

## **St. Alphonsa's Church, Tillapara**

St. Alphonsa's mission at Tillapara is situated on the national highway to Tura, 125 kilometres away from Guwahati. Jajong Kadoram, a famous picnic spot is just a kilometre away from the mission. Most people of the place are from Garo community and a few from Rabha community. They live on cultivation: rice, banana, arack nuts, betelnuts, and rubber.

### **Beginning of Catholicism in this place**

Earlier, the area had only Baptist Christians. The beginning of Catholicism in the area can be traced back to 1964 with the presence and work of Fr. Dominic Curto SDB and other missionaries who visited the place from Damra mission. History of the place also speaks about the works of Fr. Victor SDB. The first Catholics of the place, Neham Marak and his family were baptised by him.

Fr. Victor and Catechists made their entry into Hawalponga which was a non-Christian village. Their simple dealings and frequent visits drew the people to them. Later, he began to speak to them about Catholic faith. As the people were receptive, they began to instruct them. Gradually, many accepted the Catholic faith. Today the entire village is Catholic. It is the largest Catholic village of the parish with 65 families and has the biggest village church. The people in the village are fervent, firm and lead an exemplary life. They are united, cooperative and development oriented.

As a result of the missionary venture undertaken by the priests and catechists of Damra mission, the number of Catholics increased in Tillapara. In 1964 Fr. Dominic Curto bought 17 bighas of land for Rs.35 and a church was built in the same year. Till date it serves as the parish church.

### **Establishment of the parish**

As the number of Catholics increased in Tillapara area, Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil thought of establishing a mission centre there. Hence, St. Alphonsa's Parish was erected on 8 March 2009 bifurcating it from Damra parish. The first parish priest was Fr. Arokia Samy. Presently, Fr. A. A. Christian is the parish priest.

The Congregation of the Pallotine Sisters (CSAC) started their mission at Tillapara in 2011. They are engaged in education and catechetical works of the parish.

### **The School**

The place had a school run by the people of the place which was handed over to the mission as the parish was erected. Currently the school has classes from nursery to class X with over 360 students. The effort of the parish through its educative mission has brought much change to the society. Today the people are aware of the need for education and are interested in sending their children to the school.

## **Conclusion**

The parish has 9 villages with churches. Monthly catechists' meetings are held at the centre and village programmes are planned out in consultation with them. The parish makes provision to celebrate monthly Holy Mass in every village. Trained catechists conduct catechism classes in the villages.

The parish takes initiatives in creating awareness among people on health and hygiene. The SHGs initiated by the GGSS are active and they have begun working independently. Various movements and groups of the parish are dynamic and they cooperate to carry out the parish activities.

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