

CHAPTER - 5

THE ADVENT OF CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES AND INTERACTION WITH LOCAL PEOPLE

5.1 In Darjeeling Sadar

The Darjeeling town, planned by Lord Napier of the Royal Engineers, is located at an altitude of 7000 feet. It is nestled in the grandeur and beauty of the towering snow capped Himalayas. The land grant of Darjeeling was acquired from the Raja of Sikkim in 1835. The missionaries started to arrive in Darjeeling within a few years of its accession. The first Catholic missionaries to set their foot in this virgin land were the Loreto nuns who reached Darjeeling in 1846. Therefore, the year 1846 may be taken as the year of advent of Catholic missionaries in Darjeeling. The foregoing paragraphs highlight the early activities of the Catholic missionaries in Darjeeling Sadar.

5.1.1 Loreto Convent School, Darjeeling

The Loreto sisters¹ came to India in 1841 at the invitation of Dr. Carew, the Archbishop of Calcutta. Within a few days of their arrival, a school for girls was opened at Middleton Row. Since the nuns were under the care of the Archbishop, he contemplated on sending the nuns to Darjeeling to open a school for the girls. The opportunity struck at the right time, when Judge R. J. Loughnan of Patna spoke of the beauty of Darjeeling and the health-providing air to Bishop Carew. Immediately the Archbishop requested the Loreto nuns to open a branch school of Loreto, Calcutta in Darjeeling. The plan was entrusted to a committee of lay gentlemen, Mr. William Moran, Mr. R. J. Loughnan and Captain Samler, with the task of finding a suitable piece of property.

The Archbishop's advertisement in Bengal Catholic Herald reads:

"The want of schools for the education of their children, in a more salubrious climate than that of the plains of Bengal, has been deeply felt and lamented by parents residing in the province. At present, parents are obliged to send their children home for education, with great expense and danger, and thus deprive themselves for several years of the happiness of their society. Often times also, one of the parents has to accompany the children in order to watch over their welfare during the voyage and make satisfactory arrangements for their education at home. To remedy these grievous disadvantages, and secure all the benefits of an excellent climate and of education of the highest order, it is proposed to establish at Darjeeling branch school of the Calcutta Loreto House" (Bengal Catholic Herald, dated 15th April 1846:7) ².

The Archbishop missioned Mother Teresa Mons and the party to set out their journey on 10th August 1846³. The journey was long and tedious, full of risks and adventures. They began the journey from Chandennagarr by boat and sailed to Daltonganj and from there to Kishanganj by 'Pinnacle', a small sailing boat. Then they traveled in *dandies* up to Pankhabari. They reached Pankhabari on 5th October 1846. After three days of their stay in Pankhabari, by following the Old Military Road, they reached their destination Darjeeling on 10th October 1846. (Mother Teresa Mons' letter to Archbishop Carew, dated 15th October 1846)⁴. They neither walked nor travelled in bullock carts. They were in a caravan of six palanquins carried by 74 bearers. It was an amazing scene for the people on their route. The entire route was thinly populated. Mother Teresa Mons mentions in her letter:

"The cavalcade took the track towards Birch Hill, the population of Bhutia Bustee, Tibetans and Sherpas, followed to get a better view. The party included Mother Teresa Mons, Superiores, Mother Mary de Chantel Kelly, Fr. John McGirr, the chaplain, two novices and an orphan girl". (Teresa Mons' letter to Archbishop Carew in Calcutta, dated 15th October 1846)⁵.

The Loreto team stayed in Snowy View on Birch Hill, a quiet and secluded place. Meanwhile, Mr. Loughnan and Fr. McGirr located a suitable site for the convent and school. The site was not on a hilltop but a little below

the hill, well adapted to their future educational ministry. Mother Comcille gives a description of the location:

"The land which judge Loughnan bought was in three 'locations', the first including the site of the present Bishop's House and 'Sunny Bank', now St. Robert's High School. The second, being the site of the present convent and Caroline Villa. The third, the extensive convent garden. It was all one big property, for there was yet no Cart Road" (Comcille 1968: 58)⁶.

After buying the plot for the building and the school, Fr. McGirr wrote to his Archbishop:

"The nuns and pupils are delighted with every part of it; particularly as the playground attached to it is so extensive" (Fr. McGirr's letter to his Archbishop dated 28th May, 1847)⁷.

The Catholic missionaries emphasize not only the intellectual growth but also physical development through games and sports. The first pupil was Miss Ryves. Later, she was joined by Miss Emma Moran and her brother as day scholars. (The School Admission Register)⁸.

Fr. McGirr brought three boys from Purnea for the boarding. Thus, the first Catholic educational institution started off in the Darjeeling hills with six students. (Fr. McGirr's Diary: entry on 8th February 1848)⁹.

The next party of nuns along with Bishop Hartman¹⁰ reached Darjeeling on 24th April 1848, after a whole month's journey. The new nuns were Mother M. Joseph Hogan, Sr. Gabriel Doyle and two postulants. The sisters while teaching the girls and boys took care of the orphans in the convent campus¹¹. Later the orphan girls were transferred to Entally. Mother Joseph, after her tour in Ireland and England gathered more missionaries for Darjeeling. On 29th September 1853, sister Mary Stanislaus Waters, Sister M. Aloysia Raleigh, Sister Mary Xaveria Martin, Sister M. Berchmans Dowd, Sister M. Ignatia, Sister Lawrence, M. Borgia Culkin, M. Claver Boyle and M. Johanna Casey and Miss Anthony arrived in Darjeeling (Convent Chronicle: entry on 29.9.1853)¹². In 1867, there were

60 boarders and 15 little boys in the convent school (The school attendance register of 1867)¹³. The parents appreciated the education imparted by the Loreto sisters in Darjeeling. A short write-up in *Indo-European Correspondence* reads:

"People are beginning at length to open their eyes to the fact that Catholic convents are, after all, the best place for female education in India, and that no others could hold a candle to them" (*Indo-European Correspondence*, dated 13th January 1867:2)¹⁴.

Since the numbers in the boarding went up, foundation stone was laid for an annexure on 25th March 1886. The building was planned and erected by Mr. E. J. Moriarty¹⁵. The entire construction was complete in 1892. In the year 1903, a new concert hall was built. Mrs. Chapman who was a past pupil contributed a huge sum towards the construction of the hall¹⁶. A building for the training of nuns was started in 1904 in the convent premises¹⁷.

The Cambridge examinations were introduced in Darjeeling in 1905. The first three candidates appeared for the examination and were successful. The number of boarders grew and the peak was reached in 1917, the third year of the First World War. There were 211 students on the roll of whom 117 were boarders (School Records: Admission Register, 1917)¹⁸. The reason for the increase was the First World War and parents could not send their children to England. More buildings were added to the existing one, i.e. refectory, dressing room and a hospital. The hospital was inaugurated by Lord Lytton and Lady Lytton.

A report in *The Darjeeling Times* reads:

"A large gathering of friends witnessed the opening of the new hospital in the Loreto Convent grounds by their Excellencies Lord and Lady Lytton, who graciously consented to give their names to the building" (*The Darjeeling Times*, dated 27th October 1926)¹⁹.

Besides education, the Loreto sisters got involved in the medical care of the immigrant Nepalese. The Darjeeling correspondent of *Our Field* observes:

"The work of the sisters in the busti is prospering. A small house has been turned into a dispensary, and regular visiting houses are observed". (Our Field, 1938: 244)²⁰.

The sisters initiated a housing project known as Jyothi Gram. They have built 62 houses for the urban poor in the convent premises. They have shown their love and concern to the locals through this act of charity.

5.1.2 Loreto College, Darjeeling

Loreto College was founded in 1961, at the request of Dr. B. C. Roy, then Chief Minister of West Bengal. The Chief Minister wished to have a women's college in the district. It was sponsored by the Government of West Bengal and placed under the management of Loreto nuns. The college was originally affiliated to the University of Calcutta. The affiliation was transferred to North Bengal University in 1962. The building known as Southfield, originally the hill residence of Sir Arun Mukherjee and subsequently requisitioned for government offices was placed at the disposal of the college authorities. The classes commenced on 1st August 1961. (*The College Chronicle*: entry on 1st August 1961)²¹ The College offers courses in English, History, Geography, Education, Political Science, Economics and Nepali. An increase in enrolment over the years necessitated the provision of further accommodation, and an extensive building programme included auditorium, classrooms, and spacious library. Besides academics, the students are kept in touch with the poor. Mother Damien in a letter to her Provincial writes:

"When the National Service Scheme was inaugurated by the Central Government, the Loreto College branch of the N.S.S. distinguished itself in service in and outside the Municipal area, with special emphasis on adult literacy, health, hygiene and care of the environment. Annual camps in remote rural districts gave student volunteers valuable insights into the needs of the poor and underprivileged, and provided valuable training in

studying and identifying causes underlying social problems and bringing these to the attention of relevant Government agencies. Women's Development projects have been a prominent feature of the social service programmes of the college over the years" (Mother Damien's letter to her Provincial: dated, 03.04.2004)²².

5.1.3 St. Joseph's College, Darjeeling

The college, popularly known as North Point, is situated in the midst of pine trees by the side of the road, from Darjeeling to Lebong. The Catholics of Calcutta and Darjeeling repeatedly appealed to the Pope for a Catholic institution run by the Jesuit order in Darjeeling. In 1887, the Jesuits were sent to Darjeeling to take over the existing St. Joseph's School at Sunny Bank. While looking after the administration of the school the first headmaster Fr. Depelchin²³ searched for a bigger plot in Darjeeling. In 1888, Fr. Depelchin purchased nine acres of land from the Government of Bengal and eight acres of land from the Raja of Burdwan. The Viceroy Lord Dufferin was instrumental in transferring the Government land to the Jesuit Mission. The site for the projected college was on the extreme end of the Darjeeling Municipality. Fr. Truyan gives the reason for calling the college North Point. He writes:

"It was on a spur, pointing to the North nearly at the limit of Darjeeling Municipality, and for this reason called North Point." (Our Field 1938: 250)²⁴.

The construction of the school was entrusted to a Jesuit brother, Eugene Rotsaert. Fr. John Whelan, the editor of the Centenary Souvenir reproduces the construction scene in the following words:

"The construction was entrusted to Brother Eugene Rotsaert, who commenced with characteristic energy the leveling of the site, approximately 2,000,000 cubic feet of rock and soil had to be removed before building could begin and a force of some two thousand men were employed for the purpose" (Whelan, 1988: 25)²⁵.

At the completion of the construction, the school was officially blessed by Archbishop Goethals²⁶ in December 1890. However, Bro. Rotsaert was busy with the interim works. At last, the classes began on 18th February

1892 for the first time at North Point. (School admission Register: 1892)²⁷. In the same year, the college had established a section for university students known as the Special Department²⁸. The students excelled in academics and cricket year after year. In 1903, a new kitchen and bakery were added to the main building. In 1904, His Excellency, the Lt. Governor of Bengal, Sir Andrew Fraser, paid a visit to the college. The needs of assembly hall and modern laboratories were pointed out to him. Sir Andrew exhibited keen interest in the needs. Immediately, he expressed his willingness to subsidize both. Accordingly, work was immediately begun. In 1905 October, the hall was inaugurated with the name Fraser Hall²⁹. The Rectors contributed their might in the development of the infra structure of the college. At the same time, the academic excellence was not neglected.

*"The year 1947 was very important in the history of North Point School. India became an independent, a sovereign nation. This momentous event was suitably welcomed at North Point. The tricolor flag was hoisted over the college at 8.00 a.m. with great ceremony. Best of all, for the boys, a week's holiday was granted" (Whelan 1998:43)*³⁰.

In the case of St. Joseph's there was no crisis in the school during the changeover because the Jesuits had come here to work and die among the people whom they loved. Another reason is that St. Joseph's was never a British School. Its clientele was Anglo-Indians and middle class local inhabitants. Fr. John Whelan observes:

*"Indian middle-class, who had always been represented in the college and were still keenly interested in the kind of education it offered, began to send their sons to North Point in ever increasing numbers" (Whelan, 1998: 43)*³¹.

There was no break with the past but a smooth transition and a swift adaptation to new conditions.

In 1948, the University Department made its great leap forward. For the first time, women students were admitted into the college³². Land for the

new building had been purchased from Happy Valley Tea Estate. After negotiations with Calcutta University, B.A. syllabus was introduced. In 1949, there were 179 students of whom forty were working students attending evening classes³³. As the years passed by, the growth in the number of students necessitated a more spacious campus. In 1953, the property and house known as Santosh had been acquired from the Raja of Burdwan. The property was three acres of land. It was hostel for university students for about a year. Now, the work began for a new hostel in 1954, just below Santosh house. The hostel was christened Xavier Hostel. In 1957, honours courses were introduced in English, Economics and Chemistry. Political Science Honours was added in 1964. The school department kept its students busy with sports and studies. The school acquired a new colour with more Indian students and Indian staff. In 1963, the sisters of St. Anne³⁴ arrived and rendered valuable service in the Primary Division and Infirmary.

1967 saw the work on the foundation of a new building below the hostel. Fr. Krull and Bro. Robin assisted in the construction of Campion Hall. The new building was ready by the end of 1970. The hall served as recreation room, examination hall and dining room with kitchen. There was a need for the physical development of the students. Therefore, in 1980 a gymnasium was built and named Lievens Building in memory of Fr. Constant Lievens, the apostle of Chotanagpur³⁵. In the University department, a new commerce department was inaugurated in 1982. It was called Stanford Hall³⁶. Major addition to the school department is the Primary wing. In order to accommodate more and more locals into the school, the sections of the classes are increased to A, B and C. The University department offers B.A., B.Sc., B.Com, B.B.A., B.C.A., B.A. Mass Communication, B.Sc. Computer Science, B.Sc. Microbiology, Journalism, Eco-tourism Management, Industrial Microbiology, Functional English, Organic Farming, Banking and Management.

5.1.4 The Immaculate Conception Catholic Mission, Darjeeling

The Parochial register reveals that the first baptism in Darjeeling took place twenty-four days after the arrival of Catholic missionaries in Darjeeling. Ms. Agnes Margaret was baptized by Fr. John McGirr on November 3rd, 1846. (Church Records: Baptism register)³⁷. The baptism date marks the introduction of Catholic Church into Eastern Himalayas. An Englishman writing in the Bengal Catholic Herald remarks on the progress of religion in Darjeeling in the following words:

"Our little oratory continues to be attended on Sundays by Protestant ladies and gentlemen of this station, which upon all occasions appear much edified. The progress is due to Fr. Persico's preaching and his endearing disposition" (Bengal Catholic Herald, 1st August 1883:3) ³⁸.

Sunday Services were conducted in the chapel of Loreto convent until 1884. The first stone for a public place of worship was laid on 19th May 1884 near St. Joseph's Seminary, Sunny Bank, by the Capuchin fathers. The fathers of the seminary conducted the church services and taught in the seminary. The Jesuits, who arrived in Darjeeling to replace the Capuchins, not only took over the school, but also shifted the school to North Point. The transfer of the school from Sunny Bank to North Point made Archbishop Goethals build a presbytery in 1891. The presbytery was the residence for the priests who looked after the Catholic faithful of Darjeeling and a Health Centre for the sick priests. The house was named Archbishop's House³⁹ in order to distinguish it from other protestant denominations. In 1892 Archbishop laid the foundation of the church of Immaculate Conception. The construction was supervised by Bro. Eugene Rotsaert. It is 113 feet by 28 feet with oratories on both sides of the sanctuary. The stained glass windows light up the interior of the church. The Catholic community grew in number during the Pastoral care of Belgian Jesuits. It was Fr. Alphonse Scharlaeken, a Belgian Jesuit who took keen interest in the Lepcha tribe. Scharlaeken in his letter writes:

"The Lepchas with whom I associate daily are of good natured and gifted aborigines" (Fr. Scharlaeken's letter to his superior in Calcutta, dated, 12.04.1906)⁴⁰.

He learnt both Lepcha and Nepali languages. He prepared Catechism in Lepcha script. He was instrumental in attracting Nepalese to Catholic faith. Fr. Scharlaeken found caste system among the Nepalese as a hurdle for their unity (Fr. Scharlaeken's letter to his Superior in Calcutta, dated 12.04.1906)⁴¹. Fr. Louis Bodson went around the villages meeting people and preaching faith to them. He was always accompanied by his catechist⁴². The people welcomed Father into their midst to open schools. But the local authorities were against opening schools by the Catholic missionaries. After sixty years of the labour of Belgian Jesuits, the Catholic mission was handed over to the Canadian Jesuits in 1947⁴³. Fr. John Prendergast was the first Canadian Jesuit to be installed as the Parish Priest of Immaculate Conception Church, Darjeeling. He was installed on 30th March 1947 (Church Record: *Church Chronicle*)⁴⁴. Fr. John during his tenure as the spiritual leader organized St. Aloysius Club for the spiritual formation of the local boys. He also organized Little Flower Unit for the ladies. In 1954, the Parish was handed over to Fr. Eric Benjamin⁴⁵. Since, he is a local Catholic missionary he had the advantage of knowing the local language. Ever since, the spiritual leadership of the church is in the hands of Indian, especially local Catholic priests.

