

## **AS WE LOOK BACK TOWARDS OUR JOURNEY**

### **FAITH FORMATION :-**

- **Amravati Diocesan Synod held on 15 – 17 March, 2014**

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Bishop Elias Gonsalves, as per the canonical norms of the Church, initiated the process of organizing a diocesan Synod for the first time in the history of the diocese. Motivated by the idea of having a Synod and realising that the missionary Amravati Church has to become alive and responsive to the realities and challenges of the times and people of the diocese, adhering to and guided by the teachings of the Church, the call of Pope Francis and the mandate of the CBCI; the faithful, religious and priests of the diocese whole- heartedly accepted the proposal.

With engaged preparation for about 8 months, facilitated by Fr. Tony Herbert SJ; Mr. Lourdes Baptista and Fr. Joseph Xavier SJ, to understand the call of the times, various documents like the Catholic Social Teachings, United Nations Conventions and Treatises, the 12<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission document of the Government of India and the mandate of the CBCI and by conducting Participatory Learning Approach in 37 rural and urban settings and village hubs, draft position papers were prepared on 8 thrust areas. Each position paper has outlined analysis of critical issues, realities and challenges and possible strategies and programmes of action.

Responding to the call, about 176 persons consisting of 108 diocesan clergy and religious working in the diocese, about 58 lay representatives, women and men, and 10 provincials or their representatives from their congregations actively participated in the Synod.

The draft position papers were discussed threadbare by the participants guided by the Spirit which helped everyone to own up and commit themselves to the processes and the outcomes of the Synod. Finally with the theme '**ToReconcile and Unite all things in Christ**' we brought out a Socio-Pastoral Plan for the Diocese of Amravati.

- **Ordinations**

To serve the Church of Amravati with its ministerial priesthood, Bishop Elias Gonsalves, by duly observing the prescribed rites, ordained 6 Men as Priests for the Diocese of Amravati at different occasions. Arvind Xaxa was ordained on 28-12-2012; Rupesh Dabre was ordained on 02-02-2013; Subhash Maghade was Ordained on 13-04-2013; Gabriel Dhikar was Ordained on 13-11-2013; Cornelius Kujur was ordained 03-01-2014; Surjeet Tirkey was Ordained on 11-05-2016.

- **Zones**

For the better functioning of the Diocese, it was divided into five Zones i. e. Amravati Zone (Sts. Peter & Paul) Akola-Buldhana Zone (St. Mark), Melghat Zone (St. Matthew), Paratwada Zone (St. Luke) and Yavatmal-Washim Zone (St. John). Fr. Joselyn Pancras, Fr. Cyriac V. C., Fr. Biju James, Fr. Joseph Thavamony and Fr. Sanjay Wankhede were appointed as Zonal Leaders respectively.

- **Inauguration of a New Church Building at Kapustalni Mission**

Our Lady Help of Christians Church, Kapustalni which was built in the year 1903 was almost in ruins due to its poor foundational structure. Thus, Bishop Elias Gonsalves decided to build a new church for the faithful of this mission who would be able to participate during Liturgical & Para-liturgical activities with more devotion. After gaining a good support from the National and International donors, we were able to build a House of God. Finally on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2014, at the hand of Bishop Elias Gonsalves, and in the presence of many Priests, Religious and Faithful, Our Lady Help of Christians Church, Kapustalni was inaugurated, blessed and made open for the faithful to worship and pray.

- **Inauguration of MSMHC Convent at Shegaon**

The foundation works for MSMHC Convent started in the first week of November 2014 and the work soon progressed and was completed by July 2015. Thus on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2015 Bishop Elias Gonsalves, Bishop of Amravati, blessed the Building in the presence of Rev. Sr. Philomena Mathew, the Superior General of MSMHC, several priests and nuns of the Diocese and the laity of the Parish of Shegaon.

