

HOLY CROSS MISSION CENTER

NEWSLETTER

E-mail: hcmc@nd.edu

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1. **NORTH EAST INDIA: Bomb Blasts Fail To Derail Province Peace Program**
Even as the Northeast India capital town of Agartala was jolted by a series of bomb blasts, over 525 students from more than 20 ethnic communities and all states of the region gathered there October 2-5 for the 7th annual peace program organized by the Holy Cross Educational Foundation of the North East Province. The program, known by its acronym NESNIM (North Eastern Students National Integration Movement), included sessions and workshops led by experts on peace-building tactics and responsibilities as well as ample opportunities for the students to share their talents in singing, dance, speech and games, all meant to build appreciation for the beauty of ethnic diversity when shared in peace. Some of the students traveled for five days to reach Holy Cross School Agartala which hosted the program, and all were full of enthusiasm and participated energetically in spite of the tragic events in the town. Only the Peace Rally, which usually attracts over 4000 for a march in Agartala itself and is traditionally one of the high-points of NESNIM, needed to be cancelled. "Despite the massive arrangements we had already made, we thought it too risky to expose so many children to the atmosphere of fear and uncertainty brought about by the blasts," said *Fr. Shaji Mandapathikunnel*, the principal of Holy Cross School Agartala. Three people had lost their lives and over 100 were injured in the series of explosions that ripped

through Agartala's crowded streets and markets. In his message to the students, **Fr. Roy Thalackan**, provincial of the North East Province, emphasized that where others choose violence NESNIM is a message to the world that "Peace and harmony is possible, no matter what our differences are."

2. GHANA: Sisters Celebrate 25th Anniversary and Formally Open New School

On September 21, at Star of the Sea Cathedral in Takoradi, the Sisters of the Holy Cross celebrated their 25th Anniversary of ministerial presence in Ghana. An invitation from the Holy Cross Brothers in Ghana, who have long desired the witness and service of the full Holy Cross family in that country, led to the eventual arrival of the pioneers – **Srs. Mary Coursey** and **Marian Therese Slattery** – on September 29, 1983. Welcomed by the Bishop of Sekondi-Takoradi for service in his diocese, the Sisters have worked in the fields of catechetical training, religious education, health care, programs for the mentally ill, social work, pastoral ministry, and teaching. Vocation and formation work have been priorities from the beginning and today there are three Ghanaian Sisters in final vows, five temporarily professed and two candidates. Following the celebration in Takoradi, on September 27, the Sisters formally opened Our Lady of Holy Cross School in Kasoa. Bishop Matthias Nketsia, auxiliary Bishop of Cape Coast, blessed the school and **Sr. Esther Adwoa Entsiwa** welcomed and thanked the many parents and visitors present, inviting them into a genuine collaboration in the education of their children. The new school began as an after-school program in a rented home in 2005. Following a survey of community needs and careful discernment, pre-school programs began in 2007 at the convent. The new building is comprised of an administration block and classrooms for nursery, kindergarten, and grades one and two. The plan is to add one classroom a year until high school level, and to collaborate with the Holy Cross Brothers to establish an education center in Kasoa.

3. PERU: Change of Leadership at Canto Grande's *Fe y Alegria* School

The *Fe y Alegria* School in the Canto Grande section of Lima, Peru began in 1979 with a handful of students and four small classrooms in thatched huts. Today, it enrolls more than 2000 students with a campus of five two-story brick buildings. The man responsible for this development, and for the academic and technical training of thousands of children from the poor families of Lima's slums, is **Fr. Philip Devlin** who, at the age of 78, has recently stepped down from administrative responsibilities, handing over direction of the school to new principal **Br. Tom Giumenta**. The school has always offered quality education. In 1992 however, realizing that more needed to be done to help graduates find meaningful employment in Lima's struggling economy, Fr. Phil established a comprehensive trade school within *Fe y Alegria* called the Center for Occupational Training (CEO). Today the CEO enrolls over 1000 students in seventeen different trade shops and is considered one of the finest trade schools of its kind in Lima. In 1996, Fr. Phil responded to yet another need by initiating the school's first kindergarten program with four spacious classrooms housed in a beautiful new facility. The strength of Fr. Phil's vision, dedication and "can do" spirit has borne fruit in the excellence of the school he founded and developed. As one of his colleagues notes: "When it comes to hiring, many factories and businesses will give absolute preference to our graduates, for they have proven over time to be knowledgeable, highly skilled, and responsible on the job. All of which can be traced directly to Fr. Phil's influence."

