

PRAYER | SOLIDARITY | MISSION

NOVEMBER 2023



comunio

**A CCBI INITIATIVE TO ASSIST
THE CHURCH IN RURAL INDIA**



"A strong sense of **mission**
gives meaning to
a missionary's life."

Rev. Dr. Christopher Vimalraj



"A STRONG SENSE OF **MISSION** GIVES MEANING TO A MISSIONARY'S LIFE."



Recently, Fr. Gangula Vignan Das, the Associate Director of *Communio*, and I visited a mission station in Arunachal Pradesh. Monigong is about a 15 hour journey from the last railway station of India. Three Capuchin priests serve 19 hamlets in this mission parish. The parish is dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi. There is neither electricity supply nor mobile service providers in this part of the country. The rooms are very basic, made of bamboo stems and wood. The walls were no thicker than an inch, and the roof was made up of tin sheets. Numerous cracks in the bamboo walls allow cold drafts to filter through the room. The toilets and washrooms were about 30 meters away from the house, a tin shack with a roof.

The kitchen is the place where we gathered to speak around the fire in the middle of the room without a chimney. A drive through the village allowed us a glimpse into the life and culture of this remote village near the international border with China. The locals subsisted on locally grown rice, vegetables, and dairy. I was deeply moved by the stark poverty in which these priests lived among the people and the sacrifices they made every day to proclaim the Gospel.

We were taken to a construction site of a new chapel dedicated to St. Clare in Taklingtak. This project is partly funded by *Communio*. The members of this small Christian community welcomed us with great joy, dancing and singing. The hospitality and attention that we received from that parishioners were remarkable.





The Capuchin fathers have been in this Parish for the last five years. Before that, it was a mission station served for over 70 years by the MSFS priests from Tato, which is a slightly larger village. In 2012, Fr. Shijo Paul MSFS, a 29-year-old priest, died when the Bolero he was driving skidded off the road while negotiating a narrow patch of a rain-battered road. The challenging roads were in stark contrast to the awe-inspiring landscapes, the soaring mountains, the cascades of the waterfalls, and the cool mist.

When it was time to return, I was overcome with profound sadness. I carried a heavy burden of guilt for taking so much for granted, the missionaries who laboured fearlessly and joyfully, despite personal sacrifice, risks and difficulties. As I gazed upon the mountains reaching toward the heavens, I whispered a prayer for the missionary priests I had the privilege of meeting. I was haunted by the question: why do these missionaries go to the hinterland at such great personal cost and sacrifice to proclaim the Gospel?

I found relief to my questions on our return journey. We were able to join Archbishop Thomas Menampampil, who said that a strong sense of mission gives meaning to a missionary's life. One can endure any hardship as long as there is a sense of purpose in what one does. These missionaries also find immediate results in the joy of the people they assist, which motivates them to travel long distances to teach catechism or celebrate Mass and the sacraments. Beyond all this is the grace of God.

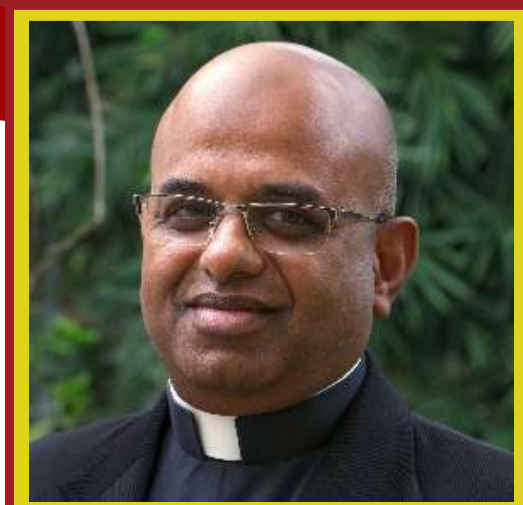


***“Glorious God on high, illuminate my heart.
Give me true faith, certain hope, Perfect charity.
Grant me profound humility, give me understanding
and knowledge, So that I may always joyfully serve
your commandments.” - St Francis Assisi***



Rev. Dr. Christopher Vimalraj

Associate Deputy Secretary General, CCBI
Director, CCBI Bioethics Forum
Archdiocese of Bangalore





India's only female Director of Communio



THE MISSION JOURNEY OF REV. SR. NEELAM XESS SCSC



Sr. Neelam Xess, India's only female Director of Communion from its 132 Latin dioceses, shares in her own words her journey and mission experience in Pastoral Apostolate.

I am Sister Neelam Xess. I belong to the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, Central Province, Hazaribag, Jharkhand.

As a young girl, I was drawn to the life style and hard work of the Holy Cross sisters—in particular their life with the people—visiting families, praying with them and sharing in their joys and sorrows. The sisters would take Catechism classes in the schools, villages and parishes. And I was so attracted to their habit and the Cross they wore that I had a great desire to do the same—which as I do today.

