



THE DISTRICT OF INDIA

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THE DISTRICT UPDATES

## Diwali



Novices and candidates decorated the chapel with the lighted clay lamps.

On November 14th, the communities across the District celebrated Diwali, "Festival of Lights." The festival signifies the triumph of good over evil and light over darkness. The Brothers in various communities highlighted the celebration with the lighting of clay lamps in the chapels and outside of their community buildings and offering special prayer services for the well-being of the nation.

## Extended General Council Meeting



Fr. André Joseph Fétis, Superior General, with the GA council members and the extended General Council members.

From November 19-20th, the Extended General Council meeting was held 'virtually' from Curia Generalizia dei Marianisti, Rome. The meeting was attended by the members of the Marianist General Council and the Presidents of the Zonal Conferences. Fr. Sudhir Kujur, the President of the AZCSM (Asian Zonal Conference of the Society of Mary) participated in this virtual meeting where various topics were shared and discussed such as news and information from the Zones and the GA, and the results and prospects of the XXXV General Chapter, especially the life and mission of the Marianist Family in our Zone including study of the Marianist charism.

## Maria Nilaya Community, Patna

Children's Day in India is celebrated every year on November 14th. The day aims to raise the awareness of people about the rights, care, and education of children. Four years ago, Maria Nilaya Community, Patna, started an outreach program through which it intends to assist poor children who have no means to pursue formal schooling.





Bro. Tony Nasam addresses the children.

The Marianist Community, Panta, hosted a Children's Day program on November 14th in which nearly 150 children participated and were given refreshments. The chief guests at the event were Fr. Pius, the parish priest of Kuruji, Fr. Sijo from XTTI, Bro. Tony Nasam, and Fr. Sebastine Bara.

### STC Deepahalli



The STC students perform a cultural show.

Skill Training Centre, Deepahalli, celebrated Children's Day on November 13th. After Bro. Casimeer Antony explained to the STC students the significance of the day, a STC student began the celebration with a prayer song. Bros. John Paul and Darwin Joseph participated in the program, congratulated the children, and expressed their gratitude to the staff and the Brothers for their continual care of the STC students, who spent the day performing various cultural programs, enjoying meals, and playing cricket.

### REDS Bengaluru

From October 12th onwards, the computer centre of REDS Bengaluru began its computer courses.



Students at the REDS Bengaluru computer centre.

These courses are meant for young men and women who are interested in learning some advanced computer programs in the fields of design and accounting. These computer courses are intended to support the poor youth who lost jobs because of Covid-19. REDS Bengaluru hopes to find suitable job placements for those who successfully complete the courses.

### Post-Scholastic Brothers' Workshop



Fr. Rajmohan, Bros. Casimeer Antony, Livens Peter Xalxo, Amit Surin and Roshan Kiro.

On November 27-29th, Fr. Rajmohan along with Bros. Julius Tete, Lalit Dhanwar, and Fr. Nittamaria Varaprasad organized a three-day workshop for the post-scholastic Brothers in Deepahalli, Bangalore. During this workshop the post-scholastics shared their ministry experiences and their struggles during this pandemic. The staff members gave them some spiritual and psychological input which may help them reflect more deeply upon their call to be Marianists.



## New Measures with Hope



Bro. Sudhir Kumar Soreng administers Budaktaka Mission Primary and Upper Primary School. After completing his scholastic studies in 2011, he was appointed to the Morning Star Community, Bharaul, where he taught for two years. In 2013, he continued his teaching ministry at the Roro Primary School for two years. From 2015 onwards he has been teaching in Budakata Mission Primary/Upper Primary School where he administers both sections of the school. In this news update, he shares how he and the Brothers are committed to carrying on the education of the children during this time of pandemic.

✿ Could you tell us about Budaktaka Mission Primary and Upper Primary School?