4. INDIA: Veteran Missionary Completes Fifty Years of Service

Fr. Jean Charles Descary, 78, is being thanked and celebrated throughout Holy Cross in India for his fifty years of service to the community and church in that country. As part of his Golden

Jubilee celebration Fr. Descary made a month long mission trip from the south, where he now serves as assistant novice director at Yercaud (Salem), to the northeast, and especially to Cachar and the Jaintia Hills where he had spent the early years of his priestly ministry. Having been forced by the political situation to leave that area more than thirty years ago, the people there were amazed that he can still fluently preach in Khasi and Bengali. *Waves*, the newsletter of Holy Cross in Northeast India reports that Fr. Descary's move to South India significantly helped the growth of Holy Cross throughout the Indian subcontinent. He has influenced most Holy Cross members in India either as a co-worker, as a major superior, or as a formator. Known for his spiritual depth, his other-centered sociability, and his ascetic nature (his favorite mode of transport still is the bicycle!), he remains full of enthusiasm for mission. "If given an opportunity," he says, "I would like to walk to the furthest villages of the parishes and spend time with the people, sharing my faith in Christ."

5. INTERNATIONAL CSC: Conference Recommends Renewing Fire for Mission

Forty-two religious representing all areas of Holy Cross service throughout the world gathered at Moreau Seminary, Notre Dame, Indiana USA from August 4-7 for a conference on the future of Holy Cross cross-cultural and international mission. Significant pre-conference consultation had resulted in position papers on four proposals of importance for conference consideration:

- a. *A mission that crosses cultural, national, and linguistic borders is an essential dimension of our Holy Cross charism;*
- b. *Restructuring in Holy Cross needs to give focused attention to what will encourage, plan and implement a collaborative response to future calls to international and cross-cultural mission;*
- c. *The call to international and cross-cultural mission should have a prominent place in every Holy Cross vocation recruitment and formation program;*
- d. *An increased exchange of personnel across province/vicariate/district boundaries will promote understanding and global awareness among us, will enrich our mission everywhere with a broader perspective, and will be a sign to others of community that embraces diversity.*

The conference, which included participant-observers from the three congregations of Holy Cross Sisters and from lay colleagues in mission, was a rich experience of Holy Cross internationality and zeal for mission. Designed from the beginning to produce concrete recommendations for consideration at the chapters of 2009 and 2010, the conference concluded with consensus around 11 such recommendations on structures needed to support cross-cultural and international mission in Holy Cross, on vocation promotion and formation for that mission, and on international exchange and collaboration for that mission. The participants expressed the hope that "each chapter of the Congregation will reaffirm our commitment to cross-cultural and international mission as an essential dimension of our identity as Holy Cross." All the conference's recommendations, the rationale for them, and some pictures of participants are at <http://brothersofholycross.com/HopeMission.htm>

6. NEWS BRIEFS: Haiti, Brazil, India, Bangladesh, USA-East Africa, Peru

***Haiti:** *Fr. Vernet Luxana*, Directeur General of College Notre-Dame in Cap Haitien, has been appointed acting provincial in *Province Notre Dame du Perpetuel Secours*, Haiti. He replaces *Fr. Rodolphe Arty* who resigned for health reasons after many years of leadership in Haiti as both district superior and provincial.

***Brazil:** The capitulants of the District Chapter in Brazil (SW) have elected **Br. Nilto Neres Oliveira** as superior. He replaces **Br. Sergio Stolf** who has completed the maximum nine years in leadership there as district superior. Br. Nilto has for many years served as both steward and vocations coordinator for the district.

***India:** The International Institute of Education and Management has recognized Holy Cross School in Champhai, Mizoram, for its outstanding achievements in the field of education. On behalf of the Vicariate of Holy Cross Brothers in India and their school in Champhai, **Br. David Kerketta** received the prestigious *Rashtriya Vidya Saraswati Puraskar Award* in Delhi on August 19.

***India:** The concluding celebrations for the twin Jubilees of Holy Cross in South India – Golden Jubilee of the arrival of Holy Cross in South India and Silver Jubilee of the Province of South India – were held in Bangalore October 19-21. The provincial chapter there convened the next day, October 22 and concluded on October 26.

***Bangladesh:** On June 6 at a special convocation organized by the Department of World Religions of the University of Dhaka, **Br. Jarlath D'Souza** was awarded a plaque and certificate for his long-time service in the cause of inter-faith harmony in Bangladesh. Since 1983 Br. Jarlath has been coordinating an inter-faith organization in Dhaka, the Bangladesh Inter-Religious Council for Peace and Justice (BICPAJ). Most of the members of BICPAJ, which meets monthly, are Muslims, but there are also Hindus, Buddhists, Adivasi Tribals, Catholics and Protestants.

