

FAIRHAVEN PROVINCIAL NEWS

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

A very Happy New Year for 2008. The month of January seems to bring a certain excitement with a new beginning. We all hope we will experience happiness and blessings with the new year. In the UK, the University of Leicester did research on the happiest countries of the world based on: health, wealth, and education. According to their research of 178 countries, some of the results were: Denmark(1), Bahamas(5), Canada(10), Ireland(11), USA(23), UK(41), China(82), Japan(90), India(125) Russia(167) The least happy: Congo, Zimbabwe, Burundi.

Sociologist **Fr. Andrew Greeley** and **Time** magazine both sponsored surveys about the level of satisfaction for people in their work. Amazingly, the results were the same.... Catholic Priests are amongst the highest for happiness and fulfillment in their chosen profession. **Blessed Damien** proclaimed that he was the “happiest missionary alive.” Whether it is a priest or an SS.CC. religious, I believe those who choose a consecrated life have the capability of experiencing what Christ promised...reaping a hundred fold. What happens if someone does not find themselves identifying with the survey results?

We are meant to be happy by “taking up the Cross and following him.” Some of the happiest clergy and religious I met were Priests who spent years in re-education camps in China; Religious who witnessed and survived the “killing fields” in Cambodia; Religious who were confined to bed through illness, and some SS.CC. at Damien residence in Fairhaven. Happiness does not depend just upon health, wealth and education. It comes from connecting to the Kingdom within. Blessed Mother Teresa lived the “dark night of the soul” for 57 years but was filled with spiritual joy because of the Christ who came in darkness. Wherever God has “planted us”, we are meant to experience the “abundant life.”

“The community seeks to insert itself in the world in which it lives so as to be a sign of the presence of God. The relations thereby established permit it to discover Gospel values in all persons and to read into them the action of the Spirit.” (SS.CC. Constitutions Art. 47)

“Living a community life oriented toward the ideal that has been described involves trials which constitute a death to the individualism and selfishness that may be present in each member. In this way, the brothers are led to a fuller and more joyful life.”

(SS.CC. Constitutions Art. 48)

Fraternally in the Sacred Hearts,

Bill Petrie ss.cc.

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VISITATION TO INDIA

As a member of the Board of the **Damien Dutton Society**, I have received sponsorship through them to attend the 17th International Leprosy Congress in Hyderabad, India, which begins on World Leprosy Day, January 30th, 2008. The following week a meeting will be held with the SS.CC. community in Orissa. **Al Gauthier**, our finance manager, will also visit the community at that time. I return to Fairhaven on February 11th.

ANTI-CHRISTIAN ATTACKS IN ORISSA

Fr. Subal Nayak conveyed his gratitude to the community for supportive prayers for the Church in Orissa that experienced violent attacks against Christians, their property and Church buildings during Christmas week. To understand the extent of the tragic event, the open letter of **Archbishop Raphael Cheenath, SVD** is at the end of this newsletter.

PROVINCIAL COUNCIL MEETINGS FOR 2008

January 15-19	April 6-11	June 24-27	November 18-21
February 14-17	May 20-23	September 2-5	

ANNUAL RETREAT FOR 2008

The dates for the 2008 community retreat will be **May 25-30** at Wareham . Friday May 30th is the **Feast of the Sacred Heart**. The retreat will conclude with our jubilee celebrations at a Mass of Thanksgiving at 11:00 followed by a social and banquet meal.

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE (USC) MEETING

The USC Bursars will begin their Wareham meeting with **General Econome Fr. Ed Popish** in Wareham on Sunday April 6-8, 2008. The Provincials meeting is April 7-10. **Superior General Fr. Javier Alvarez-Ossorio** will be with us April 5-12. A special welcome to our Rome and Provincial visitors.

SS.CC. SISTERS FAIRHAVEN CENTENARY CELEBRATION

In commemoration of the arrival of the first Sisters of the Sacred Hearts to Fairhaven in 1908, a community celebration will be held during the USC meeting. A **Mass of Thanksgiving** will be celebrated at 4:30 pm at the Retreat House Chapel on Wednesday April 9th, followed by the banquet dinner. All members of the community are cordially invited. **Sr. Helene Wood**, Provincial of the Pacific Province, will be in attendance.

FR. JOHN YAMADA SS.CC. ELECTED VICE PROVINCIAL

On Dec 28, 2008, during **Fr. Javier Alvarez- Ossorio's** General Visitation to Japan, **Fr. John Yamada** was installed as Vice Provincial. Also elected were: **Fr. Paul Kenji Honma** as vicar vice provincial, **Fr. John Michiaki Chihara** second councilor, **Fr. Phil Murphy**, third councilor, **Fr. Michael Coleman**, fourth councilor, **Fr. Sri Waluyo**, first alternative councilor and **Fr. Peter Kusunoki**, second alternative councilor. Congratulations to the new Japan Vice Province leadership. In 2009 it will be the 60th anniversary of the start of the mission.

