

## **St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Matia Majerburi**

Matia Majerburi is located near Goalpara, one of the important commercial centres of Assam. It is 150 kilometres away from Guwahati. The parish has 170 families with around thousand Catholics. It is a Garo populated area and they form the major portion of the Catholic presence, spread across three villages. There are also Rabhas. The common language used is Assamese. Agriculture is the main source of their livelihood.

### **The beginnings**

Matia Majerburi has a long history of growth in becoming the centre of the parish. It all began with the starting of a Don Bosco school by Fr. Kuriala SDB of Damra parish in 1983. In the year 1997 it was made part of the Gojapara parish and in the following year it was entrusted to the care of St. Thomas Parish, Bhalukdubi.

The people of this place were drawn to Catholic faith when Fr. Kuriala from Damra began visiting the place. With the establishment of the School, there was an increase in the number of Catholics as people from other communities began to accept the catholic faith. The Rabhas who became Catholics in the early years had to undergo estrangement from their community. But their unity and bond enabled them to sustain their faith.

The Capuchins had taken charge of St. Thomas Parish, Bhalukdubi in 2001 and in 2002 Fr. Augustine Nattunilam was appointed resident priest in Matia Majerburi. He stayed in an Ashram, which was built by the Congregation and gradually re-kindled the faith of the Catholics. By his ascetic life, hard work and regular celebration of the sacraments during his ten yearlong stay helped in reviving their faith.

### **Establishment of the Parish**

St. Francis of Assisi Parish was established on 8 December 2011, carved out of St. Thomas Parish, Bhalukdubi. It was entrusted to the care of the Order of Franciscan Capuchins. Fr. Augustine Nattunilam was installed as the first parish priest on 15 January 2012 and later, on 19 August 2012, Fr. Jacob Mattathil replaced him as parish priest. The present parish priest, Fr. Kuriakose Kattoopara assumed office on 26 July 2015 and Fr. Sandeep Babu joined him in February 2015 as Assistant Parish Priest.

The School, which was established in 1983, remained as an upper primary school until 2015. Understanding the need of the place and the importance of imparting qualitative education, the school was upgraded in 2016. Hostels for both boys and girls were built enabling the children from far-flung areas to have access to education.

Sisters belonging to the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel started a convent on 1 August 2004. They are involved in the activities of the parish and the school.

## **Conclusion**

The parish with its limited number of Catholics has been influencing the people of the locality through its pastoral and educational services. The faithful are assisted and followed up closely through regular celebration of the Sacraments, weekly adoration, and annual retreats.

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