



Petals



BETHANY SISTERS
SILCHAR PROVINCE

...Shaping a destiny where Petals count

A NEWSLETTER OF THE SILCHAR PROVINCE OF BETHANY SISTERS

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Message

"Declare His glory among the nations. His wonders among all peoples". Ps 96 : 3

During the pandemic Bethany Sisters in the North East Province have seen the bifurcation of the Northeast Province that has given rise to Guwahati Province and Silchar Province. This is to indicate Bethany is growing. I am happy that Sr Clara Mendonca has brought out Bethany 'Petals' a recording of some of our activities in the Province to declare the glory of God and make known His wonders that are worked through our Sisters and our collaborators.

Now that the whole world has entered into 3rd phase of pandemic with virus omicron, I pray that we go out of ourselves, learn to live with this pandemic accomplishing our mission for the best of our abilities with a stronger mind, body and coping mechanism to reach out to the poor, needy and the marginalized. It is good that we keep our stress level in check and find happiness in whatever is going well for us. Some of the points we need to keep in mind are taking care of our body, mind, and emotions and keep connected with God and with each other.

Let us look for a silver lining in our lives and proclaim the Glory of God in the ongoing pandemic.

Sr Lucious BS
Provincial Superior

'Starting afresh' with new dreams...

Bethany has marched on to a fresh second century. And coincidentally, here is Silchar Province created on the 6th of August 2020 out of erstwhile Northeast Province birthing new dreams. We the sisters of the province wonder the way God has picked us up to provide new momentum to the existing Bethany missions spread across the region, and freshly set on sail to live our Commitment in the divine project. Indeed the new province dedicated to the Holy Spirit will always experience new energies and sustainable providence!

'Two roads diverged in a wood,
And I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference' - Robert Frost

Similar are our feelings although we are yet to see fully, the 'differences' impacted from the new way scripted for us. While it is natural to get accustomed to old and familiar ways, it takes courage to set foot on a 'new road'. We have begun afresh although the 'woods' call you to sit by and enjoy the scenic sketches.

Sir Isaac Newton once said, 'I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.' This thought is appealing to all of us especially in today's world where we need to be living in new ways, exploring more in the given or newer contexts. The vast truth of God for humanity requires more explorers!

It is in collectiveness of the petals a corolla completes in a flower. A petal symbolizes uniqueness with respect to its appearance, placement, and its ability to contribute collectively to forming a flower. The NEWSLETTER of the Bethany Silchar Province is called PETALS aptly. 'PETALS' in the form of NEWS items, signify the humble contributions of our Sisters towards - building missionary Bethany communities, raising a Province that adds to the extension of Peace and Prosperity in the region, and also towards adding small quantities of goodness to the bigger world!

Let there be more blooms in terms of living our commitment, blooms that praise God, blooms that heal and build people. Every news item here in the PETALS is a petal indeed that contributes to a common venture initiated by our Founder RFC Mascarenhas!

Editorial



Sr Clara Mendonca BS

BETHANY CENTENARY RESOUNDS AT SILCHAR

The Centenary Celebrations commenced in the Province as all the communities joined the nine days special Novena prayers, each day marking a solemn note with reminiscences of the cherished past. The Triduum prayers telecast by the Congregation from Northern, Southern and Silchar Provinces on 'Bethany Spirituality' took us closer to the Centenary peak.

On 15th July 2021, the Provincial House and the Holy Family Convent, and the Student Candidates had a solemn thanksgiving Mass to mark the treasured Centenary officiated by Fr Joachim Walder the Episcopal Vicar for Barak valley, Aizawl Diocese, accompanied by 8 other priests of the region. Fr Joachim in his homily, thanked God for the presence of Bethany Sisters in North-eastern states and particularly in the Silchar/Aizawl Diocese, and underscored their selfless services rendered for the welfare of the remote poor villages, including in those tough times of war and insurgency. It was a deep faith experience to hear him recount the extra-mile sacrifices of our sisters in the early days as well as at the present. It was agreeable when he said, the vision of our Founder is being fulfilled through us in this part of the country.

A short felicitation followed. A note of Welcome and a brief significance of the day was delivered by Sr Lucious the Provincial Superior. As a symphony of gratitude the Bethany band inclusive of the candidates paid their homage to the Founder and the pioneers by voicing in unison the centenary song. Vote of thanks was proposed by Sr Rosy Pinto the Superior of the Convent. A festal meal followed. The day continued in gratitude having the four hours of 'Adoration' in the evening. A meaningful prayer hour to mark the 100th Foundation Day was conducted by Sr Harsha.

On 16th July, the solemn day of great joy, all attended the live Centenary Mass presided over by Bishop Peter Paul Saldanha of Mangalore Diocese. One of his touching statements was 'God loved one person and through him He loves everyone, so too God loved our Revered Founder and loved us all likewise'. Our hearts welled up with gratitude to Almighty God as we inclined our ears listening to the different messages that emanated from the Centenary event at Mother House Mangalore, graced by our Superior General Sr Rose Celine and other dignitaries.

Similar celebrations on the occasion of the centenary followed in different communities of the Province spread across 6 states of the region. The Priests, Bishops, Religious, well-wishers, Bethany lay associates, benefactors took part in the joyful event locally. Food in the form of dry ration was distributed to varied number of persons, ranging from 100 families to a couple of poor families by different communities. In addition, two communities also reached out to poor students and their families by distributing school-books, study material, and food packs on the occasion.

As we wind up the celebrations, let the Centenary theme 'Let it Grow, Let it Flower and Let it bear Fruit' remain alive and active in every Bethany sister in the post centenary years !

