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### **Message**

*This month we are invited to Ranchi, the capital of the State of Jharkhand, a land of hills and forests, land of deep faith and cultural heritage. Dominican presence in Ranchi just passed one glorious decade; 2006 to 2016! This is a time to say "Thank You" to the God who walked with us and guided us all these 10 years and to remember with gratitude all the sisters who were part of this mission. It is also a time to remind ourselves to faithfully respond to the mission of 'binding together a poor and simple community of love where we become living words that proclaim and reveal Jesus Christ.' Let us all enjoy this short visit to Ranchi Community.*

**Sr. Philomina Vengachottil**

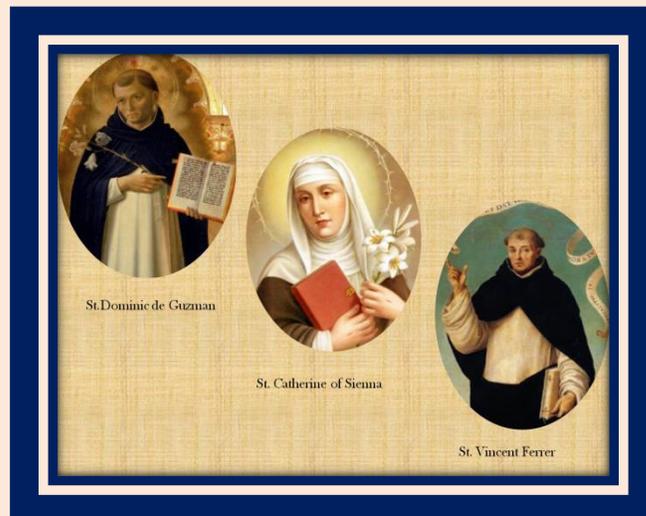
### **Pilgrimage**

As part of the celebration of the Mercy Year, on 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2016 a pilgrimage and a visit to a poor parish were organized from our (Bhitha) Parish. Our Lady of Wisdom Church, Ulhatu, is 40 kilo meters away from Ranchi. We were 300 people including priests, religious and laity. The pilgrimage started at 8 o'clock in the morning. There were 3 buses and some came in their own vehicles. The buses were stopped one kilometer away from the Church and we went in procession reciting rosary and singing songs.

After reaching the church Parish priest, Rev. Fr. Maximus Toppo briefed us about the origin of this church. This statue of our Lady is an unusual kind which we do not see around. This is a statue of Our Lady feeding the baby Jesus which was brought from Belgium at the request of Fr. Constant

Levens. He is the one of the first Belgium Jesuit missionaries who evangelized the whole of Chottanagpur and now he is raised as the servant of God. He was a devotee of this Our Lady. After reaching India, he asked his family members to send a replica of the same statue. He had the habit of praying everyday in front of this statue and within 7 years, 80000 people were converted. The faith and devotion grew very rapidly. The catholic faith took root in the soil which has become the stronghold of Catholicism in northern India giving birth to so many priests and religious. Many faithful flock to this church. After the sharing, the solemn Mass was celebrated. Then we proceeded to Jerna Parish which is few kilo meters away. They received us with traditional singing and dancing. We had collected money, clothes, rice and grains to distribute as this is a very poor parish and it was handed over to the parish priest. They also had prepared a delicious meal for us. We were back by 6 o'clock and were feeling blessed. Yes, indeed we had a very enjoyable day both in spiritual and corporal sense. May the Our Lady of Wisdom continue to intercede for all of us.

**Sr. Saroj Tete. Op**



## **The visit of Saints**

We the sisters of Ranchi community, with immense joy received the relics as we celebrate 800 years of our presence in the world. The time came after long waiting to welcome the relics of St. Dominic, St. Vincent Ferrer and St. Catherine of Siena to our community on September 15<sup>th</sup> 2016. The relics were brought from Basti Community by Sr. Divya George Anthikad.