- **Inauguration of FCC Convent at Ranigram, Uttavali in Duni Parish**

Melghat area is one of the most backward zones of our Diocese where many missionaries have worked and still working hard amongst the Korku Adivasies. Sisters of Franciscan Clarist Congregation (FCC) are working in this area to develop the Health-Socio-Pastoral status of the people. Though they had two different communities, covering about 40 km of work-area in Medical, Social and Pastoral activities; it was a need to build a new convent to link the social upliftment work. Thus, one more convent was built in this area and was named after Martyr Sr. Rani Maria. On ....., the convent was inaugurated and blessed by Bishop Elias Gonsalves in the presence of Provincial Superior Sr. Rosily FCC, many Priests, Religious and Faithful at Ranigram, Uttavali in Duni Parish.

- **Inauguration of Ursuline Convent at Borgaon-Manju in Akola Parish**

20 km away from Akola Parish, on the National highway, we have started a new mission center at Borgaon-Manju. To help in Mount Carmel School at the center and to initiate the health ministry, then Bishop of Amravati, Bishop Lourdes Daniel invited Ursuline Sisters at Borgaon Manju. Initially they were staying in a place provided by the diocese, but later they purchased a piece of land in the same area and built a new house for them. On....., the convent was inaugurated and blessed by Bishop Elias Gonsalves in the presence of Provincial Superior Sr. Rita US, many Priests, Religious and Faithful at Borgaon-Manju in Akola Parish.

- **Inauguration of Holy Cross Convent at Mariampur in Chikaldara Parish**

One of the oldest missions of the diocese is Chikaldara. French Missionaries have worked hard to bring up this mission and to develop the life situations of the Adivasi people of this area. Holy Cross Sisters have been working in this mission from more than a century. They had a convent which was in urgent need of renovation or to be built a new. Finally, they decided to bring down the old structure and build a new one for the better functioning of their mission. With the help of many generous hands they managed to form a new house for them. On....., the convent was inaugurated and blessed by Bishop Elias Gonsalves in the presence of Provincial Superior Sr. Jolly SCC, many Priests, Religious and Faithful at Mariampur in Chikaldara Parish.

- **Inauguration of Holy Cross Convent, Monticule at Amravati**

Since French missionaries of Sisters of the Cross of Chavanod landed first in Amravati, it now becomes the Mother House for the Sisters. Many Holy Cross sisters have initiated their religious life in Amravati and thus they desire to be in Amravati during their last days of life. Knowing the needs of the Sisters, the Congregation built a new house for the retiring Sisters so that they could spend more time in prayers. After renovating and extending, the convent was again blessed and inaugurated by Bishop Elias Gonsalves on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2016 in the presence of Provincial Superior Sr. Jolly SCC, many Priests and Religious.

- **New Religious Sisters invited at Tiwasa Mission**

Sisters of the Congregation of the 'Carmelite Religious of Trivandrum Carmelite' (CCR) were invited to work in the Diocese of Amravati. After completing the procedure, in the Month of July 2014, two sisters arrived in Amravati to help us in newly started Dynamata School at Tiwasa Mission. Their arrival added more efficiency in our educational ministry.

- **Double Papal Honor in for the Diocese**

Indeed it was a great Joy for the Diocese as on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2014, the Holy Father graciously granted a Medal “Benemerenti” to Mr. Manikrao Guldeokar, a lay man of our Diocese for his tireless service in our Diocese for last 55 years as catechist and Sacristan.

It gave us a chance for double celebration when we received the News that on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2016, the Holy Father graciously granted a Cross “Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice” to our beloved Sr. Barbara her service as Sacristan for last 26 years in St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Amravati.