The Vice Province of Japan has also made a personnel contribution to **CAP** with **Fr. Pierce Mullen** accepting the assignment as Director of the Damien Formation Center in Manila, replacing **Fr. Enrique Losada**.

SECULAR BRANCH MEETS IN THE USA EAST PROVINCE

Fr. Pat Killilea, the Secular Branch mentor, and **Dora Gomes**, Secular Branch leader, will be the hosts for the January 21-25, 2008 meeting to be held at St. Mary's Church, North Fairhaven. Representatives will come from California, Canada and Hawaii.

A RETREAT "CELEBRATING HOPE"

On January 11-13, 2008, **Sr. Claire Bouchard, ss.cc.** will conduct "**Celebrating Hope**", her first retreat since joining the staff at the Wareham Sacred Hearts Retreat Center. Talks, prayers, activities and sharings will help participants to embrace life-changing and life-sustaining hope through the Scriptures, and **Pope Benedict's** encyclical "**Spe Salvi**." Call 508-295-0100 for reservations. Also scheduled are:

Lenten Retreat for Women by Jane Griffin, MSW February 22-24, 2008
Lenten Retreat for Men by Deacon Frank Tremblay February 15-17, 2008

RESPITE: A TIME APART FOR SS.CC. PRIESTS, BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Let it be known to the SS.CC. in any Province of the Congregation, that they may come for a day or come for a week at the Sacred Hearts Retreat Center in Wareham, Massachusetts. Rather than limiting this program to specific dates, pending availability, our retreat house is always open to SS.CC. religious seeking time apart. There is no fixed fee for the **Respite**. The goal is to provide an environment for prayer, reflection and relaxation. SS.CC. participants can attend morning prayer, daily Mass, with availability for Spiritual Direction and Reconciliation. Call for mid-week availability at 508-295-0100. Donations are accepted.

AN INVITATION TO THE "WORLD DAY FOR CONSECRATED LIFE" MASS

On Saturday February 2, 2008, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, **Bishop George Coleman** will officiate at the 4:00 pm Mass for Consecrated Life at St. Mary's Cathedral in Fall River. All Religious are invited to attend. Another invitation has been extended by the Archdiocese of Boston on the occasion of their Archdiocesan Bicentennial. **Sean Cardinal O'Malley** will officiate at the 11:30 am Mass on Sunday, February 3, 2008 at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Boston.

PASTORING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

For those involved in parish ministry, you might be interested in a workshop offering skills for leading today's parishes and clusters April 6-11, 2008, at Marywood Center for Spirituality in Jacksonville, Florida. Our SS.CC. policy along with available Diocesan budgets for continuing education, encourages annual updating courses. This workshop has been developed by the Pastoral Leadership Institute, a consortium of seasoned pastors, psychologists, lawyers and pastoral ministers. It is designed exclusively for pastors, administrators, and parish life directors who want a fresh look at their ministry. Parishes today are more complex and demand more skills of their leaders. No matter what the pastoral setting is, every pastor has multiple roles and a need for spiritual and personal development. For further information call 859-38437 or email pastoring21stcentury@gmail.com.

JUSTICE AND PEACE REFLECTION

The US Catholic Bishops published a document, *"Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good."* They mention that, as a community of faith, we are called to protect the dignity of every person and promote the common good of the human family. **Pope Benedict XVI** called for a commitment to care for creation as the earth is "exposed to serious risks by life choices and lifestyles that degrade it." As Christians, we have a unique responsibility to make a difference in addressing the potential impact of climate change by caring without squandering the world's resources.

"... To Make the Kingdom of God present, we seek the transformation of the human heart and we endeavor to be agents of communion in the world. In solidarity with the poor we work for a just and reconciled society."

(SS.CC. Constitutions Art. 6)

PRAYER REQUESTS

Please remember in your prayers **Yvonne Cormier**, the mother-in-law of **Jack Iddon**, who died this week and Mr. Anam Digal, the uncle of **Bro. Manoj Nayak**, who died recently.

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

We wish good luck to **Peter Turrin** (USA West) and **Andrew Kellner** (USA East), who have withdrawn from the 2007 pre-novitiate programs. Vocation Director **Fr. Richard Lifrak** is presently involved in correspondence with three new discerners.

Fr. John Fee will complete 20 years of ministry in the Diocese of Detroit this year.