Sr Josyna Pao BS

Bethany Provincial House, Silchar



FIRST PROVINCIAL CHAPTER OF SILCHAR PROVINCE



Silchar Province celebrated its first Provincial Chapter at Bethany Provincial House Silchar from August 6 to August 10, 2021. Thirty delegates including the ex-officio members and invitees gathered from all corners of the Province that covers 6 states of the region.

A day's recollection preceded on the 4th of August which was conducted by Sr Elizabeth Uchoi and Sr Chrisette. Sr Elizabeth Uchoi gave a short but meaningful input session. In between, it was indeed a sad and grieving time for all in the province at the sudden passing away of Sr Neritta at Avila Convent Lumding who departed from this world on 3rd November. The delegates watched the live streaming of the funeral Mass and burial service of late Sr Neritta, held at Lumding. It was a rare privilege to accompany our dear Sister in her home-going!

On August 5, the delegates had an orientation session from Bro Sunil Britto CFC via Zoom on the Chapter theme 'Rooted in Christ, to build Eucharistic Communities and Human Fraternity'. The input was very much enriching.

The Opening Ceremony of the First Provincial Chapter took place on the 6th of August. The inaugural Mass at 6.30 am was celebrated by Fr Joachim Walder, Episcopal Delegate for the Barak Valley Deanery, Aizawl Diocese. The Opening prayer at 8.30am was meaningfully conducted by Sr Reshma and Sr Margaret Lalthlamuani. Keeping to tradition the Bible was enthroned in a prominent place in the Chapter hall amidst singing of hymns and prayers. The Provincial Superior and Chapter President Sr Lucious delivered her welcome address and declared the Chapter open. The rest of the Chapter proceedings and events followed in their own pace.

The delegates of the Chapter felt privileged to listen to the keynote address by Sr Lillis BS, the Assistant Superior General, via zoom as well as through the recorded video. Thirty years ago, she, as Provincial Superior of North East Vice Province had conducted the First Chapter of the erstwhile North East Vice Province in the same hall where the present chapter was held. It was a nostalgic moment for her as well as for the delegates though she was unable to be present in person.

Throughout the course of 5 days it was an experience of God walking beside us and we with Him. It ended on the 10th of August 2021, with great thanksgiving! We are filled with gratitude to God for its successful conduct.

Sr Mary Naulak BS,
Bethany Provincial House, Silchar

A SPECIAL TIME FOR BOOK RELEASE

It was an apt occasion while the Sisters from the vast Province area had gathered at the Provincial House for the first Provincial Chapter, to unveil the handiwork of sisters in the field of Study and Documentation. On 10th Aug 2021, while the Chapter had just ended, a small event was organised to mark the Book-release, in the presence of the Provincial team, Chapter delegates and the Sisters of Holy Family Convent Silchar. The following Books were released by Sr Lucious the Provincial Superior.

1. 'Presence – Solidarity: The significance of Jesus Christ for India today in the writings of Samuel Rayan SJ and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, authored by Sr (Dr) Surekha Lobo BS, which was also her doctoral thesis.

2. 'Walking in the Sunshine'- Edited by Sr Mary Naulak BS : This is a compilation of rich experiences of some of the Bethany Sisters who worked in North East India ever since 1962. It was a project of former North East Province for the Centenary year of the Congregation.

3. The Translation of 'The First Mangalorean Servant of God Raymond FC Mascarenhas' authored by Sr M Lillis BS -

a) translated into Mizo language by Mr Stephen Auhmun, and edited by Sr Therese Zothanpari BS

b) translated into Khasi language by Mrs Tromila Khriam, and edited by Fr Kitbok Khongrummai CSC, under the animation of Sr Teresa Martis BS.

The 4 sisters who were instrumental in getting these books and translations done namely Sr Surekha, Sr Mary Naulak, Sr Therese Zothanpari, and Sr Teresa Martis were honoured with traditional stoles and flowers as a mark of appreciation. Sr Reshma facilitated the event.



The Staff Reporter

INSTITUTION DAY

Sept. 14, 2021 was a memorable day for the Crossians at Holy Cross Convent School Dharmanagar, being the Institution Day. Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross was celebrated meaningfully. It was for the first time that we had the celebration of the Institution Day.

The students along with the staff put up a meaningful prayer service which was followed by cultural programme that included dances, songs, and a skit depicting the story of the inception of this institution and the sacrifice and hard work of the pioneer sisters. The infant institution now has turned out to be the hub of education around the town, catering to hundreds of children of the locality. The event also recognized the yeomen services rendered by Sisters, both past and present. People of Dharmanagar hold in high esteem the quality and value based education rendered by Bethany Educational Society. The message communicated to the entire school community was the vision, goal and objectives with which it was founded and the determination to take it forward to bear fruits in hundred fold. Hail Holy Cross of our Saviour!

COLOURFUL CULTURAL WEEK AT HC CONVENT SCHOOL



To provide platform for the students to exhibit and excel in their talents we organized cultural week at the School campus. November 22nd marked the first day. Fr Ajit Philip CSC Principal of Holy Cross School Bagbasa inaugurated the event. Students put up a mesmerizing inaugural ceremony. The Chief Guest in his message encouraged the students to develop their hidden talents and to excel in them. Symbolically Sisters, students and staff let off the Sky light as a reminder that life lived in Holy Cross will always promote peace and harmony.