5.1.5 Sacred Heart Church, Singamari, North Point

The beginning of the church can be traced to the missionary zeal of Fr. Joseph Ford, a Belgian Jesuit. As soon as he came to St. Joseph's College, North Point in 1895, he pondered over creating a Catholic community around the college. For a Catholic community in view, Fr. Ford recruited employees from the school run by Jesuits at Kurseong. In 1898, a church, Sacred Heart was made for the local Catholics. Fr. Ford in his letter writes:

"In three years, fifty Catholics had been grouped around the college. A chapel, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, was built for them and was blessed in 1898 (Fr. Joseph Ford's letter to his Superior at Calcutta: dated 20.6.1898)⁴⁶.

The rector of the college was in-charge of the local Catholic population. The rector assigned his priests for Sunday services in the church of Sacred Heart. On special occasions, like 'All Soul's Day'⁴⁷, 'Corpus Christi Day'⁴⁸, the Catholics of Singamari joined the town parish. All baptisms took place in the town parish until 1951. A glance at the Baptism register reveals that the first baptism was on 15.07.1951 of Rudolf Subba by Fr. Jack Coffey, SJ (Church records: Baptism register)⁴⁹. In 1955, autonomy was given to Sacred Heart Church, Singamari, with Fr. Coffey as the first Parish Priest. Ever since, the Jesuits of Darjeeling Province look after the spiritual and material needs of the faithful.

In the socio-economic field, Fr. Burns⁵⁰ established Frymal village and Navin Gram within the purview of Singamari Parish. After the landslide in 1969, many families lost their houses. The Catholic missionaries could not close their eyes towards the anxiety of the insecurity of the basic need of human beings; i.e shelter. Fr. Burns accommodated the families on a plot bought by him. The village has two names; the first name is Edgar village, named after the founder of the village. The second name is Frymal village, named after the benefactor of the village. However, the area is known as Frymal Village.

In the medical field, the infirmarian of St. Joseph's College toured the villages around the college to take care of the patients. Bro. Adolph Buysse, a Flemish spent fifty years in Darjeeling since 1915. He went to the villages and towns on horseback. He was affectionately called 'Doctor Saheb'. The editor of the *News Letter of Calcutta Jesuits* records:

"There was not a house on the hill where he had not gone" (Calcutta Jesuit News Letter, January 1965)⁵¹.

Bro. Eric Rudum assisted Bro. Quinn, a Canadian brother, in the school dispensary. The visiting hour for boys was from 9.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. After closing the infirmary, they visited houses in the village in search of patients to be nursed. Since Rudum is a local resident, he could accompany Bro. Quinn to each and every house in the village. (Interview with Br. Eric on 10.11.2004)⁵².

5.1.6 Bethany School, Darjeeling

The sisters of St. Joseph's of Cluny used to visit Darjeeling in summer in order to recoup their health after strenuous toil in the heat of Chandan Nagar. They holidayed at Loreto Convent (*Convent Chronicle*: entry 10.05.1902)⁵³. In 1903, Sr. M. Rosalia was donated 'Claremont' villa by an Irish woman as holiday villa for sisters. Thus, the Cluny sisters had a home of their own in Darjeeling. The sisters frequented Darjeeling every summer. In 1948, with the admission of women in St. Joseph's College, the Cluny sisters were requested to care for ladies. On accepting the request, Sr. Marie Theres, Sr. Michael Padiyara and Mother Celsus Brady arrived in Darjeeling on 24th February 1956 (*Convent Chronicle*: entry on 24.02.1956)⁵⁴. The first boarders were Ms. Purna Kumary Pradhan, Ganden Gay and two girls from Thailand (School record: Admission register)⁵⁵. The house was meant for student sisters too. Sr. Helen D'Cruz, Sr. Margaret Rai, Sr. Dominic Savio, Sr. Sophy, Sr. Theophan and Sr. Blanch started going to College in July 1956. It was at this time, Sr. Gerard P. recounts:

"The owner of the little school Clifton Hall had died. His wife and children sold the school building to the sisters to be used as their convent" (Interview with Sr. Gerard P. on 15.01.2004)⁵⁶.

The nuns moved to Clifton Hall. The local residents requested the nuns to open a school for the boys and girls of Darjeeling. Therefore, the Cluny

nuns initiated the Bethany Primary School in Darjeeling. In 1963, Bethany Primary School was affiliated to the Anglo-Indian Schools. This is the only Primary School recognized by the Board of Anglo-Indian Schools and receives Government Dearness Allowance for the staff. It has been recognized up to class five.

There are altogether 575 students on the roll (School record: admission record)⁵⁷. After the completion of the primary education, students are absorbed into various high schools of Darjeeling.

5.1.7 St. Robert's Higher Secondary School, Darjeeling

The school is situated above Loreto Convent. In the year 1931, the authorities of Jesuit Order had decided to open a school for the local children of town. It was also decided that it would be a Nepali medium school. Fr. Eelen gives a report in *Our Field*:

"Nepali would be the first language, Hindi or Sanskrit the secondary"
(*Our Field*: May - June 1932:235)⁵⁸.

St. Roberts had a humble beginning. Fr. Ruwet recollects in *Our Field*:

"First, it was at 'Falcon House' on the Mall, near Governor's Palace. The inauguration was on 5th February. The attendance register shows that in March there were 169 students present out of 199" (*Our Field*, 17th March 1933:156)⁵⁹.

Though it was originally started for the students of town, the pupils came from Darjeeling, Lebung, Ghum and Singamari. It is a Higher Secondary School with 1,281 boys⁶⁰ (as of 2006).

5.1.8 Salesian College Mission, Sonada

The Salesians of Don Bosco reached Woodcot, Kurseong, for the first time on 13th April 1936⁶¹, with a view to establishing a formation house in Darjeeling hills. After a year of stay at Sepoydhura, the Salesians went down to Bandel, Calcutta. Again, after a year, the Salesians began their

search for a suitable place in Darjeeling hills. After a thorough search, the Salesians acquired Sonada Brewery. The first party of Salesians with the aim of permanent settlement in the Eastern Himalayas left Calcutta in April 1936. Fr. Nicholas Lo Groi gives a description of the first batch:

"On 1st April the students of philosophy leave Bandel and board the Darjeeling train for Siliguri. Fr. Gultierrez, their Rector, leads the group to hand over the clerics to Fr. Pianazzi, their new rector. The traveling group is made up of Fr. Guttierrez, Fr. Paviotti, Bro. Balocco, co-assistant of the Philosophers and 18 students" (Lo Groi, 2003 : 193)⁶².

The party boarded the Darjeeling Himalayan Rail at Siliguri and alighted at Sonada. The house chronicler records:

"After a most slow and tiresome journey we arrive at the Brewery but the train does not stop. However, as it slows a little, Rev. Fr. Gutierrez alights and the new rector, Fr. Pianazzi comes up cheered by everybody. We arrive at sonada at 8.00 p.m. After leaving our beddings in the villa, we walk down to the Brewery where we are welcomed by Rev. Fr. Ferrais, Bro. Castelli and Bro. Michele. After tea, spiritual reading and supper we go up to St. Theresa's to sleep" (House Chronicle: 02.04.1938)⁶³.

The regular classes commenced on 16th May for the philosophers and theologians. The life at Salesian College includes academics, music, games, picnics, and manual work inside and outside the house and above all, the young men live together as one commune. Besides ecclesiastical studies, the students were directed to learn a formal degree course. The college was affiliated to Calcutta University on 4th September 1948 for B.A. in English, Alternative English, Latin, English and History. A motto was chosen as a guiding star for the students: "*Flamma Ardens et Luchens*" which means let the light shine. The affiliation from Calcutta University was transferred to North Bengal University in 1962. More courses were added, like Economics, Education and Computer Science. Though the college was originally started for the intellectual pursuit of the Salesians, the courses were made available for the local students since 2000 A. D. The college also offers UG and PG Courses of North Bengal University through the Distance Education wing of NBU.

In 1979, Fr. Jellici, SDB an Italian Catholic priest looked into the economic development of the people. He insisted on his Catholics to open a bank account. He advised them to deposit rupees 5/- per month. He used to take the people and make them open the bank account at Indian Bank, Darjeeling. He sponsors the study of 1000 children from KG up to Degree level in Darjeeling and Sikkim. (Interview with Fr. Jellici on 02.02.2004)⁶⁴.

5.1.9 St. Michael's School, Darjeeling

It is located on Darjeeling-Jorethang road, just below St. Joseph's School, North Point. It is a co-educational school affiliated to the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education. It is placed under the management of the nuns of St. Joseph's of Cluny.

It was started as a primary school in 1925 by Fr. Michael Donough to provide education for the children of the employees of St. Joseph's College. J. Arimont reports in *Our Field*:

"Fr. McDonough has opened a school for native boys in the bustee dependent on St. Joseph's. Catholics and non-Catholics are admitted" (*Our Field*, 1925 April: 6)⁶⁵.

The school is christened after its founder Fr. Micheal. The students grew in number. By the end of the first decade, there were 70 boys in the upper primary in 1935 (School record: attendance register)⁶⁶. St. Michael's School was recognized as a Junior High School on 23rd February 1979. In 1981, standard IX was started with the permission from the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education Department. It was in 1984 when the first batch of Madhyamik graduated from the school. The sisters of St. Joseph's of Cluny took over the management of the school in 1982 from the Jesuits. Sr. Marie Berchmans, SJC was the first Cluny Sister to take over the management of the institution. She initiated Computer Centre, Library, Gymnasium and a new wing for the Higher Secondary Section. The

Higher Secondary Section was inaugurated in 1999 at the request of Mr. Subhash Ghising, Chairman of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council. In 2001, August, St. Michael's School got its recognition for National Open School. The first batch of 15 students, were sent up for the class X National Open School Examination in April 2002. Now, there are 1,085 students, both boys and girls (School record: Attendance Register, 2006)⁶⁷.

5.1.10 Hayden Hall, Darjeeling

It is situated on Laden La Road. It is a Center for Community Development and Social Service. There are 23 female weavers who weave handbags, shoulder bags and carpets. Hayden hall supplies all the wool/threads and the loom. During the training period, each trainee is given Rupees 5/-, 1 kg of rice, 50 gram of oil and lunch daily from the Hall. Once the training is over, the task of carpet weaving is given to an individual on contract. An individual may earn about six thousand rupees per month. The purpose of the weaving centre is to uplift women from below poverty level.

The credit union of Hayden Hall is a boon to the poor. There are 3,000 members at present. Each member has to deposit Rs 20/- compulsorily every month. A passbook is maintained by the Hall. A member is permitted to draw loan for education, agriculture and housing projects. The members will have to return the loan by Rs. 105/- every month. The loan interest is 5% per annum.

The sewing section caters to the aspiring female tailors. There are 14 machines at the hall. Mrs. Parvati is the trainer and four hundred and twenty five girls have undergone training under her supervision during the past 25 years.

The women in town find it difficult to go out for labour work due to their children. Therefore, a crèche has been maintained at the Hall. The working women can leave their children at Hayden Hall by 9.00am. The children are taken care of by a nurse. The mothers can collect their children by 4.30 pm. Children above the age of 3 are taught in the nursery by a trained teacher.

Sr. Anne is a trained nurse and looks after Mother Child Health programmes. There are 550 mothers and 528 children on the roll. The nun conducts awareness programmes, twice a month for mothers. A periodical check-up is done for the pregnant women at Hayden Hall. The X-ray department is at the disposal of Sr. Anne for testing if mothers are infected by T.B. (Field notes: dated: 03.02.2004).

5.1.11 St. Mary's Catholic Mission, Kainjalia

The mission is situated in Bijan Bari block of Darjeeling Sadar Sub-division. The students of St. Mary's College, Kurseong often visited Sandakphu. Therefore, the Catholic missionaries were familiar with the area. Fr. David Jagaroyan, a Tamil, but associated with Darjeeling Jesuits since 1966, visited a Protestant Limbu family. A long association between Fr. Jagaroyan and the family made them accept Catholicism on 1st July 1984 (Church records: Baptism Register)⁶⁹. Daniel Loksom, the President of Parish Pastoral Council says, "Through this Catholic family, the Catholic faith has spread in Bijan Bari, in spite of strong opposition from Protestants and Hindus." (Interview with Daniel Loksom on 20.2.2004)⁷⁰. Sr. Mukti, SND, a nurse and Sr. Sreeja, SND, a social worker entered Bijan Bari block to be with the local inhabitants. Rose Lima says, "The sisters adopted non-formal education as a means to reach out to people". (Interview with Rose Lima on 20.02.2004)⁷¹. The nuns visited families and inquired about the well-being of each member. Sr. Sreeja organized self-employment programmes for women. Besides this, with the assistance of

Block Development Officer, she organized socio-economic developmental programmes, in agriculture and animal husbandry. Sr. Sreeja with the help of Fr. Cherian Nampelli helped the local people in marketing *isqush*⁷², *kutchio*⁷³ and ginger in Siliguri and Patna. Bro. Nick⁷⁴ supplied fruit plants like guava, peaches, pears and apples to the local inhabitants for plantation in home gardens. He also gave them piglets, imparted the technique of making composite manure and installed smokeless oven in the houses of the people.

In the medical field, Sr. Mukti interacted with people in the areas of hygiene, malnutrition, mother and childcare and various sicknesses. Sr. Mukti administered medicines to the patients. The complicated cases were sent to hospitals in Darjeeling and Siliguri. She also arranged appointments with the doctors for those patients who had never visited towns like Siliguri or Darjeeling. The sisters have opened dispensaries in Kainjalia, Sumbuck and Rimbick (Interview with Soloman on 20.2.2004)⁷⁵. At present, the sisters run three dispensaries and three schools in Bijan Bari Block. Fr. Cherian Nampelli is the animator for spiritual and socio-economic development of the people. The ethnic composition of Catholics at Kainjalia is as follows:

Table 5.1 Community-wise Break up of Catholics at Kainjalia

Community	Number
Loksom	32
Rai	27
Thamang	13
Sherpa	12
Pradhan	08
Total	92

Source: Church Records

5.1.12 St. Mary's Catholic Mission, Singla, Lepcha Busty

The Catholic mission is situated on the route from Darjeeling to Jorethang by road. It is located near Singla Tea Garden factory. The Catholic mission includes a co-educational school, church for worship, presbytery and a convent.

Fr. Charles Mukhia and Fr. Elias Pinto visited Lepcha busty, on an exploratory missionary trip in 1970. The inhabitants of Lepcha busty used to travel through Singamari. They often heard choir songs while passing by the church. They also noticed the gathering of large number of people at the church. The curiosity of the people arose and Fr. Charles Mukhia was invited to Lepcha Busty. As a result of the interaction, one resident of the village, Mr. Prem Kumar Subba, his mother, wife and two children became Catholics in 1991. Prem was instrumental in inviting the Catholic missionaries to Lepcha busty and Singla tea gardens (Interview with Fr. Charles Mukhia on 2.3.2004)⁷⁶. The priest-in-charge of Sacred Heart Church made regular visits to Lepcha Busty. The sisters of the congregation of Jesus reached Singla-Lepcha Busty region on 22nd April 1993 (*Convent Chronicle*: entry on 22.6.1993)⁷⁷. The pioneer sisters, Sr. Amalia Kokkat and Sr. Shoba lived in the house of the first Catholic, Mr. Prem Kumar Subba.

The interaction between the Catholic missionaries and the local people was primarily in the area of education. The sisters started UKG on 22nd April 1993 in the house of Mr. Prem Kumar Subba. As the years passed by, the number of children grew in the house. The space was inadequate to accommodate the tea garden children. It was at this time that the authorities of Singla Tea Garden donated a piece of land to the sisters to start a school for the children of tea garden labourers. Thus, the sisters started St. Mary's School. It is a co-educational school up to class 10,

affiliated to the Secondary Board of Education of West Bengal. There are 242 students in the school at present (School record: Attendance)⁷⁸.

In the field of medical care, trained nurses like Sr. Shobha and Sr. Consolata took care of the health of the people. Patients were not taken to hospital before the arrival of the Catholic missionaries for fear of death on the way. People felt that it was better for a person to die at home rather than on the way. The sisters took initiative to transport the patients either to Siliguri or Darjeeling for treatment. According to Sr. Amalia, when Prem's sister-in-law fell ill, everyone in the house thought that she was going to die. But, Sr. Amalia insisted on taking her to the Planters' hospital, Darjeeling. After a few days of treatment, there was considerable improvement in the health of the patient. "After recovery, she became a Catholic, in response to Jesus' healing power on her" (interview with Sr. Amalia on 6.4.2004)⁷⁹.

In the field of evangelization, Sr. Lidiya, a charismatic nun conducted prayers in the houses of local people. The sister visited each and every house in Lepcha Busty and Singla area. Her contact with the people was excellent and resulted in the growth of Catholic population in the region.

Now, there are 47 Catholic families comprising various ethnic Nepali communities. The growth in number necessitated the need of a place of worship. Therefore, Fr. Joseph Pappadil, the priest-in-charge of Lepcha Busty and Singla built a church and got it inaugurated on 30th April, 2004⁸⁰.

