



## **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CUSTODY OF NIRMALA IN THE STATES OF ASSAM-MEGHALAYA AND ARUNACHAL PRADESH**

### **D E C R E E**

Prot. N. 000704/03

The missionary venture of St. Joseph Province, Kerala, took its first steps in the region when it responded positively to the proposal made by the Archbishop of Guwahati in 1992, with due recommendation of the Conference of Capuchin Major Superiors of India (CCMSI) at its meeting held in November 1994. Two brothers sent by the Province to the mountainous terrain of Guwahati in 1994, pioneered missionary engagements of the Province in the region. Days of sweat and toil followed and eventually resulted in the steady growth of evangelisation and the establishment of the Order. More brothers joined the pioneers. Br. Peter Celestine, who later became the Bishop of Jammu-Srinagar, was the first Provincial Delegate of the Assam-Meghalaya Mission. Following the recommendation of the CCMSI, dated 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1997 and in response to the letter of the then Provincial Minister, Br. Mathew Paikada of St. Joseph Province, Kerala, dated 17<sup>th</sup> July, 1997, a part of the State of Assam and the State of Meghalaya (the present Archdioceses of Guwahati and Shillong and the dioceses of Tezpur, Dibrugarh & Diphuna Tura) was assigned to St. Joseph Province, Kerala, for missionary activity and implantation of the Order, with the consent of the General Definitory given at the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> October, 1997 (Prot. No. 00800/97).

The Archbishop of Guwahati entrusted the parish of Mariampur to the care of this Mission on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1995. The earnest and hard work of the missionaries yielded abundant fruit. A number of institutions were joined to the parish in the service of God's people. The same pattern was followed in other parishes such as St. Xavier's Church, Chima Impel (1999), St. Francis of Assisi Church, Byrnighat, St. Peter's Church, Kwila Mwila, etc.

As well as serving the human development of the people, the brothers have also

been successful in gathering up new workers for the harvest of the Kingdom of God. The endeavour of the missionaries in this region in promoting local vocations to our Order has placed our active Franciscan Capuchin presence on a strong footing. It is praiseworthy also that the selfless service and far-sighted activities of our brothers are encouraging to the bishops of the region. Their requests for the presence of the friars at more mission stations in their territories have always met with a positive response from the major superiors of St. Joseph Province throughout the development of their mission in this region.

At a meeting of the CCMSI held on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2002, the Provincial Minister, Br. Thomas Jacob, citing the evident steady growth and maturity of the missionary enterprise of the brothers in the region, presented the proposal of his province to raise the Mission of Assam-Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh to a Custody. In accordance with the directive of the CCMSI, and with the consent of the Provincial Definitory at its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2002, Br. Thomas Jacob, Provincial Minister of St. Joseph Province, Kerala sent a letter dated 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2002, to the General Definitory requesting that the Assam-Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh Mission be raised to a Custody entrusted to St. Joseph Province, Kerala (Prot. No. 000827/02).

The General Definitory, at its meeting on 20 November 2002, after having carefully examined all the aspects of the request, and having verified all the prerequisites, decided to raise the Assam-Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh Mission to a Custody of the same Province.

Therefore, observing all canonical provisions,

We, with the consent of the General Definitory, according to the norms of our Constitutions (cf. No.111.1), constitute and declare established the Custody of Assam-Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh, dependent on St. Joseph Province, Kerala, with all the rights and obligations of a Custody of the Order.

This decree will receive its legal force on 21 November 2003, on the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the day of its promulgation.

The boundaries of this new Custody, named **Nirmala**, which has the Immaculate Conception as its Patron, will consist of the States of Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh and the State of Assam , excluding that part which belongs to the Diocese of Aizawl.

The members of the Custody are :

-the professed indigenous brothers of Assam-Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh at the time of the erection of the Custody;

-all brothers who, at the time of erection of the Custody of Assam-Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh, exercise their ministry in Assam-Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh;

-all brothers who will make their profession as members of the Custody;

-all brothers who will be assigned to service in the Custody of Assam-Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh.

In accordance with No. 111.4 of our Constitutions, having considered the consultative votes of the perpetually professed friars now serving in Assam-Meghalaya

and Arunachal Pradesh, with the consent of the General Definitory given during our meeting of 24 June 2003, we hereby appoint as regular superior and councillors the following friars:

<b>Regular Superior</b>	<b>Br. Kuriakose Kattupara</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Councillor</b>	<b>Br. Sebastian Manayanickal</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Councillor</b>	<b>Br. Jose Pandianparampil</b>

Furthermore it is established that all friars with perpetual vows join in the first chapter of the Custody (cf. Const. No.111.4) to be held within one year. It will be the task of the Chapter to discuss the life and the testimony of these brothers and to prepare a Statute of the new Custody as well as to specify its capitular and electoral procedures.

Our hearts are filled with praise to God at the birth of a new Custody of our Order; our mind is full of grateful remembrances of the friars of St. Joseph Province, Kerala for their firm commitment to the growth of the Capuchin presence in Assam-Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh; our hopes are kindled at their resoluteness in sending more friars to the new Custody. We are also impressed with their zeal to implant the Order in Assam-Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh. The friars of the new Custody of Assam-Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh merit our fraternal congratulations and God's unceasing blessings. We commend them to the loving care of our Brother Francis and Sister Clare whose seraphic spirit we pray that they imbibe and diffuse in Assam-Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh, securely building the reign of God in the North-East part of India.

Given in Rome at the General Curia on 7 October 2003.

**Br. John Corriveau, O.F.M.Cap.**  
**General Minister**

**Br. Marek Przewski O.F.M. Cap.**  
**General Secretary**