Thereafter the competitions were held class wise for the junior students and house wise for the senior students. From November 22nd to 24th various events like Dance, Recitation, Mono Act, debate, Story Telling, Singing, Fancy Dress, and Extempore were held. Students were at their best. It was also an opportunity for them to learn to work as a team, learn leadership and values in life. Bethany at Dharnanagar not only prepares the students for excellence in academics but also for co-curricular activities. Well done students!

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE YOUNG SCIENTISTS!!!



Ten students of Holy Cross Convent School Dharmanagar participated in the VIDYARTHI VIGYAN MANTHAN 2021- India's Largest Science Talent Search for New India Using Digital devices. This event is held to raise scientific temper among the young students. In this event three of them made great achievements. Pranta Sharma Class VIII, Jishnu Mukherjee Class IX bagged First Rank in the District level and Kuntal Bhattacharjee Class IX secured the Third Rank at the District level. All the 10 Students of our School have been selected for the State level Camp. It's a moment of joy for the institution. Let Bethany Dharmanagar continue to bring glory to God.

Sr Pushpa BS

(Principal at H. C. Convent School)
Holy Cross Convent, Dharmanagar

THE JOY OF HOSTEL DAY



Holy Cross Girls' Hostel, Dharmanagar celebrated the Hostel Day on 1st October 2021 on the feast of St. Therese of Lisieux, their patroness. In preparation for the celebration they had 9 days of novena. At 6:30am there was Eucharistic Celebration led by Fr. Ajit Philip CSC. After the Mass, the children were greeted by the Sisters.

In the evening the hostellites put up a meaningful programme guided by Sr. Lucy Gonmei, Sr. Judith and Sr. Martha. The programme was comprised of Prayer, songs, cultural dances, action songs, and skit on the life of St. Therese depicting her virtues. The fellowship meal followed.

Sr Lucy Gonmei BS

Holy Cross Convent, Dharmanagar

COMMITTED TO HUMAN RIGHTS

International Human Rights day was observed on December 10, 2021 at Holy Cross Hr Sec School Silchar. The theme of the Human Rights Day 2021, "Equality-Reducing inequalities,



Advancing human rights” was highlighted throughout the event.

Sr Teresa Martis the Principal of the School welcomed the gathering and also underscored the theme of the day. The participants were the students of Higher Secondary classes,



and teachers and staff of both Holy Cross School Silchar, and Bethany Promotional Schools that are located in the slums of Silchar.

The speaker of the day, Sr Clara Mendonca BS presented the status of the Human rights in today’s world, with special reference to India and local situation. She explained on the theme of the day in length supported by video clippings on Origin of UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and the History of Human Rights, which was richly enlightening and motivating.

Speaking on the current Human Rights Day theme which relates to ‘Equality’ and Article 1 of the UDHR, she reiterated, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Therefore all of us have a duty to protect and safeguard the dignity and freedom of every human being irrespective of who they are.” There were 2 sessions on the same input topics, and the students attended the event in 2 batches. A total 211 enthusiastic students attended the session with rapt alertness, allowing a commitment to spur up in them for a just and equitable society.

It was truly encouraging to see the young minds listening so attentively with deep expression of a concern for those living in misery. Thanks to the sisters and staff for all arrangements.

The staff Reporter

PARA LEGAL PERSONNEL SHOW THE WAY

There are a total 19 trained Para legal Personnel (PLPs) who work at the grass root level at Bethany Kathalcherra mission. Of late they have taken up one each village with a special responsibility, in addition to their common projects. Under the leadership of Bethany Sisters and Mr Chandrojoy Reang, a long standing and committed field coordinator, they have been working for development in the most interior villages around Kathalcherra, Dhalai district, Tripura.



Here is one of the recent stories of Results of Bethany’s work in Kathalcherra. For the years 2018-20, the work target for the PLPs was the development of 4 villages, namely- West Kathalcherra, Uttar Kathalcherra, Randhahampara and Garo-III.

Speaking about the success story of Uttar Kathalcherra alone, it is a remote area where there was no proper road, no communication facility, no water supply, no electricity, and no ICDS (Integrated child Development Scheme) Centre in the vicinity. People are uneducated; most of them are daily wagers and live below poverty line. They are 66 families of Reang and Debbarma tribes. Whenever there were clashes between the different tribes and groups they used to escape to the forest to find security and shelter. In this connection, the Village Council Committee was followed up by the PLPs and was guided.

In such a context the Bethany staff and other youth set up goals and aims to be fulfilled. Target 2018-2020 was to have a better Road facility, water supply, Electricity, ICDS Centre and a proper school. Awareness was given repeatedly in an appealing way to the villagers by Sisters and PLPs. They were motivated to aim higher and transform the village. With the help of Panchayat leaders, they formed a development committee and worked hard to tap the resources available at the Government. Soon the efforts got transformed into tangibles, and within the set time the Road was constructed, water supply, Electricity connection, ICDS Centre and Primary School are all there for the village now to become sustainable.

Thanks to the big help of Mr. Chondrojoy the other Para legal young men. Capacity building yields!