It was a memorable event for our community. The monstrance with relics was placed honorably in the chapel; paid homage by doing Arathi followed by the opening prayer. It was a cherished day for all of us with the presence of three saints. Same day in



the evening along with St. Dominic's unit of our parish, we had the celebration. Instead of celebrating St. Dominic's feast, they had chosen this day to venerate the patron saint.



Sr. Jini welcomed the gathering and gave brief introduction about the order of St. Dominic. The Holy Eucharist was celebrated by Fr. Rajesh Toppo our Parish priest, concelebrated by Fr. Vimal I.A.M.S our Spiritual guide, who broke the Word of God which touched the heart of everyone. He continued to explain that St. Dominic was a disciplined man especially in his prayer life. Today in this globalized world, every Christian needs to become men and women of prayer. This will help us to be channels of God's grace and his gospel. It was very inspiring and empowering message. It was a great joy to see the devotion of the people who venerated the relics to obtain graces and blessings.



The next day it was kept in our chapel for the veneration and prayer. Many people visited and prayed. We concluded the veneration of the relics at 9: pm with a short prayer and on Sep 17<sup>th</sup> 2016 the relic was taken to Dalmadih Community by Sr. Latha.

*Sr. Maduri Jojo. OP*

## Our Community



The much awaited dream of the province to start a community in the capital city of Jharkhand was actualized on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2006 in a rented house. On 25<sup>th</sup> August the new

house was bought, the house was blessed on 28<sup>th</sup> of August. The purpose of establishing a community in Ranchi was to support our sisters in Dalmadhi.

The Ranchi community comes under the Archdiocese of Ranchi, there are 62 congregations working under the arch diocese. We belong to Bitha parish run by the Salvadorian fathers; there are three Salvadorian priests in our parish who look after all the need of the people around. We have 400 families in our parish, some are well to do and others are middle class but all are active in the church and very generous to the needs of the church. We are surrounded by many religious communities, there are nine congregations working in the parish, brothers, fathers and sisters, all are involved with different ministries according to their charism.

As all know at present our community consist of five sisters and two candidates, we are involved mainly in the mission of study .Sr. Latha E. and Sr. Saroj Tete are doing continuing their study for Bachelors degree Sr. Madhuri Jojo is doing her B. Ed and the candidates are doing their intermediate. Sr. Maria Furtado, the superior of the community goes to teach in the school run by the Salvadorian Fathers and Sr. Jini is involved in the prison ministry. Apart from that we do take up the parish ministry, house visiting and other activities.

We do extent our supporting hand to our sisters in Dalmadih, especially when they come to Ranchi. We are happy to reach out to the people of Ranchi through our services

*Sr. Latha. OP*

## *Regional Celebration of Dominican Jubilee*

For the Lord our God is gracious and His mercy is everlasting, Jubilate, Jubilate, Jubilate Deo! Jubilee is a celebration of rejoicing and Thanksgiving because God has done marvelous things in our lives. It was decided that we will have the celebration of 800 Jubilee of Dominican order in the Regional level in Bettiah, in the state of Bihar where the Friars have a community.



Dominican communities of both Bihar and Jharkhand and Utterpradesh were to come together as a family in Bettiah. It was a happy opportunity to visit the community as it was first time we were going there.

On August 19<sup>th</sup> evening Sr. Puspha Kujur and Anita Tirkey from Dalmadih and Sr. Jini Joseph and Maria Furtado from Ranchi started our journey by train. We had a comfortable journey by train but bus journey was not so great. Any how we managed by God's grace, to reach Bettiah safe and sound. We were grateful to Fr. Joseph D'Souza who sent the Jeep to pick us up from the bus station. Sisters from our community in Basti also joined us. Eight of us, Dominican Sisters of the Presentation, arrived at St Vincent Ferrer community of the Friars to celebrate life and joy, To

Praise, to Preach and to Bless on August 21<sup>st</sup> 2016



It was a day dawned to rejoice and sing a jubilant song. A Jubilee spirit is highlighted with the arrival of the Sisters from near and far. We were delighted to reach our Brethren's House. As we were reaching close we felt the presence of Dominican's as one family.

