Volume on the life and missionary work of Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario, SDB, is indeed a praiseworthy initiative on the part of the professors of Sacred Heart Theological College, Oriens Theological College and others who knew him. As formators of future priests and missionaries, it becomes imperative to present to the mind and heart of your students and of all Christian men of God such as Archbishop Hubert, whom we consider to be a contemporary authentic witness of Christ, intrepid herald of the Gospel, daring missionary, great sower of God’s life-giving word to the teeming millions of Northeast India.

Only a man passionately in love with Christ and fully trusting in God’s empowering grace can achieve what he has bequeathed to the Local Churches in that part of India: a number of seminaries, parishes, educational institutions, catechetical centres and mission houses of various congregations whom he invited to collaborate in his pioneering evangelization activities.

¹ His Eminence Cardinal Ivan Dias is the former Archbishop of Mumbai. He was also Prefect of the Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples. At present he is retired and lives in Rome.

By putting together all the testimonies of those who were privileged to have a firsthand knowledge or still have a vivid and reliable recollection of the life and work of Archbishop Hubert, we will be keeping alive his legacy of faithful and fruitful discipleship of Christ Jesus the Lord. May the readers of the Memorial Volume have a glimpse of the fire which filled his soul and moved his heart, and pass on the blazing torch of his missionary zeal to the men and women of the upcoming generations.

(ii) Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario, a Visionary

Bishop Victor Lyngdoh²

I was privileged to be anointed a priest by His Grace Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario. Both as a seminarian and priest, my experience of the Archbishop has been very enriching. Archbishop Hubert was a man who knew the way, walked the way and showed the way for priests, religious, seminarians and the faithful.

Archbishop Hubert was a great visionary who could foresee the future of the Church in Northeast India and rendered every possible service for the growth of the Church in this part of the world. A unique personality with total self-discipline, he taught everyone associated with the Church a sense of discipline, duty, dedication, etc., for the benefit of the people whom he loved very dearly.

As the head of the first and most important diocese of Shillong, Hubert D’Rosario had a plan for every priest who worked under his supervision. He was very understanding but extremely firm. He guided and directed all the priests and religious with a vision – a vision for the Church and people. He understood very well that the

2 The Rt. Rev. Victor Lyngdoh is the Bishop of Nongstoin Diocese, Meghalaya.

backward region of Northeast India needed the untiring services of the Church for education and healthcare and directed every activity towards that goal.

The Archbishop pushed ahead and motivated the missionary activities of the young Church in Northeast India. He took keen interest in the formation of priests, brothers and religious in order to achieve the goals set for the young and fast growing Church. He was a great missionary who led people to preach the word of God as commanded by the Lord.

Hubert D'Rosario was a man of prayer and instilled this in all the seminarians, priests and religious through his talks to the communities and in his personal interaction with the students of Minor Seminary, Philosophy and Brothers in Regency and Theology. He made it a point to visit the homes of every priest and seminarian to know them personally and promote their welfare. He was also impressed by the faith of these families.

As the shepherd of faithful, his love and dedication to the people of God was manifested whenever he toured the villages. Once he was among the people, he was a different person altogether. All his love for God came to the forefront as he was a strong believer that the love of God is love of humankind. As a great missionary and evangelizer, he was always satisfied with any kind of facility that was provided to him in the newly established parishes and centres even in remotest villages. He was a man who never felt tired of walking any distance to preach the word of God and meet his people in every corner of the region he served.

As a true pastor of souls, Archbishop Hubert took keen interest in the formation and growth of the young. He recognized that youth can carry the Church and its mission forward and hence encouraged them to take up preaching and welfare activities in the name of the Church.

In all his dealings, the Archbishop practised transparency and insisted that all his co-workers practised the same. He was a beacon of light that showed the way for accountability in the Church in all its administrative activities. He was not a professional administrator but knew what was required for the growth of the Church and had his way in achieving what he wanted for the greater good of the Church.

Above all, Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario was a great human being who carried out his mission with an admirable vision.

(iii) My Impressions of Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario, SDB

Fr. Jacob Aluckal³

Memories fade away as years pass. But, nearly twenty years after the passing away of Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario, SDB, the third bishop of Shillong and the first Archbishop of Shillong-Guwahati, the void created by his passing away has only become bigger and wider. Increasingly, I become aware of the greatness of this Archbishop.

Archbishop Hubert was a man of the Second Vatican Council II. He participated in the Council, though not fully, and was very much inspired by it. He tried his best to translate into reality the spirit of the Council. His concern for the building up of the local Church in no way prevented him to be a great missionary. He was a missionary par excellence, visiting the parishes and villages, and Christian communities and non-Christian villages. Touring the villages was his prime concern and commitment. His engagements outside the diocese were very minimal. It enabled him to get to know his priests and faithful.

3 Fr. Jacob Aluckal, holds a doctorate in Theology. He has been professor of Theology at Oriens Theological College and Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Shillong.

The Archbishop was a great source of unity for the Church in the region. The way he mobilized the entire region for the celebration of the Centenary of the Catholic Church in Northeast India in 1990, the papal visit to Shillong in 1986, and the holding of the General Assembly of the CBCI in Shillong were something remarkable. The civil authorities and the various Church leaders looked up to him for guidance and support in times of crisis.

Archbishop Hubert planned everything very systematically and when things did not go according to his plans, he used to get upset. He had a fantastic memory and hence it was not easy for him to forget hurt feelings. He always thought about others and was silent about himself, his needs and sufferings. There is a general feeling that he did not receive due credit for what he was while alive. I am really happy that a Memorial Volume is published in his honour and this will to some extent make up for the silence.

(iv) My Brief Encounter with the Founder

Sr. Koshuni Auxilia Nepuni, VSDB⁴

It was on 11th May, 1994 that I reached Shillong to join the Association of the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco, founded by the late Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario. It was on this very first day that I met our founder at Archbishop’s House, Shillong. He was unfamiliar to me then though we communicated through letters prior to my landing in Shillong.

His Grace the Archbishop, being the father and founder of the Association came every Saturday for Mass and on special occasions. He never failed to turn up at the appointed time. Whenever we know that he would be coming, we would be ready and wait for him at the time fixed. On Saturdays, His Grace would have breakfast with us together with the professed Sisters, Novices and the Aspirants.

He divided his time in order to be able to take class for us; sometimes for the Sisters, other times for the Novices and for us Aspirants too whenever his health and time permitted. Due to his ill health he often could not talk or stand for long. We were fortunate indeed to have attended the three classes taken by him. During the classes he always tried to make us feel at ease with him. Every time

⁴ Sr. Koshuni Auxilia Nepuni, VSDB, at present works as missionary in South Sudan, Africa.

before the beginning of the talk after praying he would ask our names, tribes, parishes and he would appreciate and say good things about each one of us and the community, place or parish we came from.

The Archbishop liked to see us happy and cheerful and studious. Whenever he saw any of us without a smile or with a somber face, he would say “show me your teeth” or “smile,” and then he would himself show a broad smile on his face. During class he often asked simple questions so that we could answer and that would make us happy and him too. Those were the only times that we got a chance to talk and to be with him as with our Papa. But we aspirants among ourselves, even after his class used to go on talking about his class, kindness and used to imitate him as well. I remember he asked very often: “Why have you come here?” and after getting different answers from us he would say, “Now you are my daughters.” These words made us feel like we are sisters among ourselves and all of us his dear daughters.

I was the first and only one aspirant at that time from outside the Khasi community; and being new without anybody else of my tribe I felt that it was His Grace, the Founder, who understood me most. He talked to me and made me feel that he cared. One day while I was at work His Grace sent for me; and I was very happy indeed to meet him in his office at Madonna Convent. There he enquired about my family background, about my Matric (HSLC) Exam and also my stay at Madonna Convent. I shared with him all the news about myself. He encouraged me to go ahead and advised me that I should never turn back. He also told me that he had prayed for me. I was impressed by his gentleness, understanding, fatherly love and above all his goodness. He always reminded me of God. He never mentioned anything that was apart from Jesus, Mary and the saints. I remember even now, that he used to say, “pray for me also; I am praying for you or I have prayed for

you.” Many times I met him personally and his simplicity and concern were always the same.

One day together with my superior I met the Founder to tell him about failure in my exam. As I was crying bitterly, His Grace was trying to console me and mentioning the first day when he saw me he said, “The first time you met your father Archbishop, you did not even wish him. That day you looked like a queen. But now you are my daughter.” He said all these smilingly and those scenes remained in my memory ever since and make me think and cry till today.

To me, His Grace was the only one I trusted and believed that he did really care for me. I never experienced such sorrow and regret as at his passing away. Even now my memories of him are still vivid in my mind.

Many times our superiors remind us of him and it is all true that he was a real father to us. He was a man who could understand, encourage, admire and adjust himself to any situation and person. He was a man of prayer and a great Missionary. His piety and devotion to Our Lady are reflected in “The Way of Life” (a booklet on VSDB Way of Life) which he gave us. It was only after his death that I came to know that he was loved and admired by many in his Diocese and whoever knew him did regret his untimely demise.

(v) Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario, A Great Planner

Fr. Terence D’Souza⁵

Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario always showed respect for civil authorities and the laws of the country. He often reminded his priests about the same. In this he was following the example of Don Bosco, his spiritual father, who recommended to his missionaries great respect and deference for civil authorities. Thus addressing his priests in 1965, writes Fr. Terence D’Souza of Dibrugarh diocese, D’Rosario said: “Please Fathers, do not try to enter Nagaland for ministry without the proper government permit. Don’t put the Church in trouble, please.”

Archbishop D’Rosario was convinced of the validity of Catholic education in our schools imparted to non Christians too. He was always hopeful that Catholic education would mould their values even if they do not become Catholics. Again, some day in the distant future, they may turn to Christ and his Church. Thus addressing heads of schools he said: “There are a number of Hindus and non-Catholics in our many schools in Northeast India. With regard to the non-Catholics, they could someday become Catholics.”

Archbishop D’Rosario had an eye and an ear for language, words and their origins, and rare facts. Thus he would ask: “Do you know how

5 Fr. Terence D’Souza worked for many years at St. Joseph’s Minor Seminary Dibrugarh. He is retired now and lives at the Bishop’s House Dibrugarh.

the word "JEEP" came into being? The original word was G.P. (General Purpose Vehicle). By dint of mere repetition of the word G. P. Became jeep. Gradually the word Jeep became a common name for the particular type of vehicle. And so there came into being the present word".

One of the primary concerns of Archbishop D'Rosario as a pastor was the love and care of local vocations from the very beginning of his episcopal ministry. From the time he came to Dibrugarh, he began to look for and invite priests to promote local vocations. Already by the end of 1964 and the beginning of 1965, there were several boys from Nagaland, Manipur and the Assam plains in St. Joseph's Minor Seminary which was still in the Bishop' House.