Sr Gretta BS

Bethany Convent, Kathalcherra

Tribute to our dear departed family members, Jan. - Dec. 2021

- ▷ Sr Kiran Sister
- ▷ Sr Pushpa Joseph Mother
- ▷ Sr Anandi Kerketta Aunt
- ▷ Sr Mary Kikon Brother
- ▷ Sr Nirmala Toppo Aunt
- ▷ Sr Amritha Brother -in- law
- ▷ Sr GrettaDSouza Brother- in- law
- ▷ Sr Isabella Sister
- ▷ Sr Lucy Uchoi Elder Brother
- ▷ Sr Cleopha/Sr Sunita Jyoti 2 Brothers -in- law/Uncles
- ▷ Sr Rosy Pinto Uncle
- ▷ Sr Harsha Aunt
- ▷ Sr Stella Matthew Uncle
- ▷ Sr LeenaSerrao Aunt
- ▷ Sr Nirmala Toppo Aunt
- ▷ Sr Hilda Ida Dsouza- Brother -in- law
- ▷ Sr Mary Joseph Father
- ▷ Sr Lucy Uchoi Uncle

SHAPING LIVES AT KHASI CROSS-ROADS

“See the light in others and treat them as if that is all you see.”- Wayne Dyer. To see the light of hope of a bright future in the eyes of the Khasi Tribal children and infuse in them the courage to strain towards realizing it, is the renewed vision of the sisters at Holy Family Convent, Silchar. It was almost a century ago that the Canadian Fathers of the Holy Cross Congregation took upon seriously their obligation to be the mentors of the Khasi tribe. Going back to the original vision and picking up the threads they left behind, the Bethany Sisters in collaboration with the Diocesan Fathers are determined to re-focus their attention towards the pastoral care for the Khasi Community especially through faith formation and education.



During the pandemic and strict lockdown, sisters travelled to six interior Khasi villages and distributed the food commodities to the families. The people least expected it and yet it came as a timely help. They received the ration with so much of appreciation and gratitude. If that was to respond to their physical hunger, the sisters also took care of their spiritual thirst. During the Marian Rosary months of May and October, Sisters joined the Holy Cross Parish community for the common Online Rosary and sustained the faith of the people. Since the family visits and visits to the sick and the dying was not possible, Sisters counseled the people with conference calls and suggested ways and means to make people keep safe. Once the situation was a bit normal, Sisters in batches once again visited the Khasi villages together with the Bethany Lay Associates and Priests at the Parish which boosted their sense of belonging to the common fold.

Then the focus of Bethany was on the future hope of the Khasi community by ensuring quality education to their children despite the pandemic constraints. On-line classes for the children was very much impossible due to the Network problems in the village set up. Besides, being many children in a family, parents could not afford to provide a smart phone each and some illiterate parents could not support the children for updating their notes and Online learning. Therefore a Khasi Hostel Students' Parents Meeting was organized in Sept. 2021, along with the Fathers in the Parish. As an outcome, the Children who were otherwise lost in the remote villages were brought back to the hostels and Offline recuperative classes were arranged for them. To our dismay, we realized the serious damage the pandemic has done to our children, and so to their parents as the students had forgotten all that was taught in the years past.

Starting afresh with such students was a big challenge that the Sisters faced. However, with our constant watchfulness and accompaniment children responded joyfully and learnt systematically and we had the joy of seeing them coming up with the help of the Hostel Wardens, Sisters and Fathers. We all worked as one team. Thus these days there is once again so much of life and joy in the campus with the presence of our children.

Some children were also helped to make their civil identity cards to avail minority scholarships and a few have successfully applied for the same. Providing scope for the higher education for students who have successfully done their studies in our institutions was another great concern which needs to be realized responsibly. Making our hostel ministry relevant, a space is recently created at the Holy Cross Girls Hostel for tribal girl students of Higher Secondary classes in order to benefit from the quality education of Holy Cross Hr Sec School Silchar.

As a fruit of our shared dream with the Barak valley Administration of Aizawl diocese, in the year 2021, six Khasi girls and one boy have taken admission in Grace Nursing Academy Bangalore, for a degree in Nursing or Diploma in Health Assistance, with the support of Holy Cross School and Grace Nursing Academy. It's truly satisfying to see them blooming with dreams for life. The diocesan schools in the region have thus set a target of educating 50 Khasi students as health professionals by the year 2035. Trusting in the providence of God, the Bethany Sisters hope to sustain more lives of the people dear to their hearts.

Sr Teresa Martis BS
(Principal at Holy Cross H S School)
Holy Family Convent, Silchar

MAMIT MISSION - THE FRAGRANT PETALS

In spite of the Pandemic, lockdown and strict Covid restrictions prevailing, our mission was round the clock at Mamit. This was possible through the dedicated work of our sisters and staff. The 2 main programmes undertaken here are- a) Targeted interventions related to IDUs under MSACS (Mizoram State AIDS Control Society) Project, and, b) Solace Home for the destitute women.

BETHANY TARGETED INTERVENTIONS



Staff of MSACS Project

29 staff are involved in this project working for the Injecting drug users (IDU) both at the office and at the field level. Sisters along with the Project Manger imparted timely training and guidance for the smooth working so that the clients are not deprived of their services. We conducted trainings for the Out Reach Workers (ORW), nurses, Peer Educators (PE). There was also MPSE training (Mapping and Population size estimation) for the staff after which the staff were engaged in survey of the villages. We conducted Advocacy meeting in 2 of the villages for better networking with the village leaders and implementation of project objectives.

BETHANY SOLACE HOME

Swadhar Greh – this is under the Government Department of Women and Child Development to cater to the needs of children and women in distress in Mamit District. At the



A rehabilitated family

beginning of the year we had 4 inmates, now they are 10 inmates- 4 women and 6 children. There are 6 staff on the roll. Overall wellbeing of these women and children is looked after. They



Staff of Solace Home

are provided with good and nutrient food and personal needs. They were given literacy classes and awareness on AIDS and drug addiction. Everyday spiritual input, Recreational activities,

guidance and counseling, and medical care are provided for them. We had an inmate with POCSO case. She has been given counseling. We had to network with the Police department, CWC and the adoption centre as her case was under investigation. She has delivered a healthy baby and the baby has been handed over to the adoption centre as per her wish.