***USA-East Africa:** **Br. Jesus Alonso** (SW), a doctoral candidate in micro-biology and immunology at the University of Texas Health Science Center, has become a link between San Antonio's Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research and health officials in Uganda in the effort to develop a test that will rapidly diagnose Ebola and Marburg, deadly hemorrhagic viruses that have killed thousands in central Africa. With the Holy Cross commitment in East Africa as a base, he hopes to continue this research and teach at Uganda Martyrs University at Nkozi, Uganda in the future.

***Peru:** Two new health initiatives are underway at Brother Andre Clinic at Lord of Hope Parish in Canto Grande (Lima). A major outreach campaign to counter a growing tuberculosis problem has begun which will address everything from prevention to early detection to changing the cultural outlook on the disease, so often hidden by those afflicted. The clinic has also initiated a program to address children's health issues, especially targeting illnesses caused by parasitic organisms which, according to a recent survey, infect up to 90% of the children of the area.

7. CELEBRATING SERVICE, CALL AND COMMITMENT

*On July 23 **Fr. Malcolm Johnson**, 75, died in his room at the Holy Cross formation house in Santiago, Chile after a five month battle with cancer. He was in the company of his sister, one of the palliative care nurses, and many of the religious of the local community who had been caring for him when he passed away. Fr. Johnson made first vows in 1951 and was ordained in Santiago in 1959 following theology studies there. His more than 50 years in Chile were dedicated to pastoral work in a number of parishes including *Las Rocas de Santo Domingo*, *San Roque*, and *Andacollo*, to the teaching and publishing of Bible Courses for parishes and schools (the most recent of which was published just five months ago), and to community service as District Steward for more than 20 years.

***Sr. Leonella Moe**, 93, died on August 22 at Rosary Convent, Saint Mary's, USA. Sr. Leonella was a "second career" missionary who, after productive ministries of teaching and school supervision in the States, volunteered for mission in Uganda at the age of 65. For 15 years she used her skills in the education department of Fort Portal Diocese to promote faith formation and

create teams of religion teachers. A founding member of the National Service Team of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Uganda, she is largely responsible for the growth of that renewal in the Fort Portal area. She also was influential in promoting HIV/AIDS education through Behavior Change workshops in schools. Leonella often said “kindness disarms people.” She certainly disarmed many, both among her Ugandan colleagues and friends and within her Holy Cross community!

***Fr. James Tobin** of the Eastern Province died at the age of 87 at Holy Cross House, Notre Dame, Indiana USA on August 27. Following ordination in 1947, Jim served in East Pakistan/Bangladesh for almost 30 years. His ministries there included teaching in Bandhura minor seminary and parish work with the Mandis in Mymensingh district. He was pastor at the parish in Golla when his assistant, Fr. Bill Evans, was martyred on November 13, 1971, shortly before independence. In 1976 he returned to the States where for many years he ministered as a chaplain in hospitals and as an assistant in parishes.

*Seminarian **Kamal Cornelius Mangsang** of Sacred Heart of Jesus Province Bangladesh died of a drug-resistant infection that caused organ failure in Bangalore, India on September 12. Kamal, a Mandi tribal from Jaljalia Mission of Biroidakuni Parish in the Diocese of Mymensingh, was in India for BA studies and living there with the seminarians of the Province of South India. Many members of the Holy Cross community in India participated in the day and night care for Kamal over the six weeks of his illness, and during the last two weeks and at the time of his death Kamal’s father and Fr. Jim Banas of Sacred Heart of Jesus Province Bangladesh were able to be with him as well. Following moving prayer attended by more than 100 priests and religious both in Bangalore and at Holy Cross Novitiate chapel in Yercaud, Kamal was buried in the community cemetery on the grounds of the novitiate. A memorial Mass with his family was held in Dhaka.

***Sr. Marian Therese Slattery** died of an aggressive brain tumor at Saint Mary’s Convent, Notre Dame USA on September 24. She served as a school administrator with the Holy Cross Sisters’ mission in Brazil, as a member of staff at the Sisters’ formation and renewal program at Tiberius in Israel, and as a pioneer in the pastoral work of the Sisters in Ghana. As co-director of relief operations with Catholic Relief Services in Beirut, Lebanon in 1983, Sr. Marian Therese assisted hundreds of thousands refugees in dire need of help as a result of the Lebanon war. Wherever she ministered, she was known for her great organizational skills and “no nonsense approach.”

*On August 15 **M. Pierre Herve** and **M. Joseph** of *Province Notre-Dame du Perpetuel Secours* in Haiti made their perpetual profession of vows at Cap-Haitien.