On January 12-13, 2008, **St. Margaret of Scotland Church**, in the Archdiocese of Washington DC, begins their 100-year centenary celebrations. Since undertaking the ministry of this parish in 1988, there have been four pastors. Three of them, **Fr. Columban Crotty**, **Fr. Fintan Sheeran**, and **Fr. David Lupo** will be present for the opening of the parish jubilee year. Because of parish commitments in the Bahamas, **Fr. Martin Gomes** is unable to attend.

The Provincial Council will be approving a budget for communications and discussion about the frequency of **News n Briefs**.

Sr. Helene Woods has accepted the invitation to be facilitator for the Provincials segment of the USC April meeting.

Fr. Brian Marggraf departs every day after lunch for his radiation treatment in Fall River and is happy and healthy looking as ever.

On January 3rd, **National Public Radio (NPR)** gave a commentary about the heroic life of **Blessed Damien** on the occasion of his birth anniversary.

Fr. Fintan Sheeran spoke at the Religious Formation Conference "*Compelled by the Spirit to be Fire in the Church*".

Fr. Enrique Losada wrote from Spain extending Christmas greetings to all in the province.

*To the Sacred Hearts of Jesus & Mary
Honor & Glory*



Personnel at Sacred Hearts Retreat House in Wareham, Deacon Frank Tremblay, Sr. Claire Bouchard and Fr. Jim McDonough. Missing from the photo are Fr. Bill Penderghest and Bro. Damien O'Hare who are also in residence at the Retreat House

The atrocities committed against the Christians in Kandhamal District Archdiocese of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India

1. Introduction

The feast of Christmas, an event of joy and peace turned to be a tragedy.

The trouble began on 24th December at 8.00 a.m. at Bamunigam village, close to the police station under Daringibadi Block of Kandhamal District. Some Hindu Fundamentalists forcefully removed Christmas decoration, which the Ambedkar Baniko Sangho comprising the local Christian entrepreneurs had put up as a preparation for Christmas, with due permission of the administration. This was followed by exchange of words between two groups, as the fundamentalists insisted that the people stop Christmas celebrations. Within a few minutes a group of people, who were stationed close-by, pounced on the members of Ambedkar Baniko Sangho with sticks, knives, other lethal weapons and guns and other firearms.

Seeing this armed gang coming to attack them, the people dispersed out of fear. The fundamentalists shot at the people with their guns, critically injuring two of them. They also destroyed about fifteen shops belonging to the Christians after looting the shops and houses. Six or seven members of Ambedkar Baniko Sangho were beaten up by the mob.

On the second day, Christmas 25th December, the crowd came back and destroyed the churches in Bamunigam area. Then they entered the Christian villages and burnt their houses and property. Christians were asked to leave the place. Church and the Christians were under mortal threat, but there was no police security.

2. Attack on Bamunigam and Balliguda Parishes

On the same day, 24th December at about 2.00 p.m. much larger crowd (400 to 500) marched into Balliguda town parish and damaged and ransacked the church buildings. By 10.00 p.m. the following institutions were destroyed or burned (some fully, others partly). The large parish church, presbytery, convent, computer room, dispensary, plus +2 student's hostel, etc.

The same armed mob then moved into the town and completely burned down the church belonging to the Baptist Christians. They also attacked another church belonging to the Pentecostal Christians.

On 25th December they were moving around menacingly threatening the priests and Christians so that they were not even able to file FIR (First Information Report) with the police. The situation continues to be desperate and there is great fear and anxiety among Christians.

On 25th December, also the convent in Phulbani was attacked by a group of fundamentalists. They destroyed everything possible from outside of the convent (door, window glasses, etc.) They also damaged a new school bus. On 25th December the priests and sisters in Pobingia parish were advised to move out to a safer place which they did. And thereafter at 12.00 noon a group of Bajrangdal people attacked the church of Pobingia parish and destroyed it. There after they destroyed the priest's residence in the afternoon.

All this happened with impunity -- in the presence of police. More than half of 24 parishes in Kandhamal District could not celebrate Christmas mass because of fear of attack. For instance, Two constables asked the priests of Phulbani parish to have no celebration lest there will be more troubles. During midnight Mass on 24th December, someone threw a bomb on Archbishop's House, Bhubaneswar. It exploded, fortunately no damage took place.

A good number of village churches are also destroyed of which we do not have definite information. In Barakhama parish, 400 houses are gutted, five people murdered, property looted, one tractor, one jeep and two motor cycles burnt. The formation house of Capuchin congregation was totally vandalized.

4. Preplanned attack and destruction

Orissa has a history of communal flare-ups every now and then. But this time it was very intensive, violent and pre-planned from all points of view.