The inmates of Solace Home were filled with joy as they exhibited their talents on the occasion of Christmas programme where our sisters from two other communities i.e. St Theresa's and Mary Mount joined us.

SPECIAL EVENTS

i. Covid Relief Project - It was funded by the Congregation and was successfully implemented in Mamit District and Sihphir. At Mamit the beneficiaries (162 families of 7 villages) were provided with 6 chicks and 2 kg of chicken feed, each. Most of the families are poor depending on daily labor for their livelihood. The YMA and Village leaders helped us in locating the families and in the distribution of the chicks. Our staff of Bethany Solace Home were instrumental in the process. The beneficiaries were happy and delighted to receive this help for their families as it will serve as a sure means of livelihood for them.

ii. Awareness on Cancer – We organized awareness on Cancer especially for women, funded by Sister Doctor's Forum of India (SDFI). Around 35 people gathered for the same. The resource persons- Ms Lalnunhlimi from Tobacco Control Department, Mamit District, explained various issues on cancer in women particularly with regard to habits related to the people in Mizoram.

Sr Dr Prema Misquith BS
(Director- Bethany MSACS Project)
Bethany Convent, Mamit

'MARY MOUNT' AIZAWL REACH OUT

The team of sisters at Mary Mount Convent and Christ the King Cathedral Aizawl Prison Ministry unit had the forethought of celebrating Easter 2021 at the Central Jail, Mizoram. Sr Irene Therese delivered the Easter message based on the Word of God to the inmates of the jail. A festive meal was served to the inmates and prison guards.

Many activities followed in the month of November to render Pastoral care. The Sisters took the lead to bless nine cemeteries accompanying the Priests in various localities of the Parish. Before the Feast of Christ the King, the Catholic children from different villages were trained and catechized by Sr. Irene Therese and Sr. Veronica Kimtei preparing them for their First Communion and Confirmation. 56 Children received the First Communion, and other 60 Confirmation, on the Feast of Christ the King, First Advent Sunday and Christmas vigil.



As we all know, the political situation of Myanmar has gone from bad to worse.

Thousands of civilians from Myanmar are given refuge by the Mizoram State. In the midst of this humanitarian crisis, Sr. Veronica



Kimtei accompanied by Fr. Paul Suante, Parish Priest of Sihphir, had visited the Refugee camp at Champhai Holy Cross Old School. Donations, mostly warm clothes, and dry rations, collected by the Sacred Heart Church Tlangnuam, Women Association and the Bethany Champions were distributed to the refugees-who were about 80 persons from 14 families. It was a grace-filled moment to see their expression of gratitude, on the one hand, and heart-wrenching to listen to their sad story on the other.

Sr. Irene Therese gave a One Day Retreat at St. Mary's Parish Electric Veng Aizawl for Children and Teenagers who were preparing to receive the First Communion and Confirmation. Around 100 of them were present for the Retreat.

On the feast of St Stephen, 26 Dec, 38 Altar-servers took oaths during the Mass. After the Holy Eucharist, there was a short felicitation followed by short plays based on the life of their patron saint- St John Berchmans. The best performances were



given prizes. Refreshments were served by the Cathedral Sunday School Board. The prizes were sponsored by the Sunday School Board of Sacred Heart Church, Tlangnuam.

Sr Irene Therese BS
Mary Mount Convent, Aizawl

INITIATION TO BETHANY'S LIFE - 'COME & SEE'

11th September, 2021 was a special day for Silchar Province, and in particular to Madonna Convent Kolasib. 17 candidates from 6 states - Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram were initiated to 'Come-and-See' Programme. Sr Mary Naulak, the Provincial delegate, received



them to Bethany and entrusted them to the care of Sr Therese Zothanpari, the Candidates In-Charge. 2 more Candidates, belonging to Garo (from Meghalaya) and Gujarati community, joined on 1st October, 2021.

The Programme began with an hour of Prayer with the theme, "I have called you by name, you are mine". The Candidates entered the Chapel with a lighted lamp each and offered themselves to the Lord placing their lamps on the altar. Sr Therese Zothanpari welcomed the candidates along with the

community members. The Sisters enacted the Call of Samuel from the Bible. Sr Mary Naulak, the Provincial Delegate, addressed the candidates, with her thought-provoking message, saying: "You are called by God. Listen to Him attentively and discover Him, love Him during this period of Formation, and- Be like Jesus". Then they were given a blessed cross to wear. Felicitation and fellowship meal followed.

Sr Therese Zothanpari BS
'Come & see' Directress
Madonna Convent, Kolasib

MEETING THE DIVINE WITHIN

We the junior sisters of Silchar Province coming from different communities gathered in the Provincial House, Silchar for 3 days' recollection beginning on the eve of 27.10.2021. We were warmly welcomed, and were guided by Sr Surekha BS the Coordinator for Formation and Junior Directress.



The recollection was a blend of reflections, sharing and discussions of various topics in line with the theme. At the very outset Sr Surekha explained to us the theme 'Rooted in Christ to build Eucharistic Communities and Human Fraternity' which is also the theme of the XVII General Chapter. She spoke to us as to how we are to be rooted in Christ by the integration of our religious vows and community living.

The soul-searching questions posed before us created a burning desire to re-commit ourselves to our Divine Spouse. The sessions helped us to be aware of our stagnant areas and grow in freedom. The heart-touching online talk of Sr. Mariette BS on the relevance of religious life, posed a challenge to live our Consecrated Life with courage, conviction and diligence.