Though we were tired after the long journey, all our tiredness vanished as we reached the destination and we joined our brothers to help out wherever was needed. We all felt the family spirit to work and to celebrate, to thank and praise God for the very Gift of our Father St. Dominic. We are very proud to be his Sons and Daughters.

The celebration began with the Holy Eucharistic presided over by Rev. Bishop William D'Souza, Bishop of Patna. Twelve priests including the Dominican Fathers and a few from neighboring communities and parishes concelebrated the Holy Mass. Church was packed with faithful and religious. It was a grand celebration. Rev. Bishop broke the Word of God and expressed great appreciation for Dominican Fathers who are working tirelessly to build the faith of the people following the

example of St. Dominic who spent his life to bring back to faith the people who strayed from the church and their faith. He reminded us of our responsibility to safeguard our faith and to bring back to faith those who are turning away from God and the Church.



The Eucharistic Celebration was followed by a cultural program conducted by the parishners. Rev. Fr. Joseph D' Souza took us on a virtual tour to the life of St. Dominic and to the life of the Dominican family today.



Then together as a family we solemnly sang the Salve Regina and O, Lumen. It made us to refresh our past and present memories as a Dominican Family and we are very proud too. A fellowship meal was shared by all those who came for the

Eucharistic celebration. At the end we sat together and had a family meal and shared our joy of being together. We really enjoyed the day and with grateful hearts we thanked each other for coming together and sharing the joy and love of St. Dominic.

*Sr. Maria OP*



*They are not prisoners  
but our brothers and  
sisters behind the  
bars.....*



I always longed to see them.....  
I wanted to know how they felt.....  
I always held them responsible for their fate till I met them.  
They are not all criminals  
There are innocent ones  
Carrying the cross of injustice, jealousy, hatred  
Sometimes it is because they are poor  
and not influential.

When I was in Bangalore, many of us in the community wanted to visit prison, especially during Lenten or advent seasons. We wanted to have an interaction with inmates. Though many at times we tried to arrange it but never happened because it is a tedious process to get permission as the entry to prison is restricted. I was very much interested but this remained as an unfulfilled desire till 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2016. Upon my arrival in Ranchi I was looking at the possibilities of starting the new mission and I was lucky to get in touch with the prison ministry team. I began my visits to prison on 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2016, going to Hotwar central jail in Ranchi with the prison ministry team consisting of Jesuit fathers and sisters from different congregations.

### **My experience of visiting Prison**

Hotwar Jail accommodates almost 3500 prisoners. There are young and old, rich and poor, educated and illiterate. It is very sad to see very young people between the age group of 20 to 40. The prison main entrance gate will be opened upon our arrival and we have to enter our names in the register and surrender our mobiles. Then the next gate will be opened and there will be more than 10 Catholics waiting to accompany us to the chapel. It is like the escorts accompanying the VIPs. The chapel is a small hall where our brothers and sisters behind the bars are staying. (We no longer call them prisoners, but brothers and sisters behind the bars; a mercy year initiative). It is a beautifully painted hall with the pictures of Jesus and Mary; and various parables from the gospel, by one of the brothers behind the bars. On special occasions like Easter, they decorate it very beautifully. I have been so much touched by

the devotion and attention with which they participate in the Mass. I haven't seen such devotion elsewhere even in retreat centers. For some of them who are abandoned by the family and living here for many years, this is the only place and time they get some solace and comfort. I remember, on Good Friday during the way of the cross, seeing some people were crying and participating in it. It was really heart-renting. Persons belonging to other faiths also come especially in female ward.. Always the words of Jesus ring in my ears "First will be last and last will be first".

One day during mass we heard some people fighting outside and after Mass as we were talking one of them told me, sister, these days fights are less as we have started praying every evening for our fellow brothers and sisters. It is a real witness. Many of them have come closer to God and are experiencing the power of prayer. There are also innocent people framed with false charges and for them life is very challenging inside. They draw their strength from prayer as release seems to be a distant dream as our judicial system is so slow and for some of them no one is there to follow up their cases. Some of them told that they learned many lessons in life after landing up in the prison.

