

5th October 2010

Detailed Report of the Sri Lanka Mission after 6months

Dear Rev. Bro. Antony Palamattom, Provincial

We are so much delighted to submit this detailed report of the assessment of the Sri Lanka mission to the Provincial and his councilors. At the outset, we extend our thankfulness to the Provincial and his team for all the support and prayers.

INTRODUCTION

The Sri Lanka Mission was a response of the Prior General's request to the Indian Province to take up the task of a new mission in any of the neighboring countries of India. Having been considered the request of the General, the Previous Provincial and his councilors made a preliminary study and upon the request of the Bishop of Badulla, His excellency, Rt.Rev.Dr. Julian Winston S. Fernando sss, Sri Lanka, the then Provincial , Bro. Augustine Polaprayil, Bro. Pius Manithottiyil and Bro. AlbertThekkumkaduthadathil paid a visit to the Bishop and had an initial discussion. It was formally agreed up on and decided to send two Brothers to the Diocese of Badulla, Sri Lanka, for preliminary assessment. The matter was submitted to the Provincial Chapter which was held in Chennai in February 2010 for the approval of the Chapter members. The Chapter entrusted the newly elected Provincial and his Councilors to follow up the matter. Accordingly, Bro. Albert Thkkumkaduthadathil and Bro. Bino Parakkanasseril accompanied by the Provincial Rev. Bro. Antony Palamattom, Rev. Bro. George Kizhakkenath, Provincial councilor and Vice-Provincial and Rev. Bro. Aloysius Joseph Mattathil, Burser of the Province, reached Sri Lanka on 5th April 2010. The Provincial, Bros.K.T George and Aloysius left Sri Lanka after a couple of days.

We have stayed in the Bishop's House for three weeks and then shifted to a building offered by the Bishop which is attached to the Parish of Diyatalawa which is 40 km away from the Badulla Town. Since the building was not used for a long time, we have done some renovation ; and purchased necessary furniture and household items, which costed altogether around Euro 3000. On 6th May 2010 the building was blessed by the Bishop in the presence of Rev. Priests, Sisters and parishioners. Around 25 people participated the function. At present we are involving in parish activities

along with the Parish Priest in visiting families etc. We have also visited different parishes and villages, estates and various people to study the situation.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DIOCESE

In a land area of 8,348.4 square kilometers, the diocesan territory includes Badulla. Badulla diocese comes under two districts such as Monaragala and Badulla.

Badulla is located at the southeastern extremity of the hill country. For rail travelers it is also the end of the line from Colombo. The town is capital of the mountainous, Uva Province, but as it is situated at a slightly lower elevation (about 600m). Badulla is almost encircled by the river known as the Badullu-Oya. It is also ringed by mountains, one of which, Namunukula, predominates. As a result, the town experiences a climatic phenomenon called the Badulla Blanket, a lingering humid mist. Badulla stands 2222 ft. or about 677m above sea-level.

Badulla is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic district which is home for Sinhalese, Muslims and Tamils. The main economic activities in Badulla are based on agriculture (60%) and tea plantations (20%). Tea is cultivated by the planters, and rice, fruit and vegetables by the natives in the district. Dunhida water falls in the diocese is gigantic and beautiful. The water fall is situated in Badulla, an ancient hill capital and about 63m (208ft).

Badulla diocese, 130 kilometers southeast of Colombo, serves a diaspora of some 21,985 Sinhalese and Tamil Catholics living among 1 million people comprising mainly Sinhalese peasant farmers and Tamil tea-garden workers in the hills of the underdeveloped southeastern Uva Province.

Badulla diocese is in the upper central region bordering Kandy in the north, Batticaloa and Trincomalee dioceses in the east, Colombo in the west, Galle in the south. The diocesan area is a predominantly Buddhist. The diocese was founded on December 18, 1972. The first bishop was Bishop Leo Nanayakkara, O.S.B. from 1972 to 1982. Badulla diocese's patron saint is St. Mary. Bishop Julian Winston Sebastian Fernando S.S.S., the present bishop was the first Asian to become a bishop from his congregation, which has three other bishops, for North America, Latin America and Africa.

Badulla diocese has 21,985 Sinhalese and Tamil baptized Catholics, of all 1,651,000 people comprising the territory. Badulla has 19 parishes with 42 resident priests.

Population

In Badulla diocese, the population is 1,614,000 at the end of 2004 (The population of the whole country 18,990,000). Most residents are Sinhalese and Tamils.

Climate

The average temperature is 23 degrees Celsius. The climate is tropical with about 1,800 millimeters of rain during monsoon. The monsoon is from May to August and October to January, this is the time of the year where heavy rains can be expected. In general, temperatures during late November to mid-February

are lower than during the rest of the year.

Political structure

The towns are managed by municipalities. The villages and small towns are administered by elected local bodies.

Telecommunications

Government and private operators provide extensive telecommunication facilities in the diocesan area.

Transportation

The diocesan area is well connected by roads and railways but still many poor roads lead to the states.

Education

89% percent is the literacy rate in the diocesan territory.

Language

The standard Sinhala and Tamil languages are in use.

Statistics

Catholic Population

As of Dec. 31, 2006 diocese of Badulla had 21,985 Sinhalese and Tamil baptized Catholics, of all 1,651,000 people comprising the territory. Badulla has 19 parishes with 42 resident priests.