Sr. Dominica Siamliani & Sr. Josyna Paocine
Bethany Convent Study Center, Shillong

SEEKING THE TREASURE JESUS

The 7th of July 2021 was a memorable day for us, the 24 candidates from Eastern Province, and the then 'Northeast' Province which is presently formed into Guwahati and Silchar Provinces, as it was our initiation day into Sacred Heart Pre-novitiate Lumding, Assam. Sr Lucious, the Provincial Superior of Silchar Province initiated us into the Pre-novitiate in the presence of Sr Sandhya, the Provincial Superior of Guwahati Province. Sr Carmine and Sr Leena Serrao the Procurators of Guwahati and Silchar Province respectively, and the community sisters of Avila Convent, Lumding were present on the occasion.

From Silchar and Guwahati Provinces, we are 14 and from Eastern Province we are ten in number. The theme of the day was 'Jesus the precious



treasure of my life'. There was a smile on every face as we held the lighted candles and walked decisively to the altar of God as a sign of our self-giving. During the initiation, Sr Lucious exhorted us to keep Jesus as our only treasure in our heart and make Him our supreme goal.

After the Initiation prayer we were felicitated by the Provincial Superiors, our formators -Sr Mary Diki and Sr Meryline Khongjoh, and the Community sisters.

Anjuna Suchiang & Judith Man San Kim Pre-Novices
Sacred Heart Pre-Novitiate, Lumding

THE PRE-NOVICES AT LUMDING SPEAK ...

ALLURING TIMES WITH THE LORD

We the 24 Pre-Novices of Sacred Heart Pre-Novitiate Lumding, Assam want to say, that the time we had being alone with God, from 3rd to 8th Dec. 2021 revealed much to us. Sr. Bridget BS, Provincial Councillor, Eastern Province accompanied us in this special journey of the retreat.

We had unique experiences of God during our personal prayers. The unconditional love of God and His faithfulness allured us! It is God who has called us to be with Him and to belong to Him. Each day we longed for the times to see Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. We were assured of God's presence leading us to go ahead in following Jesus.

We are grateful to Bethany for all the opportunities provided for our growth. Sr. Mary Diki and Sr. Meryline, our directresses, continue to support us in our search for the Divine.

Priyanka Daimari & Nili
Pre-Novices, Sacred Heart Pre-Novitiate, Lumding

LEARN MORE AND GAIN MORE

It was our privilege to attend five days classes on 'Psychosexual integration' from 27.11.2021 to 02.12.2021 by Sr Bridget BS, Provincial Councillor, Eastern Province. The five days were full of moments of learning and gaining for our life, as we came to understand more about our sexuality.

Human sexuality that we were taught in the past and in the present has broadened our understanding, from time to time. We come to know the importance of healthy sexuality for every human person. Having taught about psychosexuality we were enlightened that we need to be grateful to God for creating us as we are. These classes will help us to integrate our life every day.

Anjana Suchiang & Evelyne Khonglah
Pre-Novices, Sacred Heart Pre-Novitiate, Lumding

DELVING INTO OUR SPIRITUALITY

With great joy and burning zeal in our hearts, we the Pre-Novices were privileged to have five days of classes on Charism and Spirituality from 4.10.2021 to 8.11.2021 by Sr Surekha BS, the Provincial Councillor, Silchar province.

Those days were a moment of learning and gaining knowledge about the Charism and Spirituality of Bethany. We were enthused to increase our faith and appreciate our spirituality. The life of Mother Mary inspired us to live an exemplary life by accepting the will of God and to be strong in faith in times of difficulties and temptations. We were inspired by the missionary zeal of St Therese our second Patroness and to do every small act with great love. In the lives of Mary and Martha of Bethany we learnt how to combine contemplation and action, and be committed to the person of Jesus. Fr. Founder's life inspired us to be compassionate towards the needy.



Therefore we are called to live a life of holiness, rooted in the love of God and in creative fidelity to our Charism. We are inspired to reach out to the poorest of the poor in different ways and bring God's love to the lonely and sad.

Jeneth & Marshalin
Pre-Novices, Sacred Heart Pre-Novitiate, Lumding

A SECOND BETHANY HOME AT MANIPUR

It has been some few years of search and aspiration to

find a second house in Manipur in the Archdiocese of Imphal. The infant Province Silchar rejoiced on 13th November 2021 in the portals of Sacred Heart Campus at Hungpung, Manipur. It was indeed



a historic event as we witnessed the erection of the 18th Community in Hungpung, Ukhru Dt, Manipur. Sr Lucious the Provincial Superior of Silchar Province installed Sr Philomina Secundas as the first Superior of Bethany Convent Hungpung with Sr Therou Marina Pao and Sr Catherine Pao as other members. The welcome gesture by the Tangkhul Community made a great impression on us. Moved by the Charism of the Institute and spirit of the Founder



we would cater to education ministry. The place brings a lot of scope for imparting knowledge and Faith to the people.

During the Solemn Eucharist Rev Fr John Kashiphrii Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Imphal prayed blessings on the Sisters and blessed the house too. He urged them to bear witness to Christ through their life, in collaboration with other Religious sisters. The Eucharist was concelebrated by Rev Fr Gabriel Mayopam the Parish Priest, and two other fathers, religious sisters of SABS and SJSJ congregation.

Indeed it was a red-letter day in the life of the Congregation. We are deeply indebted to Sr Rose Celine the Superior General and her Councillors for their constant support and guidance. Thanks to Sr Lucious our Provincial Superior and Councillors, for their efforts to make this day possible. The day ended with a deep sense of gratitude to God.