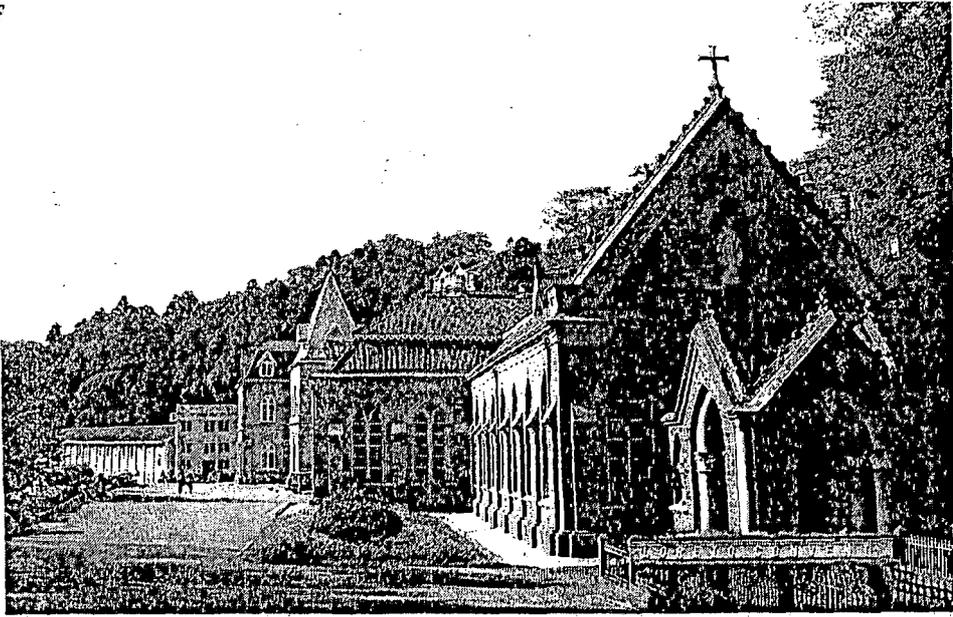


Plate 1. Loreto Convent School Darjeeling (1846).

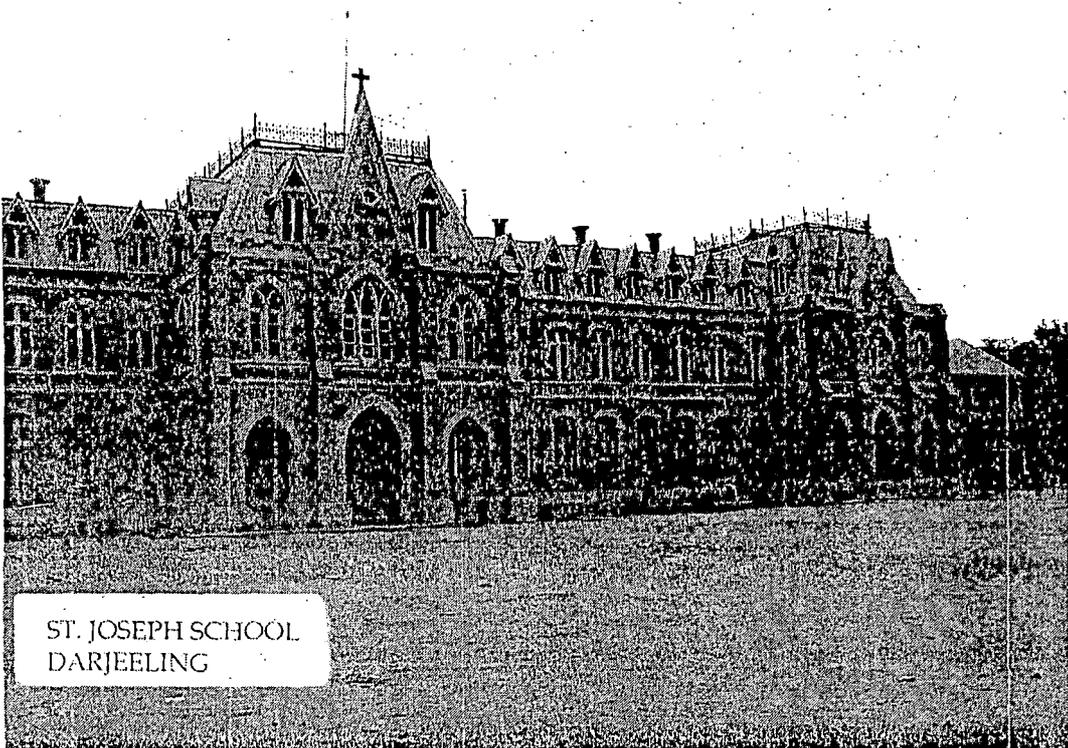


Plate 2. St. Joseph's School, Darjeeling, built in 1888 by the Belgian Missionaries



Plate 3. Bishop Stephen Lepcha, the present pastor of the Catholics of Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas, resides in this house.

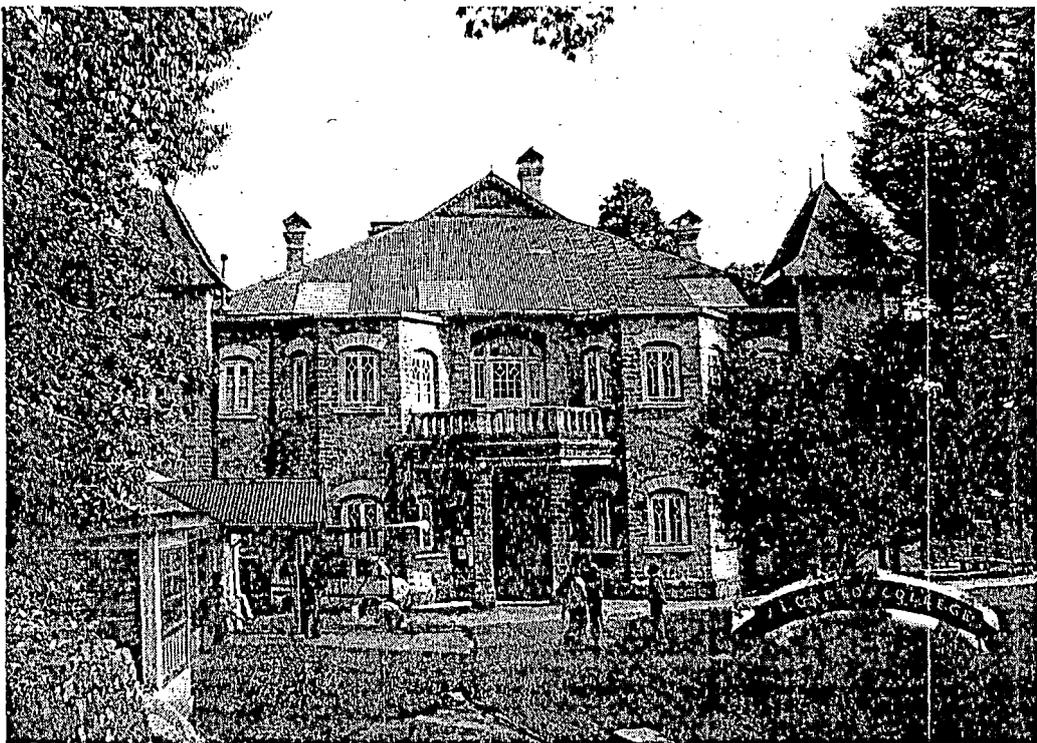


Plate 4. Loreto College for women managed by the Loreto nuns

5.2 In Kalimpong Sub-division

Kalimpong is a hill town nestled in the lower Himalayas in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal. It is located on a ridge connecting two hills, Deolo hill and Durpin hill. The average elevation of the area is 4,100 feet. After the Anglo-Bhutan War in 1865 Kalimpong rose to prominence. After signing the treaty of Sinchula with Bhutan, Kalimpong was absorbed in to the Sadar sub-division of Darjeeling district. Later in 1916, Kalimpong was made a separate sub-division with Kalimpong town as its head quarters. The British intended to develop a hill station in Kalimpong as an alternative to Darjeeling.

The majority of population in Kalimpong is ethnic Nepali, who migrated to Kalimpong in search of job when it was still under British rule. The ethnic groups include Lepchas, Bhutias, Sherpas, Rais, Yolmos, Damais, Kamis and Limbus.

The British were attracted to Kalimpong because of its proximity to Tibet. They wanted to promote trade with Tibet. At the same time, the Catholic missionaries wanted to make use of the trade route to reach Tibet.

In 1846, Pope Gregory XVI handed over the Southern Tibet Mission⁸¹ to the fathers of 'Mission Etrangeres de Paris' (MEP)⁸². The French Society was already working in the French colonies at Hong Kong and Pondicherry. The entry of Catholic missionaries into Kalimpong sub-division stems from the attempt of the missionaries to enter Tibet⁸³. Having failed an entry into Tibet in 1882, Fr. Desgodins⁸⁴ and Fr. Henry Mussot⁸⁵ anchored their mission at Pedong, a small town on the trade route, which ran through it from Tibet to Kalimpong. There are two reasons for choosing Pedong as a mission station. First of all, British government did not want any hostility between Catholics and Protestants in British India. Since Kalimpong was already allotted to the Scottish

missionaries, Pedong was given to Catholic missionaries. The second reason was ecclesiastical. Since South Tibet mission was under the jurisdiction of Missions Etrangères de Paris, the fathers hoped to follow the mule track⁸⁶ from Pedong to Lhasa. Meanwhile, the Fathers initiated humanitarian works in Pedong area that spread to the nearby villages.

5.2.1 Sacred Heart Church, Pedong

Pedong is situated at an altitude of 5100 feet above the sea level on Kalimpong-Lhasa route. It is twenty-eight kilometers away from Kalimpong and located near the confluence of Murdung Khola and Rishi Khola. The locale is perched on a hill from which the table land of Tibet could be viewed⁸⁷. Pedong falls in Algarah block. It has both Panchayat and Post Office.

The Pioneer French Fathers, Fr. Desgodins and Fr. Mussot arrived at Pedong on 11th November, 1882 and camped at pedong (Fr.Desgodins' letter to his superior in France, dated 12.11.1882)⁸⁸. Mr. Wace, the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling had granted the fathers three acres of land⁸⁹. After clearing the forest the fathers established a Catholic mission at Pedong. Fr. Hervagault and Fr. Desgodins baptized first Bhutia christians of Pedong on 24th December 1885 (Church records: Baptism register)⁹⁰. After three years, in February 1885, a school was established for the Bhutia children of Pedong⁹¹. In 1887 there were ten children in the school (School record: Attendance register)⁹².

Fr. Desgodins in his report in the news bulletin writes about the ethnic composition of Pedong:

"The Nepalese were not permitted to reside in Pedong. The area was reserved for Bhutias and Lepchas. The missionaries found Four hundred Bhutia families in Pedong Valley and Lepcha hamlets at Tendrabong and Kashyong" (Missions Catholique 1884 : 488)⁹³.

After the British expedition to Tibet in 1888-1889⁹⁴ the British found the Nepalese faithful as porters and labourers. It was the British who opened Pedong to the Nepalese. Fr. Desgodins wrote to his superior in France:

"Since the Nepalese as porters and labourers had been most helpful to the British army, the British declared Pedong Valley open to the Nepalese from 1889 onwards" (Fr. Desgodins letter to his Superior dated 05.12.1890)⁹⁵.

Thus, Pedong became a multi-ethnic community. Since there was lack of medical facilities, people of all communities were dying premature in large numbers. Even the limited and periodical medical help by the missionaries was not enough. To be able to extend medical help to all the people of the area, Fr. Jules Douenel saw the necessity of building a small hospital. He purchased a small plot of land above the presbytery and built quarters for the patients. Each patient had a self-contained flat in order to avoid quarrel with each other. He completed the hospital in 1898. After two years, Fr. Jules Douenel⁹⁶ paid his attention to another need of the people around. Apart from the sick and the infirm, there were some old people and disabled who needed a house to live in. In order to meet the need he took up the construction of Homes for the aged and disabled, close to his presbytery. The homes were just a cluster of a few houses where the aged and disabled people of either sex were kept separately and were fully supported by the mission.

5.2.2 Vijaya Rani Girja, Maria Busty

Maria Busty is situated in the lap of Ruchela Peak, which is the tri-junction of Sikkim, Bhutan and Kalimpong sub-division of Darjeeling. The hill is opposite to Pedong. Mudung River divides Pedong and Maria Busty ridges. Fr. Hervagault⁹⁷, the founder of the village, gave the name Maria Busty⁹⁸ to the new establishment. Maria Busty means the village, which is dedicated to Mary, mother of Jesus⁹⁹. Fr. Hervagault and Fr. Saleur¹⁰⁰ offered their service to the British during the expedition against Tibet in

1888. They served the British army as chaplains to Irish Catholic soldiers. After the expedition the British decided to reward the French Priests. Fr. Desgodins wrote to the British authorities that he could not accept money. However, he could accept land for the mission. Fr. Desgodins informed his Superior:

"Thus, on 2nd February, I wrote to the government so that they give us a big plot of jungle where we could establish a Christian village with our grown up orphans and a few converts" (Fr. Desgodins' letter to his Superior, dated 22.12.1891)¹⁰¹.

The government was pleased to give the land to the French missionaries. In another letter to his Superior, Fr. Desgodins mentions *"the governor of Bengal has given us 225 hectares of forest"* (Fr. Desgodins letter to his Superior, dated 30.03.1891)¹⁰². All the trees were given to the fathers free of cost. The Catholics were permitted to live in this village. The Village *Mandal* was to be chosen by the superior of Catholic mission. The tax was fixed for four annas per acre (*Missions Catholique de Pedong 1891: 221-276*)¹⁰³.

Once the formalities of the transfer of land was over Fr. Hervagault left Pedong on 15th October 1891 (*Church Chronicle: Entry on 15.10.1891*)¹⁰⁴. Hervagault writes: *"I have taken one dozen of my newly baptized Catholics for the new place"* (Fr. Hervagault's letter to his superior, dated, 10.12.1891)¹⁰⁵.

He described his first few days in a letter to his Superior:

"The jungle was so thick that it was impossible on the first day to find a place sufficient for pitching a tent. The new comers had to spend their first night under the trees. Twelve families started clearing the forest and made the place habitable. By the end of November, we had built twelve huts and a chapel" (Fr. Hervagault's letter to his superior dated 10.12.1891)¹⁰⁶.

The first baptism was on 1st November 1891 of Djeni Gurung by Fr. Hervagault. She was given the name Jeanne in French. (*Church Records: Baptism register*)¹⁰⁷. The summit of the hill had been leveled by the

people. The timber and bricks were prepared. Fr. Hervagault made a brick-oven to mould the bricks for the church. He designed the church for 400 people, 64 feet by 34 feet. Fr. Hervagault chose an appropriate site for the church. He wrote in his diary "I have chosen a place from where it could be seen from all around." (Fr. Hervagault's diary: Entry on 11.09.1892)¹⁰⁸. Fr. Hervagault started a school in February 1893 for the children of Catholic families. He wrote to his superior in the following words:

"In our school, classes begin and end with the singing of Canticles in Latin, French, Nepali, Hindi or Bhutia" (Fr. Hervagault's letter to his Superior, dated 10.06.1893)¹⁰⁹.

In 1910, Fr. Hervagault carved a niche for a grotto in a huge rock, a little below the church. It took several weeks for the children of the boarding and the faithful to dig a path over the cliff and level sufficient space in front of the grotto. A statue of Our Lady of Lourdes was brought from France and installed in the niche carved by Fr. Hervagault.

The population of Maria Busty comprised three ethnic groups - Nepalese, Lepchas and Bhutias. The first one dozen Christians who shifted from Pedong to Maria Busty with Fr. Hervagault were Nepalese. The pioneer settlers brought their relatives to Maria Busty. When the news reached Darjeeling that land was freely available at Maria Busty, a few Nepalese migrated to Maria Busty. In 1920, Fr. Hervagault wrote to his superior mentioning the growth of Catholics in his mission.

"We are around 200 Christians now, who have come, nobody knows from where: although we have never spoken to these people, newly arrived from Nepal, they want to become Christians. That reminds us that we are nothing. God's grace is everything" (Fr. Hervagault's letter to his superior dated 02.06.1920)¹¹⁰.

The next ethnic group that became Catholic affiliated to the church of Maria Busty was the Lepcha. Nine Lepcha families from Dukka

approached Fr. Hervagault for baptism. Being so many, 46 in number, they felt strong enough to remain faithful to Catholicism (Church Records: Baptism register)¹¹¹. Though Dukka was four kilometers away from Maria Busty, the Catholics attended Mass every Sunday in the Vijaya Rani Church. Fathers visited the Lepcha houses and taught the people catechism.

Fr. Hervagault had learnt Tibetan language before arriving in India. After spending few years in Pedong and Maria Busty, he brushed up his Tibetan language. The news Bulletin of the French Fathers of Foreign Mission reports:

"Fr. Hervagault also baptized a good number of Bhutia children of Kagey. As he spoke Bhutia language as fluently as Nepali, he had established a good relation with them, whom at times, he used to help with some money" (Missions Catholique de Pedong, 1916:456)¹¹².

In the medical field, Fr. Hervagault went around treating the patients. Fr. Desgodins wrote in his letter "Fr. Hervagault carried some medicine with him during his house visits" (Fr. Desgodins' letter to his superior, dated 23.11.1990)¹¹³. Wherever he met a sick person, Fr. Hervagault administered some medicine. At present, the health care programmes are being continued by the sisters of St. Joseph's of Cluny at Maria Busty. A trained nun runs a dispensary in this remote area.

In Maria Busty, Fr. Hervagault paid much attention to the education of the children. He started a boarding school, where poor students were kept. Gradually, he admitted day scholars. Thus, St. Joseph's Primary School came into existence. He was instrumental in establishing primary schools at Kagey and Lingsey.

