

Our Lady of Fatima Church, Lumding

Lumding is situated in Nagaon district of Assam and has the second most urban population with nearly 50, 000 people. It was one of the railwaytownships founded by the British Raja during the colonial rule in Assam. It had the presence of Anglo-Indian Catholic families and a few Catholic families from Andhra Pradesh who were working in the railways. Fr. G.K. Prakash who was the first parish priest of Hojai parish made several visits to the area and rendered spiritual assistance to the Catholics. Later on Bishop Joseph Mittathany of Tezpur diocese thought of establishing a parish at Lumding in order to have a closer follow up of the Catholic communities.

Establishment of the Parish

In the year 1974 the Bishop of Tezpur erected Our Lady of Fatima Parish at Lumding, bifurcating from Hojai parish and appointed Fr. Augustine Panamkatt as its first parish priest. It was reported that he found 100 Catholic families in Lumding and its surrounding areas as he took charge. They were mainly railway employees and people of Garo community. On the following year in February, Fr. Augustine started Don Bosco English medium school in a temporary house.

The Congregation of Bethany Sisters joined the parish in 1979 and rendered assistance to carry out the pastoral activities of the parish. In December 1979 Fr. Joseph Kizakevedu MSFS was appointed parish priest of Lumding. He was transferred in 1982 and Fr. Kulandaiswamy looked after the parish until Fr. Masidas Mundu was appointed parish priest. In 1985 Fr. John Mulangothra joined the parish and later he was appointed as priest in charge and principal of the school until he was transferred in 2002.

Development

It was during the time of Fr. John that Lumding parish became a full-fledged centre. His dedicated work and commitment brought about a lot of progress and development. In 1988 he also established a Don Bosco School at Derapathar (a rural village far away from the centre) and reached out to many tribal communities such as Garos, Adivasis, Boros, Karbis and Tiwas. It was during his time that Catholic population increased in Derapathar area.

To give further impetus to the parish Fr. John built a vocational training centre in the year 1989 and handed it over to the Bethany Sisters to manage it. In 2002 Fr. John was transferred and Fr. Alex Kalayathinal was appointed as parish priest and principal. Fr. Sojan Pulickal succeeded him in 2004. Lumding parish was bifurcated in 2006 and Derapathar parish was created. Fr. Joseph Olickal took over as parish priest and principal from Fr. Sojan and served the mission until 2015. From 2015 May Fr. Thomas Mattathilany took over the administration of the centre as parish priest and principal of the school.

Conclusion

Lumding parish has the history of over four decades of hard work and dedicated service of several priests and sisters. Although the centre remained distant from the diocese of Tezpur due to lack of proper conveyance and communication, the persevering efforts of the pioneers advanced its growth and development. One cannot forget the hard work that has gone behind in its making and the transformation it has brought to the lives of the people.

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