

## **St. Vincent De Paul, Derapathar**

St. Vincent De Paul, Derapathar is situated 215 kilometres away from Guwahati. People of the place are agrarian. Their main cultivation is sugarcane, wheat and paddy.

### **Origin of Catholicism**

The genesis of Catholicism in Derapathar goes back to the year 1970, when Fr. G. K. Prakash toured the area which was named Derapathar No. I, II, III, and IV. His record speaks of having found 1400 refugee families who were supported by the Assam government to get settled there. They had migrated from Bangladesh during the partition in 1971 and had been in Matia refugee camp of Goalpara, Assam. Among them were 160 Garo Catholics, 30 Garo Baptists and 3 non-Christian families. There were also others: Dalu, Hajong, Koch and Bengalis. It is also reported that, Fr. Prakash contacted some of the boys from Dalu community and encouraged them to gain education. Later, a few of them received Catholic faith.

Fr. Prakash while serving at the Hojai mission had been visiting Derapathar mission regularly and looking after the spiritual needs of the Catholics. In 1974, Derapathar mission was handed over to Lumding parish. It was in 1988 Fr. John Mulangothra started the Don Bosco School in Derapathar to avail education to the children of the surrounding villages. In 2004 the mission was returned to Hojai parish for its pastoral care.

### **Creation of the Mission Centre**

Seeing the religious fervour, strong faith of the Catholics and territorial vastness the Archdioceses decided to form an independent centre in Derapathar. In a simple ceremony held on 2 August 2006, Archbishop Thomas Mennampampil declared Derapathar as an independent mission centre and installed Fr. Basil CM as priest in-charge, who stayed on in the mission to care for its flock.

The newly formed Derapathar mission had around 600 Catholics spread out in 32 villages within the radius of 32 kilometres. Fr. Prakash undertook the construction of Derapathar village church in 1993 and completed after four years, blessed and inaugurated in 1997. The church was spacious and had a simple Assamese style structure made out of bamboos, planks and wood.

### **Erection of the Parish**

On 27 September 2008, the mission centre was raised to the status of a parish and entrusted its administration to the Congregation of the Missions (Vincentians). The parish is dedicated to the patronage of St. Vincent De Paul.

Presently, the parish has 566 Garos, 32 Adivasis and 2 Boro families. The present parish priest is Fr. Sanjay Kha Kha.

The Congregation of the Daughters of St. Thomas (DST) joined the mission on 23 March 2010. They collaborate in carrying out the various pastoral activities of the parish, especially to impart quality education to students and to follow up the faithful through family visits, meetings and animation programmes.

### **Conclusion**

The parish has laid the foundation for the formation of a fervant Catholic community. It has been instrumental in uniting the diverse communities living in the vicinity. The quality education and the pastoral care extended from the centre have helped them to change their outlook and to work for their better future.

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