In the agricultural field, Fr. Hervagault experimented with a community system of farming like the German Jesuits did in South America (Awasty

1978: 22)¹¹⁴. The farming was on co-operative basis. Fr. Hervagault introduced tea in Maria Busty¹¹⁵. Later, Fr. Brahier started a vegetable co-operative society. People from Kagey, Lingsey, Dukka and Maria Busty sold vegetables to the co-operative society. Fr. Brahier transported the vegetables to Kalimpong on his horse for sale. After sale, Fr. Brahier distributed the money to the farmers (Interview with Mr. Joseph Bhutia on 07.08.2005)¹¹⁶.

Fr. Brahier, while looking after the Lepchas of Changsing, noticed the plight of Lepchas who faced difficulties due to lack of good seeds for cultivation. Therefore, paddy seeds were supplied to the Lepchas. This scheme was called Co-operative of Paddy Seeds¹¹⁷.

Sr. Mere Paul, a French Catholic nun reached Maria Busty on 18th February 1957 and opened a dispensary (Dispensary record:18.02.1957)¹¹⁸. The Nepalese from all castes approached mother Paul for medicine. The locals christened her 'Doctorni ama'¹¹⁹.

5.2.3 St. Bernadette Catholic Mission, Gorubathan

The Catholic Church is situated by the side of the road from Kalimpong to Gorubathan through Lava. Gorubathan is a plateau where cattle trade took place between Bhutan, Nepal, Sikkim and West Bengal. (Interview with William Phipon on 05.04.2004)¹²⁰.

In the year 1897, Fr. Hervagault undertook a missionary trip to Bhutan border. He landed up in a Lepcha village called Gorubathan. He was welcomed by the people. Since most of the Lepchas were Protestants, he could not establish a mission there. Two years later, Fr. Hervagault and Fr. Moriniaux ¹²¹ went to Gorubathan to keep in touch with the Lepchas. The Fathers from Maria Busty and Pedong maintained their winter visits to Gorubathan.

Fr. Benjamin Stolkey ¹²² visited Gorubathan from Maria Busty during the illness of Fr. Hervagault. Since he spoke Lepcha fluently, he could converse with Protestant Lepchas. The real break-through occurred after the conversion of Mr. G. T. Sitling¹²³ from Protestantism to Catholicism. Mr. Sitling's relatives accepted Catholicism as their new faith. The first baptism was of Maria Lepcha on 12th December 1931 by Fr. Benjamin at Gorubathan Presbytery (Church records: Baptism Register)¹²⁴. Stolkey used Gorubathan as a transit house in order to reach out to Todey and Nimbong. At present there are altogether 31 Catholic families in Gorubathan (Field Note: 05.04.2004)¹²⁵. The present Church was built by Fr. Abraham Kandathinkara and the Presbytery by Fr. Rocky D'Souza.

The sisters of the Daughters of the Cross reached Gorubathan in 2002. Bishop Eric Benjamin bought two acres of land from Robert Lepcha, a Catholic and accommodated the nuns there. The nuns look after the welfare of the womenfolk of Gorubathan.

In the field of medical care, it was Fr. Eigenmann¹²⁶ who treated the Lepcha patients of Gorubathan. He brought medicines from Switzerland. He also prepared medicines and administered to the patients. Fr. Eigenmann consulted two books for the treatment of patients. The first one is '*An L'usage des Missionaries des Coloniacex*'. The second one is '*Guide Medical African*'. These books are preserved in the Franco-Swiss museum¹²⁷ at Pedong. Fr. Eigenmann prepared medicines himself. A weighing machine which was used to mix the right proportion of various chemicals is preserved at the Franco-Swiss Museum, Pedong.

In the educational field, the Swiss and Indian missionaries assisted the children to get good education in St. George High School, Pedong. Presently, Fr. Edward Sangnes, a Lepcha priest takes care of the spiritual

and material needs of all the people of Gorubathan. The Lepchas assemble in the church on Sundays and worship Jesus by participating in the Holy Mass.

5.2.4 St. Nicholas Catholic Mission, Todey

Todey is situated in the hill section of Gorubathan under Kalimpong subdivision. It is cut off from Kalimpong by a mountain ridge descending southwest from Ruchela of Neora valley. It is also separated from Bhutan by the De-Chu or Jaldhaka River. Todey can be reached from Siliguri through Coronation Bridge via Chalsa and Jaldhaka.

In 1897, Fr. Hervagault lamented the migration of Nepalese from Nepal to Bhutan border. He expected them to settle in Maria Busty. Fr. Hervagault wrote:

"Most of these people from Nepal go to Bhutan, not to our place. Our land is so small that it has been filled up very quickly with these migrants who so easily become Christians" (Fr. Hervagault's letter to his superior, dated 27.03.1897)¹²⁸.

Fr. Hervagault made a discovery trip to Bhutan border. He trekked from Maria Busty to Ruchela Peak, then, descended to Bhutan border. He found a large number of Nepalese settled near the border. (Fr. Hervagault's diary: Entry on 19.09.1900)¹²⁹. During his second visit to Todey, he passed through a Lepcha hamlet at Gorubathan. The British government did not allow Fr. Hervagault to establish a mission at Todey due to the protest by the Protestants. However, Fathers from Maria Busty maintained their annual visits to Todey. The fruit of the visits of French Fathers was reaped by Fr. Robert Eigenmann, a Swiss, in 1947. Mr. Joseph Sitling from Darjeeling had gone to his maternal aunt's house at Todey. It was at this time, Fr. Eigenmann visited this area from Gorubathan. Mr. Joseph, being a Catholic welcomed Fr. Eigenmann. Since the missionary had sufficient knowledge in medicine, he treated the patients. As a result

of the healing ministry, five families of Rai ethnic community accepted Catholicism (Interview with Mr. Joseph Sitling on 2.5.2004)¹³⁰.

Fr. Eigenmann felt the need of educating the children of the area. Therefore, a primary school was established at Tangta, five kilometers away from Today. Mr. Joseph Sitling was appointed the first headmaster of the school. Fr. Eigenmann constructed a thatched house and lived in Tangta for six years. In 1960, Fr. Leonard Molomoo, the first Lepcha priest along with a nurse Agnes did commendable service in medical care. Later, The Sisters of St. Joseph's of Cluny, Sr. Susan and Sr. Michaelle reached Today on 10th June 1994 to initiate educational and health programmes. Now, Fr. David Lepcha looks after the spiritual and material welfare of the people of Today. The Sisters of St. Joseph's of Cluny run both the Primary school and dispensary.

5.2.5 St. Joseph's the Worker Church, Git-Dubling

The Catholic mission is situated halfway between Algarah and Lava. According to a local Catholic resident Mr. Buddha Lepcha, there were two villages in the past, Git and Dubling, with separate *Mandals*. When the *Mandal* of Git died, the *Mandal* of Dubling was asked to look after both villages. Thus, two villages came under one village council and were put together as Git-Dubling. The place is also known as Budhabare since there is weekly market on every Wednesday. The area falls under Git-Dubling Police Station (Interview with Mr. Budha Lepcha on 07.05.2004)¹³¹.

In 1899, Fr. Durel, a French Catholic missionary from Maria Busty penetrated into this Lepcha dominated village. He spent some time at Nok, a hamlet in the vicinity. A new Catholic managed to get a plot of land for the missionary. Fr. Durel constructed a house for himself. Unfortunately, the Protestants filed a complaint stating that a Catholic

missionary had intruded into their territory. The British Government ordered the missionary to leave Nok on 4th December 1899. Fr. Durel went back to Maria Busty. Almost 36 years later in 1935, Fr. Gratuze set up a mission campus at Git-Dubling. The first baptism in the church of St. Joseph the Worker was on 27th October 1935 of Raphael Lepcha by Fr. Gratuze (Church records: Baptism register)¹³². A presbytery was established in 1936. In the same year a school was also established. The Lepcha children were the beneficiaries of the school. Jeanne Francoise ¹³³, a German nun was the first woman missionary to set foot at Git-Dubling. She reached Git-Dabbling on 22nd April 1949. Since she was a nurse, she set up a dispensary in the convent. Regarding her travel from St. Joseph's Convent School, Kalimpong to Git-Dabbling, she writes:

"I traveled in a jeep up to Relli river. Then I crossed the suspension bridge. I climbed slowly upon the gentle Tibetan pony. Again, after several hours of climbing, I reached a magnificent forest, which in a humid season swarms with leeches. Behold at last - Git, my home" (Sr. Jeanne's letter to Mother General in Paris, France, dated 25.04.1949)¹³⁴.

The Sisters of the St. Joseph's of Cluny took over the administration of school in 1950. The present church was constructed under the supervision of Fr. Augustine Schyrr ¹³⁵ in 1967. The church is in the shape of a Cross. Fr. Thuler painted the pictures on the wall behind the altar. A plaque on the Grotto reads: "In memory of Fr. Schyrr, our Parish Priest".

Fr. Augustine Schyrr's contribution in the field of dental care is commendable. His specialty was in the extraction of tooth. His dental kit is preserved in the Franco-Swiss Museum at Pedong (*The Telegraph*, Thursday 13.01.2006)¹³⁶. The people of all castes and creeds approached Sr. Emma¹³⁷ with requests to attend to complicated delivery cases at Git-Dabbling. Sister, trusting in the healing power of Jesus, attended delivery cases and saved the lives of patients. Now, the Sisters of the St. Joseph's of

Cluny run the High School and look after the dispensary. Fr. Joachim Sada, a Lepcha priest looks after the spiritual needs of his Rong folk.

5.2.6 St. Peter's Catholic Mission, Munsong

The mission campus is situated by the road from Rangpo to Kalimpong. The distance is 17 kilometres from Kalimpong. The area is covered with cinchona plantation. L. S. S. O'Malley in his *Bengal District Gazetteers: Darjeeling* gives a short description of Munsong and cinchona plantation.

"In 1899 a fresh extension of about 900 acres – since extended still further to about 7,000 acres – was commenced in the Damsong forest block, situated about 10 miles north-east of Kalimpong, near the junction of the Rangpo and Teesta rivers on the borders of Sikkim. In this new block, which is known as the Munsong Division, there are at present about 500 acres under cinchona Ledgeriana, with about 1,200,000 plants. (O'Malley 1907: 124)¹³⁸.

Fr. Rene Singh, priest-in-charge of Sacred Heart Church, Pedong befriended the manager of the cinchona plantation at Munsong. The manager permitted Fr. Rene to tour in his garden and establish contact with the labourers. Fr. Rene conducted a missionary tour in the cinchona garden (Interview with Fr. Rene Singon 01.06.2004)¹³⁹. Fr. Martin Rey¹⁴⁰, successor to Fr. Rene in the Sacred Heart Church, Pedong visited Munsong and Kashyong gardens. Fr. Rey sent Dr. Oliva Rai to Munsong to look after the Health care of the garden labourers. The regular visits of Catholic missionaries to the garden resulted in baptism. The first baptism of Vinod Gurung by Fr. John K. Bingham was registered on 5th March 1995. Baptisms of the previous years were registered at Sacred Heart Church, Pedong.

As the number of Catholics increased, Fr. Rey started celebrating Holy Mass in the families. Fr. Rey was given a plot of land by the plantation authorities to construct a church. A beautiful church was constructed in 1983. Fr. John Bingham¹⁴¹, an American Jesuit was the first resident priest

at Munsong. He stayed at Munsong for two years, looking after the spiritual needs of the people. Besides his pastoral work, he got involved in the health care programmes of the locals. He assisted the sick to get into good hospitals in Siliguri.

The status of women in Munsong improved with the arrival of Sr. Emilia Lakra, Sr. Anastasia Billung and Sr. Marie Therese of Filles de la Croix, on 26th January 1995. The Sisters conduct tailoring programmes for rural women. They visit each family in the cinchona plantation and organize self-help groups for the socio-economic development of the women.

Table 5.2. Community-wise Break up of Catholics at Munsong

Community	Number
Tamang	52
Sherpa	31
Gurung	30
Rai	15
Lepcha	10
Ghimirey	10
Thapa	8
Subba	4
Khawas	3
Bhutias	3
Pradhan	2
Total	168

Source: Church records

The Catholic population at Munsong grew from a handful to 168 during the last one decade (from 5th March 1995 to 5th March, 2005). From the above table, it is clear that the Tamang Buddhists have embraced Catholicism more than others. The main reason for the people to accept

Catholicism was the belief that "baptism brings physical healing" (The diary of Fr. Rene Singh: Entry on 03.11.1992)¹⁴².

At present, Fr. Fulgence Xaxa administers the Sacraments to his flock. The Sisters visit houses and look after the welfare of the people.

5.2.7 St. Joseph's Convent School, Kalimpong

In the year 1919, Fr. Jules Douenel of the Foreign Mission Society of Paris, learnt that Kalimpong was open to residential area. Without wasting time, he went to Chandennagar with a request to the Cluny sisters. In the request letter Fr. Douenel writes:

"I invite you to establish a Holiday Home at Kalimpong that could later on become a house of education" (Fr. Douenel's letter to Mother Ursula, dated 16.03.1920)¹⁴³.

Since the sisters agreed to start a holiday home, Fr. Douenel approached the Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) for a plot of land for the sisters. The SDO granted 1.85 acres of land to the sisters. The land was adjacent to the site chosen by Fr. Douenel for his residence. The SDO in his letter writes:

"The site is a nice one, just below a plot chosen by Fr. Douenel and above the cart-road, with a good view" (SDO's letter to Sr. Ursula dated 23.07.1920)¹⁴⁴.

The construction started immediately. Sr. Ursula bore the expenses and Fr. Douenel supervised the construction. By the middle of May the convent was almost completed. The Convent chronicler records:

"During the hot summer of 1921 the sisters came and spent a pleasant few days to regain their strength and become acquainted with friendly people." (House Chronicle: Entry on 26.07.1921)¹⁴⁵.

The British Catholics of Kalimpong requested the nuns to open a school for girls. The request was forwarded to the SDO by the sisters. The SDO was pleased with the request and granted the sisters "one acre of land free for a playground" (SDO's letter to Sr. Ursula dated 03.07.1923)¹⁴⁶. The

Deputy Commissioner wrote a letter to the sisters, mentioning "You are allowed free use of public water" (Deputy Commissioner's letter to Sr. Ursula, dated 12.02.1925)¹⁴⁷.

After the completion of groundwork for a school, on 26th May 1926 the Cluny sisters along with two staff and three children alighted at Gielle Khola Railway Terminal. Sr. Marie Therese describes the journey from Siliguri to Kalimpong in the following words:

"We boarded another train (a very small one) to reach Kalimpong road station. The train passed through deep forests for some time and then entered the mountains. We got our first glimpse of the river, 'Teesta' between the high mountains. It seemed that the smart little train was taking a malicious pleasure in making us pass above the precipices. It razed the edge so much that nobody could put a foot on the ground, at last it slipped more into the mountains and then suddenly stopped. A bridge was being repaired and it was impossible for the train to pass by. In this country people do not get embarrassed due to inconveniences caused to the passengers. All the passengers were requested to get down from the train and cross the river on foot. We were busy in our compartments under a heap of packets, small and large. All were taken down in disorder. A number of coolies took them and through a narrow footpath we descended down to the river. Thank God!, the water was not deep, nobody lost balance on the bridge improvised with bamboos and stones. On the other bank a train waited for us. Our reservation charts were put up. Two wooden benches were allowed on the van and we packed in. None of our parcels was lost. Our heavy trunks were carried across the river on the backs of coolies. I would never have believed that a man could be so strong. I was amazed to see the amount of goods being carried by the men and women on their backs. The goods were held on each porter's back with a rope passing below the goods and then through the forehead. The entire load was supported by the head and the small of the back. These short people are gifted with extraordinary physical strength. It is said that a woman carries an entire piano on her back! They are called Bhutias and they speak Bengali, Hindustani or Nepali. The women are covered with huge necklaces, large saucers of copper hang from their ears and on the legs, chains of convicts. The coolies are clothed in rags. At about half past eleven we reached the Kalimpong Road station, where the disciple of good Father Douinel handed us this welcome message from Father" (Sr. Marie Therese' letter to Mother General in Paris dated 04.06.1926)¹⁴⁸.

The reputation of St. Joseph's Convent School spread rapidly far and wide. In 1929, there were children of Royal families of Sikkim and Bhutan

(*Convent Chronicle*: Entry 03.03.1929)¹⁴⁹. The Inspector of European Schools was so happy with sisters that permanent recognition was granted to the school as Secondary School.

5.2.8 St. Theresa's Church, Kalimpong

In June 1924 Fr. Jules Douenel arrived at Kalimpong to work with the Sisters and build a Catholic church in Kalimpong. He stayed in a simple hut and had his meals in the convent. Later he chose the land for the church and began the presbytery. According to *Convent Chronicle*, "There were ten Catholics, all were from Maria Busty and worked at Dr. Graham's Homes" (*Convent Chronicle*: Entry on 06.06.1927)¹⁵⁰. In 1931 Mr. Gyan Tshering Sitling, the most popular and prominent pastor of the Scottish Presbyterian Church decided to become a Catholic along with his relatives. According to Baptism Register, Fr. Gianora baptized 68 persons from Protestantism to Catholicism. (Church Records: Baptism register)¹⁵¹. He bought a piece of land from Santosh Sing Bhutia and a plot for cemetery, playground and a bigger presbytery. Fr. Peter Ranger was appointed Parish Priest in 1937, with Mr. Joseph Bhutia as Catechist. Fr. Jerome Singh was instrumental in the construction of a Pastoral Centre, called Pushpika near the church. Sisters of St. Joseph's of Cluny regularly visit house in Kalimpong.