Sr Philomina Secundas BS
Bethany Convent, Hungpung, Manipur

MAKING CHRISTMAS REAL!

AT MAMIT : IN SEARCH OF THE SHEEP



Christmas brings with it plenitude of joy and blessings and sharing it with others makes it doubled. The sisters at Bethany Bazarveng Mamit, came up with an idea to celebrate Christmas with a difference this time. As the people were worried and troubled with the increase in Covid cases, we wanted to bring joy and put an extra smile on the faces of the people at Bawngua village. This village has 10 neophyte families (Catholic), who are economically poor. They depend on jhoom cultivation for survival.



As we entered the village few of them readily welcomed us and the rest joined quickly as they were busy with their works. We were delighted to see around 24 of them present including children. We spent time being with

them, listening to their stories, teaching them basics of Faith. At the end of half a day of our interaction with them, some of them were able to reproduce what they learnt. They were gifted with a small token each.

Sr Lucy Uchoi taught them carols in their own language and all of us joined in singing which added to their joy. We distributed essential food items to each of the families and clothes to Children. We were glad to see their enthusiasm and interest. It was exciting to see that they were too generous in sharing what they had, the fruit of their labour- the garden produce. Thanks to Sr Reshma for this creative idea of evangelizing the villages with a difference.

Sr Prema Misquith BS
Bethany Convent, Mamit

CHRISTMAS AMIDST THE PANDEMIC

The sisters of Madonna convent Kolasib went to share the Christmas joy with people of different villages around Kolasib. It was like Mary in the Scripture sharing the joy with Elizabeth.



We visited the less privileged people of the far-flung villages, like Kawnpui, Hortoki Thingdawl and more.

The limitations of the pandemic did not deter us from seeing our people. 'Be born in us incarnate love'- this message kept ringing in our ears as we ourselves tried to bring Christ to the people through our presence. 'How can one become Mary in this 21st century?

Do we know the pain of being Mary?' we kept pondering on these words as we reached out to the far away villages and celebrated the Eucharist with them.

Sr Shanthi BS
Madonna convent, Kolasib

EMPOWERING THE YOUNG

On 23rd December the death anniversary of our Father Founder RFC Mascarenhas a pre-Christmas celebration was organized especially for the members of 'Bethany Champions' and the Little Way Association. As many as 70 children turned up on the occasion. Sr. Veronica Kimtei the animator of the



Champions and of Little Way Association played the host.

Sr. Irene Therese the animator of the community gave a talk on Fr. Founder. She spoke on the responsibilities of the Bethany

Champions and of Little Way Association members, and the expectations the people have from them. She encouraged the young students to do their best in exercising leadership and service. Sr. Sylvia, the headmistress, gave a Christmas message calling them to spread the gifts of love, joy and peace to all.

Meals were served to all who had attended. Campfire, carol singing, and exchange of Christmas gifts were the highlights of the event.

Sr Veronica Kimtei BS
Mary Mount Convent, Aizawl

CHRISTMAS WITH BETHANY PROMOTIONAL SCHOOLS

On 23rd December, the 61st death anniversary of Father Founder RFC, a Christmas event was organised for the tiny students of the Bethany Promotional Schools(BPS), Silchar. The programme was held at Holy Cross School Auditorium Silchar. It was made colourful for the sake of the little children who otherwise have their classes in small rooms at the slum locations. BPS is a special reach-out programme of Bethany Social Service Centre (BSSC) Silchar. There are 6 BPS centers in

the slum areas of Silchar to provide mainstreaming education to children of the poor and the migrants.



Out of 108 children on roll, 60 children attended the event; the rest could not come as the life in these slums is quite uncertain for the poor migrants especially during pandemic. Teachers and the staff of BSSC under the leadership of Sr Silvia Daphrou the Director of BSSC, in collaboration with the Bethany Sisters at Holy Cross School Silchar arranged the event. The Chief guest Dr. Devarati Ray, through her words encouraged the little children to grow in the joy of life. Sr Clara BS the Province Coordinator for Social work presented the Christmas message. The event was very colourful cheered by Christmas songs, dances & skit by the students, as well as Bethany candidates.



The legendary Santa Claus merrily danced with the children to the tune of jingle bells. Those students who had excelled in drawing competition at Children's Day were awarded prizes.

The contributors were many, to make the children happy. We need to make a special mention of one of our past students,



Ms Priyanki Das who along with her friends- Dipanjan Purkayastha and others, donated some study material and cake to 100 poor children of the BPS. This kind gesture of sharing with the underprivileged children was in memory of

their late friend Arnab Das, who had died quite young.

For most of the children who entered the Holy Cross School campus for the first time, that too on a celebration, was a 'dream come true' experience.

The Staff reporter

From the Archives

SILCHAR PROVINCE COMES TO BIRTH

"Let Bethany grow, flower and bear fruit" had been our constant prayer during the centenary year of the Congregation. As if in answer to this prayer, Bethany got its 10th administrative unit - the newly created Silchar Province on the 6th of August, 2020. During a meaningful Eucharistic celebration Sr. Joy BS, the delegate of the Superior General and the outgoing Provincial Superior of the erstwhile Northeast Province, read out the decree of erection of Silchar Province and solemnly installed Sr. Lucious BS as the first Provincial Superior of this new Province. Sr. Clara Mendonca BS, Sr. Surekha BS, Sr. Harsha BS and Sr. Mary Naulak BS, took oath as first, second, third and fourth councilors respectively.