I completed my metric in 1984 and I wanted to join the Congregation and to serve the people just like the sisters served. But being the youngest child and loved by my family, I was not permitted. But after my graduation in 1987, with the blessing of my family, I joined the Holy Cross Congregation, taking my first vows in 1991 in Hazaribag.

Since my first profession, I was appointed as a pastoral sister at Mahuadanr parish in Daltonganj Diocese. From 1991 to 1996, I contributed in pastoral apostolate through family visits, teaching Catechism in the village, mostly under the tree or in the village Chapel; preparing them for the Sacraments of first Holy Communion, Confession and Confirmation. Besides these, I was engaged in adult catechesis, marriage preparation seminar, youth ministry, on-going faith formation and Sunday catechism classes. I would stay in the village for two to three days and some times for a week. Travel was challenging, as it was limited to on foot or bicycle. But God's grace, I was able to continue my apostolate—even without much knowledge and experience about the pastoral ministry. The people were eager to listen to the word of God; and they were very generous. Their welcoming hearts encouraged me to do mission joyfully.





In 1996, I was transferred to Holy Cross Patparia, Ambikapur, Chattishgarh and there I was given the responsibility to work in the Diocesan Catechetical Centre. During the nine years of my service, I completed a one-year diploma course on Catechetics at Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore.

From 2005 to 2007, I was an Assistant Mistress of Postulants and a Vocation Promoter until 2008 in the Holy Cross Training centre, Hazaribag and Ranchi Burdwan compound.

On July 3rd 2009, Late Rt. Rev. Charles Soreng, S.J. Bishop of Hazaribag appointed me as a Catechetical Director, Crusveer Director and SCC / BEC co-ordinator in the Diocese of Hazaribag, where I render my service until today. I remain indebted to the Bishops of Hazaribag Late Rt. Rev Charles Soreng SJ and Rt. Rev. Anand JoJo DD.

During the past years of my mission, I have experienced the deep Love of God. I have found Jesus' hand in all my activities; even when I was down with severe pain due to diffused disc bulge at L1-L2 that caused a narrowing of spine. Those two discs were removed and two screws are put to support the plate. This is indeed the miracle of God's healing power in my life to continue His mission.

The words of our co-foundress Bl. Mother Maria Scherer, "With God and for God we can do many things" encourage me in my mission. I deeply believe that only with God, I can accomplish mission. Today I am happy to give my life for the people.

In 2022, I was appointed by Rt. Rev. Anand JoJo Bishops of Hazaribag as the Diocesan Director of Communio India, Hazaribag Diocese. The Communio India project is a great support for financial and spiritual help. I could organize and monitor various activities for the entire diocese, vicariate, deanery and parish levels, including building up of a Synodal church, women empowerment, rectification of marriage and the above-mentioned programs. I am extremely grateful to Communio for supporting the Hazaribag diocese to materialize our vision "Towards Building up of a Synodal church based on the true faith, love and charity of our Lord Jesus" in this most challenging time.

I remain grateful to my Provincial Superiors Rev Sr. Britto Madassery SCSC, Rev. Sr. Agnes Beck SCSC, Rev. Sr. Vijaya Minj SCSC, Rev. Sr. Rosily Kolencherry SCSC and at present Rev. Sr. VeenaAkkal SCSC who trusted and entrusted me with this Pastoral ministry.

May God continue to bless all our effort and endeavours for His greater glory.

REV. SR. NEELAM XESSCSC
Directress, Communio, Diocese of Hazaribag.

ONGOING PROJECT



CONSTRUCTION OF A CHURCH AT TAKLINGTAK, MONIGONG PARISH

Communio is helping construct the church at Takingtak in Monigong parish under Itanagar diocese, which is one of the remotest and inaccessible places in the ranges of the Himalayas on the border with China. The Franciscans from OFM (Cap) are giving excellent pastoral service in that remote area. Envisioning to transform the old bamboo-built chapel and accommodate more faithful for worship with basic amenities.



COMMUNIO CATCH UP



COMMUNIO @ ST. JOHN'S REGIONAL SEMINARY, HYDERABAD

Fr. Vignan Das, Associate Director of Communio, presented a summary about Communio and its initiatives to about 100 seminarians at the St. John's Regional Seminary (Major), Ramanthapur, Hyderabad.

Ms. Anastasia Pinto and Ms. Angela Nayak briefly shared about their contribution as Communio collaborators. Following an audio-visual aid, Fr. Vignan Das shed light on the significance of Communio, and answered questions by the young seminarians. The presentation concluded with a note by Seminary Rector, Rev. Fr. Marreddy Kommareddy. The seminarians were also presented with Communio notepads and brochures.



PROJECTS SELECTION COMMITTEE (PSC) MEETING

The fourth Projects Selection Committee (PSC) meeting of Communio was held on 20th Sept 2023, at St. John's National Academy of Health Sciences, Bengaluru. Total 22 project applications were presented and PSC approved 18 project applications after carefully examining the objectives of each project.

IN GIVING WE RECEIVE!

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of the Church in India by your generous contribution.

COMMUNIO
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