Fr. Jules saw the need of printing Catechetical books and installed printing press, which was known as Ong Press. The following books were printed at Ong Press:

1. The four Nepali Gospels
2. The Acts of the Apostles
3. The Stories of the Old and New Testament
4. A Nepali Catechism
5. A Nepali Prayer Book

Fr. Andre Butty¹⁵² was sent to Pedong to assist Fr. Schyrr who was in charge of the orphanage. He was always worried about the food of his orphans. In order to find a solution to the financial burden, Fr. Butty bought two cows and began to prepare cheese. He learnt the technique of making cheese from Dr. Graham's Homes and Fr. Eigenmann. Since there weren't enough places to keep cows, oxen and pigs, the Dairy Farm was shifted from Pedong to Kalimpong in 1947. He established his farm on the land bought by Fr. Gianora. One dozen orphans followed Fr. Butty to Kalimpong. Fr. Butty, with the help of his orphans and co-workers, prepared cheese, chocolates, lollypops and curds. He inaugurated a small industrial school to train the dropouts of St. Augustine's School in shoe making, tailoring and carpentry. Doma Tamang¹⁵³ who worked with Fr. Butty for 27 years describes the campus as follows:

"There were fifteen cows in 1949. There was also a Piggery Farm with 67 pigs, a fruit orchard and vegetable gardens" (Interview with Doma Tamang on 11.06.2004)¹⁵⁴.

The beneficiaries were the local unemployed people. Fr. Butty not only employed the people, but also imparted non-formal education to illiterate men and women. He took up housing scheme for his labourers. He built twenty-five houses known as 'Pachis Dhurey'. Though the farm had to be closed down in 1987 after Fr. Butty's retirement, the labourers continue to make cheese in their own houses.

Fr. Edouard Gressot founded Shanti Nagar (Town of Peace) in 1985, for the urban poor of Kalimpong. He built seventy-five houses for the handicapped and sick.

5.2.9 St. Michael's Catholic Mission, Sangsay

The Catholic Mission of Sangsay is situated fourteen kilometers away from Kalimpong. The valley of Sangsay can be viewed from Deolo. According to Norden Tsering Lepcha, the etymology of Sangsay is found

in Lepcha language. 'Sungse' means see all over the place. Therefore, Sangsay means the spur from which one can see all around. Kalimpong, Teesta river and Southern part of Sikkim could be viewed from Sangsay (Interview with Norden Tsering Lepcha on 06.06.2004)¹⁵⁵.

The first Catholic missionary to descend into Sangsay valley was Fr. Gaston Gratuze, a French missionary. He penetrated into this Lepcha village as an educationist. By realizing the need of education in the village, John Lepcha, a teacher from Pedong was sent to Sangsay to start a school. The school flourished in Sangsay. Fr. Gratuze occasionally visited Sangsay. When the Swiss fathers took over the Pedong mission, Fr. Schyrr and Fr. Butty frequented Sangsay to look after the educational needs of people. They also noticed that the patients could not reach the hospital on time due to poor transport network. Therefore, in 1952, Fr. Gex Collet and Sr. Ann Mary, a nurse visited each house to nurse the sick. As gratitude towards the Catholic missionaries for their care for the ravine folk, five Lepcha families embraced Catholicism.

The first five Catholic families attended Sunday services in Mirik near Algara. They stayed in Mirik during the days proceeding Easter Sunday. Fr. Pittet, after witnessing the depth of the faith of Catholics, permitted them to construct a small chapel in the land donated by a Lepcha family in 1961.

The priests from the Diocese of Darjeeling took care of the people in their material, educational, medical and spiritual needs. The Sisters of the Charity of Nazareth reached Sangsay on 22nd November 1986 (*Convent Chronicle*: entry on 22.11.1986)¹⁵⁶. Regarding the involvement of sisters in medical care, Fr. Samuel Lepcha writes:

"Sr. Maria Palathingel along with three paramedics is busy taking care of sick people. She makes timely house visits under M.C.H. programme" (Reported by Fr. Samuel Lepcha in *Tea Leaves*, Vol.6, No.: 4, 1988)¹⁵⁷.

Now, the Sisters of the Charity of Nazareth look after the school and dispensary. Fr. Rocky D'Souza is instrumental in maintaining the religious-social services for the people of Sangsay.

5.2.10 Christ the King Church, Algarah-Mirik

Algarah is situated half way between Kalimpong and Pedong while Mirik is on the way from Algarah to Lava. Algarah means an iron rod to which an animal is tied. In Lepcha, 'Mirik' means a burning place. According to Joseph Lepcha, people in Algarah used to watch wild fire in the forest, opposite to Algarah. Therefore, people in Algarah referred to that region as 'Mirik' (Interview with Joseph Lepcha on 20.06.2004)¹⁵⁸:

Fr. Gratuze, a French missionary from Pedong used to travel on foot through Mirik to Peming to visit Catholic families. Since a relative of a Lepcha Catholic resided in Mirik, Fr. Gratuze took rest in the house. Therefore, Fr. Gratuze was the first Catholic missionary to pass through the Lepcha hamlets of Mirik. On the other hand, Fr. Peter Ranger¹⁵⁹ often passed through Algarah, a small market, en route to Gorubathan. His eldest brother had a cottage in the bazaar, known as John's Lodge. Fr. Ranger's frequent visits to his brother put him in touch with local people. He started a small Catholic mission station in one of his brother's rooms. Seven Catholic families in Algarah are the fruits of the labour of Fr. Peter Ranger. It was at this time, Michael Lepcha¹⁶⁰ who combined in himself both the functions of Lama and Bongthing discussed with his wife about becoming Catholic. In 1949, Mr. Michael went to Kalimpong to meet Fr. Gressot. The Swiss missionary was delighted to meet an aspirant to Catholicism. At the invitation of Mr. Michael, Fr. Gressot went to Mirik and promised a school, if land was donated. According to Joseph Lepcha,

Rozar Lama and Doma Lepcha who were in charge of the Gumpa agreed to give a plot of land to the Catholic missionaries. Sukhman Rai, the *Mandal* made the legal process faster for the transaction of the land. Fr. Gressot built a school at Mirik in 1951 (Interview with Joseph Lepcha on 20.06.2004)¹⁶¹. In the following year in 1952, Fr. Gressot supervised the construction of the church and the presbytery. The first baptism, registered in Mirik's register is of Celestina Lama on 10th April 1953, by Fr. Gressot. (Church Records: Baptism register)¹⁶².

At present (2006) the diocese of Darjeeling looks after the mission. Bro. Xavier Rai is the headmaster of the school. Meanwhile, Fr. Michael Lepcha (Jr.) organizes the church activities in Mirik.

Fr. Pittet, during his stay at Mirik, translated the Missal and Rituals from Latin to Nepali. He composed Nepali prayer books as per the decree of Vatican II on worship.

5.2.11 St. Margaret Mary Catholic Mission, Borbot-Nimbong

The Catholic mission is situated on the route from Kalimpong to Bagrakot through Lava. Fr. Gratuze, a French missionary from Pedong on his way to Pemling used to halt at Nimbong in 1932. He visited a few Lepcha families at Pemling who had relatives in Pedong. About thirty-six years later, in the year 1968, Fr. Eigenmann along with Joseph Sitling, undertook a missionary expedition. They landed in Nimbong, the stronghold of Protestants. Since the Protestants opposed the presence of a Catholic missionary, Fr. Eigenmann retreated to Borbot where he administered medicines to the sick. The medical care of Father won the hearts of people and he was allowed to reside at Borbot, two kilometers away from Nimbong. He visited his patients once a month. The patients who recovered from their illness embraced the faith of the missionary. Thereafter, Fr. Charles Mukhia bought ten acres of land and constructed a

chapel with residence. The Lepchas who earlier professed Buddhism and Nepalese who practiced Hinduism formed the Catholic community at Nimbong-Borbot.

Fr. Victor Khawas, besides evangelization work, encouraged the people to cultivate ginger in their fields. He gave the people meals, and made them plant *amliso*¹⁶³ and fruit trees in their fields. He insisted on terraced cultivation in Nimbong-Borbot area.

Nowadays, Fr. Waltar Crasta organizes the Church activities. At the same time, the Sisters of St. Joseph's of Cluny run the Primary School and dispensary. Sr. Marie Pierre, a nurse at Nimbong-Borbot, applies all her medical skills to treat the patients. Though she is an allopathic nurse, she administers ayurvedic medicine to her patients.

5.2.12 St. Augustine's School, Kalimpong

The Second World War had disastrous effects on nations and people. The fear of imminent attacks had gripped the people of Bengal, particularly Calcutta. The people fled to safer places and the institutions were closed. The Catholic parents not knowing what to do with the education of their children sought the help of Fr. Benjamin Stolke whose relatives were living in Calcutta. He started coaching classes for the Catholic children who took shelter in Kalimpong. Fr. Paul Thurler¹⁶⁴ assisted Fr. Stolke to conduct coaching classes in one of the rooms of the presbytery. The coaching classes led to formal classes and St. Augustine's School was born. As the years passed by, the number of students increased in the school. Therefore, the school was shifted to the land bought by Fr. Gianora. In 1945, St. Augustine's School was shifted to the new locale. The tireless efforts of the Swiss missionaries brought up the school.

Fr. E. Gressot, on behalf of his congregation, thought of establishing St. Augustine's School firmly. He brought his brother Philip, an architect, in 1964 to build St. Augustine's School complex. Fr. Martin Rey supervised the construction of the school, though Mr. Poddar was the contractor. The Swiss fathers looked after the boarding and the school until 1978. Thereafter, the administration was passed on to Indian Catholic missionaries.

5.2.13 St. Maurice's Catholic Mission, Suruk

Suruk is a remote area near Samthar in Kalimpong Sub-division. It falls in Suruk-Samthar and Yangmakum Gram Panchayat. In January 1952, Fr. G. Rouiller¹⁶⁵ opened a mission among the predominantly Buddhist Lepchas. He was assisted by Victor Khawas, a teacher from Pedong. According to Asing Joseph Lepcha, Mr. G. T. Sitling had visited his relatives in Suruk and advised them to become Catholics. Fr. Benjamin Stolke, with his Lepcha Bible, had preached the gospel to the Lepchas (Interview with Asing Joseph Lepcha on 27.06.2004)¹⁶⁶. When Fr. Rouiller, accompanied by Victor Khawas reached Suruk, the ground was already prepared for the sowing of Catholic faith by Fr. Stolke. Fr. Rouiller celebrated the Mass in Latin in the courtyard of Kancha Lepcha's house. Fr. Victor explained to Kancha's family the significance of Mass. In the midst of opposition, Kancha Lepcha became Paul Kancha Lepcha. His name was registered in the Baptism Register on 07.06.1952 (Church Records: Baptism register)¹⁶⁷. Since Fr. Rouiller was a good carpenter, a wooden presbytery with a chapel was constructed.

Fr. Victor Khawas and Fr. Rouiller opened a Primary School in 1952 in order to remove the illiteracy of the Lepchas. Besides a regular school, classes were conducted in the evenings for the working people. Now, the children can pursue their studies up to class twelve in Suruk.

In the medical field, the Sisters of St. Joseph's of Cluny have removed the superstitious practices of the people. After recovery from illness, the people abandon the articles used by witch doctors. The dispensary chronicler writes:

"The people have surrendered their magical items to Catholic Missionaries. Now, one of the rooms in the dispensary has become a sort of a museum of witchcraft emblems, tambourines, strings of serpent's vertebrae, human bones, monkey's heads, jackal's jaw bones, whiskers and tongues of tigers" (Dispensary Chronicle: Entry on 16.4.1955)¹⁶⁸.

Besides evangelization work, Fr. Rouiller improved the road transportation for the people of Suruk. For ages, the villagers used to be isolated during monsoon because of swollen rivers. The people's activities remained paralyzed for months due to lack of communication. Fr. G. Rouiller, knowing the difficulties of the people, constructed 75 meter long bridge over Samthar and Relli rivers. The suspension bridge, although made of wood, bamboo and iron cables was a great boon to local people.

The people of Suruk had no long-term planning regarding agriculture. Fr. Rouiller introduced scientific ways of cultivating vegetables. He also encouraged the people to plant fruit trees and plantains. He encouraged them to use organic manure for the cultivation of vegetables.

Fr. Rouiller, with the help of Fr. Brahier started Samthar Agricultural and Monitory Co-oprative (SAMCO) in order to help the socio-economic growth of Suruk and the entire region. They acquired 50 acres of forestland at Shepkhola from the government of West Bengal. Tractors and sawing machines were imported from Switzerland. With the help of the Swiss Government, a rope way was built over Teesta at 27th mile in September 1966. They also started animal husbandry. The West Bengal

Government was so pleased with Swiss Catholic missionaries that Fr. Rouiller and Fr. Brahier were given Indian citizenship.

5.2.14 St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Mission, Tanyang

Tanyang is situated on the route from Kalimpong to Samthar, through Relli Bridge. According to John Lenus Lepcha, the etymology of Tanyang can be traced in Lepcha tradition. The word 'thu' means lake and 'nyang' means up to the brim but not overflowing. Therefore, the meaning is the place where the lakes are about to overflow but not flowing (Interview with John Lenus Lepcha on 04.07.2004)¹⁶⁹.

Fr. J. M. Brahier, on his journey from Git-Dabling to Suruk, was encountered by two individuals at Samthar. One of them was a woman who invited him to Tanyang to start a mission station. The other person was Mr. Tencho Simick, a Protestant catechist of Tanyang. Since there was schism in the community, the catechist did not want the break away group to pick up momentum. Therefore, Mr. Simick requested Brahier to make the Protestants Catholics. Father stayed in the house of Mr. Lakshuman Lepcha who had become a Catholic. Later, Fr. Brahier bought a small plot of land from Lagay Lepcha, and constructed a presbytery with a provisional chapel. The first baptism was of Mrs. Motik Lepcha on 17.08.1952 at Tanyang by Fr. Brahier. (Church Records: Baptism registers)¹⁷⁰.

Fr. Brahier felt the need of educating the Lepchas. Therefore, he converted father's residence into a school. He taught in the school from 6.00 a.m. to 10 a.m. Fr. Brahier brought Canicius Lepcha and Alexius Lepcha from Maria Busty to Tanyang to be teachers in the new school. Later, the school was recognized by the government of West Bengal as Tanyang Tribal School.

The Sisters of St. Joseph's of Cluny reached Tanyang almost 33 years after the establishment of the Mission Station. Sr. Rosalia Rai, a teacher, and Sr. Gabriella Rai, a nurse arrived at Tanyang on 21st February 1986. (*Convent Chronicle*: Entry on 21.02.1986)¹⁷¹. Besides a well furnished dispensary, the Sisters started a private primary school for the local children.

Now, Sr. Rachael Chhetri is the nurse at Arogya Bhawan, Tanyang. She avails the Mother-Child Health Programme of Hayden Hall for the mothers and children of Tanyang. She organized medical camp in May 2004. Thirty patients, both men and women, were operated for cataract.

The Catholic missionaries in Tanyang initiated socio-economic programmes for the welfare of the people. Fr. Brahier noticed that the Lepchas were in debt to the moneylenders. Therefore, he started Multi-purpose Co-operative Society. The society liberated the people from the clutches of moneylenders. Fr. Brahier made arrangement for marketing oranges, ginger, maize and paddy at SAMCO, Shepkhola.

Fr. Jacob Pallivathukkal observed the shortage of water for the people of Tanyang. He was instrumental in implementing the water project of Seva Kendra. He brought water through a pipe from a distance of three kilometers.

Fr. George Vadakkal observed the cumbersome annual repair of the thatched houses of the Lepchas. Therefore, he took trouble to bring corrugated iron sheets for the roof of Lepcha houses. He also initiated a co-operative store for the sale of grocery items. He made the items available for the people at a cheaper rate than in the nearby market. Fr. Gregory Lepcha, the present leader at Tanyang, is responsible for the construction of the road up to Tanyang Tribal School. The local people rendered their labour in the construction of the road.

5.2.15 Our Lady of Lourdes Mission, Tendrabong

The Mission campus is situated below Algarah Bazaar. The Lepcha village is perched above Mudung River. Thomas Passang Lepcha gives the reason for naming the area as Tendrabong. Before the arrival of Catholic missionaries, all the Lepchas professed Buddhism. A group of Lamas along with their wives and children visited each house once a year for annual pujas. The caravan stayed in one house for about five days. The sound of the drum echoed in the valley. In Lepcha, 'thandar' means the sound of the drum and 'bong' means place. Therefore, the name of the place is Thandarbong. An anglicized version of the name of the place is Tendrabong (Intervi with Thomas Passang Lepcha on 11.07.2004)¹⁷².

Fr. Desgodins has mentioned the name 'Tendrabong' in his letter and expressed that, of the four Lepcha villages within the radius of five kilometers from Pedong, except Thanderbong, the other three, Dukka, Chiangsing, Kashyong have embraced Catholicism (Fr. Desgodins letter to his Superior, dated 04.05.1895)¹⁷³. Ever since, there is silence about Thanderbong in the letters of French Missionaries. The first Catholic missionary to preach the gospel in Thanderbong was Fr. Martin Rey, a Swiss missionary in 1954. His contact with the Lama of the monastery resulted in the conversion of Lama and the entire family into Catholicism. The first person from Thanderbong to become a Catholic was Eric Zungi Lepcha on 06.11.1955. He was baptized at Sacred Heart Church, Pedong (Church records: Baptism Register)¹⁷⁴. The first church in Tendrabong was the spacious monastery-cum-residence of the Lama. Mr. Alphonse Lepcha donated five acres of land to the Catholic missionaries to establish a mission campus. Fr. Francis Yonzon, priest in-charge of Pedong with the help of the local people constructed a place for worship in 1995. A residence for the priest also was constructed. The people constructed a Grotto to house the statue of Mary, Mother of Jesus. A hillock above the

Church is the cemetery for the Catholics. A convent, school and dispensary were set up by the Sisters of the Charity of Nazareth for the welfare of the people.

