

St. John Bosco Parish, Boko

St. John Bosco Parish, Boko is situated in the Kamrup district of Assam, on the National Highway 37, 62 kilometres away from Guwahati city. It is one of the most populous areas of the district. The people of the place are mostly from the tribal communities of Rabha, Boro and Garo. Most of them are agrarian and live by cultivating rice, oranges, pineapple, banana, bettlenut, aracknut, and rubber.

The catholic population of the parish is 2908 with 295 families spread across 25 villages. They are mostly from Garo community. There are others from Boro, Rabha, and Adivasi communities and a few from Assamese community.

The start of the mission centre at Boko can be traced back to the year 1984. Initially it was a sub-centre of the parish of Sonaighuli and served as a link between the catholic mission stations of Guwahati and Garo Hills. It started off with a school managed by the teachers with the timely assistance of fathers from Sonaighuli.

The surrounding area of the mission being one of the main centres of the Rabha community, it was hoped that greater emphasis would be given to the proclamation of the Gospel among them through an organized work in a parish setting. Fr. Bosco Minj SDB from Sonaighuli visited the place occasionally. He interacted with the people and searched for a plot of land for establishing the mission. Fr. Mario Porcu, the then parish priest of Sonaighuli initiated the process and bought the land. But there were many oppositions and hurdles. The land had no approach road and the people were non-cooperative. Finally the problems were settled by buying the land for the approach road. From 1986 onwards Fr. Bosco Minj SDB began residing in the place, giving attention to the educational and pastoral activities. The parish was officially established on 19 March 1993, and Fr. Mario Porcu was appointed the first parish priest. He spent his time and resources to reach out to the people and to improve their life situation. He purchased several plots of land for establishing mission centres. He has also constructed a number of bridges and culverts to improve conveyance in the villages.

In the beginning, Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians (MSMHC) from Sonaighuli parish collaborated with Boko mission for the missionary activities. Sr. Agnes Basumatary and Sr. Mollina Marak were the pioneers among them. In the year 1985 the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) arrived. Since their arrival, they collaborate with the pastoral and educational activities of the mission. They also had a dispensary through which they carried out health ministry, which was one of the crucial needs of the time. Eventually it was closed down as the public health sector improved.

The present parish priest is Fr. Joy Joseph Kachappilly SDB. He follows up the plans and programmes of the parish. The parish organizes pastoral activities with the help of meetings with the parish council, pious associations for men, women, youth and children. It undertakes regular

pastoral visits to the villages and organizes annual Sabhas and retreats. Besides these, it also conducts preparatory classes for first communion, confirmation and marriage.

The parish takes great care to look after the Christian communities scattered in the villages. It has an English Medium High School to cater to the educational needs of the children of the locality. Poor students are assisted with concession and scholarships. They are also helped in purchasing books and uniforms. The public has been supportive of the school since its establishment. The parish has two fide schools at Korebari and Gorbandha to cater to the elementary education of the children of the villages.

There is a steady growth in the number of Catholics. People have become friendly and appreciative of the services rendered. The Parish School is much sort after by the people. Education has played a vital role in bringing changes to the society. With the help of Bosco barefoot College, a centre for the development of the rural youth under Don Bosco Institute, employment rate has grown. Today, St. John Bosco Parish remains a blessing to the people with its varied services and programmes, influencing the lives of those it touches.