- **Diamond Jubilee Celebration of Amravati Diocese**

A yearlong preparation preceded by a Synod under the amiable guidance of Bishop Elias Gonsalves in the Diocese of Amravati, culminated in the Diamond Jubilee Celebration of the foundation of the Diocese on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2015 with the theme: “**Family: Its Mission in the Church and Society.**” Archbishop Salvatore Pinocchio, Apostolic Nuncio to India, along with Archbishop Abraham Viruthakulangara of Nagpur, Bishop Godfrey of Baroda, Bishop Edwin, the Emeritus Bishop of Aurangabad, Bishop Allwyn of Sindhudurg, Bishop Ephraim of Chanda and Bishop Ambrose of Aurangabad took part in the Eucharistic Celebration and the Cultural Programme cum civil felicitation thereafter. Many renowned personalities of the city were present for the programme. MLC Mr. Ranjit Patil, the honorable State Home Minister thanked and appreciated Catholic Church and its affiliate institutions for the yeomen services rendered to the people in the diocese regardless of their cast and creed. The celebration fittingly came to an end with the agape.

- **Inauguration and re-dedication of the renovated St. Francis Xavier Cathedral**

On the same occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of the Diocese, St. Francis Xavier Cathedral which was under renovation was inaugurated and rededicated on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2016. The memorial statue of ‘Jesus, the Holy Redeemer’ at the entrance of the Cathedral was blessed and installed by Archbishop Abraham, after which Archbishop Salvatore, the Apostolic Nuncio solemnly inaugurated the renovated Cathedral and Bishop Elias Gonsalves opened the doors of the Cathedral in the presence of a large gathering of its flock and invited them to make a solemn entry into the presence of God. A very good wooden carving work done at the sanctuary of the Cathedral added not only more beauty but also created an atmosphere of prayer. At the end of the Eucharistic Celebration the Architect, Engineer, Contractor, Sound and Light Technicians, the Sequeira Brothers from Vasai, the Cathedral Sacristans Mr. Manik and Sr. Barbara were felicitated at the hand of Archbishop Salvatore Pinocchio, the Apostolic Nuncio.

## **EDUCATION:-**

- **Creation of Amravati Diocesan Board of Education**

There are almost 48 educational institutions, including Primary, Secondary & Higher Secondary Schools, in the Diocese of Amravati run by the Priests & the Religious. Though each institution was contributing in its own best efforts to develop the society, they were never brought together under one umbrella. It was the need of time to form an association for the Educational purpose where they can work together on common ground, not only to help each other but to learn from one another. It would also help them to fight together in difficult situations, especially when the conflict arrives between the Local Management and the civil authority. Thus, with great efforts, Bishop Elias Gonsalves brought all of them together and formed a new association called ‘Amravati Diocesan Board of Education’ on January 4, 2013 with the Bishop of the Diocese as its ex-officio President and the Nominated Secretary.

- **Creation of Amravati Catholic Diocesan Education Society**

Again to bring all the Diocesan Educational Institutions under one umbrella 'Amravati Catholic Diocesan Education Society' was formed. Though the work of the formation of the Society was initiated in late 2013, but it took almost 3 years to complete the work with a proper legislative procedures. The society was registered under the Bombay Public Trusts Act, 1950 and it also obtained the 'Minority Certificate for Educational Institution' from State Government of Maharashtra.

- **New Schools initiated in the Diocese**

After a proper study, Bishop Elias expressed the need of starting two new schools in the diocese. Dynanmata English School was started at Tiwasa Mission from the academic year 2013 and St. Xavier Cathedral CBSE School was started at Amravati from the academic year 2014. Both the schools have now taken a shape and they are imparting a value based education to the upcoming generation.

- **Inauguration and Blessing of St. Xavier Cathedral CBSE School Building**

One more memorial of the Diamond Jubilee of the Diocese in the field of Education, on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2016, St. Xavier Cathedral CBSE School Building was inaugurated and blessed by His Grace Archbishop Salvatore Pinocchio, the Apostolic Nuncio to India. Many students, parents, staff as well as Priests and religious witnessed the marvelous programme.