Table 5.3 Community-wise Break up of the Catholics of Tendrabong

Community	Number of Families
Lepcha	75
Rai	16
Gurung	11
Tamang	07
Biswakarma	07
Bhutia	04
Total	109

Source: Field survey

As for health care, Fr. Martin Rey visited families to inquire the health of people. Fr. Rey Fr. Rey once a month at Tendrabong and administered medicine after Mass. Fr. Martin was a doctor for the body as well as soul.

To bring socio-economic development in the village, the Catholic missionaries encouraged the local people to cultivate cash crops like cardamom and ginger. Till then, the locals cultivated crops just enough for home consumption. They had no concept of trade until the arrival of Fr. Rey. Fr. Martin encouraged the people to cultivate cardamom, ginger, millet and maize. He converted a drying lake near Mairung into an agricultural field. Crop failures were very common either due to lack of rain or excessive rain. To help the people in their hours of distress and misery, Fr. Rene Singh collected maize given as offerings to God and preserved them in the church to distribute among the poor during the monsoon.

5.2.16 St. Patrick's Church, Pringtam-Kankebong

The mission is situated on the route from Kalimpong to Samthar through Relli Bridge. The nearest bazaar is Khani Dara. A new opening was made by Fr. Brahier at Pringtam. He visited this Lepcha hamlet from Tanyang. Mr. Lama Tshering Sada, a retired army officer welcomed Fr. Brahier to Pringtam. Though the army officer was Protestant, he became Catholic. He donated part of his land to the Catholic mission to build a church. Fr. Brahier constructed a church in Lepcha style. Fr. Brahier completed the construction of a double story wooden presbytery in 1957. The first baptism was of Phurba Philip on 06.03.1958 at Pringtam (Church Record: Baptism Register)¹⁷⁵. Fr. Brahier visited Kankebong, a village about two kilometers away from Pringtam. Fr. Eigenmann was instrumental in constructing a church in Kankebong in 1965. As the Catholic population grew, there was a need for a bigger place for worship. Therefore, Fr. Gressot built a church in Kankebong. Majority of the Catholics were from Rai ethnic community. The church is built in Hindu temple style. This is the only church in Darjeeling and Sikkim region in Hindu style. The Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, at the invitation of Bishop Eric Benjamin, arrived at Kankebong on 17th March, 1995 (*Convent Chronicle*: Entry on 17.3.1995)¹⁷⁶. To initiate educational and health care programmes, Sr. Dennis, in-charge of the dispensary, trained two nurses and placed them in different villages. The patients from far and wide, approach Sr. Dennis for various treatments. According to Sr. Dennis, the common sicknesses are fever, headaches and diarrhoea. Whenever special care is needed the patients are referred to Government Hospital at Pedong or Kalimpong (Interview with Sr. Dennis on 11.07.2004)¹⁷⁷.

5.2.17 Mary, Mother of God Church, Relli Road, Kalimpong

The mission campus is situated within Kalimpong town, on Relli road. Mary Mother of God Church was bifurcated from St. Theresa's Church,

Kalimpong in 1974. Fr. Gex Collet acquired a piece of land in the heart of Kalimpong town. He built the church with the help of Mr. John Samsing Lepcha in gompa style, without any pillar inside. The altar is at the centre. The decoration is influenced by Tibetan art. The verandahs all around are typical of a Buddhist monastery. The church was blessed on 1st January 1978 by his Lordship Bishop Eric Benjamin (*Church Chronicle: Entry on 1.1.1978*)¹⁷⁸. The church is dedicated to Mary, Mother of God and is commonly known as the Relli Road Church. The first baptism in the church of Mother of God was on 03.01.1978 of Teresa Margaret Rai by Fr. Gex Collet (*Church Record: Baptism Register*)¹⁷⁹. Fr. Gex Collet is the founder and its first Parish Priest.

Table 5.4 Community-wise Break up of Catholics, Relli Road

Community	Number
Tamang	14
Rai	14
Lepcha	12
Bhutia	11
Thapa	10
Sharma	09
Dorji	08
Gurung	07
Subba	06
Mangar	06
Chettri	06
Darnal	06
Pradhan	06
Biswakarma	05
Sherpa	05
Ghataraj	05

Sarki	05
Bhujel	05
Mukhia	04
Sundas	04
Khawas	04
Rasaily	04
Pariyar	04
Baraily	04
Rumtail	03
Ghimirey	03
Gadal	03
Kalikotey	03
Bagdas	02
Maji	02
Das	02
Diyali	02
Total	188

5.2.18 The Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Lolay

Lolay is situated on the route from Kalimpong to Kafer through Relli Bridge. It is two-hour drive from Kalimpong through the maize fields. In 1974, the Rai ethnic group of Lolay felt the need of inviting the Catholic missionaries into their midst. Mr. Basil, Michael and Paul wrote an invitation and forwarded it to Fr. Pittet who was in-charge of the mission at Algara-Mirik. The invitation was signed by thirty-two people. The leaders of the Rai community wrote:

"We request you to come to our village and organize socio-economic developmental programmes. We are still in a bad state after the great landslide in 1968" (Extract from the invitation letter of Rai community to Fr. Pittet, dated 03.02.1974)¹⁸⁰.

Fr. Pittet, on accepting the invitation, visited the house of Mr. Basil Rai. He was whole-heartedly welcomed by the people. Fr. Pittet hired a house that belonged to Mr. Bhavan Prasad Rai, a military man. Later, Fr. Pittet bought five acres of land from Chandra Chettri in 1976. He constructed a church-cum-presbytery. Though the Rai community invited Fr. Pittet to Lolay, the first individual to accept Catholic faith was a Gurung. According to Baptism Register, Mrs. Magdaline Gurung was baptized by Fr. Pittet on 14.07.1974. (Church records: Baptism register)¹⁸¹.

Fr. Pittet initiated agricultural reforms in Lolay. He encouraged the people to make use of the stones from their field and make terraces for cultivation. He provided meals free of cost and demanded labour from the people in order to make footpaths in the villages. Under Fr. Pittet's leadership, people from all castes and creeds came forward to pool their energy together for the socio-economic development of the area. Fr. Pittet was instrumental in supplying seeds of paddy, maize and millet, which were obtained from horticultural farm, Kalimpong.

According to Michael Rai:

"Fr. Pittet lived among the people and took interest in the welfare of people. Therefore, the members of Rai community embraced the religion of the Father" (Interview with Michael Rai on 18.7.2004)¹⁸².

Later, the Loreto nuns reached Lolay in order to start a school for the children of the area. The Church, which was built by Fr. Pittet, had been converted into a convent. His presbytery is now the kitchen and dining hall of the Sisters. Sr. Helen was instrumental in solving the water scarcity of Lolay. She initiated a water project to supply water to the entire village.

5.2.19 St. John the Baptist Mission, Pudung

The Mission Campus is near Relli River by the side of the road from Kalimpong to Relli Bridge. The road passes through the agricultural farm of the Sisters. Fr. Gex Collet, while at Relli Road Church, opened a new

mission station in 1978 with the help of Cluny sisters. Fr. Collet built a church on the plot donated by Pascal Rai, the first Catholic of Pudung.

The Sisters of the St. Joseph's of Cluny purchased seven acres of land at Pudung to launch a model agricultural and dairy farm in 1987. The sisters have a piggery, dairy farm, poultry and farm for cultivation of vegetables. The aim of the model farm is to give training to the villagers in animal husbandry and horticulture.

5.2.20 Gandhi Ashram, Kalimpong

It is situated by the side of the road from Siliguri to Kalimpong. It is four kilometers before reaching Kalimpong at 6th mile. Fr. George Edward McGuire entered Kalimpong sub-division on 8th April 1993 with the aim of establishing a music school for the poor children. He cherished the concept of Ashram where children live, learn and work together. The children from the poor and distressed families are given admission to the Ashram. In this Ashram, a course on Music is compulsory. Besides Musical Programmes, children are sent to various schools for formal education. The aim of the school is to make the children stand on their feet. Now there are hundred and forty-seven children studying at the Ashram.

5.2.21 Don Bosco Jyoti, Kalimpong

The vocational institute is situated by the side of the road from Kalimpong to Pedong at 14th mile. The property was purchased by the Salesians of Don Bosco, to establish a vocational training institute. The foundation stone was blessed by Bishop Stephen Lepcha on 14th July 2002. After the construction of the institute, Shri K.C. Mandal, S.D.O., Kalimpong inaugurated the institute on 9th July, 2003. The aim of the vocational institute is to cater for the poor youth of Kalimpong, especially the school dropouts and underprivileged, so that the youth may be empowered with

technical skills. The courses include welding, tailoring, secretarial, electrical and computer technology. On Sundays, the trainees teach the students of the neighborhood. The students of different schools at the coaching centre are given classes corresponding to the school subjects of each student.

Plate 5. Sacred Heart Church at Pedong built in 1890 (top)

Plate 6. The new church at Pedong built in 1970 (bottom)





Plate 7. Fr. Durel feeds his orphans at Pedong (1916).



Plate 8. A Catholic nun imparts education in the open air at Git-Dubling (1950).



Plate 9. The Catholic community of Pedong with French Fathers (1907)

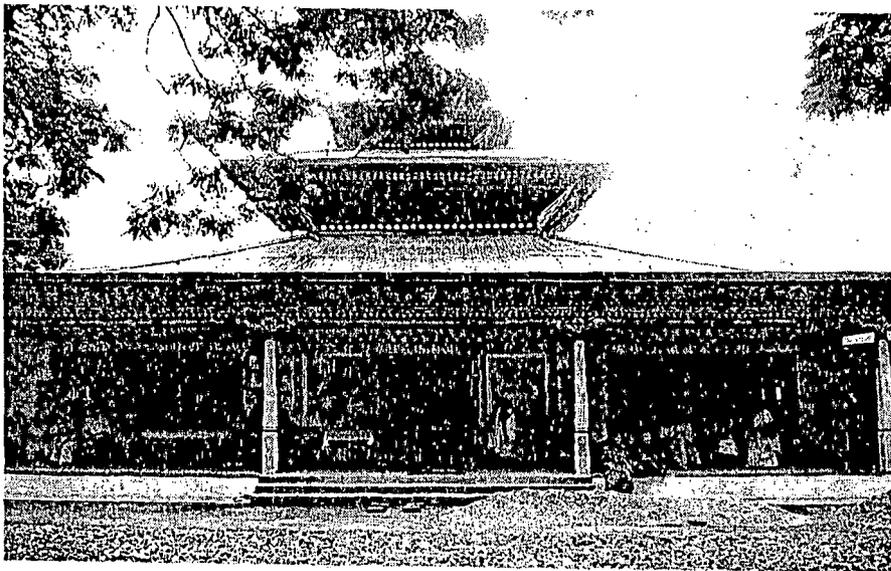


Plate 10. Mary, Mother of God Church, Relli Road, Kalimpong. The Church was constructed in Gumba style by Fr. Jex a Swiss Catholic Missionary in 1978.

5.3 In Kurseong Sub-division

Kurseong is situated at an altitude of 4,864 feet. It is the place of white orchids. The town is connected to the plains through two routes, via Tindharia and Pankhabari roads. All around the town the slopes are covered with tea bushes, which yield fine varieties of Darjeeling tea. Kurseong was conceded to the British Empire by the king of Sikkim in 1835. In 1880 the place became a preferred destination for sanatorium. It was made the headquarters of Kurseong sub division on 23rd August 1880.

5.3.1 St. Mary's College, Kurseong

The college is situated by the side of Kurseong-Darjeeling road, four kilometers away from Kurseong railway station, in an elegant mansion in the deep woods of St. Mary's hill. The college was shifted to Delhi in 1971, by selling the entire property to West Bengal Government. Now the St. Mary's college houses the Eastern Forest Rangers' College.

Fr. Ignatius Koch reached Kurseong in 1885 as the chaplain for Darjeeling Himalayan Railway. He spent most of his time in search of a suitable site for the college. Fr. Arimont writes in *Our Field*:

"Most of his time, no doubt, was taken up with the selection of the site for St. Mary's and in the construction of the house on the hill" (Arimont: 1939:25)¹⁸³.

Regarding the acquisition and the extent of the property, Fr. Koch writes:

"A vast area of 117 acres of land was prepared in April at a cost of Rs. 3,600 from the Maharaja of Burdwan. Br. Ratsaert began the building under the direction of Fr. Grosjean, the Superior of Western Bengal Mission" (Fr. Koch's letter to Fr. Grosjean in Calcutta, dated 10th February 1889)¹⁸⁴.

After the completion of the building, the college was officially blessed on 31st July 1889. Brother Didier, St. Mary's infirmarian had commendable

contribution in the field of health care. The chronicler of the college records:

"This good Brother became famous all over the surrounding hills for his pills and nostrums. He gained the confidence and gratitude of people. Another infirmarian of the college was Bro. Buysse. He was known as 'doctor Sahieb'. Smartly riding his horse, Bro. Buysse attended the sick" (The College Chronicle, dated 19.2.1909)¹⁸⁵.

G. Rondeaux reports in *Our Field*:

"The Brothers have been also among the first apostles of our hills; Br. Didier is still famous for his medicines, which, still more than his words, did good to souls, specially to the dying. His present successor, Br. Buysse, is for many the great man of St. Mary's, his reputation as a doctor equals and surpasses that of qualified practitioners" (Our Field, April 1939: 160)¹⁸⁶.

For the socio-economic development of the people, the brothers of St. Mary's college started a dairy farm. The employees had to care for two hundred cows; cheese was made for both the inmates of the college and villagers. Another area in the economic development of the people was turning the forest into cultivable land. F. Rondeaux reports in *Our Field*:

"Our Brothers started working: a farm and a vegetable garden were exploited. Little by little, with the help of volunteers from among the scholastics and villagers, the slopes were planted with trees and paths traced through the property" (Our Field, 1939:160)¹⁸⁷.

The young fathers of St. Mary's College practiced the social teachings of the Church to alleviate the social problems. One important social work was mentioned in the *Calcutta Newsletter*:

To help solve the problem of scarcity of water during the months before the monsoon, with the support of Government and the people's co-operation, they have built tanks and laid about 4,000 feet of water pipes in St. Mary's Basti, Sepoydhura and Kariyabasti. (Calcutta Calling, 1964, No. 43, July-September)¹⁸⁸.

Another social work mentioned in the *Calcutta Calling* is of repairing the century old Darjeeling road, "Some fathers, together with about 60 local

people, carried out the work" (*Calcutta Calling*, 1964, No. 43, July-September)¹⁸⁹.

Fr. Lenain founded St. Mary's Co-operative Bank in order to uplift the poor economically. The humble beginning was in March 1914. Fr. Lenain lent out money to the poor to build houses, to start a dairy farm and agricultural farm. In 1918, the Bank numbered 130 persons, a large majority being Hindus. Fr. Truyen describes the reasons behind founding the bank:

"First of all, he did not want the Catholics join the Scotch Mission Co-operative Society. Secondly, the Catholics had already lost some money in a non-catholic Bank of Kurseong. Thirdly, he wanted to unite the people of St. Mary's Hill through this bank" (Our Field, 1940:27)¹⁹⁰.

Regarding the impact of the Bank on the people, Fr. Truyen remarks:

"It has enabled a few to trade and others to build a house; it has kept others, out of the usurers' hands, though a few love running up a debt with the Mahajan and then borrowing from the Bank to pay that debt. It has also taught many to save money: the proof is that they finance their own Bank" (Our Field, 1941: 81)¹⁹¹.

From the excerpt, it is evident that the Bank promoted the economic welfare of the people.

The Grotto, near the Ranger's College houses the statue of Virgin Mary and is located in a beatific surrounding near a stream. The local devotees light candles and pray to God. In the forest, just above the College stands a large statue of Jesus Christ spreading his arms wide. The cross on the Gothic steeple of the College is a legacy of the former Catholic training College.

5.3.2 St. John Berchman's Church, St. Mary's hill, Kurseong

The Catholic Mission is situated by the side of the road from Kurseong to Darjeeling, at a distance of about four kilometres from Kurseong Railway

station. It is situated near the Forest Ranger's College. The students of St. Mary's College along with Fr. Motet used to visit the houses in the villages. When the people came in touch with Catholic missionaries, a few of them embraced the new faith. A small chapel was built for the native Catholics in 1889. The work among the locals began as soon as the fathers opened the college at St. Mary's hill. The first baptism was recorded on 6th September 1889 of Charlie by Fr. Jose Baret (Church Record: Baptism Register)¹⁹². Charlie was a French national. The record of the first local baptism was of Adela Jangber on 6th April 1890 by Fr. Motet. (Church Records: Baptism register)¹⁹³. According to the College chronicler:

"In 1900, the number of Christians had risen to 240. A small Christian busty was forming around the parish church". (College Chronicle: Entry 06.01.1901)¹⁹⁴.