4.1 The speed with which attacks were carried out. This was not possible unless it was planned. Within half an hour over two hundred people in Bamunigam parish premises (they sprang up from nowhere) and 400 to

500 persons in Balliguda where maximum destruction took place. These two attacks took place simultaneously.

- 4.2 They appeared on the scene of destruction with instruments capable of causing massive destruction in a short time. For instance, they had acid with them in order to burn things. They had guns, iron-cutting swords (machine) to cut the grills of door and windows.
- 4.3 The attackers had enough food stuff with them to prepare their meals in the area of attack. One must conclude that they had preplanned this attack.
- 4.4 Swami Lakshmanananda began to travel from Daringibadi to Bamunigam as soon as the attack began in Bamunigam. The Swami is considered to be the mastermind behind all the attacks.

All these show that without pre-planning such unprecedented destruction is not possible within a short time, maximum destruction in three days.

5. Nature of their operation.

I had told my priests and religious that they should save themselves and don't worry about the property. So, I advised them to escape to anywhere as soon as they hear about an impending attack. Because of this the institutions were 'open' to Fundamentalists for total destruction.

5.1. We could not rely on police force either because they were too few or they were indifferent for the reasons I do not know.

5.2. Destruction took place even in the presence of police force (20 of them) in Bamunigam who just watched.

5.3. The fundamentalists broke open the main door, smashed window glasses, twisted grills and gathered all that can be piled up in the middle of the building, poured kerosene or petrol or acid on the heap of things and made a bonfire. The end of the show! Then they moved into another place.

5.4. Whatever they could they have carried away.

6. Who were the attackers?

In general the armed mob of fundamentalists belonged to what is called the 'Sangh Parivar', professing an extremist and intolerant Hindutva ideology of hate and violence. But the people who perpetrated the crimes were as a rule from other villages to avoid recognition, so after committing the crimes, they disappeared from the scene. So, often it is difficult to identify individuals involved in acts of arson and attempted murder.

7. How did the Government handle the problem?

In general the Government promised us all support and protection. The 'Kui Samaj' had declared two day bandh on 25th and 26th December in order to protest against giving scheduled caste status to SC Christians. Since 25th December is Christmas we expected some trouble. We approached the District Magistrate and Superintendent of police about the impending troubles. They promised us all support. To make the long story short the following is our experience.

1. The district administration had not taken any precautionary measures to prevent any troubles; consequently they were not able to control or prevent the destruction.
2. When the trouble began on 24th December at 8. 00 a.m. I approached the Director General of Police (DGP) who promised all support. But we are utterly disappointed because only after 26th hours after the first attack the force reached the places of attack in Bamunigam. Distance from Bhubaneswar to the area of trouble is 300 kilometer. From District Head Quarters, Phulbani (Kandhamal) to the troubled area is over 85 kilometer.
3. Either the deployment of the Force was insufficient or the Force did not have the power to take necessary action on the spot.
4. The fundamentalists moved freely in trucks and other vehicles shouting slogans "Jai Shri Ram" "Jai Bajrang Dal" etc. Destruction went on unabated.

5. So far no one has been apprehended even though most of the attacks took place before the police.
6. Most of the priests, pastors and religious sisters in Kandhamal District have taken shelter in the forest. In fact the fundamentalists are in search of finding their hide-outs.
7. The Christians who are already attacked and those who are in great fear of being attacked feel with sufficient reason that they are left to the mercy of the fundamentalists.

In general I would say that the administration miserably failed to take necessary and effective steps to prevent such unprecedented destruction of establishments of Christian community in Kandhamal District.

7. A delegation met the Hon'ble Chief Minister and made the following demands:

1. That a CBI inquiry may be ordered for proper and impartial investigation for justice.
2. That Central Para Military Forces are deployed in adequate strength at all the affected and sensitive places to prevent any further recurrences as the local police has not been able to control the situation.
3. That impartial and proper assessment of the property damaged, caused to various Churches, Christian institutions and other establishments may be made and adequate compensation be provided as early as possible to restore confidence of the people in the administration.
4. That proper compensation is given to the deceased family and injured persons.
5. That the culprits responsible for creating communal disharmony and caused damage to people and properties should be severely dealt with and the Govt. officials be given exemplary punishments for their gross negligence, inaction, apathy amounting to connivance with the perpetrators
6. A Fact Finding Committee consisting of various Church leaders and representatives proposed to visit various affected sites and personnel of the Kandhamal District and other affected places of the state to take stock of the situation and to console the victims and families. Therefore, we request to provide police protection to the team during their visit. (Photographs will be sent later)

Yours sincerely,

Archbishop Raphael Cheenath, SVD