The Eucharist for gents and ladies are celebrated separately. First we have Mass in the male ward and then in the female ward. In the female ward, we are allowed to celebrate Mass only twice a month and other days we have the communion service for them. The female ward is painted beautifully by one of them who just got her bail last week after three and half years.

Every day they come together in the morning and evening for their prayers.

They wait for us every Sunday in order to share their joys and sorrows. We also try to help in different ways to release the innocent ones and people who are in prison for more than 15 years. According to last government survey 65% of the brothers and sisters behind the bars are under trials. They have to wait years for the verdict. So pathetic is our judicial system. Another day I read in the news paper, Chief Justice of India lamenting over slowness in rendering judicial justice and pleading the central government to appoint more judges so that cases could be dealt quickly.

Besides going to prison we also visit the families of the prisoners whose houses are near (in and around Ranchi) also try to get those who are innocent or involved in the petty crimes released by contacting the lawyers or likeminded persons who are working in this line.

### **Prison Ministry Course and visits to rehabilitation centers.**

I also had an opportunity to participate in the Prison Ministry course for two weeks in Bangalore conducted by the Prison Ministry India. There were 30 participants from all over India, including priests, religious and laity. It gave a basic understanding of the humble beginning of Prison Ministry in 1986 by Fr. Varghese Karipperry and Fr. Francis Kodiyan who were brothers then in Vadavathur Seminary, Kottayam in Kerala. Prison Ministry India is operative in all the states of India.

Prison Ministry India operates upon the following biblical basis. The relevance of this ministry is articulated very beautifully.

Church began in prison: Jesus was kept in a dungeon, the apostles (Peter, Paul, John) were imprisoned many at times and many were converted by their preaching in prison. (Prophets were imprisoned)

The first to enter heaven was a convicted prisoner.

On the Last Judgment Day only 6 questions will be asked and one among them will be, I was in prison you visited me/ didn't visit me.

I also visited some rehabilitation centre during course and in Kerala during my holidays in order to explore the possibility of having one in Ranchi by us and still continuing to search.

### **Prison Ministry Sunday celebration**

Prison Ministry India, celebrates Prison Ministry Sunday once a year on the Sunday prior to August 15 in order to make the faithful aware of its activities and the need to be involved in it directly or indirectly. The Prison Ministry India Ranchi unit met together and decided to reach the Letter from Bishop and prepared liturgy to 24 parishes in Ranchi and the responsibility was shouldered by team members.

When I approached our parish priest Rev. Fr. Rajesh Toppo, he was very welcoming to celebrate the Prison Ministry Sunday in the parish and told me to prepare the chart and also to share my experience. I was very happy to do it and I was surprised to see after Mass, one of them who was in jail for 16 years and released two months back. He

has taken a room in our parish and is looking for job. A woman also came up and told that her brother (rakhi brother) is in jail for more than 15 years and told me to wish him next when I go. The parish also gave the Sunday collection towards Prison Ministry.

Yes, I do enjoy my prison Ministry.

"You are here (prison) because you are caught; we are out there because we are not yet caught." (Fulton sheen to prisoners)

*Sr. Jini Joseph. OP*

### **Prisoner**

Living in solitary confinement,  
no one to share their predicament.  
Alone they live, all alone,  
alone they laugh, alone they moan.

What to look forward to?  
No music, TV, nothing new.  
Even the meals served twice a day  
are just edible, the least to say.

Robed in orange from head to toe,  
they pace around to and fro.  
The only sane thing to do,  
lest the jailer raises a brow.

Reliving all their past memories  
in their temporary chummary  
but after a while, even that's gone,  
how many times can you, past, recall?

So they wait with unending patience,  
their eyes to the door with diminishing  
eagerness,  
that a friend, a relative, any acquaintance,  
might buy them freedom from this loneliness.

Priya