For nearly a century, St. Mary's Hill was a global village. The students from Belgium, Canada, United States of America, Australia, Malta, Spain, France and Italy studied at the college. The students on every Thursday took a stroll to the villages to be in touch with the people. Very often special trainings were also imparted to the women. Fr. J. Farrell, reports in *Our Field*:

"Recently four Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny spent a month on St. Mary's Hill, near Kurseong and did as much as four devoted, dedicated women could do to give aim and purpose to the lives of Nepali women of the village. The sisters taught the women, knitting, sewing, needle work and prayers" (Our Field, 1953 March - April, 17)¹⁹⁵.

For the economic development, Fr. Joseph Pappadil started a Dairy Farm in Kharia Busty, a village below the Hill Cart road in the valley. Fr. Pappadil observed the difficulties of people in transporting cow milk to the town of Kurseong. Therefore, as a first step, an approach road was made from the Hill Cart road to Kharia Busty. Secondly, a dairy plant was established at Kharia for pasteurizing the milk before being supplied to town.

Since the Catholic community grew in number, there was a need for a spacious building for worship. Therefore, an octagonal church was built and blessed on 7th October, 1988. St. John's church is an example of modern architectural excellence.

5.3.3 St. Alphonsus' School, Kurseong

The school is situated half a kilometer away from the town on Kurseong-Darjeeling road. It is just opposite to the new taxi stand. In 1889, the year of the inauguration of St. Mary's College, Fr. Motet, a Professor of Philosophy opened a school for local boys. The first batch of boarders arrived from Darjeeling. Fr. Motet had jotted down the historic event in his diary as follows:

"On 15th January, 1891 the first pupils arrived. Ten boys were sent by Fr. Fierens from Darjeeling" (Fr. Motet's diary: Entry on 15.01.1891)¹⁹⁶.

The school for the boys grew in number year by year. Fr. D. Truyan gives the reason for the increase of students in the school:

"When there had been some converts at Kurseong and Catholic families began to have children, their boys came to school as boarders" (Our Field 1928, April: 25)¹⁹⁷.

In 1932 Fr. Michael Wery was appointed as the Parish Priest of St. John Berchman's Church and in-charge of the school. He upgraded the school. Fr. Truyen writes in *Our Field*:

Fr. Wery is seen teaching them farming. They raise their own sag and potatoes and peas. They have started a flower garden. (Our Field, 1933: Sept-Oct: 44)¹⁹⁸.

Besides academic matters, Fr. Wery gave importance to vocational training. He introduced carpentry, tailoring and shoe making. Fr. Wery got St. Alphonsus' School recognized and affiliated to Calcutta University temporarily for two years in 1935. Fr. Wery writes in *Our Field*:

"The excitement in the Bazar was great; all the Nepalese were pleased" (Our Field, 1935: January 19)¹⁹⁹.

In 1937, the school's reputation brought many pupils and new accommodation had to be found for the school. The archbishop secured Clarendon Hotel, which was converted into the present St. Alphonsus' School.

In connection with high school, a guru-training department was established. This department qualifies its graduates to teach in any recognized primary school of Darjeeling district. The first batch of 14 teachers appeared in 1937 and all passed successfully. Fr. Wery established a network of Catholic primary schools in Kurseong and Darjeeling hills. He has established primary schools at Chunbatti, Mani Bhanjang, Tindharia, Happy Valley, Shanti Rani, Dilaram and Mamring. He appointed headmasters who passed out from his Guru training department of St. Alphonsus' School. Fr. Wery admitted more and more students of Kurseong town as day students, while maintaining his boarding. Fr. Galex gives the break up of students in his report in *Our Field*:

Table 5.5 Boarders at St. Alphonsus' School, Kurseong, 1942

Ethnic Group	Number
Napalese	43
Lepchas	12
Tibetians	15
Uraon	1
Total	71

Source: *Our Field*, February 1942: 31

Fr. Abraham initiated social service programmes after his retirement from St. Alphonsus', school. His motto is 'helping the poor to help themselves'. Since hunger is the root cause of the many problems of the majority of rural poor, his main thrust is food production through

piggery, dairy farm, cultivation of vegetables and mushrooms. He gives training in Square Meter Vegetable Gardening to his sixty eight school going children who reside in his *ashram*. The purpose of such gardening is to produce vegetables out of season and earn a higher rate. A wasteland is also made cultivable through this system. Broccoli is grown throughout the year in his garden. He insists on crop rotation between root crops, leaf crops, flower crops and seed crops. The gardeners are requested to water only at the root. The plot has to be covered with a plastic and no one is allowed to walk on the plot. Spinach, broccoli, carrots, beat root, methi, cauliflower, rai saag, and beans are found in his garden. Fr. Abraham instructs the poor villagers of Kurseong an appropriate technology in farming so that they can produce enough to feed their own families and the local community.

The dairy farm consists of 45 cows. The cows of the breed of Holstein Jersey have been imported from Bangalore. Father employs 22 women in the fodder cultivation field. They gather fodder, cut by machine and feed the cows; the pure milk is being sold to the people of Kurseong.

Piggery is a valuable investment in the hills. Therefore, 28 pigs of Hampshire and Land race breed are kept here. In a year, one pig puts on approximately 106 kg flesh. The market value for 1kg is Rs. 80/-. Therefore, a single pig may enable the *ashram* to earn Rs 8,480/-per annum.

The Bio-organic manure is being produced at Woodcot. The unskilled individuals are employed in making the compost by using waste papers, cowdung, soil etc.

Recently, Fr. Abraham has introduced mushroom cultivation. There are 555 cylinders that produce mushroom daily. The mix is straw with spawn.

Dry oyster Mushrooms are being marketed in Darjeeling, Kurseong and Siliguri.

Besides training the locals, Fr. Abraham gets involved in charitable acts. He has built 23 houses on a large plot of land purchased by him. The housing colony is above St. Alphonsus' school. The village is named after its founder Fr. Abraham as "Abraham Busty". Another project for the homes for homeless is Good Shepherd village. Fr. Abraham, after building houses, handed over the entire building to the poor. He supplies gas stoves and pressure cookers to poor families to reduce the use of firewood and check deforestation. Since water scarcity is an increasing problem, he stores up rainwater for irrigation. The techniques of water harvesting are being imparted to the people. In order to save electricity, solar energy is being used to heat water. The poor children who stay in the *ashram* are sent to local school for education. They pursue in academic and vocational streams of education. Cecilia George aptly remarked, "By his sincere efforts to train the local people in dairy and vegetable farming, Fr. Abraham touches the hearts of the people of Kurseong. He invites people to tap the local resources for a better living. The poor is always close to his heart" (Interview with Cecilia on 01.08.2004)²⁰⁰. Reforestation is a major concern for Fr. Abraham. He plants thousands of trees in and around Kurseong.

5.3.4 St. Paul's Catholic Mission, Kurseong

The mission is situated by the side of Kurseong-Darjeeling road, one kilometer away from Kurseong Railway station. It is also just opposite to Kurseong Tourist Lodge. The church overlooks the railway track and the Hill Cart Road. Fr. Ignatius Koch was appointed chaplain to the Himalayan Railways in 1884. Since Kurseong had a large population of British and Eurasians who were employed in the Railways, Father took care of the spiritual needs of the Catholic employees. His jurisdiction

included Gayabari, Tindharia, Kurseong and Tung. The first Catholics of Kurseong were British and Eurasians. Fr. Koch resided at the quarters of Railway officers. His status was more or less equal to an officer, which is evident from his letter:

"I am comfortable at Kurseong. I get first class free ticket. I have been provided with a bungalow and servants. I share table with railway officers and tea garden managers" (Fr. Ignatius Koch's letter to his Mission Superior in Calcutta, dated 11th September, 1885)²⁰¹.

Fr. Koch celebrated Holy Mass in Dak Bungalow for the Catholics. But, on special occasions, the railway Catholics joined the seminarians of the college. Fr. Jossen writes in *La Mission de Bengal occidental*:

"Since 1890, in order to spare the faithful, the climb-up to the seminary, mass was celebrated on Sundays in the Dak-Bungalow, situated on the main road in Kurseong itself; for solemn occasions, however, such as Christmas, Easter, Ordinations, Processions etc., the Parish gathered in the chapel of the Seminary" (Jossen 1912: 97)²⁰².

The first local baptism of Ram Bahadur Dewan by Fr. Koch is registered on 14.03.1891 (Church record: Baptism Register)²⁰³. Ever since the Catholic population grew in number, the Dak-Bungalow was inadequate to contain all the Catholics; people felt the need of a church. Therefore, on 9th March 1904, Fr. Bernard, rector of the college blessed the first stone for a new church. According to the chronicle, the church was ready by 15th January 1905 and blessed by Archbishop Meulemann of Calcutta. The church was dedicated to St. Paul, the Patron Saint of the former Archbishop, Paul Goethals. (*St. Mary's College Chronicle*: 15.1.1905)²⁰⁴.

The church is the hub of religious and social activities. St. Paul's Parish Catholic Association (SPPCA) was founded in 1958, during the tenure of Fr. Henricks. The Association looked after the smooth running of the church. Naari Samaj is the organization of the women. Women are empowered to take up responsibilities in the church.

In 1955, Fr. Bernard Bruneau was in-charge of St. John's Catholic Mission, St. Mary's Hill, Kurseong. Besides his responsibilities in the church, he practiced his medical expertism in the tea gardens of Kurseong. Fr. Joe Brennan describes the work of Fr. Bruneau in Kurseong in the following words:

"His first ministry was in St. John's on St. Mary's Hill. He had already developed a medical reputation and the sick came to his small house from far and near. He visited his wide-spread Parish regularly - Dhahran, Mamring and beyond, with his bag of medicines. He also visited in town - the sick and abandoned, bedridden in hovels, bringing them medicines and love, ready if necessary to carry them to the hospital." (Brennan, *Centenary Souvenir, 1905-2005:23*)²⁰⁵.

Fr. Wery took interest in Liturgy. He translated hymns from English and Hindi into Nepali. The hymn books were printed in his Ong Press. The fathers from St. Mary's Theology College taught hymns to the parishioners for High Masses on special Feast days.

5.3.5 St. Helen's School, Kurseong

The school is magnificently situated in Kurseong, on Kurseong-Darjeeling road, at an altitude of 5,510 feet above the sea level. It overlooks the Balasan River and green carpet of verdant tea bushes. St. Helen's school, St. Joseph's school and St. Margaret's Home, managed by the nuns of the Daughters of the Cross adorn the vast school campus.

Since the nuns were either falling ill or dying young due to tropical diseases of the plains, the sisters who were residing in Calcutta desired a resort home in Darjeeling hills. Therefore, the nuns rented 'Charleville', a British Bangalow on Pankhabari-Kurseong road. As soon as the tea planters saw the nuns, they expressed their willingness to send their daughters to the convent for education. The pioneering nun Mother Marie accepted the girls in her convent for education on 17th April 1890. Her colleagues in the convent were Srs. Marie Aimec, Virginie, M. Bernard and

Ethelreda. Sr. Marie Aimec was the first superioress and Headmistress. Since the number of students increased, Sr. Marie started her search for a new site. A shapeless rocky mountain was located and Sr. Marie was quite pleased with it. Since a contractor was unprocurable, she herself drew the plan of the new building as she thought necessary. The rocks were blasted and the stones were cut and shaped by hands. The school was ready by February 1902. Sr. Marie named the school, St. Helen's Technical school. There was a special department for technical courses. On 15th November 1903 the Lieutenant Governor visited the school. He evinced a lively and sincere interest in the school and wrote in the visitor's book: "*I am quite pleased with the progress*" (Visitor's book: Entry on 15.11.1903)²⁰⁶. According to the school register there were 75 pupils on the roll during the time of his visit. (School record: Attendance Registers)²⁰⁷. The number of pupils began to increase year by year. The authorities of St. Helen's paid a lot of attention to music. The school was made a center for the Trinity College Music Examination in 1903. In 1907, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Darjeeling district invited the school to compete the best essay. St. Helen's school bagged the prize. (*School Chronicle*: Entry on 18.10.1907)²⁰⁸. By 1909, no more government examination was held, since the education authorities were busy with the scheme for introducing Cambridge examination. Sr. Mary Josephine wrote to her superior in France about the re-organisation of school system in Bengal:

*"The schools in Bengal are divided into four different categories viz Elementary, Higher Elementary, Secondary and Higher Secondary. Our school was made a secondary school, which meant that only junior candidates; age 14-17 could be prepared (Sr. Mary Josephine's letter to superior in France, dated 16.02.1910)*²⁰⁹.

In 1911 the first group of junior Cambridge candidates sat for the examination. In 1913, the school was made a Higher Secondary school. In music, senior and junior Cambridge Examinations were held regularly. In 1917 four Technical pupils passed the City and Guilds Examination of

London. The next few decades were uneventful. However the classes went on as usual.

5.3.6 St. Margaret's Home, Kurseong

It is perched on the hillside just above St. Helen's school. It offers shelter for orphaned and needy children. A small house was built in June 1899 to house the orphans. It was inaugurated on 8th June 1899. The St. Helen's school chronicler records:

"On the first day 5 little tots from the districts were taken in" (St.Helen's school chronicle: Entry on 09.06.1899)²¹⁰.

The orphanage is attached to St. Helen's school. The pupils take care of the needs of the orphans. Joan Nation writes in Helena:

"Many of us have adopted little boys and girls, some times singly but usually as a class. We fulfil our duties by occasionally visiting our adopted children, buying materials for frocks, and giving them a few annas (Helena 1939:22)²¹¹.

The children are fortunate since their education is catered for from primary to graduation level. Those who complete study enter various professions such as nursing, secretarial work and teaching. Those who cannot study are employed in domestic service at St. Helen's School on reasonably good salary.

5.3.7 St. Joseph's High School, Kurseong

St. Joseph's High school was opened in February 1939. In the initial stage, the school was housed in the presbytery near St. Paul's church. Now, the school occupies a fine two-storeyed building, which has been erected below St. Helen's school. The reason for the school was rapid spread and demand for education among the hill people. The educated parents were no longer satisfied with a primary education for their daughters. Therefore, the sisters of the Daughters of the Cross decided to open a high school for the girls of Kurseong.

5.3.8 Goethal's Memorial School, Kurseong

It is situated by the side of Kurseong-Darjeeling road. It is four kilometers away from Kurseong town. Upon the death of the Most Rev. Dr. Paul Count Goethals, Archbishop of Calcutta, on 4th July 1901, it was decided by the influential committee of priests and laymen to start a school in his memory. Rev. Goethal was succeeded by Dr. Meulemann. The Honorable Mr. James Woodroffe, Advocate General of the High Court, called on Archbishop Dr. Meulemann soon after his consecration as archbishop and told him that he wished to have a memorial erected to the late Archbishop Goethals. He also requested the Archbishop to call a meeting of the Principal Catholics in Calcutta to devise what shape that memorial might take. Archbishop Meulemann agreed to Mr. Woodroffe's proposal and the first meeting of all the priests in Calcutta and all prominent Catholic laymen was called. During the meeting Woodroffe expressed his wish to get all the European boys out of Moorghihatta Orphanage and bring them into healthier surroundings. It was at this stage that the Christian Brothers were consulted. Bro. Fabian Kenneally was prepared to back the project if the memorial selected were a school situated in a hill station. Bro. Stanislaus O'Brien attended the next meeting and agreed to open a school in Kurseong. The editor of the school annual describes the acquisition of the land in the following words:

"The Maharajah of Burdwan agreed to sell a large strip adjoining the St. Mary's College grounds for the proposed Goethal's Memorial School. The Government also agreed to lease us an area adjoining the Maharajah's strip" (The Goethalite, 1992: 3)²¹².

Thus, abundance of land was secured for the new school. In September 1903, Brother Stanislaus O'Brien was sent to Kurseong to establish the new mission. After clearing the site, Bro. John Molitor was entrusted with the construction of the building. It took four years for the school to be ready with boarding. In February 1907, classes were commenced in the

magnificent building. Bro. S. O'Brien was appointed the first Principal of the school with one hundred boys. The editor of the school annual mentions about the first prospectus in the following words:

"The first prospectus had in view the affiliation of the school to the Sibpur Engineering College, Calcutta" (Goethalite 1993: 5)²¹³.

A two years' engineering class was initiated for the purpose of obtaining entrance into the Sibpur Engineering School for mining. Since the Sub-Overseer Course did not fit in with the needs of pupils, it was stopped in favour of Cambridge. The Cambridge system continued until 1970. The school then switched over to ICSE. Now there are 822 students on the roll of whom 228 are boarders (School records: Attendance Register)²¹⁴.

5.3.9 Holy Cross Vocational Training Institute, Kurseong

The institute is situated by the side of the Hill Cart road from Kurseong to Darjeeling. It falls under St. Mary's Post Office. The Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross reached Romila Villa on 25th September, 1956 (*Convent Chronicle: Entry on 25.9.1956*)²¹⁵. The pioneer sisters were Sr. Diomira, a German and Sr. Salutaris, a Swiss. The purpose of their arrival was to establish a holiday home for the sisters in Kurseong. At the same time, the Rector of St. Mary's college requested the sisters to accommodate the guests of the students in the villa. However, the need of the hour was to take care of the women. Therefore, the pioneers initiated Home Science courses for the girls of Kurseong. Later, in course of time, the vocational stream of CBSE board was introduced in the institute. Apart from the CBSE course of Higher Secondary, one year Secretarial Course was also introduced. Meanwhile, Sr. Rosaria, a German nun pioneered in the field of medical care. She established a dispensary near St. Alphonsus' School. Since she advanced in age, the dispensary was shifted to the convent. The medical care and vocational courses continue at the Holy Cross Institute. The present status of students is as follows:

Table 5.6 The Students at Holy Cross Institute

Standard	Number
Class XI	125
Class XII	102
Total	227

Source: Attendance Register, April 2006.