***Leopold Temba, Prosper Tesha and Br. Everest Neema** pronounced their perpetual vows on 15 August at St. Augustine Institute, Kampala, Uganda. The following day Leopold and Prosper were ordained to the diaconate by Bishop Christopher Kakooza, Auxiliary Bishop in the Archdiocese of Kampala. After completing studies in December, Leopold is assigned to Holy Cross Parish Dandora in Nairobi, Kenya, Prosper to assist on the formation staff of Andre House in Jinja, Uganda, and Everest to teach sciences at Holy Cross Lakeview Secondary School, Jinja.

*On September 6 in the San Matias Chapel of *Parroquia Nuestra Madre de La Luz* in Monterrey, Mexico **Alfredo Olvera Ledezma** of the Indiana Province pronounced his final vows.

*On September 13 in the Chapel of the Generalate of the Little Sisters of St. Francis, Jinja, Uganda **Sr. Beatrice Wangatia** made her initial profession. **Sr. Mary Alice Bowler**, Area of Africa Coordinator for the Sisters of the Holy Cross, received her vows.

*Two Holy Cross religious from India made final profession of vows at St. Kevin’s Parish in Welland, Ontario, Canada on September 13. **Jinto Mathew Puthiyidathuchalil** of North East

India and *Vijay Amritharaj* of South India are in Canada for theology studies as participants in a collaborative program between the Vicariate of English Canada and the India provinces.

***Br. Stephen Anandaraj** of the Vicariate of India made his final profession on 29 September at his home parish of Elathagiri in the Diocese of Dharmapuri. Elathagiri is one of the oldest parishes of the diocese, has the largest number of Catholics, and is the source of many religious and priestly vocations for the church, but this was the first time the Christians there could witness a religious profession.

*On October 4 in Dhaka, Bangladesh **Subash Joseph Costa** of Sacred Heart of Jesus Province pronounced his vows of perpetual profession.

***Br. Placid Ujjal Pereira** of St. Joseph Province in Bangladesh made final vows at St. John the Baptist Church, Toomilia on October 11. Br. Ujjal is presently doing a diploma in theology at Holy Spirit Major Seminary Banani and residing at Holy Cross scholasticate Rampura. **Br. Binoy Gomes**, provincial, received his vows and Archbishop Paulinus Costa of Dhaka presided.

*The Provinces of South India and North East India celebrated ordinations of six new priests in the month of October. In the South India Province, **Dominic George M.** was ordained on October 16, **Arockia Sunil J.** on October 18, **Ashok Vino L.** on October 20, and **Biju Lawrence Moolakkara** on October 27. In the North East Province, **Sijomon Joseph Pyanpillil** was ordained on October 27 and **Bobby John Thelliyankal** on October 30.

*On October 17 at Holy Rosary Church, Tejgaon, Dhaka, Bangladesh **Srs. Renu Teresa Rozario, Tuli Drong, Anita Gomes and Sheema Purification** made perpetual profession in the Sisters of the Holy Cross. **Sr. Geraldine Hoyler**, congregational treasurer, received their vows.

*On October 31 at Mary Help of Christians Cathedral Grotto, Shillong, India **Sr. Lucy Lalsangzuali** became the first Sister of the Holy Cross from India to make final profession. Sister Lucy is from Mizoram, NE India. **Sr. Joy O'Grady**, congregational president, received her vows.

CURRENT ISSUES OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN AREAS OF HOLY CROSS INTERNATIONAL MISSION

INDIA: Violence Against Christians Escalates

The eastern Indian state of Orissa has long been plagued by Christian-Hindu tension, but the violence against Christians reached new levels in late August after Hindu political leader Swami Laxmananada Saraswati and several of his companions were killed. Though Marxist rebels claimed responsibility for the killings, extremist Hindus blamed Christians because Saraswati had been an outspoken leader in the campaign to stop villagers from converting. Dozens of Christians have been killed, churches and church institutions (including a hospital run by the Missionaries of Charity) have been torched, some priests and religious have been killed or raped, and thousands of poor Christians have been chased from their homes by fire and threats on their lives. "Christians are being hunted out now. If they don't renounce their faith, their life is in danger," said the Archbishop of Orissa's capital on September 6. In a September 30 statement decrying the lack of government response to the violence, The Indian Episcopal Conference refuted claims that the attacks are retribution for Christians forcing conversions. In a nation where the caste system continues to be used in rural areas, the bishops contend that the allegation of forced conversions "derives from fear that many in the deprived communities may be so empowered as to assert their own rights and resist exploitation. No matter how great the threat that may confront us, we cannot renounce the heritage of love and justice that Jesus left us." Karan Thapar, a moderate Hindu commentator has called for the "silent majority of Hindus" to speak out. "The violence perpetrated on Christians," he writes, "does not defend but shames Hinduism."