People in the Diocese

- Baptized Catholics: 21,985
- Members of other Christian denominations: 5,139
- Followers of other religions: Buddhists 928,799; Hindus: 172,063; Muslims : 50,644

Diocesan and Religious Priests

Diocesan Priests: 27

Religious Priests: 15

Religious Brothers, Sisters

Religious Brothers: 0

Religious Sisters: 71

Seminaries, Houses of Formation

Minor seminary: 1

Major seminary: none

Houses of Formation: 4

Deaneries in Diocese

- Bandarawela
 - Badulla
- Moneragala

There are 19 parishes with 42 resident priests in the diocese

Catholic Educational Institutions

Technical Institutes: 2

- Bishop Leo Technical Institutes, Badulla, Sri Lanka
- St. Anthony's Technical Institute, Moneragala, Sri Lanka

Catholic Social Welfare

- Children's home: 1
- Girls' homes: 2
- Girl's hostel: 1
- Clinic :1

The Health Care Services

Predominantly, the health care services are provided by the Government at various levels through rural dispensaries, Base hospitals, district Hospitals and referral centres. These services are provided at free of cost. There are Dispensaries in most of the Tea Estate. But there are private health care services provided by the Doctors through dispensaries as well. The doctors are allowed to do private consultations (here it is called Channeled Consultation) in the private clinics after the duty hours. As per the law of the Country only a medical practitioner who is registered in this Country can prescribe and provide medical services. Therefore, it may not be possible to provide medical services of any kind without the support of a medical Doctor.

Educational services

The Government is providing free of education to all the children. There are few private schools and colleges running by the private people without any support of the Government. But there is no school or colleges running by any Religious in this diocese. Few years ago, the Government has taken over the Institutions which were running by the religious Brothers and Sisters.

OUR OBSERVATION

Government

After the 30 years of internal War, Sri Lanka is developing very fast which we can see everywhere. More than 90 % of the people are Buddhist and therefore this is a country with Buddhist ideology. The Government is also supporting by the Buddhist. Here it is a sort of aggressive Buddhism and they are dominating everywhere. In the Government there is no strong opposition and therefore they can change any existing law without any problem. The Catholics are very minority and are not much supported by the Government. Few years ago, the Government has taken over most of the Hospitals and Educational Institutions run by the Catholic religious.

Land and the availability

Badulla is covered with mountains of tea plants and it is not easy to find a level ground. The tea estates were planted by the British and when they left it belongs to the Government. Some of the Estates are given to the private companies for lease. Actually there is no transaction of land is going on and it is very difficult to assess the price of the land. We have seen a 13 Acres of land which is in Haputala. It is a slightly slide land with 8 acres of tea plant and other cultivation. The demanded price for the above land is around Euro.3 Laks . We could not proceed further on this land because Bishop did not agree to purchase the land in Haputala.

Bishop and the Diocese

At present there are no major apostolate services running by the Religious in this Diocese. Most of the Religious are having only their Formation houses. The Diocese is having only two technical training schools and one small clinic. A Home for the Aged is under construction since two years. There is some religious like Marist Brothers, Franciscan Brothers and Jesuit Fathers left from here. We have seen that there is limited freedom for the religious to do their activities. Everything is totally controlled by the Bishop. Most of the development was done by the O.M.I Fathers in this diocese. They were working in the interior places and when it is developed, the diocese will take over and they have to go further to interior places.

Last week we had a talk with the Bishop and we informed him that we found some land in Haputala which is in between a Parish Church and the Minor seminary. But the Bishop will not allow us to start anything near to the church or other Religious Institution. His idea is that the Religious should go to interior where there is no Catholics. We told him that we wish to start something near to a Parish to attend the Holy Mass every day. Further, he will not allow us to start any Home for the Aged since he is constructing one in the Diocese. In short, He will decide for us where to start and what to start.

As a foreigner we cannot purchase the land in our name and therefore only in the name of the Bishop. Further, every year we have to renew our Visa, paying Rs.20000, which is only with the recommendation letter of the Bishop. Our stay in Sri Lanka, we have to depend always to the Bishop.

Sharing of a German Journalist.

Mr. Michael J.A. Kreit is a journalist from Germany. He is running an Orphanage at Koslanda in Sri Lanka since 11 years. He founded a Little Smile Association to help the poor and he is getting fund from Germany. He is having a huge Farm (Little Smile Organic Pvt Ltd) and mainly exporting spices to Europe. Recently he constructed a building for modern type of Education. He is the soul person for all these project and it worth around SL Rs.2000 cr. Now he is facing lot of trouble from Government to send him away from here. The Police charged serious false cases (like keeping of drug and Antique) against him and put him in jail and seized his passport.

Even the Apolo Hospital in Colombo which was constructed few years ago is now seized by a Minister.

Our suggestions

In view of the information that we gathered from different sources and from discussions with various people, we put forward the following suggestions;

1. To take the challenge and risk to start a School for the Mentally challenged or a Home for the Aged people in this diocese according to the charism of our Founder St. John of God. For that we need complete freedom and independency to select the place and apostolate according to the our charism. This is to be convinced to the Bishop by an official dialogue with the Provincial.
2. Discontinue our study for the time being in this diocese and start later in other diocese like Negombo or Chilaw where there is more Catholic area. At present it is not possible to go directly to other diocese from here since we came here by the invitation of this diocese.

Conclusion

With great enthusiasm and a challenging mind we took over this study in Sri Lanka. As Hospitaller Brothers, we are always open to the new challenges and ready to take up new initiative and open new avenues where ever needed as shown and lived by St. John of God and our beloved Bro. Fortunatus. Sri Lanka Mission is one such that is already initiated in accordance with our Charism of Hospitality. Considering the present situation and the before mentioned facts we wish that Provincial and the councilors will take a suitable decision as early as possible.

Let us united together in prayer as a Province for the success of a suitable decision regarding this mission and thereby we can be living witnesses of the compassionate love of Jesus Christ with the intercession of our Most Holy Mother Mary and St. John of God.

Thank you .

Yours fraternally united in prayers

Bro. Albert and Bro. Bino.