On the day of my priestly ordination on 1 July 1965, held at the Don Bosco grounds in Imphal, speaking to about 2000 Catholics of Manipur and Nagaland the Archbishop said: "Today I am ordaining Deacon Terence D'Souza a priest of God and most of you are seeing it for the first time ever! Blessed be the day when one of your sons will be ordained priest, in Manipur". The day came years later when Deacon John Kashiiprii of Mao was ordained a priest.

Archbishop D'Rosario was a man who planned things meticulously. He was definitely a deskman, a planner, a schemer, a dreamer for the Kingdom. With the backing and financial support of Fr. Ignatius Rubio, mighty works for building up the infrastructure of the Church were undertaken. Magnificent cathedrals, churches, chapels, seminaries, schools, hospitals and mission stations were undertaken for the spread of the kingdom of God in the plains of Assam, and in the Hills of Manipur, Nagaland and Meghalaya. No wonder that the people of the region just revered him, loved and respected him.

(vi) Archbishop D’Rosario: Some Impressions

Fr. Joseph Vaz, SDB⁶

Bishop Hubert’s father was a railway officer. Mr. Rosario was an upright person and taught his son to run on the right track and to observe all the rules of safe running. Hubert was a good boy in school. My uncle, Mr. V. P. Coelho, was his headmaster and teacher in Calicut (Jesuit School).

Mr. Rosario was transferred to Tirupattur in the early thirties. Young Hubert met the Salesians and I suppose he could not resist the charm of Fr. Carreño, then novice–master, who taught his novices to serve the Lord in gladness.

Fr. Hubert was a man of God. As a Salesian he was an exemplary religious, never sought or approved of an exception. He would always meet his sister in the parlour: “She is a woman, isn’t she?” he would say.

As a rector he was a loving father. He was so alert that at any point of time he knew where each confrere was and what he was doing. That was “Salesian Assistance.” His sermons, conferences and talks were spiritually nourishing. It was a privilege to be with him and to have known him.

⁶ Fr. Joseph Vaz, SDB, worked as teacher for many years at Don Bosco School Matunga, Mumbai with Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario. He passed away a few years ago. RIP.

**(vii) A Wonderful Human Being,
A Fervent Religious and Priest**

Bro. Thomas Puthur, SDB⁷

Living with Rev. Fr. Hubert Rosario for two years as my Rector at Don Bosco Matunga, Mumbai, made me understand that he was a wonderful human being, a fervent religious and a zealous priest.

i) A Wonderful Human Being

Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario had a heart of gold to forgive his enemies. He knew how to disagree with his opponents and to win them over with his human qualities of justice and benevolence. He was intelligent, wise, hardworking and an able administrator with a heart.

ii) A Fervent Religious

Archbishop Rosario’s love for poverty, chastity and obedience was real. Community life, especially community practices of piety such as meditation was his forte. His interior life was illumined by the light of the presence of God and it was seen in his demeanour.

⁷ Bro. Thomas Puthur, SDB, worked for many years as teacher and educationist at Don Bosco School Matunga, Mumbai. He passed away in 2010. RIP.

iii) A Zealous Priest

Archbishop Hubert gave utmost importance to the devout celebration of the Eucharist, reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion, recitation of the breviary and the daily rosary. His sermons were instructive and practical. He knew how to lead his community to holiness. I still see him as Rector and Principal waiting for the boys to come out of class or study for recreation, gently conversing with groups of boys and leading them to the shrine of Don Bosco's Madonna for a visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

Archbishop sought after vocations to the priesthood and religious life. His motto like that of Don Bosco was "Give me souls, take away the rest." May the Lord send to the Church many more priests like Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario.

**(viii) Missionaries of Christ Jesus and
Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario
Sr. Maria D’Silva, MCJ⁸**

Introduction

We, the Society of the Missionaries of Christ Jesus were founded in 1944 to be at the service of the missionary Church. This was our original charism and mission. The founding Sisters came from various Catholic Action groups in Spain. They were all united in and dedicated to evangelization.

We were born as a religious society to be at the service of the Gospel, that is to say, to be missionaries of Christ Jesus, and we continue existing as a group of missionaries. The common denominator of all our activities in the midst of different life- styles and cultural contexts, is our self-giving to the needs of the missionary Church.

The Beginnings of Our History

In the 1940s Spain was emerging from the traumatic experience of the Spanish Civil War. The Catholic Action group of Pamplona included some zealous women dedicated to the service of the Church.

⁸ Sr. Maria D’Silva, MCJ, is a member of Missionaries of Christ Jesus. At present she is the Provincial Superior of the Missionaries of Christ Jesus, at Shillong, Meghalaya.

These women may be compared to dry wood awaiting a spark of fire. And the Holy Spirit supplied this spark in a chance meeting with Fr. Moses Domenzain, SJ, who was waiting to return to Japan at the end of the Second World War. He spoke to the group animatedly about the missionary dimension of the Church in Japan. Fr. Domenzain also met other members of the Catholic Action group such as Maria Camino Sanz Orrio and others. They thought to themselves: how greatly the cause of mission would advance in the Church if some in the Catholic Action group were to become missionaries of Christ Jesus. This was the spark of inspiration given to us by the Holy Spirit. It was shared by the founding Sisters: Maria Sanz Camino, Conception Arraiza and Maria Teresa Unzu. This small group met in Javier on the 14th of March, 1944, in an old house in front of the castle of Javier which was the birth place of St. Francis Xavier, the patron saint of the missions. The group that met at Javier had no idea yet of what exactly it wanted to be. But one thing was certain. It wanted to be flexible and available to the missionary Church without a specific religious habit, a minimum of rules and freedom to devote themselves to the service of the Church according to the signs and needs of the time. From the very beginning, the then bishop of Pamplona, Bishop Marcelino Olaechea, SDB, and later Archbishop of Valencia supported this project very warmly.

In 1948 just four years after the foundation of our society, the first missionary expedition came to India. They went straight to Tura in Garo Hills and to Kohima, in Nagaland. Thereafter the Missionaries of Christ Jesus went to Japan, Venezuela, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chile, Bolivia, the Philippines, Santo Domingo, Cameroon, Chad, China, Vietnam, etc.

The Foundation of Nazareth Hospital in Shillong

The Missionaries of Christ Jesus arrived in Shillong in 1948. Upon our arrival in India we did not settle in any large city. They went to distant and interior areas, such as Garo Hills and Khasi-Jaintia Hills where religious women were not available at the time. Because of the presence of the Spanish Salesian missionaries in Northeast India, Bishop Stephen Ferrando, bishop of Shillong, paid a visit to Javier in October 1963. He requested the General Directress of the Missionaries of Christ Jesus to send sisters to begin healthcare, humanitarian and educational works in Northeast India. He was planning to build a small hospital in Shillong at that time. Accordingly Sr. Maria Angeles Ercilla arrived from Spain to take over the existing dispensary in Shillong, in 1958. Sr. Margarita Cifre and a certain Kong Margaret Marbañiang, a Khasi nurse, and an assistant completed the team of Sr. Angeles. The name Nazareth was adopted by the Sisters in consultation with the local Christians to honour the wish of the donor of the piece of land. The donor was Mr. Rogers, who was a great friend and admirer of the Salesians. He wanted the future Hospital to be named Holy Family. But this idea was given up because there was already an institution named Holy Family in Northeast India. Hence the name Nazareth was chosen.

From the very beginning, the hospital was run by the Nazareth Hospital Committee as a legal entity and with well defined rules of membership, roles, terms and conditions. The hospital belonged legally to the diocese of Shillong and with the bishop of Shillong as its patron; and the Missionaries of Christ Jesus were fully responsible for the direction, administration, maintenance and progress of the hospital. The hospital was run as a Registered Charitable Society from the very beginning. It was formally inaugurated in December 1965 by the then Chief Minister of Assam, Shri B. P. Chaliha.

Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario took great interest in all that was done in the hospital. He always sent his representatives to the Annual General Body Meeting of the hospital to learn about our achievements, difficulties and plans. He would often visit priests, sisters and brothers who were admitted in the hospital. He also took great care to reach out to the economically poor patients and those from far off villages. He showed concern for the wellbeing of the staff and sisters working in the hospital. The Archbishop was very human and fatherly in caring for the sisters and the people. He was an inspiration for all.

Thus it is true what Margaret Meade, the famous anthropologist, is quoted to have said, “A small group of committed people can change the world, do not doubt it.” Christ’s call to be the salt of the earth and leaven in the dough was the driving force of the little band of Missionaries of Christ Jesus. They not only catered generously to the medical needs of the people but also to their general welfare. They also conduct pastoral, medical and other outreach programmes in distant villages.

In Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario we found a great missionary and pastoral bishop. He constantly visited distant villages, staying there for days and then participating in the celebration of the Sacraments. He was well known as the bishop of the people. A good number of our missionaries has shared our pastoral work along with the bishop in distant villages. People enjoyed meeting him, especially children. They would rally around him without any fear. He always had good humour and was ready to crack simple jokes. He also had a talent for mimicry. At times, even before liturgical celebrations began in a particular place, he would be seen talking to the people with great ease and interested in the youth and their needs.

Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario fostered good relationships among the religious both women and men. He took great interest in and

was involved in the CRI (Conference of Religious of India) meetings. He was involved in the regional and local units of the CRI. He took part in the meetings whenever requested. He shared his views and promoted joint action with the religious. He had a kind and appreciative word for all. He also recognized any activity or laudable work done by any agents of pastoral work. He always made it a point to visit all the religious communities of the diocese.

Evangelization through Healing Ministry

The Missionaries of Christ Jesus' objective in running the hospital was always evangelization through healing ministry and service. They wanted to liberate the sick from suffering by communicating God's love and salvation through kindness, patience and availability. They motivate the hospital staff by teaching them Christian values and attitudes by example and personal encounter. On the socio-economic front the sisters motivate and initiate the staff in the Christian education of the people. They teach people the habit of thrift and saving. They impart an inner dynamism to improve their own social situation and set them on the path of social action and change as well.

Nazareth Hospital conducts a number of outreach programmes in villages. They also network with other congregations and NGOs. The Missionaries of Christ Jesus help the staff to deepen their human and Christian values through talks, retreats and prayer sessions.

Handing over Nazareth Hospital

As years went by the hospital was catering to about 60,000 patients annually. It grew into a full-fledged hospital with two hundred beds. The Missionaries of Christ Jesus worked in Nazareth Hospital for nearly 30 years. Our charism as a religious institute includes the starting

of new services, activities and other initiatives for evangelization. After establishing and developing medical, educational service centres and humanitarian services, we hand over the entire establishment to other agencies willing to carry on the work. The Missionaries of Christ Jesus choose other services and move on to new places. After much discernment, prayer, dialogue and search for a new agency, Nazareth Hospital together with the Nursing School of Rapsbun was handed over to the Archdiocese of Shillong and through it to the Holy Cross Sisters of Menzingen in December 1987. Three sisters of the Missionaries of Christ Jesus agreed to stay on for one more year to help out the transition period. One sister of the Missionaries of Christ Jesus continues to be on the Registered Society General Body Committee.

