

## **St. Xavier's Parish, Changsari**

St. Xavier's Parish, Changsari is situated about 25 km away from Guwahati, in the district of Kamrup Rural. The area is surrounded by Muslims, Boros, and Assamese. Being an industrial belt it has people from other states of India as well. Most people are government employees, industrialists and traders. There are also Adivasis from North Lakimpur, who came as hired workers of construction companies.

### **Establishment of the Mission**

The start of the mission marks its humble beginning in 1998 with Fr. James Moolackatt from the Diocese of Kottayam, Kerala, staying in a rented house. Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil formally inaugurated the mission on 17 January 2001 and appointed Fr. James Moolackatt as the first Priest in-charge of the mission. A school was opened in the same year. Classes were held in a temporary bamboo shed with a few children from the neighbouring village. On 14 November 2001 Fr. Mathew Anchukandam, Financial Administrator of the Archdiocese, laid foundation stone for the school building. In the following year on 12 October Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil blessed the new school building in the presence of many parents, neighbours, priests, sisters, staff and students.

In the year 2005, during the term of Fr. Sijo MST, the Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod of Kolkata Province were invited by the Archbishop to open a convent to render their service. The Delegation Superior, Sr. Mercedes, responded to his invitation and opened the convent on 24 July 2005. Addressing the first members of the community on the day of the inauguration and blessing of the Convent, Archbishop Thomas said, "You are specially chosen to this particular place, to be the light for everyone. Start in your littleness and do great things by little way ... be filled with the spirit to transform the society."

The parish has 17 families belonging to different communities such as Adivasi, Boro, Garo, Telugu and Assamese. These are mostly working groups from factories, army and educational institutions. All of them are regular in the participation of Sunday Eucharist and other pious practices organized in the parish.

The sisters visit families, pray with them and give guidance. Devotion to St. Joseph and Sacred Heart of Jesus is imparted to all catholic families during the months of March and June by organizing special prayer gatherings. In the year 2015 the picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was blessed and installed in all houses consecrating the families to the Sacred Heart. The people are faithful to family prayer. They have an altar in their family where they place the Bible, Rosary, candle and Holy Water along with the picture of the Sacred Heart.

The parish's priority for imparting education is realized through its School. St. Xavier's Catholic High School, Changsari with its systematic and planned attempt does its best to bring about appropriate development and changes in the students. It gives emphasis for character formation,

thirst for knowledge, attainment of multifaceted skills and values. Though academic excellence is its major thrust, it provides a platform to the students to develop their individual talents in all spheres of life. The motto of the school challenges the students to be "committed to create a civilization of love, wisdom and peace."

The school begins every academic year with a meaningful prayer service invoking God's blessings upon the students along with the initiation ceremony of LKG students who write on the rice the first letter of the alphabet of English and Assamese helped by their Guru / respective teacher.

St. Xavier's approach to education is very much child-centred. The students are awarded by the Govt. of Assam for participating in the science inspiration award project for the Secondary and Higher Secondary Level. It had outstanding achievements during the past years especially in the HSLC Examination. The School organizes sports, cultural events, science exhibition, carrier guidance, human rights awareness and natural disaster management programme for the students.

The present strength of the school is 625. It has the history of having had the management by various religious congregations such as MST, SVD, OSST and priests from other dioceses. At present it is under the leadership of Fr. Joseph Olickal, who is the Principal. The recognition of the school is in process.

The parish has a day care centre, 'Mercy Home' for the differently-abled children. It renders assistance to the less fortunate children by bringing them from their own homes daily by vehicle and providing them physiotherapy and basic education. Some of the children are trained to be self-dependent, while others are taught to read and write. The centre has trained staff for physiotherapy, occupational therapy and other developmental and functional activities. It has the record of having improved the physical mobility of many such children.

The parish assists widows and extends support to orphan children by giving sponsorship for their education. It has a hostel, where children from different faith are cared.

The Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod collaborate in carrying out the various activities of the parish such as pastoral ministry, education, hostel and care of the differently-abled, widows and orphans.

The centre with its varied pastoral and education ministries has been able to bring about substantial changes in the lives of many. Being close to the national highway the centre hopes to gain greater possibilities for growth and expansion.

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