

## **Christ the Bearer of Good News Cathedral, Dispur**

From the time the Government of Assam decided to make Dispur its Capital, the place drew attention from all corners leading to noticeable change with rapid growth and development in all aspects. With the increase in population, there was mushrooming of housing complexes, educational institutions, hospitals and business establishments in the area. Situated along the National Highway that connects all the Northeastern states its growth is phenomenal.

Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil looked for a suitable plot of land in Dispur to establish a parish knowing well the importance of the place. An ideal piece of land was located at Rukminigaon near sixth mile alongside G.S. Road, and it was bought by the Archdiocese on 20 March 1996.

The genesis of the cathedral parish at Rukminigaon, Dispur, can be traced back to the time when OFM Cap Congregation was entrusted with the charge of its establishment. As a result of the Archbishop's negotiations with the Provincial of OFM Cap, Fr. Mathew Paikada, the congregation took up the responsibility of the centre for two years. On 22 December 1996, the Archbishop declared the erection of an 'Independent Pastoral Care Centre' at Rukminigaon and appointed Rev. Fr. Joseph Zacharias OFM Cap as the Priest in-charge of the new centre, and on 1 January 1997 he blessed and inaugurated it in the presence of several priests, religious and faithful.

In the initial years the Holy Mass was celebrated in a shed temporarily built in the campus. The demarcated area of the parish extended up to the railway line going to Dimapur in the north, Kahilipara in the south, Jorabat in the east and Rajgarh road in the west.

On 12 February 1997, a small presbytery was built and blessed by the Archbishop. Fr. Joseph Zacharias OFM Cap was transferred on 2 April 1997, and Fr. Peter Celestine OFM Cap replaced him. It was during his term, on 26 September 1997, the centre was elevated to the status of a parish and he became its first parish priest. The event marks the dawn of another parish in the city of Guwahati.

In May 1998, as Fr. Peter Celestine was appointed Bishop of Jammu, Fr. Sebastian Manayanikal OFM Cap took over as parish priest. At the completion of the two years' service by the congregation of OFM Cap, the parish was taken over by the Archdiocese. In April 1999 Fr. Acharya Nazarine was appointed as the parish priest. On his transfer in April 2003, Fr. Thomas Ekka took his place and later Fr. A. Victor administered the parish. As the Archdiocese faced shortage of priests, the congregation of the Missionaries of St. Francis De Sales (MSFS) was entrusted with the temporal administration of the parish. Hence, on 4 September 2005 Fr. Mathew Puthumana took charge as the parish priest. From 19 October 2008 Fr. Jose Mundoly and from 11 December 2011 Fr. Athnas Kerkatta served as parish priests. The present parish priest, Fr. Stephen Marayikulam (senior) was appointed on 8 June 2014. Fr. Benjamin Nakho

Ngade (2010-2011) and Fr. Jose Thenganakunnel (2011-2015) served the parish as co-pastors. Presently Fr. Joseph Chettaniyil is the co-pastor.

Even before the establishment of the parish, there were a few catholic families at Dispur. Later, the number was on the increase as the place began to gain importance being the state capital with the establishments of institutions of public and private sectors. The faithful of the parish comprises of people from various parts of the country. They can be categorised into three groups: people of the place, migrants (mostly employees), and students from other states. Presently there are about 130 registered catholic families and over hundred others the parish caters to.

Finding Dispur as the ideal place for the Cathedral Church of the Archdiocese foundation stone was laid on 26 November 2008. The newly built cathedral was blessed by Archbishop Thomas Menampampil on 19 December 2010, dedicating it to Christ the Bearer of Good News.

Major liturgical celebrations are held at the cathedral. It witnessed the historical event of the installation of Most Rev. John Moolachira as the Archbishop on 18 January 2012. The event was attended by archbishops, bishops, clergy, religious, government officials, and a large number of faithful across the region.

Christ the Bearer of Good News Cathedral with its imposing look beside the national highway bears witness to the surpassing goodness of the Almighty over the years. It stands as a symbol of love, peace and harmony.