The pioneering spirit which entails handing over of well-established activities and institutions is not easily understood by all. In fact, some congregations who were approached for the takeover couldn't quite fathom the reason why. The following extract of the letter of Sr. Susan Moollel, Provincial of the Holy Cross Sisters, Ernakulam, dated 13th July 1987 says:

Your generosity and willingness to give up such a smooth running hospital indeed shows your spirit of detachment. I will cherish the joy radiated by each sister in welcoming us and in the hospitality extended to us till the end.

The Archbishop was aware that we were giving up generously everything we had, without keeping back anything for ourselves. We did not accept any compensation and at the time we had no property or house for ourselves in the city. In view of these facts, the Archbishop with his fatherly heart offered to us a small property with a wooden cottage situated at Laitumkhrah with the name Nirmali. As desired by

the original owner of the property, the name Nirmali, meaning "Gift of God" was retained.

Our loving memories of Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario have strengthened us further in our pioneering spirit and zeal for mission. He always encouraged our initiatives and innovative moves in evangelization. This helped us to combine well our Ignatian spirituality with the joy and missionary spirit of the Salesians.

(ix) Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario and the VSDB

Sr. Mary John Bosco Shadap, RNDM⁹

The Most Reverend Hubert D’Rosario, SDB, Archbishop of Shillong-Guwahati as a true son of Don Bosco was endowed with great zeal and love for souls. He invariably toured the far-flung villages of the Archdiocese to such an extent that he was called “The Bishop of the villages” or “Village-Bishop.” On his return from these tours he would bemoan the plight of the village people who were left to themselves in their poverty, sickness and ignorance. The respective parish priests could hardly visit each village even once a year, so the poor people knew next to nothing of their religion. This situation pained and touched him to the heart. He could foresee what dedicated and committed sisters could do for these poor, simple and ignorant people. The Visitation of Our Lady to St. Elizabeth was to him a source of inspiration and just as Mary went with haste to attend to and stay with Elizabeth, the sisters too would stay and identify themselves with the people bringing them peace, hope and joy.

The Archbishop prayed and deeply pondered over this problem and when the Bishops of Northeast India region met to work on a long term preparation for the Centenary of the Catholic Church in

9 Sr. Mary John Bosco Shadap, RNDM, was Mother Provincial of RNDM. She was Mother President of the VSDBs in its initial stages. She passed away in 2000. RIP.

Northeast India in 1990, the Archbishop voiced his concern regarding the needs of the people in the villages. The Bishops readily supported his idea of founding a new Congregation of Sisters in order to live among the people as one with them, to work for their total upliftment, to evangelise, catechise and preach the Good News particularly to the poor, ignorant and abandoned, especially the young.

The Archbishop approached the Holy See with this intention and was given the green light to carry out his project. Accordingly, he approached the established congregations but found none who would be prepared to stay in the villages with the people.

The Archbishop had seen the work of the RNDM Sisters in the villages of Sohra and Marbisu parishes. There were two sisters assigned full time for village ministry in each parish. The Archbishop admired their work of preaching, catechising and evangelizing and their method of approaching the people and their skill in preparing the liturgy and para-liturgical services with full participation on the part of the poor and simple villagers. Accordingly, he approached the Superiors of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions to help him in the work of forming young women for village missionary work.

Early in 1983 Sr. M. Benedicte, the Superior General was on Visitation of Australia and New Zealand and in reply to the Archbishop's request broke journey in Calcutta on route to Rome to discuss the issue with him and the Provincial Council, from whom she had already heard of the project. Sr. M. Benedicte told the Archbishop that she would give him an answer within two days. She discussed the question with the Provincial Council who after a full day of prayer and discernment voted unanimously in favour of the request. Accordingly two sisters were named tentatively to commence the work on May 31st, 1983.

The place available for the project was an old Middle English School of Upper Shillong parish; hence much renovation and repair works had to be done. This was hardly finished when we had to make immediate preparations for the opening of the convent on 31st May. It was indeed an uphill task as the girls chosen had no idea of what religious life meant. They were at a loss at first when the routine was made and adhered to. Silence for them was something new and meditation was a subject they thought they would never get used to. Slowly but steadily under the constant care of the Sisters teaching and working with them, guiding them by word and example, the aspirants picked up and imbibed much of what they received.

Before the end of 1983, it was deemed necessary to replace Sr. Mary Pius who was named superior at Marbisu convent by Sr. Marie Therese who had returned from Rome after the completion of the Ark Programme for Formators. Sr. Mary Martin returned to Marbisu and Sr. Mary Candida replaced her.

The year 1984 brought in more aspirants to the Association and Sr. Mary Candida was put in charge of these while Sr. Marie Therese looked after the postulants. In May, the seven postulants were received as Novices and Marie Therese did much spade work in the formation of the young women. In 1984, Sr. Mary John Bosco completed her term as Provincial and Mary Bernadine had to undergo a major surgery so she rang up Sr. Mary John Bosco in St. Mary's to replace Sr. Marie Therese in Madonna Convent as she was needed for work in Calcutta. So Sr. Mary John Bosco went there and soon after Sr. Marie Therese was named Provincial Secretary and Directress for the Sisters in Temporary Commitment and Sr. Mary John Bosco was asked to take charge of the new Congregation in August 1985.

Sr. Mary Candida worked for four years with the VSDBs. She did not spare herself in this work. She trained the young people in the art of housekeeping, cooking, sewing and gardening and used to accompany them to the market and initiated them into the art of buying provisions for a group, economically and with good sense and judgment. Sr. Mary Rita replaced Sr. Mary Candida for a while and then came Sr. Clarissa for six months. Sr. Biola came for more than a year and helped the aspirants in studies effectively and efficiently. Meanwhile, new aspirants came in every year.

The ceremony of the First Vows was held on May 31st, 1986. It was indeed a red letter day for the Association. The Archbishop requested permission from our Superior in Rome for Sr. Mary John Bosco to be called President of the Association without changing in any way her position as an RNDM. So the work went on with yearly recruits and professions till May 1992, when six Sisters of the first batch were ready for their final vows. The next day, June 1st, the Archbishop had a meeting of all the professed sisters and with due consideration and consultation named Sister Cecilia Sad, VSDB, the new President of the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco. Mary John Bosco officially returned to the Congregation on 24th February, 1993, where her informal, loving service continues to nourish the Sisters and the newly appointed President of the Association.

(x) My Personal Encounter with our Founder

Sr. Mabel Dhar VSDB¹⁰

It was in 1982 that I personally met Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario for the first time in one of his tours to our parish of Mawkyndeng, Jaintia Hills. He gathered all the senior girls in one of the class rooms and spoke to us about religious life. I managed to enter there with the help of my friend as I was very shy. He asked all our names including mine which he forgot later on till I joined Madonna Convent on 29th February 1987. From the time that I joined the VSDB Congregation and came to know him well, I really experienced the fatherliness in him. I can say that his love for me was so personal that I was never afraid to approach him whenever I was in trouble or doubt.

Though I was only an aspirant, yet whenever he had a little free time, he came down to my level speaking to me and asking me about my health. Whenever he came to Madonna Convent he would ask me to meet him with the permission of Mother John Bosco, RNDM, then superior and directress of the congregation. My meetings with him when occasion arose or when I wanted to, were always very precious. His loving words, encouragement, prayers, blessings and his personal love for me really made me see and experience Christ in him and

10 Sr. Mabel Dhar, VSDB, is at present Vicar General of the VSDB congregation.

through him and felt an impetus and courage to dedicate my life to God as a religious. After our meetings, we both would go together to the chapel to pray. He had the special gift of loving others and each one experienced his love in a unique way.

Before taking any important step in religious life like entering into the pre-novitiate, novitiate, first profession, etc., we had to write our self evaluation and Mother John Bosco would prepare a report on us. We had to meet the Archbishop personally because it was he who would read the report to us. We all were very happy to meet him and we would long for such occasions.

“Are you ready to suffer for Christ? Do you love me? I love you with the love of Christ. Do you love the Archbishop? I am your father. My dear, don't worry go ahead.” Such were his words. It was only for His Grace that I ever used the word “Papa” besides my father at home. In one of my personal meetings with him he said, “I rely on you, so whatever I tell you, you must hand over to others when I die. Your congregation (VSDB) is a congregation of love, compassion and joy. Show your teeth – *Pyni ki bniat te!* People must see you a smiling, loving, joyful and cheerful sister.” “God loves a cheerful giver” was his advice to me on the day of my first profession on 15th August 1990.

He also advised us that we must never preach the Gospel to the people without preparation. He not only said it in words but he practised it. “So, before preaching,” he said “Pray: O God move the hearts of my hearers that they may hear and love your word.”

The Archbishop used to come twice a week to Madonna Convent for Mass i.e., Tuesday and Saturday. After Mass we all gathered in the study hall to pray the psalm of the day together. He would write the Psalm number on the board with his creative line drawing and we

all would imitate him. He also asked us to learn by heart at least one or two passages from the bible because he said that when we become old all that we have memorized will come back fresh to our memory.

Then the different groups, namely, the professed sisters, the novices and the aspirants would go to their respective class rooms for class and Archbishop Hubert would take class for one of these groups. He insisted that all of us must have the book of the psalms. He planned the schedule for us to pray one psalm daily. Thus in 150 days we read all the psalms.

Most of the Saturdays when he came for Mass, after breakfast, he would ask us to bring our song book to the refectory and sitting around the table we used to sing all the songs that Br. Castellino Fernandes, SDB, taught us. Brother came once a week to teach us songs from the book 'Merrily Sing.'

His Grace also taught us the prayer of Heroic Act of Charity by which we offer all our works and prayers for the souls in purgatory and even after our death if there is someone praying for us we should offer that prayer for the other souls in purgatory and not for us. The prayer goes like this: "O my God, in union with the merits of Jesus and Mary, I offer up to you for the poor souls in purgatory, all my works of satisfaction and also those that may be offered up by others for me during my life and at my death. Amen."

His Life as Witness

The Archbishop led a very ascetic life. His prayer life touched and inspired the hearts of many especially the simple and innocent people in villages whom he often visited like a shepherd. People saw him always with the Black Book in his hand praying alone which was no doubt the breviary. I remember on one occasion I was travelling with

him from Shillong to Jowai; he did not talk much on the way but all the time he was praying the breviary and on occasion he dozed off to sleep.

The Archbishop's attention was always on the people in villages. His zeal for souls could not keep him indoors in spite of heavy work and ill health. He reached practically all the villages of the diocese over hills and valleys. When he could no longer walk especially when he was sick, the people would carry him on a chair to reach the villages.

Another virtue that was clearly seen in him was his duty consciousness. He always kept his works and records ready and up to date. He would keep his office and room clean and tidy and arranged properly before going out for a tour or for other programmes.