In the absence of Most Rev. Stephen Rotluanga CSC, the Bishop of Aizawl Diocese, Rev. Fr. Joachim Walder, the Episcopal Vicar of Barak Valley Deanery of Aizawl Diocese, officiated at the Eucharist with five other priests concelebrating with him. A short felicitation followed.

The new Silchar Province had 17 communities at the start, and now with its presence at Hungpung Manipur, it is with 18



communities, spread across 6 states of northeast India. May this new shoot of Bethany be an effective channel of God's reign!

Sr Mary Naulak BS
Bethany Provincial House, Silchar

FIRST PROVINCE DAY AT SILCHAR PROVINCE

Before the day of Pentecost 2021, the Province day of Silchar Province, the 23rd May, all the Sisters and Candidates at the Provincial house including Holy Family Convent, held nine days of Novena with appropriate themes. It was befitting for us to celebrate Pentecost with earnestness as Silchar Province named after the Holy Spirit.

All the communities of the Province had a modest celebration in tune with the context as the times were marked with covid clouds, with nine days of novena, a meaningful prayer hour and a Holy Eucharist. The unique point of the preparation for this great event was the night vigil in all communities, on the day preceding Pentecost, extending between 6.00 pm and 12.00 midnight, with Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

At the Provincial House Silchar, the Sisters young and old kept up the 6 hours adoration in a deep spirit of awaiting for the 'Pentecost'. The Provincial team, the Community sisters and a good number of sisters on transit, the Candidates and the little Hostellites, added depth to the mood of the vigil. The naming of the Province after the Holy Spirit in itself was a factor to

exude earnestness in imploring the Spirit to fall afresh on the entire province, and the Congregation. The common hour of shared prayer led by the junior sisters was an uplifting moment for all. At the different hours of the vigil, the special needs of the Church, the country and the entire world in a time of anxiety caused by the pandemic, were presented to God, that the Spirit may Heal, Restore and Renew the Face of Creation!

On the Day proper, it was the feeling of the twin celebration, the celebration of Pentecost liturgically, and Province feast day. The celebration was marked with solemn Eucharist celebrated by Fr Gabriel Pinto, and the other festivity. At the greeting, Sr Clara the Asst Provincial Superior shared the message denoting the significance of the event. This celebration for the first time as one Province imbued everyone with readiness to be led and guided by the Holy Spirit, in the leadership of Sr Lucious the first Provincial Superior and her Council.

Let the Spirit enable the Province to conquer newer heights of sanctity and mission!

Sr Josyna Paocine BS
Bethany Provincial House, Silchar

FIRST PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY OF SILCHAR PROVINCE

The first provincial assembly of the newly erected Silchar Province was held from 29th to 31st January 2021 on the theme "Spirit-led communities – a Call of the time" with the view of planning, coordinating and evaluating the life and mission in Province. The First house of the Assam mission-the Holy Family Convent which is also holding the new Provincial house was the venue. The total 27 participants of the assembly included the Provincial team, 17 superiors, 1 pre-novice directress and 3 Heads of Schools.

After the opening prayer and a symbolic welcome, was the address of the first Provincial Superior Sr Lucious. She stressed on the significance of the theme of the assembly. Quoting Mt 20:26, she called on the members to imitate Jesus' way of



leading, and to make leadership in the community a shared venture.

The various input sessions followed. Sr. Clara Mendonca presented on 'Province vision- an elucidation', in connection with the assembly theme, relating to current societal issues that call our attention. Sr Surekha spoke on 'Role of Holy Spirit in Religious Communities Today', while Sr Mary Naulak gave a brief explanation to 'Fratelli tutti' the recent encyclical of Pope Francis.

Dealing on the assembly theme 'Spirit led communities – a call in the time' Sr Joy BS the former provincial superior of North East Province and the resource person, elaborated on the theme-

Community as Mission. Drawing reflections on the Bethany Anthem she called on the community leaders to make the communities homes of faith, hope, love and joy. She also explained elaborately on the Revised Formation Ratio of the Congregation.

There were presentations of Community reports by superiors. The Province coordinators for apostolates presented their reports too; Sr Harsha on Education, Sr Mary Naulak on Pastoral & Vocation, Sr Clara on Social & Health, and Sr Surekha on Formation. Sr Leena Serrao the Province Procurator gave a brief report of the temporal administration

Action plans were drawn up by the assembly members for their communities. A common action plan for all the communities was synthesized with respect to priority areas, facilitated by Sr Clara. In-depth spirituality, spirit-led community life and compassionate service were the focus of the plan in the centenary year. Further there was a brief discussion on the upcoming centenary celebration in the province, guided by Sr Lucious. A short session was set apart for sharing on the highlights of the Enlarged Council Meeting Dec.2020; Sr Lucious and Sr Clara shared in brief.

In conclusion, Sr Lucious exhorted the superiors to attend to the ongoing formation, to foster single minded devotion to Consecration, and enhance common spirit in the communities.

Sr Stella Mathew BS
For Bethany Provincial House, Silchar

*You are ever a part of our Lives...
Dear Sr Neritta!*



Sr M Neritta BS
15.10.1949 - 03.08.2021

Cheerful countenance, gracious smile
Sr. Neritta, you attracted everyone
Joyful, prayerful and large at heart
With good rapport, charitable, kind and smart

Gentle manners, friendly nature
Loving formator, efficient teacher
Spared time for catechesis and pastoral works
Committed missionary in all the tasks

So quick was your home going
Shattered are we in your departing
Adieu, dear Sister, pray for us from above
You are remembered with much love

Adieu till we meet again!
- **Sisters of Bethany Silchar Province**