



**ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CUSTODY OF PREM JYOTI  
IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF DELHI  
AND DIOCESES OF SHIMLA AND CHANDIGARH**

**D E C R E E**

Prot. N. 000705/03

By the second half of 18<sup>th</sup> century the Capuchin Order had established a glorious missionary presence in and around North India. The northern part of India was annexed to the Tibetan Capuchin Mission by a decree of the Holy See on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1874. This northern part includes the Delhi - Shimla region. The Mission was entrusted to the care of the Capuchin Province of the Marches.

In 1910, the Archdiocese of Shimla was created, dividing the then Archdiocese of Agra. Its first Bishop was Fr. Anselm E.J. Keneally OFM. Cap., a member of the English Capuchin Province. In 1937, Delhi was joined to the Shimla Archdiocese, thus becoming Delhi - Shimla Archdiocese, of which Most. Rev. Sylvester Patrick Mulliyann Capuchin was the first Archbishop. In 1950, Delhi - Shimla Archdiocese was handed over to the Diocesan clergy, and the Capuchins moved into Jalandhar. From then on the Capuchin presence here became increasingly sparse as the Capuchin thrust shifted to the Jalandhar Diocese. On June 4, 1959, the Archdiocese was divided into two separate ecclesiastical units, namely, the Diocese of Shimla and Archdiocese of Delhi.

New awareness of the need to create a more active Capuchin presence in the capital of India emerged as the Capuchins in India became a fully-fledged Province in 1963. Ever since, the Indian Capuchins considered it one of their primary concerns to work in Delhi - Shimla. In 1970, the Parish of Shahdra in Delhi was entrusted to the Capuchins by the then Archbishop of Delhi Most. Rev. Angelo Fernandez. They took over the parish of Shahdra and began their missionary endeavour. In the year 1972, the existing Indian Capuchin Province was divided into four jurisdictions in South India. The various missions in North India too were divided and the mission of Delhi - Shimla was entrusted to St. Francis of Assisi Province, Kerala. Five brothers were sent by the Province to work there. Initially

they had a very humble beginning in the parish of Shahdra. The parish includes three mission stations. There are two secondary schools, St. Joseph's Academy, run by the friars. These schools cater for the educational needs of the local people. Within a few years the presence and work of the missionaries made the parish the most vibrant one in the Diocese. Using the parish as a launching pad, the missionaries had other outreach programmes in the entire District, such as literacy campaigns, health care programmes, adult education, Alcoholics Anonymous, gainful employment schemes, etc. When the time was ripe the Province extended its missionary activities to the Shimla - Chandigarh Diocese in 1990. Similar activities for the development of the faith and life of the people were undertaken. The LaVerna friary, with a parish and two sub-mission stations, opened in 1990. Friars are engaged principally in various modes of indirect evangelisation in the villages. More and more houses and outreach programmes were launched in response to the needs of the people. Assisi Ashram, Dilshad Colony, Delhi was opened in 2001. This is a pastorally oriented house where our brothers cater to the spiritual needs of the people around. Another house was opened in Shimla - Chandigarh region in the same year. The friary, St. Francis Ashram, Kala - Amb, runs a primary school, St. Francis' Academy, as it is found to be a more contextual means of indirect evangelisation and spiritual animation of the local people. While working hard for the Kingdom of God the friars also paid attention to forming young missionaries so as to ensure a better future for the Mission. Navjyothi Ashram, Bawal, Hariyana was opened in 2002 with the aim of forming young Capuchins in a genuine, living missionary context. From the very start Navjyothi has functioned as the post-novitiate of the Province where young brothers imbibe a genuine Capuchin Mission spirit amidst the harsh realities of the mission field. The socio-political setting is not always conducive to the implantation of the Order. In spite of such hardships, a positive beginning has already been achieved with the recruitment and nurturing of local vocations, and these efforts continue in the existing formation house. Now the Mission has a vibrant team of missionaries capable of carrying on the work of evangelization in a more effective way.

With the steady growth and maturity of the Capuchin missionary presence in the region, and following the decision of the extraordinary Provincial Chapter of St. Francis of Assisi Province, Kerala held from 11 - 14 October 2000, the then Provincial Minister, Br. Godwin Gama, requested the General Definitory to raise the Mission of Delhi - Shimla - Chandigarh to a Custody, on 23 January 2002 (cf. Prot. No. 00088/02). The proposal had been presented and approved at the CCMSI meeting in Nagahutta in January 2002 (cf. Prot. N. 00386/02).

The General Definitory, at its meeting on 10 April 2003, having carefully examined all the aspects of the request made by St. Francis of Assisi Province, Kerala, and having verified all the prerequisites, decided to raise the Delhi - Shimla - Chandigarh 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 Delhi - Shimla - Chandigarh, dependent on St. Francis of Assisi Province, Kerala, with all the rights and obligations of a Custody of the Order.

This decree will receive its legal force on 22 November 2003, the day of its promulgation.

The boundaries of this new Custody, named **Prem Jyoti**, which has St. Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio) as its Patron, will consist of the Archdiocese of Delhi and Dioceses of Shimla and Chandigarh.

The members of the Custody are:

-the professed indigenous brothers of Delhi - Shimla - Chandigarh at the time of the erection of the Custody;

-all the brothers who, at the time of erection of the Custody of Delhi - Shimla - Chandigarh, exercise their ministry in Delhi - Shimla - Chandigarh;

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

-all the brothers who will be assigned to service in the Custody of Delhi - Shimla - Chandigarh.

In accord with No. 111.4 of our Constitutions, having considered the consultative votes of the perpetually professed friars now serving in Delhi - Shimla - Chandigarh, 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:

Regular Superior

Br. Godwin Gama

1<sup>st</sup> Councillor

Br. George Kooliath

2<sup>nd</sup> Councillor

Br. Joseph Alex

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. Francis of Assisi Province, Kerala for their firm commitment to the growth of the Capuchin presence in Delhi - Shimla - Chandigarh; 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 Delhi - Shimla - Chandigarh. The friars of the new Custody of Delhi - Shimla - Chandigarh 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 Delhi - Shimla - Chandigarh, securely building the reign of God in the Delhi - Shimla - Chandigarh region of India.

Given in Rome at the General Curia on 23 September 2003, the day of commemoration of St. Pio of Pietrelcina, Patron of the new circumscription.

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

Br. Marek Przewczewski O.F.M. Cap.  
General Secretary