A Lover of Fun and Laughter

In meetings, gatherings and meals he was very jovial and cheerful. His jokes were all very interesting to listen to and made us laugh a lot. He would ask me to solve so many riddles which sometimes I could not solve. Once he asked me to solve the following riddle: "An elephant is climbing a hill. He takes one step forward and two steps backward. So how will he reach the top of the hill?" I could not answer the riddle. Every time I asked him for the answer, he would say "You think about it and tell me." Thank God in the same year before his death he told me the answer which was very simple: The elephant will reach at 'the end'.

We had a dog by the name Jimmy which was very cowardly. The dog would bark at every body and then would run away and hide itself. So Bishop Hubert named him a "Brave Coward." He often said, "With great humility I say that I am a great photographer." I often laughed at him and replied, "What kind of humility is this?" Altilia Umdor, the Archbishop and I on some occasions used to speak imitating the

American accent. We had great fun together. But Mother John Bosco on hearing us speaking thus would get angry because she wanted us to speak English well.

The Archbishop encouraged us to have communication with our parents, asking us to write to them at least once a month and to visit them once in a year. Whenever we go home for holidays, he encouraged us to meet our parish priests. On returning he inquired from us about them and our meeting with them. He was very much interested in music and singing. He asked us to learn at least one musical instrument each. He himself was a musician and he sang well. He taught us a number of songs. But he told me that he decided not to play music again after the death of his brother who died in an air crash. During any celebration such as Christmas, Easter and the anniversary of his episcopal ordination, each one had to present a musical item. He would be very happy and proud of us.

As I have mentioned above, he encouraged boys and girls to join seminary/convent to become zealous priests and religious. Once speaking about vocation he said, "Each one bring one." He also asked us to treat all who come to visit us with kindness and hospitality. He insisted that we must give them a cup of tea. I miss him very much. It took me very long time to accept the fact that he is no more with us. I cherish the moments I spent with him and I felt comfortable in his presence. Now I can see him only in my dreams.

Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario’s sayings:

- Be an apostle and make others apostles.
- Be a saint and make others saints.
- To become a saint it is not difficult. Just do the ordinary work in an extraordinary way.

- Your following of Christ must be prompt, immediate, complete and loving.
- It is our life that is going to change the world, not our words.
- Be good religious not only in name but in reality.
- Pray that you may fulfil your duties as sisters.
- Make your community a place of love and unity.
- Suffering is part of your training.
- Our congregation (VSDB) is essentially missionary. Our first mission is evangelization both direct and indirect.
- Paradise is a reward for obedience to God's law.
- When you show long face, the devil is at work. When you are smiling, the Holy Spirit is at work. It is very hard; still we have to fight to be always cheerful.
- If you cannot jump over, you go around the problem.
- God alone is enough for me.
- The only thing that we can say is: "How good God is! So if I have not been generous enough in God's service, I shall be more generous, I will strive to be more fervent, more hard-working and more open to the Holy Spirit.
- Lord I love you: increase my love. I believe in you: increase my faith. I hope in you: increase my hope.

(xi) Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario, a Great Missionary

Fr. Gervasis Kozhuppathadam, SDB¹¹

It was during troubled times that Bishop Hubert D’Rosario came to Shillong. The Central Government had served quit notices to many foreign missionaries in Assam. He was transferred from the Diocese of Dibrugarh as the Archbishop of Shillong-Guwahati in 1969. During this period, the Catholic Church saw many developments. In 1973 the Diocese of Tura was created and again the Diocese of Diphu. In 1992, the Archdiocese of Guwahati was erected. Within a short span of time he accomplished much. In 1990 he had Fr. Tarcisius Resto Phanrang, SDB ordained as Auxiliary Bishop of Shillong.

As Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario came from Dibrugarh to Shillong, he got down and kissed the ground as a sign of his dedication to the Church of Shillong. Later he was led into the Cathedral where he imparted the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

His Grace Hubert D’Rosario was a man of vision. He was a great organizer. For the development of the Archdiocese personnel was necessary. He realized this immediately. In the beginning of the

¹¹ Fr. Gervasis Kozhuppathadam, SDB, is at present the Rector of the Shrine of St. John Bosco at Sohra. (Cherrapunji)

Church in Northeast India, the tendency was to depend on foreign missionaries. But in the 1960s, the government of India forced us to have indigenous leaders. An effort was made in this direction during the time of Bishop Stephen Ferrando assisted by Fr. Mario Bianchi as early as 1962 to start an Apostolic School at Upper Shillong and called it St. Paul's Minor Seminary. It was a good beginning.

During the time of Archbishop Hubert we saw two major seminaries coming up. Thus Christ King College for the study of philosophy was established. In 1979 we see his dream realized for the theological seminary at Mawlai called Oriens Theological College. To begin these major seminaries he was assisted by Rev. Fr. Ignatius Rubio who worked to get all the funds to bring these major projects to completion.

In the beginning, the diocesan students of theology joined the Salesian Brothers to study at Sacred Heart Theological College. Later on when the personnel were ready and the other dioceses sent their students to Oriens Theological College, the classes were conducted at Oriens itself. So also was Mathias Institute for M.Th studies. Archbishop's farsightedness helped in the development of the Archdiocese.

The Salesian Congregation purchased a piece of land for the present Pastoral Centre in the year 1973 from the Indian Tea Association. Here again, Archbishop Hubert was very much in the forefront of the project. With the help of Fr. Ignatius Rubio he started the work in order to make it a centre of missionary animation by means of retreats, seminars and courses in on-going formation for missionary personnel. The Centre has also great scope for various programmes for the on-going formation of the clergy, religious, laity, catechists and youth groups of the region.

The Archbishop organised his time in such a way that he could go abroad for meetings and other important works, to be in his office

and meet his clergy and others and to visit interior villages of different parishes to be close to his people and have a firsthand experience of their way of life. This has boosted the morale of the people, gave an example to priests and extended spiritual support to all. Accordingly we may rightly call Archbishop Hubert the Apostle of Northeast India.

Archbishop Hubert founded a congregation of sisters called the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco. He wanted them to imitate Mary in visiting families; to proclaim Jesus to people in their life-situation and to take care of the sick and the poor. He wanted to inculcate in them the spirit of Don Bosco as he himself was a son of Don Bosco. The VSDB, as they are called, have grown in numbers and are doing praiseworthy work among the people bringing them hope and raising the level of their Christian life.

Eventually we hope that this Congregation will be raised to the status of a pontifical congregation, and in this way the number and quality of services of the Sisters to the Church and people will be more effective and expand. Being an indigenous congregation it should be given all encouragement and support.

In recent times a number of new dioceses such as Itanagar, Miao, Jowai and Nongstoin have come up; and we have possibilities for more dioceses. The VSDB Sisters can be engaged in faith formation to our new Christians in Northeast India. These are ample fields of evangelization and catechesis. The VSDB through their unique way of approaching people can win many souls to Christ. This is indeed due to the far-sightedness of Archbishop Hubert.

With the arrival of Archbishop Hubert in Shillong, a new missionary dynamism was brought into the Archdiocese. With the help of Fr. Ignatius Rubio, SDB, the diocese was able to secure sufficient financial support for many infrastructural works. His Grace

the Archbishop had the sagacity to bring Fr. Rubio to work with him. With patience and great tact he could accomplish much for the diocese of Shillong in a short time. The number of Christians and clergy registered a phenomenal growth during his years as the Archbishop of Shillong.

The North-eastern Social Forum and other similar institutions such as Bosco Reach Out have rendered praiseworthy service to the people of the region. They have all received inspiration and encouragement from Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario. As President of the Council of Regional Bishops, he always encouraged new initiatives.

In conclusion, we may truly state that we had in Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario a true father, pastor, organizer, administrator and a spiritual guide for the Church in the whole of Northeast India. He gave his life for the progress and development of the whole of Northeast India. He was indeed one of the greatest missionaries of our own times. He remains unforgettable in the hearts of our people as a saintly Archbishop with a wonderful personality.

(xii) A Man of Great Moral Authority

Rev. Dr. Fr. Sebastian Ouseparampil¹²

In the process of growth and development of an institution or an organization, if we look back with a keen sense of history, we can easily see that there are times when a person with charismatic qualities taking up the helm of affairs of the institution concerned and leads the institution to great heights.

The thirty years or so that Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario served the Church in Northeast India amply show that he precisely did the same. He led the Catholic Church in the Northeast India from mid 1960s till his death in 1994. This period witnessed the phenomenal growth of the Catholic Church in the region and its varied spiritual, developmental and humanitarian services to the people of the region in these thirty years or so. He struggled hard for its growth and put the Catholic Church on a sound footing in many ways.

Today the Catholic Church in Northeast India has 15 dioceses and a total of one million and a half Catholic population. This is in great part the result of Archbishop Hubert’s far reaching vision and indomitable faith. He played a key role in the rapid growth of the Catholic Church in the region.

¹² Fr. Sebastian Ouseparampil belongs to the diocese of Kohima. For many years he was the Administrator of St. John’s Hospital in Bangalore and later president of CHAI.

Archbishop Hubert was instrumental in bringing several communities of women's religious congregations to Northeast India. They have made a deep impact on the region. The sisters and nurses could visit families in distant villages and bring the healing ministry of the Lord to the doorstep of their homes in remote villages. They easily made an opening for the Gospel in many areas where missionaries had no access. In fact if we carefully examine facts we can easily understand that it is the women religious who made an opening for evangelization in many places.

In 1965, I came to Dibrugarh as a young seminarian with practically no idea about Northeast India, its peoples and cultures. We used to flock around Bishop Hubert D'Rosario and listen to him about his missionary journeys to the interior villages, and he always had a telescopic view of the future of the mission and what was more surprising was the hopes and aspirations he had for each of his priests. He was really inspiring and it certainly helped us to understand the realities of our missionary work in the Northeast India. In fact after my ordination in 1976 when I started working closely with Bishop Abraham Alangimattathil, I started understanding Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario in depth. His vision for Northeast India especially for preparing personnel and working in collaboration with religious congregations has transformed Northeast India.

I have heard many people speaking about the moral authority that the Archbishop had among the Bishops in Northeast India and his priests. This moral authority enabled him to draw up plans and make important decisions for the Church in Northeast India. We know that moral authority comes from a life rooted in truth and faith. It is also the essence and foundation of a life of holiness.

After independence, Pakistan sent its army into Kashmir and occupied nearly half of Kashmir and India had to send its

army to Kashmir to stop the advance of the Pakistan army. At the same time there were Hindu-Muslim riots taking place in Kolkata and the Government was at a loss. It was at this juncture that Mountbatten said, "We will send our one man army to Kolkata." It was none other than Gandhiji. And the presence of Gandhiji restored communal peace in Kolkata. There is a vast difference between power and moral authority and Archbishop Hubert had the moral authority based on the Gospel and that was his greatest strength. And because of his moral authority Archbishop Hubert was able to make a tremendous difference in leading the Catholic mission in the Northeast India.

