

Jubilee Message by Provincial Superior of Bangalore

On July 16, 1849 Father Anthony Mary Claret with his 5 companion priests gathered together in a small room in the diocesan seminary at Vic, Barcelona, Spain and there he declared, "a great work begins today." Father Manual Vilaro one of the cofounders answered smiling, "what can its importance be, being that we are so young and few in number?" "You will soon see," said Father Claret, "and if we are few God's great power will shine brighter." These were prophetic words of Father Claret that today over 3000 Claretian Missionaries, the religious congregation founded by Father Claret on that day, are working in 66 countries around the world "seeking in all things the glory of God, the sanctification of its members and the salvation of people".

The beginning of the Congregation in India 50 years ago was no doubt part of the Prophecy of Father Claret. Right from 1952 attempts were made to start the Congregation in India. The visit of Fr. Peter Schweiger, the then Superior General, to India in 1956 was the first concrete step towards starting the Congregation in India. It was followed up by Fr. Rudolf Mainka and Fr. Walter Safran of the Province of Germany. Bishop Sebastian Vayalil and Fr. Alexander Cherukarakunnel of the Pala Diocese are to be specially remembered who later on proposed concrete steps in starting the Congregation in India and were true helping hands in the beginning times.

One person, Fr. Franz Xavier Dirnberger CMF, who laid the foundation and shaped the future of the Congregation in India, stands above all other persons. Along with him we remember with gratitude Fr. Peter Schutz CMF, the then provincial superior of the Province of Germany, who stood behind every step for a strong foundation of the Congregation in India. In 1970 Fr. Dirnberger was sent to India by the Province of Germany, who from then continued his dedicated missionary life and service in India until he died in 1993.

On 31 March 1970 the foundation stone for the first Claretian House in India was laid at Kuravilangad, Kerala and it was named 'Claret Bhavan'. That was a phenomenal and divinely willed beginning no doubt, that now at 50 years we the Claretians in India are 3 Provinces, 2 Independent Delegations, 94 Communities in 12 States in India and 476 Priests working in the missions in India and abroad. The Province of Bangalore today has 27 Communities, 149 Priests working in India and abroad, missions in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Haryana-Delhi, Jharkhand, Punjab and in New Zealand.

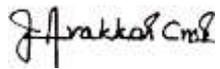
At this juncture we gratefully remember the contributions of the pioneer Indian Claretians in moulding the congregation in India. Fr. Joseph Madavath the first Indian Claretian Priest who was ordained in Germany in 1968 is the first to be thankfully remembered. Along with him Fathers Mathew Njayarkulam, George Vanchipurakal, George Nedumplakunnel and Kuriakose Thekkilakattil under the leadership of Fr. Franz Dirnberger laid a strong foundation for the congregation in India and guided the initial stages of its growth. We joyously remember all other Claretian Missionaries, our benefactors, friends and well-wishers who stood at the forefront and zealously worked for the growth of the Congregation in India.

The successive General Governments and very specially the Province of Germany which is our Mother Province whose unparalleled and wholehearted support all throughout the 50 years of our journey made the great difference in our growth story is ever remembered with deep sentiments of gratitude.

When we think of a movement inspired and impelled by the Holy Spirit, we do not think much about the works and achievements but the element of the Divine in it and how powerful this Divine element

is moving on. Then we count every growth, every progress, and every achievement as a Divine plan and blessing. More than anything we Claretians count everything within the perspective of evangelization because we are apostolic missionaries by call and evangelization is our charism and our hallmark. As Father Claret was, we too work for the “greater glory of God and salvation of souls”.

The beginning of the Congregation in India 50 years ago was the result of the Divine inspiration. 50 years later, as we look back today, we realize that the very foundational blessings we had, been always with us. As we celebrate the Golden Jubilee of our presence in India we journey on with the hope and prayers that God will continue to bless our life and work in India further that we may dedicate ourselves for the service of God and our fellow human beings and we take this year of Jubilee as a time of thanksgiving and a time of renewal.



Fr. Jacob Arakkal John CMF

Provincial Superior

Province of Bengaluru