Budakata Mission Primary School was established in 1927 by the Rourkela diocese. It is an Odia medium school. The school studies are taught in Odia and the students learn Hindi and English as their second and third languages. In May 2005, the Marianist Brothers took over the administration of the primary section from the diocese. In the following years, the Brothers added classes from sixth to tenth due to the demand of parents and local people.

The school's administration is divided into two: a primary section and an upper primary section. The primary section includes classes from first to fifth, which are aided by the local government's providing the children with mid-day meals, textbooks, and school uniforms. The government also appoints a headmistress for the school's day-to-day activities.

The upper primary section includes classes from sixth to tenth which are financed by collecting tuition from the students. There are seven lay teachers and four Marianist Brothers teaching at the school, which continues to face various legal challenges due to past land issues. The Marianist Administration and the community director are trying their best to settle these legal matters and are hoping for a positive outcome in the near future. In the meantime, the District Administration is unable to add good infrastructure to the existing school building. Moreover, the upper primary school is completely dependent upon the monthly tuition from the students.

✿ How are you helping the students continue their education at Budaktaka Mission Primary School during this pandemic?

It is very sad that this pandemic has affected our school children's education. Their academic learning has been slowed down. But all teachers are trying their best to educate them through online classes.





☼ Do all the students at your school own a mobile phone?

Many students at our school do not own a mobile phone because many students' families are very poor. Even though some of them have cell phones, they are not able to use them because of the poor mobile signal in the rural areas.

☼ What tools do you use for online teaching?

We are using *whatsapp* for sending teaching materials to the students, but many of them find it difficult to follow. Most need some verbal explanation, especially for mathematics and science.

☼ How about the students who do not have the access to cell phones?

Many students do not have access to cell phones. So, we had arranged special classes especially for class tenth students. But as the situation became so bad, we were forced to stop so now they have to make their own arrangements to learn the class materials with the help of the teachers and classmates.

☼ What is your advice to the students during this pandemic?

We have advised our students not to leave their home, but to focus on their studies. We encouraged them to study the class materials that we provide through *whatsapp*.

☼ How do you evaluate the progress of the students?

So far, we have not evaluated the progress of the students because the Odisha government has not yet decided to have an assessment. In addition, the Odisha Board of Education has reduced 25% of the syllabus, so students have less material to study during this academic year.





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✿ What are the advantages/disadvantages of asynchronous (online) learning in a rural setup?

There are many disadvantages to online learning in a rural setup. First of all, many do not have a smartphone. Even if they have a smartphone, they also have internet problems. The high school students are struggling to understand the subjects, especially mathematics and science. They need explanations in those areas, although they can understand other subjects like Oriya, English, history, geography, economics, and political science. So many are facing the problem of learning through online classes.

✿ How are your teachers coping with the current asynchronous (online) teaching?

Every day the teachers are preparing their class materials on their subjects and sending the notes to the students through *whatsapp*. Sometimes the Brothers and I assist the teachers with the classwork.

✿ What is the reaction of the parents?

Many of the parents are unhappy because students are not able to learn properly through the online classes. The pandemic has made it more difficult for parents to pay their children's school fee; in fact, 50% of the parents are unable to do so. Because of this, the school administration is facing a huge financial problem managing the school and paying the teachers.



Bro. Sudhir Kumar Soreng (in middle) with the teachers and the students.

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**Prayer Requests**

Let's pray for the world that continues to be affected by the Coronavirus pandemic. May God heal those who are infected. May God bless those working to heal the sick. May God give us the strength to overcome this pandemic. May God help us to remain steadfast in His love. May He grant eternal peace to those who have lost their lives to this virus.

Fr. Romanus Tete S.J., the brother of Bro. Ananias Tete, has been admitted to a hospital for cancer treatment. Kindly keep him in your prayers.

Please pray for the Brothers who celebrate their birthdays during the month of December:

02 Dungdung, Suman

03 Dhanwar, Lalit

14 Ekka, Sanjay

15 Soreng, George

20 Surin, Augustus

Kujur, Kuldeep