On a personal level and in the name of the North East Diocesan Social Forum, I feel deeply grateful to him for the historic decision he made in favour of the idea of a Social Forum in the year 1988 in Dibrugarh on the occasion of the regional bishops' meeting there. The North East Diocesan Social Forum was still an idea and we were struggling to establish the Forum and to get it recognized and owned by the Regional Bishops' Council. In the backdrop of this historic situation we had developed and prepared a draft framework to be discussed in the Regional Bishops' Council meeting with the hope of getting their approval. We had a very stormy session where the regional bishops expressed their concern and opposition to the creation of the Social Forum.

All through the discussions, His Grace listened to us and to the bishops of the region. We were not getting enough support from the bishops. But summing up the discussion at the end His Grace Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario said, "Why, the Fathers are doing something good, let them go on." These few words made the Forum a reality. When the Archbishop made a stand it was final. He gave us some land for a nominal sum and even guided us and told us to acquire some more.

If it were not for the moral authority the Archbishop exercised over others, the Social Forum would not be what it is today. For this I always think of Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario with deep gratitude. His vision and support at a critical time made the Social Forum a reality. And all of us are aware today how the Forum has developed and continues to serve the Church in Northeast India. Today we remember with joy and gratitude his wit and wisdom, his cool mind and warm heart.

(xiii) Hubert D’Rosario, First and Last a Missionary

Bishop George Palliparambil, SDB¹³

The first time I met Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario was on 19th December 1970 when he came to Savio Juniorate to wish us all for Christmas. Being winter holidays, there were only a few boys in the house. Therefore we had enough chance to shake hands, kiss his ring and also talk to him. To our great joy and amazement, the Archbishop was relaxed and in a mood for casual and friendly talk. He spent more than one hour with us before going back to Archbishop’s House. Since then I had the chance of meeting him on a number of occasions.

The first meeting with the Archbishop left an indelible impression on me. He was both a very dynamic and intelligent person and missionary. He talked about the two great missionaries of Khasi-Jaintia hills, Fr. Aloysius Ravalico and Fr. Constantine Vendrame and stressed the need of many more missionaries like them, as there was still much to be done for the people in the region. He placed before us a challenging agenda which I have never forgotten and which I keep on repeating to people to this day: “Each one catch one.” He meant that each one of us must bring at least one more soul (person) to Jesus Christ. I often think of this

13 The Rt. Rev. George Palliparambil, SDB, is at present the Bishop of Mioa Diocese in east Arunachal Pradesh.

within myself and imagine, if all of us were to do so and inspire others to do the same, soon all the people of Northeast India would become disciples of Jesus.

Whenever we went to see and wish the Archbishop we would find the kind and gentle pastor and missionary with a vision for the region. He always received us very kindly in the small Assam-type Bishop's House at that time and spoke to us in a very gentle way. We continued to see him on many occasions and hear his inspiring messages. He always called for great missionary zeal and commitment.

I was in Sonapahar mission centre from the last week of April till the beginning of August 1979, helping Fr. M. Albizuri, SDB. Fr. Albizuri was a zealous missionary, who played a big role in my love for mission and it was he who first taught me Khasi. He also taught me to re-act quickly to situations and even to take risks. He was sick and needed rest and treatment and after my arrival he went for a two week-rest to Maligaon.

At one time Fr. Ignatius Rubio came to Sonapahar to see the church that was under construction. I do not know if Fr. Rubio had told the Archbishop about the situation in Sonapahar; since the next day after his visit the Archbishop came there and that too without giving prior notice. He inquired Fr. Albizuri about his health and mission work. Having learnt of the difficulties of the mission and of Fr. Albizuri's health the Archbishop felt very bad and apologised for his inability to provide him with an assistant.

We had lunch together and as he got ready to go, Fr. Albizuri said to the Archbishop: "If you don't send me an assistant soon, after George goes away, I will send you a letter telling you to come and bless my marriage. I can't be staying alone all my life, that too with my damaged spine." The Archbishop took the joke kindly but with much

pain in his heart at his inability to help. He reassured him saying: "I have talked with the Provincial and he is also unable to find anyone except so and so (he mentioned the name). If you are ready, he will come immediately." "Please don't," Albizuri retorted and continued, "In that case, I shall not send this brother for theology. He knows many things, I shall teach him something more. If you cannot ordain him I shall do so and keep him here."

The Archbishop laughed and he called me aside and said, "See how much need is there for good priests. Some priests are not needed anywhere or by anybody." For me, that was a revelation and a lesson for life. At that moment, I decided that I would never be an unwanted priest.

Never did I realize that today I have to confront similar situations in life where I meet priests of various interests, motives and ways; some with their own hidden agenda which are not at all in conformity with the priesthood.

His Grace spoke for sometime about details of the mission centre and encouraged me to go on and be a good missionary. I consider that moment to be a rare privilege. I thank God for this opportunity of meeting such a great personality.

In August 1979 I joined Sacred Heart Theological College for theological studies. This gave me more opportunities of meeting the Archbishop. In 1980, I took up the care of the Arunachalee and Tripuree youth in Shillong. Both were at that time newly discovered responsive groups. His Grace took a lot of interest and was willing to meet and to encourage them. This gave me more opportunities of meeting and be profoundly inspired by him.

Towards the end of 1981, I met Bishop Denzil D'Souza of Silchar who said to me, "I have come to know that you are baptizing

youths from Tripura. I would like to meet and examine them, to see if they are really well prepared.” As the year ahead was crucial for us, I was a little scared. I happened to meet His Grace for something and told him about this impending examination. He was very kind and encouraging. He told me not to worry, even if one or two failed. “They can learn later their catechism” was his reply. He further told me not to give up and that we should continue to make new contacts with these tribes. Fr. Matthew Pulingathil, the then Rector of Sacred Heart Theological College, helped us with the car and tea for the youth who had gathered for the exam. That was a great relief. And to my great joy all passed the test. Bishop Denzil D’Souza expressed his happiness and allowed me to go ahead with my apostolate.

In July 1982, Archbishop Hubert ordained us deacons. On that occasion he spoke of the holiness of deacons and how they must be zealous for the kingdom of the Lord. As deacons again, we had a number of occasions to meet him.

In December 1990, after the centenary celebrations of the Church in Northeast India, he informed me that in response to my many invitations, he would come to Tinsukia and be with the Bible School students for a day. We adjusted the school examinations, so that he could preside over the pre-Christmas Mass and be with the boys and girls for the gathering. He spent a very active and enjoyable day with us and exhorted the boys and girls to be good and courageous missionaries.

During the years that followed, I had the joy of being with him on a number of occasions especially at seminars on evangelization in Shillong, Patna, Hua Hin in Thailand, etc. On one of these occasions he told me a very revealing incident from his life.

The Archbishop was the leader of the Catholic Church in this region; and he spearheaded the various Church movements. “Arunachal

Action Committee” was one of them. He was the president and Mr. L. Yanger, the general secretary, and Mr. Wanglat Lowangcha the member. The goal was to fight the so called “freedom of religion act” passed by the Arunachal Legislative Assembly in 1977.

After the disastrous experiment with the short-lived Janata Government, the Indian masses brought Indira Gandhi back to power, forgetting the excesses of the emergency period. They made it loud and clear that they preferred order to anarchy. At the end of 1979, as the leader of the Action Committee, the Archbishop got an appointment with the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, through the good offices of the then Rajya Sabha MP from Meghalaya, Mr. Alexander Warjri.

Indira Gandhi gave him a very patient listening. At the end of the discussion, the Archbishop suggested to Madam that the unconstitutional law be repealed. She did not say anything opposed to it but graciously asked; “Bishop, how many Christians will you have in Arunachal?” Not to be sounding big, he replied, “about 5000.” She smiled gently and again said to him, “Yea, we shall do so; let me know when you have 50,000 people there.” The Bishop understood the meaning. In any democracy, where votes matter, number is an important factor. He impressed this idea on me and wanted me to make sure that I share this idea with others. I have learnt it for life, and have seen and am seeing it in action daily. If only more of us were to learn this truth and work hard to make it a reality!

Another outstanding quality that I saw in Archbishop Hubert that I can never forget was his love, care and respect for those working in the mission centres. In March 1991, I was in Shillong for some work related to the papers of the Bible School students. I just made a courtesy call on His Grace. As he was coming down to the dining hall for coffee

I was also taken along. We had coffee together with some of the priests there. He spoke very highly of the Arunachal people, the missionary work done there and his visits. We went out of the dining hall and suggested that we talk a while sitting in the parlour itself. So we went in and started a very friendly conversation about the work being done in East Arunachal Pradesh.

As we talked on, the Bishop was informed that someone wanted to meet him. He asked the person to be shown in. Someone from far away (the name is withheld for obvious reasons) came in. The person expressed the desire to talk to him privately. But Archbishop insisted that anything could be discussed there itself as he was sure of the person with him. He said to the person, "He is a young missionary, doing a very responsible work. I can share all matters with him." The person, I realized, was uncomfortable. I offered to go and wait outside but he would not let me go. The discussion was about social work. He welcomed the idea whole-heartedly but added sternly: "Any social work, if it does not lead people to accepting Jesus as our Saviour, has no relevance in this region." This was another lesson for me and I have tried my best to pass this on to others and to make it a reality.

I pray that the great ideals lived and passed on to us by this great pioneer and visionary be re-kindled in our region and in us that we may all be bold and zealous like him to proclaim Jesus Christ to all. Proclamation of Jesus Christ was the primary task of the first Apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ. It must remain the priority of all his disciples to the end of the world. Archbishop Hubert D'Rosario was first and last a missionary of Jesus Christ to the people of our region. May the memory of this great missionary continue to inspire our lives.

(xiv) An Evangelizer and Founder

Fr. Francis Kharwanlang¹⁴

Archbishop Hubert was a great gift of God to the whole of Northeast India and to Shillong Archdiocese in a very special way. At his funeral in 1994, His Grace Joseph Mittathany, Archbishop of Imphal and Chairman of the Northeast Bishops' Council, said in his farewell address: "In the passing away of Bishop Hubert D'Rosario, we have lost a great leader of us all." During his time many new dioceses opened in Northeast India. This was because of his initiative and concern for the growth of the Church. Priests, religious and faithful, who knew him, still continue to speak about him with love even now. For me he was not only a leader but my spiritual mentor. I was closely associated with him in many respects but especially during the celebration of the Centenary of the coming the Catholic Faith in Northeast India in 1990 when he appointed me as the General Secretary of the celebrations. During this time I learned much about his leadership and forbearance in spite of many difficulties involved.

14 Fr. Francis Kharwanlang, belongs to the Diocese of Shillong, and holds a Master's degree in Liturgy. He is at present working at St. Paul's Minor Seminary, Upper Shillong as Spiritual Director.

i) My Association with Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario from 1970 till his Death

During the summer of 1970, after his taking charge of Shillong Archdiocese, Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario made it a point to visit us the Shillong Seminarians studying at Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamalee, Madras (Chennai), in Tamil Nadu. Here I came to know him for the first time. He also came to know me, as I was given the privilege of reading a welcome address in the name of the whole community. His visit manifested his great love and concern for us being far away from our own Diocese and from our native place.

ii) My Impression about Him as a Person

He was a very discipline person with himself and he expected the same from others. Some misunderstood his self-discipline as being too strict or inconsiderate. A man of deep faith in God, he spent quite many hours in prayer fulfilling as far as possible all the different hours of the Divine Office. Several times I found him praying the Divine Office when I paid him a visit, be it morning, before noon, midday or afternoon prayer, let alone the evening prayer which he seldom missed. Whenever I travelled with him by vehicle early in the morning he would take in hand the Breviary and pray the morning prayer. He would end the prayer with a short prayer to the souls in Purgatory, a devotion he loved so dearly.

iii) Great Love for Evangelization

Every winter season he would plan touring several villages with the parish priests of different parishes. He would tour at least 7 to 10 villages in each parish. I was feeling bad for him as he was having heavy diabetes. This disease prevented him from taking sugar and starchy food

which were not properly absorbed by his system. However, he would sacrifice all this for the sake of the Lord.

I would like to give just one example to show how Archbishop Hubert truly sacrificed himself for the sake of the people and of the Lord. In January 1987, there was a Silver Jubilee celebration of the arrival of the Catholic Faith at Weiloi village, in Marbisu Parish, and He was there on both days, Saturday and Sunday. I was then Parish Priest of Marbisu. On Saturday we had a *Jingiaseng Īalap* in the evening in open air. Weiloi is usually very cold in winter with plenty of frost. During the *Jingiaseng*, the Archbishop wanted to sit for confessions. I told him not to do so as there was no place inside the pandal (*dara*). He decided to sit outside in the open air. When his turn came to give a few words of advice and to impart blessing, he could not move from the chair. I thought he was asleep. But when I went near to call him, he was found cold and stiff. I shook him and managed to wake him up. In spite of this, he stood for few minutes, greeted the people, shared with them the word of God and imparted the apostolic blessing. He pretended as though nothing had happened to him. After the *Jingiaseng*, he was searching for his Rosary which he held in his hand during confession. He did not realize that the Rosary had fallen on the ground from his stiff hand. This was truly a beautiful sign of a shepherd who loved his sheep.

iv) Love for Priests

Archbishop Hubert loved his priests and used to keep personal contact with them in different ways. Whenever there was a Eucharistic or Marian Procession or any *Jingiaseng* in the parish, he would reach the place a day before (Saturday) and spent the night in the Parish. This gesture would give confidence to the priests in the parish and assure them that the Archbishop loved them and they could share with him

anything they wanted. If there was any Brother in regency in the parish he would call and dialogue with him.

Archbishop Hubert was a capable administrator who never wanted to procrastinate the day's responsibilities. He was found at times to sit late till midnight in his office in order to finish some pending work. He lived poor and had a soft corner for the poor and the needy. Through Fr. Joseph Rubio his helper at the Archbishop's House, he would distribute to the poor and the needy people not only foodstuff such as wheat, bulgur, milk, oil, etc., but also free homeopathic medicine. Appeals from the parish priests for financial subsidy to poor people whose houses got burnt or being struck by other natural calamities were never rejected.

v) Sufferings Embraced With Love

Archbishop Hubert accepted sufferings with great resignation placing himself at the disposal of God. Once he told me that he had reached all the villages of his priests except mine. I told him that it was very difficult for him to reach my village Tynrong since it was situated in a very steep slope of Ri War Sohra. There was still no road and we had to walk at least 3 hours to reach it from Mawsahew (model village) station. However, he said he would try. I felt sorry for him as he had at times swollen legs and carbuncle due to diabetes in his body. However, I took him in February 1989, a year before the Centenary of the Church in Northeast India in 1990. After 10 minutes of climbing down the steps his legs began to tremble and his knees began to knock against each other. Even while resting, off and on, his knees would continue to shake. Thanks to Fr. Peter Schiavon, then Parish Priest of Sohra, he entertained him along the way with jokes. I put one tall and stout young Catholic to help and hold him that he might not fall. At least

three times we stopped on the way and refreshed ourselves with cool drinks and fresh tropical fruits of the Ri War. Many faithful came out to accompany him. What was beautiful was that he did not utter a word of grumbling. He offered it all to God.

vi) Particular Concern for Boys

Archbishop knew that the Khasi society cared very little for boys especially for their academic education. He used to dialogue with the Fathers at the Monthly Meeting of the Priests how to help our boys in the parish and outside the parish, especially in rural parishes. To realize his dream, he built a three storey hostel building for post-Matric boys by the side of the parish hall at the Cathedral parish. There were both private and common rooms. They were provided a common kitchen to cook their own meals. In all nearly 100 boys could be accommodated. Bro. Castellino Fernandes was in charge of this hostel for some time. I was 7 years in the Cathedral Parish, 1991-1998 and I loved to take admissions and to look after their overall welfare while in the hostel.

vii) Plan and Purpose of Founding a Religious Congregation for Women

It was only in 1980 that Archbishop Hubert revealed his plan to found a new congregation of religious sisters from among the tribal girls of Northeast India.

The chief aim of founding a religious congregation for women was for visiting the villages and for spreading the message of Jesus Christ. This congregation should consist of local young women from among the Khasi and other tribes of Northeast India. They should live in the midst of their own people. The Archbishop believed that tribal girls could understand better the culture and the genius of their own

people. He loved local and tribal cultures. He wanted to see them grow, blossom and mature for the service of the people. His belief was such that out of the depths of these local cultures a beautiful Church would spring forth with deep Christian faith.

The sisters of this congregation should be like Our Lady who with great eagerness and haste went to visit her cousin Elizabeth to share with her the good news of salvation. Their main task was to visit people in their villages and work and stay with them even in the remotest areas of the parish.

Before taking a final decision to found a new congregation, he consulted his diocesan council members and sought their enlightened opinion. I was then a member of the council. He sought the advice of certain founders of religious congregations. In his journey within India and abroad he visited many shrines of Jesus Christ and Our Lady and prayed for guidance and enlightenment. Practical and sensible views of the priests of his Archdiocese were very much respected by him.

His collaborators were in general his council members. But those who came forward were Fr. Ignatius Rubio, Procurator of the Archdiocese and Bro. Castellino Fernandes, SDB, his private secretary. I also, in my capacity as his chancellor then, played some role in helping him realize his dream.

Firstly, Archbishop Hubert insisted on having good holy girls to join his congregation. Secondly, he wanted to get a local based religious congregation to help him at the initial stage to look after the new recruits, educate them, and take care of their day-to-day spiritual formation.

Archbishop Hubert asked the parish priests of the diocese to look out for good and well-intentioned girls who had at least attempted matriculation examination. He then interviewed them personally and made a selection.

Conclusion

The project of founding a religious congregation for tribal women was very much relevant in the context of the rapid growth of evangelization work in the Northeast India in general and in the Shillong Archdiocese in particular. In this context, local vocations as children of their own culture are strongly encouraged thereby calling the Church in the Northeast to stand on its own feet in bringing salvation to its own people and even spread the faith to other parts of our country and the world.

Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario was a person of great vision. Even though he did not live long enough to see the full flowering of his dream, it is now the bounden duty of the Sisters to follow the aims and objectives of their Founder and fulfil his lifelong goal of spreading God’s kingdom everywhere.

(xv) My Recollection of Hubert D’Rosario As Young Salesian

Fr. John Med, SDB¹⁵

It was a short time before Hubert arrived in Tirupattur, South India, that Fr. Carreño was appointed rector of that newly erected community in the recently established province of Madras. In fact Fr. Carreño, a Spaniard from the Basque region was destined to go to Shillong but then was given to the Madras Province as a favour. With his exuberant personality and genial character he enlivened the hot and otherwise uninviting strip of land in Tirupattur which later became the life-centre of the Province and the nursery of Salesian vocations. It was due to his dynamic personality that the Salesian community in India became a fast growing religious family, even now in India.

The centre of Tirupattur town was and is still Hindu and Muslim. Protestants established their presence mostly in the periphery of the town. There were a few Catholic families in the town and in surrounding villages. The Protestant hospital stood where the Sacred Heart College and the House are at present. They owned the land. But

¹⁵ Fr. John Med, SDB, is one of the pioneering Salesian missionaries in India. He was Provincial in the Province of Madras, Novice Master at Shillong and a frontline missionary in Manipur. He died a few years ago. RIP.

they left it for a more suitable location in the town. Water was scarce and the land dry. The Railway line passes just near our compound and the Highway on the other. Five kilometres from Tirupattur is a Railway junction of Jalarpet.

In those years a railway inspector happened to visit Fr. Carreño. The Inspector was a Mangalorian and his wife a Malayalee. They had a son who had just completed his school final examination. They were a Catholic family and they were thinking about the future of the boy, Hubert by name. They were attracted by Fr. Carreño who also spoke with the boy, Hubert. The goodness of Fr. Carreño and the familiarity of the Brothers attracted them and Hubert decided to join the Salesians.

The family of Rosario had to leave Tirupattur because they were on transfer and Hubert remained with the Salesian since he expressed his desire to become a Salesian. Since he had sufficient education he was considered as an aspirant. And soon other boys joined him: Devadas, a Tamilian, who had the same level of education as Hubert, and Arnold, a Telegu and another older boy. At that time four Italians aspirants arrived and joined the novitiate: Angelo Castelli an Italian ex-army man 10 years older than me, Restelli, Chanoux, and Cusini, all Italians fresh from Italy. This little group was ready for the novitiate within a short time. Fr. Carreño was naturally the Novice Master and I was appointed as the Assistant, and I was perhaps the youngest of them. I was with them for four months while completing my Philosophy studies and then I remained as their Assistant in Novitiate. I decided to just live with them as one of them. All persevered and I myself also. For two years I was in charge of the novices and the students of philosophy. Then I left for Shillong for my Theological studies.

As regards Hubert D’Rosario and his companions, they lived as a close family and we grew together under the direction of our active

and happy Novice Master and Rector. I have only good memories about Bro. Hubert. We all loved him and he lived as a faithful and happy friend giving good example to all and forming himself for his future apostolate.

During and after the Second World War, I lost track of Fr. Hubert Rosario. Both of us followed the path of obedience wherever we were asked to work and so we rarely met each other. When I was appointed Provincial of the Province of Madras, I found him occupying the post of Rector of the Don Bosco Katpadi. As I was never anxious to make changes of personnel and found that Fr. Hubert was doing good work in that House I was glad to leave him there. It was a normal House with the Salesian community that had been detached for Vellore House. It was an ordinary High School, with usual problems.

But a change had to be done not because Katpadi needed it but because there was a need to find a suitable Rector in far off Don Bosco, Bombay. Considering the good qualities and solid preparation of Fr. Hubert, we thought it good to propose Fr. Hubert to be sent to Bombay. Bombay was a large and difficult different House to manage and it was not easy to find the rector there. People of that big city, the capital of Maharashtra, though in Madras province, were always allergic to people hailing from South India. Fortunately Fr. Hubert was the son of a Mangalorean; so his name helped to settle some questions and objections to his appointment. Still there remained the reaction of Fr. Maschio, the great patriarch of Don Bosco, Bombay, and one who was indisputably the most popular person in Bombay. Fr. Rosario was young and of rather shy character. To give him support, we sent to that house Fr. Rubio, a Spaniard and a strong man and added to him Fr. Sebastian Karotemprel who was also esteemed. It was a good solution and all the confreres and also the public were glad.

Under the new superiors, the school of Don Bosco, Matunga, was running well but again when all seemed settled and functioning well another problem arose when a Bishop had to be appointed in far off Dibrugarh, Assam. Fr. Hubert Rosario was suggested for the See of Dibrugarh in Assam. For Fr. Rosario it was a shock but he was asked to accept and be ready for this new obedience, this time for the good of the Church. Again to support him and not allow him to go to a completely unknown place he asked that Fr. Rubio and Fr. Karotempel should come to Assam to help him. They knew him, loved him and made the sacrifice of leaving the mother province behind.

With the departure of the new Bishop of Dibrugarh the young province of Madras lost not only the Rector of Don Bosco, Bombay, but also our very capable Administrator, and Fr. Rubio, Prefect, and Fr. Sebastian the Dean of studies. All felt it especially because the province was young. It needed elderly, experienced confreres to maintain the good spirit. Still, for the good of the Church in the Northeast India we were glad to make the sacrifice especially since the Salesian work in the South was fast growing in personnel that in due time would heal the wound. The future in fact proved that this step and sacrifice was worth it for the good of the Church.

I personally admired Hubert D’Rosario for his exemplary character and life, his ability for work and readiness ever to do the will of God. We wished him, with a tinge of sadness, goodbye and I treasured his memory as one who was so near to me in my Salesian life in India.

Appendices

(i) Homily on 31 May, 1983 inaugurating the Pious Association of the Visitation

Homily delivered by Archbishop Hubert D’Rosario of Shillong-Guwahati on May 31st, 1983 –Feast of the Visitation of Our Lady, during Holy Mass, inaugurating the PIOUS ASSOCIATION OF THE VISITATION

My dear Brothers and sisters and children in Jesus Christ,

By the Grace of God we have gathered here today on May 31st 1983, Feast of the Visitation of Our Lady, to offer this Holy Mass in this new house of formation named Madonna Convent, with these eight young Khasi tribal women who are candidates for the Pious Association of the Visitation under the guidance of Mother John Bosco, Provincial and Sr. M. Pius of the Sisters of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions.

Way back in the year 1979, we Bishops of Northeast India were planning our 1990 centenary celebrations. We studied in depth the needs of the various Dioceses in our region. We found that we urgently need apostles to live and work for the poor, illiterate, sick and needy in

the rural and urban areas. We need a Don Bosco and Mother Teresa for the villages in particular.

India has a population of about 690 million, of these 540 million live in the villages which number about 600,000 and hold 82.7% of India's population; 297 million live just above the poverty line and 300 million below the poverty line. About 70% of the Indians are illiterate; 80% live below the poverty line and many die annually of various diseases.

After almost 2000 years of Christianity, our villages are still the most abandoned group in the Church's activity. Most of the religious houses of men and women are found in cities and towns. The missionaries, catechists, and some Sisters meet our people in the villages in a few fleeting visits and for the rest of the year they are left to themselves. The ignorance of faith and Christian living is appalling, the level of literacy is shocking - not more than 10% - and the number of victims of disease is beyond counting; the squalor is indescribable and the poverty shameful.

Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, spent most of his days in the villages of India, to show to the leaders that India is a land of villages and they need to care for them.

The Seminar on "The Indian Church in the struggle for a New Society" held at NBCLC, Bangalore, and 19-24th October, 1981, recommends that the apostolate of the religious should have a far bigger rural thrust than it has today.

The CRI (Conference of the Religious of India) in its General Assembly held at Bangalore, March 28 – April 1, 1981, had given some recommendations as an effective means of aiding the tribals:

Sisters living together with villagers and identifying themselves with the villagers.

There is nothing more effective than our total insertion with the people, staying with them. All this has moved the hearts of non-believers to accept the faith.

That in the effort to preach the message of Christ to the Tribals, religious working in tribal areas should aim at a total insertion among them, and as far as possible preserve their culture.

The soul of India lives in the villages. The progress of the country depends on the progress of the villages. Jesus said: "We must go to the other villages around here. I have to preach in them also, because that is why I came" (Mk 1:38).

It is to meet this urgent need of India and Northeast India in particular, that this new group of young women is being formed today with the consent and encouragement of the seven Bishops of this region.

After much prayer and consultation from the year 1980, God has blessed this project which is being realized today.

I prayed at the various Marian Shrines in India: Bandel, Bandra, Vellankani; Shrines in Italy especially in Rome, Milan and Torino; in Germany, Belgium, at Lourdes in France, at Knock in Ireland and at Walsingham in England. I got persons and religious communities to pray for this intention.

When I met Cardinal A. Rossi, Prefect and Archbishop D.S. Lourdasamy, Secretary General, of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in 1981, they gave me the green light to go ahead and to inform them of the progress. I placed this project before my clergy and their cooperation is seen today in the young women present here – one from the Cathedral Parish, two from Laban, two from Upper Shillong, two from Marbisu and one from Mawbri – others tell me they will send candidates in the years to come. I am grateful to them. I thank these young women for having heard and followed the

call of Christ through these their pastors. I am grateful to their parents who willingly gave these their daughters to start this new group. May God bless and reward them.

I wish to thank Mother M. Benedicte, Superior General of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions for accepting to send her Sisters to help in the initial formation of these candidates. I am indebted in particular to Mother John Bosco, Provincial, Sr. M. Pius, Superior, Sr. Mary Martin and the other Sisters and their pupils who worked very hard to prepare the house for this day.

I thank Fr. Mathai Kochuparampil, SDB Salesian Provincial, for being present here and agreeing to send some Salesian priests to help also in the formation of these young women. I thank Fr. V. Albera, Parish Priest of Upper Shillong for placing this parish school building at the disposal of this group. I thank Fr. Ignatius Rubio who has gone to his reward, for transforming this school into a religious house. I thank all benefactors who have come generously to help in preparing and furnishing this house. May God bless and reward all of them.

These candidates, God willing, will have a year as aspirants and postulants, followed by a two-year period of Novitiate. They will take their private vows on the completion of their novitiate. When the number of professed members will reach thirty, they will be raised to the status of a diocesan Congregation.

They will be known as the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco. They will bring the light of the Gospel to our people, especially the poor, in the spirit of Don Bosco.

Now in the presence of this august assembly, according to Church Law, I, as Archbishop of Shillong-Guwahati, recognize this first group of eight young women and others that may join later under their Superior, as a Private Pious Association to be called the Pious Association of the

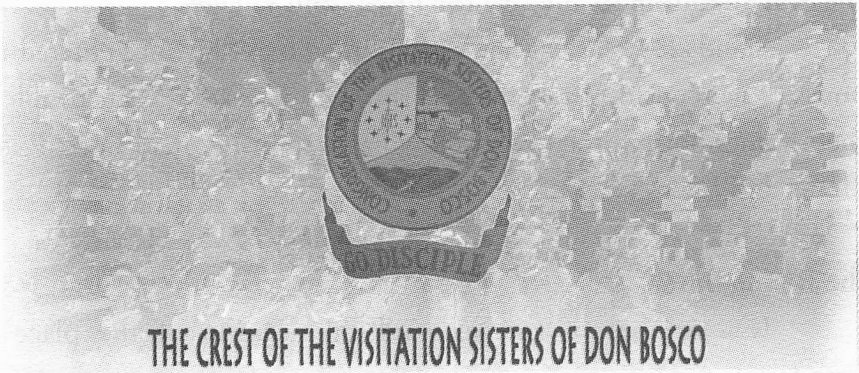
Visitation and approve of it. May the Lord bless this group and the Superiors and lead them to their objective of becoming religious sisters in due course. May Mary be their model, mother and help.

These sisters will labour to bring the Saving Christ, right into the homes of our people. Evangelization and Catechesis will hold the pride of place in their ministry. They will care for the health of our people, by preventive and curative medicine and hygienic living; will help remove illiteracy especially through non-formal education and will guide people to increase food production.

Mary at her visitation will be their model and patroness. As Mary "Went with haste into the hill country", to visit and help Elizabeth (Luke 1:39), these sisters will rush to attend to the spiritual and other needs of our people in the villages and towns and will live with them. They will be other Mary's to our people in the far-flung villages and towns and will bring to them the Love, Joy, Peace, Strength and Hope in Christ.

This is the gift of God to His Church and the sign of His love during this Holy Year and our Novena of Preparation for the Centenary in 1990. May these young women become other Mary's in body, mind and soul and bring Northeast India to Christ and Christ to Northeast India. May many more young women join their ranks to hasten the coming of His Kingdom.

(ii) Crest of the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco



The Crest of the VSDBs has been designed to capture the spirit and aim of the life and mission of the congregation. It bears the Motto, which is topped by various elements: The name of Jesus with the crosses; a star with rays spreading to towns and villages; the rising sun, a wood or forest and the hills and rivers. A brief comment on each of these elements is in place.

The Motto

“Go, Disciple!” (Mt. 28:19). It is the goal of the apostolic work of the Congregation. Evangelization is at the heart of the life and mission of the sisters.

The name of Jesus surmounted by a Cross and surrounded by eight Crosses

The name JESUS, in its symbolic Greek form, used by the early Christians, stands for Our Lord Jesus Christ who redeemed the world through His death on the Cross, presented by the Cross which surmounts the symbol. The eight crosses represent the eight beatitudes, the summary of the Gospel teachings of JESUS which the sisters are striving to live radically and to win all to Christ through evangelization and catechesis.

The Star shedding its rays on the towns and villages

Stands for Mary at her Visitation who as She once entered the house of her cousin Elizabeth, now through the sisters, visits people in their homes both in the towns and villages to bring them Love, Peace, Hope, and Joy of Christ.

The Rising Sun

Is a symbol of the geographical position of the place of foundation and first mission of the Sisters, namely the eastern region of India. It also represents our Lord, the Sun of Justice. It will be the effort of the Sisters to remedy the situations of injustice and poverty that they meet in order to let the light of Christ free people from darkness.

The Wood

It signifies Don Bosco, the founder of the Salesian Congregation, who is also the Patron and after whom the Congregation of the Visitation sisters is called ("Bosco" in Italian means "wood"). The sisters strive to become saints by living the spirituality of Don Bosco.

The Hills and the Rivers

Represent the field of work entrusted to the sisters, namely the interior areas of our land.