#### **HEALTH: -**

- **Inauguration of the Extended Building of Dayasagar Hospital**

Dayasagar which is one of the biggest hospitals of the city, with all the possible equipment is the major serving health institution in Amravati. Day by day the number of patients is increasing and that gave a thought to extent the building. A new wing for the hospital was made ready and was blessed by Bishop Elias Gonsalves in the presence of Provincial Superior Sr. Rosily FCC, many Priests, Religious and Faithful. It is to be noted that Dayasagar, a charitable hospital is serving many poor patients in the city as well as many other villages are covered by the hospital through Mobile dispensary. There is another Dayasagar Hospital located deep in the heart of Melghat Region amidst of Korku Adivasies. This hospital also is involved in health ministry to the poorest of the poor.

#### **SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT :-**

- **Manav Shakti Sanstha at Zari-Jamni**

It is a known fact that Vidarbha region of Maharashtra State is most of the time badly affected by agrarian crises, especially Yavatmal District, where a big number of farmers have committed suicide. Keeping in mind the need of the time, the diocese of Amravati started working for this cause in great manner. Manav Shakti Sanstha (MASS) which is situated in deep isolated area, amongst the Kolam Adivasies of Yavatmal district is highly engaged into human development works. Apart from the material and financial aid, the center is more focusing on counseling, guidance, extra-classes for children, livelihood programmes etc. many generous hands have come up to help this noble cause.

- **Our Lady of Perpetual Help Burse for Distressed Farmers**

As a watermark of the diamond Jubilee of the diocese, a burse named “Our Lady of Perpetual Help” burse for distressed Farmers was declared at the hands of His Grace Archbishop Salvatore Pinocchio. After a proper survey and inquiry made, a truly laudable step, as a beginning of this project, an initial cheque of Rs.10,000/- was handed over to a widow named “RekhaLokhande”.

The Apostolic Nuncio expressed his happiness on seeing the initiative taken by the diocese and immediately handed over Rs. 10,00,000 /- (Ten Lakh) cheque for this noble cause. The diocese has now taken kin interest in this project and many families are helped.

- **Inauguration of ‘Family welfare and Counseling center’**

Due to agrarian crises and other problems, many families are at the verge of getting broken. Thus, it was an urgent need of time to start a counseling center for those in need. Hereby, along with material help, focus is now given more on personal and family counseling. A special cell is established in the diocese, with the help of expert counselors, to help and guide the needy. At the diocesan level “**Family welfare and Counseling center**” is inaugurated on July 3, 2016 to help the distressed farmers, especially making them strong in faith to face the crises to take up as challenge. This center is now also open for the Parents, Students, Youth, Women etc.

#### **COMMUNICATION :-**

- **Amrawani and Diocesan website**

Keeping in mind the present world of multi-media, we have also started a Diocesan website [www.amravtidiocese.co.in](http://www.amravtidiocese.co.in) whereby all our diocesan activities are uploaded and made open for all. In order to focus on our other activities and to evangelize through our work, we have also taken a keen interest in starting a diocesan magazine called *Amarwani* (Amar+vaanai) = eternal word= Jesus). At present, the magazine is published only once in three months.

- **Various Construction, Renovation and Repairworks**

As the diocese is spreading its wings to cover various missions, it also stands in need of infrastructure. Therefore, various construction, renovation and repair works are taking place in the diocese. Many schools buildings are being renovated, extended or repaired for the better functioning. Few Churches and Presbyteries of different missions which were in need of an urgent repair were made ready for the proper use. Still the construction works at many places is going on.

#### **ENVIRONMENT :**

- **Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vanashri Vrukshyamitra Award**

Caritas India, in collaboration with JVS, runs “ Centre for Environmental Studies in Social Sector” ‘CESSS’ in Malkapur mission area of our Diocese. The works done in terms of development of the capacities of the communities in many villages through this centre are praiseworthy. This programme was initiated by Caritas India which is now even meant for the neighbouring regions as well. The Government of Maharashtra took a keen note of it and

granted “ Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vanashri Vrukshyamitra Award 2014” to this centre. On 29<sup>th</sup> July 2016, at the hand of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and in the presence of many ministers and dignitaries, Fr. Jolly and Mr. Mukund received the award during a grand function at Nagpur.