5.3.10 Don Bosco Mission, Mirik

In the year 1968, Fr. Richard McDonald, the Parish Priest of St. John's Parish, Kurseong, was going home for his holiday and Fr. Jellici was appointed to celebrate Mass in Malat and Dhajea for six Catholic families.

In 1970, Fr. Jellici and Fr. Michael Rai learnt that there was a Catholic policeman named Placidus Francis Lepcha working in Nagari. On 31.10.1970, Fr. Jellici and two Holy Cross nuns went to his house and the Holy Mass was celebrated.

In 1974 the Tea Estate Manager Mr. Jeewan Gurung asked Fr. Jellici to pray over his ailing grandfather. This way Fr. Jellici entered the soil of Mirik and requested Bishop Eric Benjamin and Fr. Prendergast to buy a piece of land in Mirik.

In 1978, Fr. Leonard Tamsang had to remain in Salesian College to prepare for his B.A. examination for one month. At this juncture, Fr. Jellici took him to Gopaldhara on 24.10.1978 and the first mass in the soil of Mirik was celebrated. Soon after on 04.02.1979 a mass was celebrated in the house of Mr. Leonard Subba.

On 10.04.1979, Fr. Provincial of Salesians of Don Bosco and Bro. Mani went to have a day-out in Mirik. They started thinking seriously about

buying the land in Mirik. Similarly, on 14.10.1979, Fr. Elias Pinto, treasurer, Diocese of Darjeeling and other fathers scouted the place and thought of buying a piece of land. Many Salesian fathers did not support the cause of buying the land but Bro. Isaac supported Fr. Jellici who wanted the Salesians to buy the land.

On 12.11.1979, two nuns of Sisters of Mary Immaculate congregation, Pieta and Rosa Mary, were going to Calcutta from Assam and met Fr. Jellici in Siliguri. Fr. Jellici took them to Sonada and kept them overnight. The next day they went to Mirik to inspect the site for Don Bosco Mission. This was the first step taken by the SMI nuns. Later after due consultation with ecclesiastical authorities, a plot of land was purchased for the convent on 26.11.1979.

On 29.06.1980, the Holy Mass in Nepali was celebrated in Lewis School by Fr. Antony Sharma and Fr. Jellici in the presence of Br. Mani, Holy Cross nuns, the faithful of Turzin Sangma, Nagari and Dhajea.

The day 26.11.1980 is a red-letter day in the history of Mirik Catholic Mission because, on this day a Senate meeting was held in the Bishop's House, which decided to entrust Mirik and Balasun to Salesian Fathers. Immediately, Sr. Mary and Sr. Merlin came to Deosidara, Mirik and started staying in a rented house.

On 15.05.1982, the foundation stone of Don Bosco Kendra was laid. Fr. George Alakulam wanted to stay permanently in Mirik and on 20.08.1982 he came to Mr. Roshan Gurung's house and stayed there. On 22.08.1982, Sunday, Fr. Logroi, Fr. Jellici, Fr. Provincial and others came and introduced Fr. Alakulam to the people. Mr. Sebastian was appointed Catechist on 01.09.1982. On 08.11.1982 Fr. Alakulam celebrated the first

Mass in Mirik Busty in Mr. Ernest Lepcha's house. The inauguration of 'Father's Kothi'²¹⁶ took place on 19.12.1982.

The school was started as a coaching centre for children who were not able to continue their education elsewhere. As the non-formal school developed, a small school building was built in 1991. Under the leadership of Fr. Vincent, the non-formal school began to acquire more formal character of a Madhyamik High School, while still catering to school dropouts. The need was then felt to seek recognition for the school. In 1997 Fr. Martin Lakra put in the application requesting the recognition of the school. Fr. Pius Kerketta and Fr. James Kurikayil followed it up. Finally, recognition was granted to the school on 15th April 2005. The secretary of the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education in the letter of recognition writes:

"Grant first recognition to Don Bosco School (English Medium), Darjeeling provisionally for two years as a 4 - class Jr. High School"
(Letter from Secretary, West Bengal Board of Secondary Education to Secretary, Don Bosco School, Mirik, dated 06.04.2005)²¹⁷.

Now, Don Bosco School conducts classes from one to ten with 465 children. In the medical field, it was Fr. Bruno, parish priest of St. Paul's Church Kurseong, who visited Mirik and its surrounding villages like Gopal dara, with medicine. Later, whenever Fr. Jellici visited the tea gardens, the labourers asked for medicine. Therefore, Fr. Jellici requested M. C. nuns to take care of the health of the inhabitants of Mirik. Now, the Sisters of Mary Immaculate carry on the medical work through their dispensary.

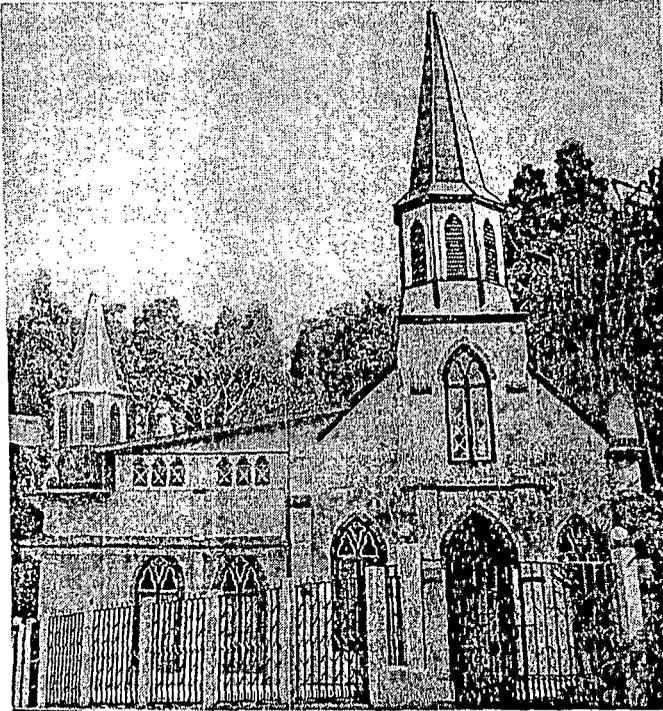


Plate 11. St. Paul the Apostle Church built in 1905 at Kurseong.

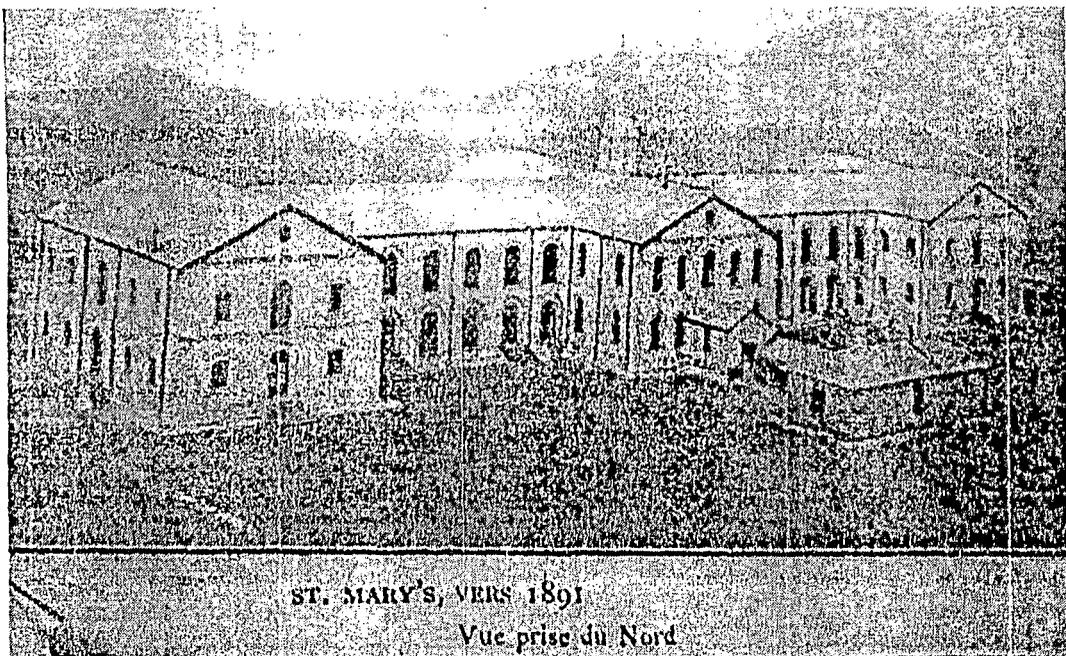


Plate 12. St. Mary's Theological College, Kurseong. It is now the Forest Ranger's College.



Plate 13. Fr. Wery supervises the extension work of St. Alphonsus School, Kurseong (1935)



Plate 14. The boys at St. Mary's boarding (1944).

5.4. In Sikkim

The presence of Catholic missionaries in Sikkim dates as far back as a week's discovery trip of Fr. Hervagault and Fr. Saleur in November 1885.

Fr. Gaston Gratuze, in his *Un Pionnier de La Mission Tibétaine, de Pedong Auguste Desgodins*, mentions:

"Fr. Hervagault and Fr. Saleur, taking with them a cook named Trachi and a few porters, went down to the Rishi Khola and up to Rhenock" (Gratuze 1935: 78)²¹⁸.

The first Catholic missionaries passed through Rhenock, now a small town in East Sikkim. In March 1888, the British Government sent 2,000 soldiers along with four field guns through Kalimpong and Pedong to dismantle the forts built by the Tibetans on the Sikkim- Tibet border. At the request of the British Government, Fr. Hervagault and Fr. Saleur were sent to Gnathang and Yatung as chaplains for the Irish Catholic soldiers. The Catholic missionaries stayed in Sikkim for several weeks. The years between 1888 and 1933 have been a void in the history of Catholicism in Sikkim. In February 1933, the king sent his daughter along with a few relations to St. Joseph's Convent School for studies. After few months, in October, Fr. Douenel approached the Raja of Sikkim with a request for a piece of land to establish a Catholic mission in Sikkim. The king's reply was that if there were any Sikkimese Catholics, he would grant permission. Fr. Douenel could not find a single Catholic. Therefore, he could not establish a Catholic mission in Sikkim at that time.

In 1937, Bishop Eric Benjamin, Fr. Joseph Kunnath and Fr. Brahier made a tour in East Sikkim, exploring the possibilities of establishing a mission station in Sikkim. Fr. Brahier in his memoir writes:

"On 27th June 1937, Rev. Msgr. Eric Benjamin, Fr. Joseph Kunnath and myself were plodding up in the mud from the town of Ranipool on the path going to Assam Block to the village of Gaucharan in Sikkim" (Anugraha, 2000:37)²¹⁹.

The tour of the three explorers did not yield any result. By the year 1945, the Catholic graduates from Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong subdivisions of Darjeeling district of West Bengal were employed as teachers in the government schools in Sikkim. In the year 1946, Mr. William Gadal, the catechist of Sacred Heart Church, Singamari, Darjeeling made a tour in West Sikkim in search of Catholics. He found six Catholics who had married either Hindus or Protestants. Thus, the first Catholics were found to settle in West Sikkim. He reported the matter to Monsignor Eric Benjamin. The Catholics employed in Sikkim used to go to their hometown to celebrate Christmas and Easter. They conveyed to the Catholic priests in their respective places about the possibilities of establishing a Catholic mission in Sikkim. Fr. Gianora, the Prefect Apostolic of Sikkim and Kalimpong appointed Fr. Leonard Molommo in charge of Sikkim Catholic Mission in 1950.

5.4.1 St. Xavier's Catholic Mission, Pakyong

The school is located in East Sikkim, 29 kilometers away from Gangtok. It is in the heart of the town. An imposing school overlooks the play ground. It is by the side of the road from Ranipool to Rhenock.

In 1951, Fr. Leonard Molomoo, the first Lepcha Catholic priest, reached Namchepong, a village two kilometers away from the present St. Xavier's School. He had two aims, the first was to search for Catholics and the second was to visit his relative Chimito Lepcha. At the same time, Fr. Gianora requested Fr. Leonard to begin a school. In Sikkim Fr. Molomoo was welcomed by his relative who accommodated the missionary for a few months in her house. Since the host was unwell, the priest prayed over her. A rosary was given to her for prayer. Chimito recounts her religious experience and recovery in the following words:

"One day my husband was away at Singtam. I was suffering from giddiness and lay in bed. Fr. Molomoo requested me to pray to Jesus through Mary, Mother of Jesus. I prayed and the evil spirit departed from me in the form of a cat. Now, I am happy and healthy. I accepted Catholicism voluntarily. (Interview with Chimito on 25.03.2006)²²⁰.

Peter Lepcha, another recipient of Jesus' healing power, gave witness to people, saying, "Neither Lamas nor doctors could cure me but Jesus has made me well" (Interview with Peter Lepcha on 25.03.2006)²²¹. Peter is the first Catholic of Pakyong. He was baptized on 10th November, 1951 (Church record: Baptism Register)²²². Fr. Molomoo observed the illiteracy of the people. So he bought a small plot of land at Namchebong where he built his residence and primary school in 1952. Fr. Molomoo invited men and women from Chubo Busty, Kalimpong, to be teachers in his school. Marcel Rai volunteered to teach in the new school. He taught in the school, got married to a local Lepcha girl and settled down in Pakyong. As the number of students grew in the school, there was a need for a bigger area. Therefore, the present site of St. Xavier's school was purchased. Now, classes are conducted from Lower KG to class twelve of ICSE and ISC stream. The total strength of the school is one thousand, two hundred and fifty two. The institution caters to the needs of the students of Pakyong, Ranipool, Rorathang, Gangtok, Rongli, Rhenock, Kalimpong and Darjeeling.

In the socio-economic field, Fr. Molomoo instructed the people the method of growing food grains and vegetables. He encouraged the people to use organic manure. Fr. Leonard visited each house and prayed for the sick.

In the medical field, the Sisters of St. Joseph's of Cluny have established a dispensary in Pakyong. The nurse sisters administer medicines to the

sick. The medicines and prayers have brought healing to many patients in Pakyong sub-division of East Sikkim.

5.4.2 St. Thomas Catholic Mission, Gangtok

The mission campus is situated on Palzor Stadium road, near Sikkim Nationalized Transport bus stand. St. Thomas is the only Catholic church in Gangtok town. The church, convent, school and a grotto adorn the Catholic mission campus.

Fr. Molomoo visited Mr. Hilton in Gangtok and celebrated Holy Mass for his family. The Catholics who worked in government offices attended mass in the hospital quarters of Hilton. The Catholics were Mr. Hartnet and family, employees of Sikkim Nationalized Transport, Mr. Anthony Rai, an ex-army personnel working in Army Cantonment, Mr. Sen, S.N.T. staff and Mr. Manuel Mukhia, the postmaster. As the years rolled by more and more Catholics were employed in Government sector. Fr. Joseph Kunnath rented a room in the Kazi Kothi for the Sunday service. On weekdays, the rented room served as a typing school. Mrs. Agnes Mukhia, wife of Manuel Mukhia was in-charge of the typing institute. Fr. Kunnath purchased a plot from the Gangtok Municipality for a school. The campus with school, church and a convent were ready by the beginning of 1979. The sisters of the Mercy of Holy Cross impart pre-primary and primary education to the students of St. Thomas School. The students who pass out from St. Thomas proceed to Holy Cross, Tadong, for their further study. There are altogether 926 students in the Montessori and primary school (School record: Attendance Register 2006)²²³.

In the field of evangelization, the first baptism was registered in 1965 (Church record: Baptism Register)²²⁴. Fr. Joseph Kunnath, Fr. Joachim Sada and Fr. Felix Baretto animated the Catholic community in Gangtok.

The nuns assisted the priests by house visiting and catechism in the smooth functioning of the parish.

In the field of medical care, the priests, nuns and the Catholics of St. Thomas parish visit the hospitals in Gangtok. They pray over the sick in the name of Jesus. The prayers of the Catholic missionaries transmit solace to the patients. And thereby many patients get healed.

5.4.3 St. Peter's Catholic Mission, Gaucharan

The Catholic mission is situated in Assam-Lingzey, East Sikkim. Assam is the corruption of the word 'ogsung' which means, 'the place of three streams'. The streams are Selele, Tado and Bala. Gaucharan in Nepali means 'cow grazing area'. For administrative reasons, the two areas have been merged. The distance is 23 kilometers from Gangtok.

The story of the entry of Catholic religion into Rai community at Gaucharan is both interesting and informative. Mrs. Padam Maya Rai was admitted at Gangtok hospital for the treatment for Tuberculosis. She had to stay in the hospital for two years. During her stay in the hospital, she came in contact with a Catholic patient from Kalimpong, named Mrs. Grace Golay and a Catholic nurse Mrs. Hilton. Both Catholic women instilled Catholic faith in Mrs. Padam Maya Rai. Meanwhile, Lachuman Rai, husband of Padam Maya, came in touch with a protestant pastor during his visits to the hospital. A leaflet on the life of Christ was given to Lachuman. When Padam Maya was discharged from the hospital, she discussed with her husband about Catholic faith. Both husband and wife spoke about Jesus Christ. At this juncture, a primary school was started by the local residents of the area. