

St. Paul's Catholic Church, Panishali

St. Paul's Catholic Mission, Panishali was started on 3 February 1995 in the Archdiocese of Guwahati, Assam. It is about 200 kilometres away from the state capital, Guwahati. This centre was opened in view of developing the backward villages of Panishali area which is inhabited by different tribes, namely, Garos, Rabhas, Boros, Koch, Kachari, and Muslims.

The Catholics of the parish are mainly from Garo community. There are three Boro families. The mission has 150 families with 650 Catholics. It has six villages, namely, Galchira, Kariapara, Lower Thorko, Rongsai and Upper Thorko. The farthest village is Rongsai, a village on the border of Meghalaya. Here the people live on daily wages.

Establishment and administration

Fr. Paul Parekkattil MST opened the centre, with the help of Fr. E.V. George of Tikkrikilla parish. Though it was opened for the Rabhas, they were not in favour of Christianity and in fact were against the church in the beginning. They were even unwilling to send their children to the school for fear of being converted. Only in the recent times they began sending their children to the school. Presently, the school has a many students from Rabha community attending the School, but even now, there are no Catholics among them.

From 1997 Fr. George Olickal MST took charge of the parish and from 1998 to 2004 the Fr. John D'souza and Fr. Crosper Sangma of the Archdiocese managed the parish administration. In 2004, the centre was handed over to the Capuchin Congregation and during their time, the Parish Church and the present School building were constructed. In February 2007 the Archdiocese handed over the administration of the centre to MSFS congregation and Fr. John Kelamkuzhackal was appointed parish priest. On 18 July 2010 Fr. Jose Thekkel succeeded him.

The MSMHC Sisters who are at the centre render service in the parish and the School. They run a health centre to cater to the health needs of the people. There are hostels for boys and girls.

Activities of the parish

The parish organizes various activities to promote and nurture the Christian faith. It conducts retreats, conventions, Sunday school, annual *Sobha*, and youth programmes. Monthly meetings of village catechists, sodalities of Our Lady and the youth are held regularly. The parish priest and the sisters visit the villages on a regular basis and celebrate the Sacraments.

St. Paul's M.E. School was opened in the year 1995, with 15 children on the roll. In the beginning the School functioned in a thatched shed, which was later shifted to a concrete building. In the year 2008 it was upgraded to High School. Now there are 470 students in the School. The students are from different walks of life, religion, and tribes. The school organizes

different activities in the school to bring out the best in the students. Besides regular classes, there are special tuitions given to the poor children.

Conclusion

The parish has brought development in the lives of people. It has influenced them to understand the need of education. They attend Sunday liturgy and the children are encouraged to attend catechism classes. The youth are brought together every second Saturday and they stay on for meetings, instructions and Rosary. The following day they attend Sunday Mass, join the discussions and participate in the common work.

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