**(iii) Letter of Cardinal S. Lourdusamy
to Archbishop D’Rosario**

SACRA CONGREGATIO
PRO GENTIUM EVANGELIZATIONE
SEU DE PROPAGANDA FIDE

PROT N...3737 / 83

Rome, July 29, 1983

Your Grace,

I am in receipt of your letter of July 16, 1983, written on the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, along with which you sent on a copy of the Homily which you gave on the Feast of the Visitation inaugurating the Pious Association of the same Title, together with a photograph of the 10 young Khasi tribal women with the two superiors of the young Society, forming its present nucleus.

In this regard, while expressing my gratitude to Your Grace for this thoughtfulness, I want to assure you that this Sacred Congregation renews the encouragement given to you on the occasion of your visit here to this Sacred Dicastery in 1981. The beginnings seem to be most auspicious, and it is our hope and fervent prayer that the Lord will continue to call more young women to this young Association brought into being by very necessary and special objectives to be achieved in the

area of the country where they will begin both their formation and their eventual apostolic ministry.

Invoking upon Your Grace, and upon the members of this Pious Association, along with the superiors who have so generously taken up the responsibility of the formation of these young women in their initial steps toward religious life, I wish to avail myself of this occasion for expressing to Your Grace my sentiments of personal esteem and every best wish.

Sincerely yours in our Lord,

(signatures)

**(iv) Letter of Erection of the Novitiate House of the
VSDB**

The Most Rev HUBERT D'ROSARIO, SDB, D.D.

PHONE: 3355

ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE

Archbishop of Shillong – Gauhati 793 003

SHILLONG – 3 (MEGHALAYA) INDIA

ERECTION

of the

NOVITIATE HOUSE OF THE VISITATION SISTERS OF
DON BOSCO

Decree

I, Hubert D'Rosario, SDB, Archbishop of Shillong – Gauhati, after having obtained the consent of the Archdiocesan Council, do hereby erect the Novitiate House of the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco, at Madonna Convent House, Nongkseh, Upper Shillong, SHILLONG – 793.005

Given at SHILLONG,
on May 31, 1984, Feast of
the Visitation of the B.V.M.

(signature)

ARCHBISHOP OF SHILLONG – GAUHATI

(signature)

seal

CHANCELLOR

**(v) Letter from the Congregation
for Evangelization of Peoples**

SACRA CONGREGATIO
PRO GENTIUM EVANGELIZATIONE
SEU DE PROPAGANDA FIDE

Rome, 21 July 1984

PROT...N... 2682 / 84

Your Grace,

I acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 1st June, last, in which Your Grace informed this Sacred Dicastry of the erection of the Association of the “Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary” with a view to gathering together the young women desirous of consecrating themselves to the Lord and of dedicating themselves entirely to the service of the poor and the abandoned of the Archdiocese of Shillong – Gauhati.

At the same time, you forwarded to this Sacred Congregation a copy of the Statutes of this Association for information and approval.

In this respect, I wish, first of all, to assure Your Grace that Propaganda has taken due note of the foundation in question, and that

the formation and direction of the members have been entrusted to two Senior Sisters of the Institute of "Our Lady of the Missions".

Moreover, this Sacred Congregation has closely examined the text of the Constitutions which, treating of an Association, should preferably be termed "Statutes."

The above-mentioned text certainly contains valid elements above all, of a spiritual character, which after having been proven by experience, could form part of the text of Constitutions when the Association will become a religious Institute of diocesan right.

For such an elevation, it will be necessary that the Association of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary will have made a certain progress and consist of at least thirty members who, besides having completed their initial formation (novitiate and juniorate), have given proof of living and working in accordance with the aims of the foundation.

The text requires, moreover, to be more fully developed from the normative point of view, with the introduction of all those rules, which experience will indicate as necessary, so as to permit the members to live a regular community life and to dedicate themselves with profit to the forms of apostolate proper to the Association.

With the eventual elevation of the Association to a religious Institute of diocesan right, it will be likewise necessary, to avoid inevitable confusion, to distinguish between the internal Superiors (Supreme Pontiff, President and Community Leaders) and the external authority (diocesan Bishops).

Until such time as the Institute will be able to hold a regular General Chapter, it will certainly be for the Bishop, after having consulted those concerned, to provide for the nomination of the Leaders, but this transitory provision should not appear in the Constitutions.

Treating, then, of a diocesan Association, the approval of the Statutes of the same does not come under the competency of the Holy See but under that of the diocesan Bishop who has erected it.

Finally, I am pleased to inform Your Grace that Propaganda has presented your request for a subsidy to maintain the candidates in formation of the new-erected Association, to the relevant Pontifical Missionary Society.

Availing myself of this occasion to express sentiments of high esteem and with every best wish, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Our Lord,
(signatures)

**(vi) Decree of Approval of the Pious
Association of the VSDBs**

THE MOST REV.

PHONE: 3355

HUBERT D'ROSARIO, SDB, D.D.
ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE
ARCHBISHOP OF SHILLONG – GAUHATI
SHILLONG – 3 (MEGHALAYA) INDIA

**DECREE OF ERECTION
OF THE PIOUS ASSOCIATION OF THE VISITATION
SISTERS OF DON BOSCO**

I, Hubert D'Rosario, Archbishop of Shillong – Gauhati, after considering:

(a) The usefulness of a new Association of women for the evangelization and development of people, especially in the neglected urban and rural areas of our Archdiocese,

(b) the support and counsel obtained from mature persons,

(c) that the opportune moment has now arrived for its establishment, and having invoke the holy name of God, by virtue of the present letter, on my own authority, ERECT and DECLARE AS

CANONICALLY ERECTED, the Pious Association of the Visitation Sisters of Don Bosco into a juridical person within the Catholic Church, with its principal house in the city of Shillong, Meghalaya, India.

This Association, in so far as it is Diocesan, will remain under our immediate jurisdiction and special care, according to the norms of the Code of Canon Law (cc.594, 595).

Given at Shillong, on the eight day of December, nineteen hundred and eighty three, in the Jubilee Year of the Redemption.

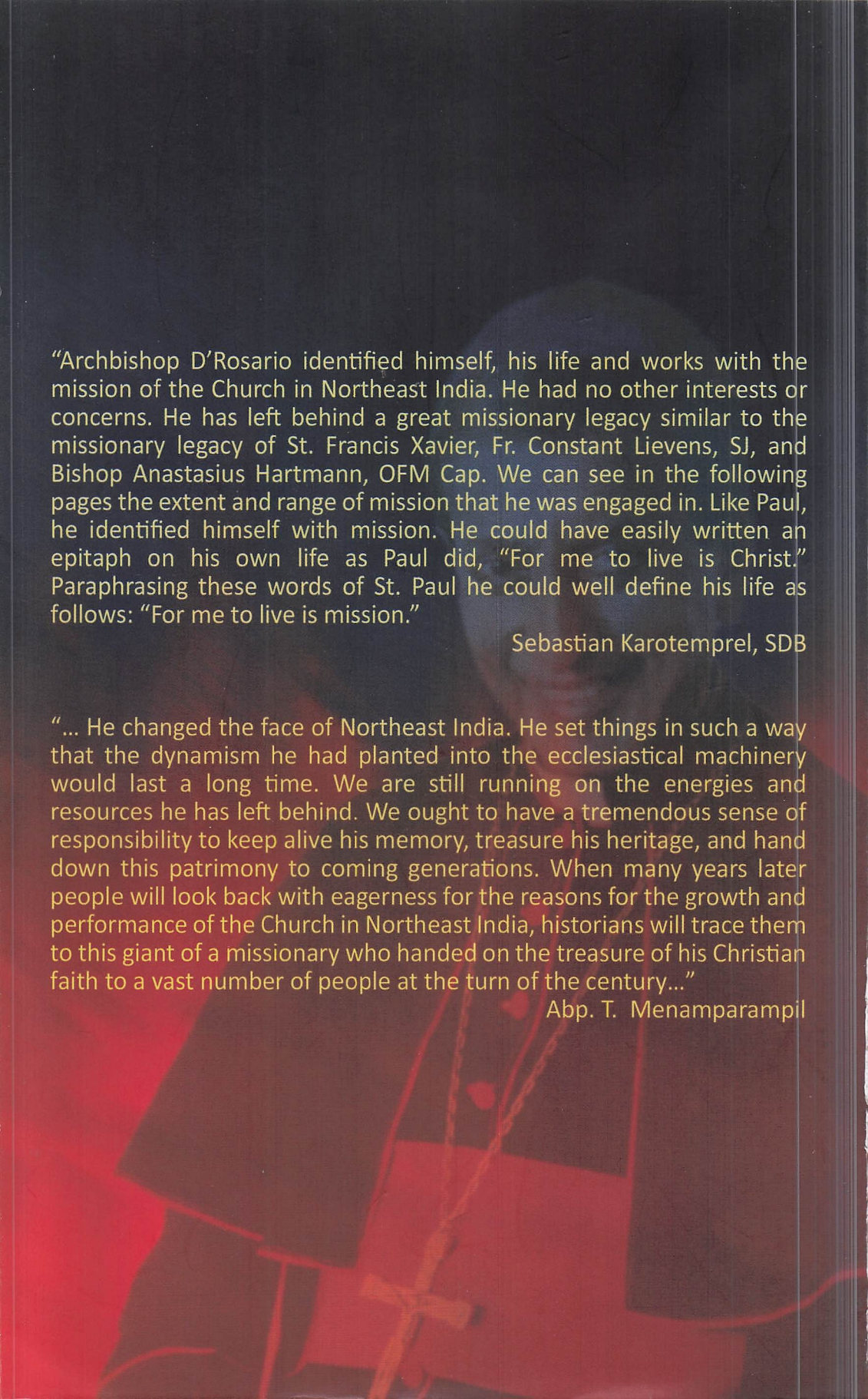
(Signature)

Archbishop of Shillong – Gauhati

seal

(Signature)

Chancellor



“Archbishop D’Rosario identified himself, his life and works with the mission of the Church in Northeast India. He had no other interests or concerns. He has left behind a great missionary legacy similar to the missionary legacy of St. Francis Xavier, Fr. Constant Lievens, SJ, and Bishop Anastasius Hartmann, OFM Cap. We can see in the following pages the extent and range of mission that he was engaged in. Like Paul, he identified himself with mission. He could have easily written an epitaph on his own life as Paul did, “For me to live is Christ.” Paraphrasing these words of St. Paul he could well define his life as follows: “For me to live is mission.”

Sebastian Karotemprel, SDB

“... He changed the face of Northeast India. He set things in such a way that the dynamism he had planted into the ecclesiastical machinery would last a long time. We are still running on the energies and resources he has left behind. We ought to have a tremendous sense of responsibility to keep alive his memory, treasure his heritage, and hand down this patrimony to coming generations. When many years later people will look back with eagerness for the reasons for the growth and performance of the Church in Northeast India, historians will trace them to this giant of a missionary who handed on the treasure of his Christian faith to a vast number of people at the turn of the century...”

Abp. T. Menampampil