

St. Xavier's Catholic Mission, Tamulpur

St. Xavier's Catholic Mission is located at Tamulpur in Baksa District, Assam. It is 50 kilometres away from Mushalpur, the district headquarters. The place got its name 'Tamulpur' from the two words - *Tamul* (Araca nut) and *pur* (town). Since early years it has been a business centre and the main commodity sold here is *Tamul*. The inhabitants of the place live on farming, cultivating Tamul on a large scale. The occupants of the area have come from various places for trade and commerce and got settled there. As they began to face trouble from the insurgent groups many of them were forced to flee.

Today, Tamulpur is a home for many tribal inhabitants like Boro, Rabha, Sarania Kachari and Madahi. There are also Adivasis, Sandals and Muslims and they use Assamese, Boro and Hindi for communication.

Of the total population, Hindus form 85 percent, Muslims 10 percent and Christians 5 percent. Among the Christians, majority are Baptists. Though the number of Catholics is few, there is a noticeable growth in the recent times.

Establishment of mission

As Tamulpur shares boundary with Bhutan Hills, the possibility of establishing a centre was much thought about by the Archdiocese to get in touch with the Bhutanese. Hence, in 2000, a plot of land was bought in Bareigaon, Tamulpur with the help of Fr. Ruben Ekka. Education being one of the means for evangelization, an English medium school was opened there.

On 3 December 2002, the Archdiocese established St. Xavier's Parish at Tamulpur with Fr. Maria Susai as its first parish priest. The parish shares its boundary with Khoirabari Devisional Block on the east; Pagladia River and G.P Block on the west, Bhutan Hills on the north and Rangia Devisional Block on south.

In 2008, Fr. Arokia Samy joined the parish as assistant parish priest. In the same year the Order of the Most Holy Trinity (OSST) arrived at Tamulpur for mission experience in Northeast. In 2009 Fr. Xavier Kachappilly OSST was appointed to render assistance in the parish. Later in 2009 Fr. Maria Susai was transferred and Fr. Mathew OSST was appointed parish priest. In the same year on 1 June Fr. Xavier OSST took over the charge as parish priest and he was succeeded by Fr. Jins Valiakulathil OSST. Presently Fr. Jojo Padinjarepaiathuparampil OSST and Fr. Meby Varghese OSST serve the mission as parish priest and assistant parish priest respectively.

Tamulpur parish has about 300 Catholics and fifty families spread across seven villages. They are mostly from the communities of Adivaisis, Sandals, Boro and Assamese. The parish has two village chapels at Mazdia and Lingurkata.

Programmes and activities

The parish undertakes regular village visits, catechetical programme and other activities that help to strengthen the faith of the people. Its youth association, catechism department, women association, and St. Vincent De Paul Society work towards growth and development.

St Xavier's School

St Xavier's School was begun in a bamboo shed in 2004 with 22 students on its rolls. In the following year, four classrooms were constructed and Archbishop Thomas Menampampil blessed it. Later, in October 2008, a three-storey building was built and it was blessed and inaugurated by Fr. Varghese Kizhakevely, Vicar General of the Archdiocese. Presently the school has 846 students.

The mission has boarding houses for both boys and girls. The girls' hostel was blessed on 25 April 2011, managed by FDSHJ, and the boys' hostel was blessed on 20 October 2012, managed by the priests.

Conclusion

The presence of the mission at Tamulpur among the different tribes of peoples helps in bringing harmony and development. Its outlook towards people goes beyond all barriers as it renders service to all classes of people. The women association and Vincent De Paul society of the parish add much life through their varied ministries. The vocational training centre - Shanti Mahila Vikas Kendra run by the ASMI Sisters empower the school dropouts and unemployed women. The Centre run by the Missionaries of Charity assists the poor, sick and differently challenged.

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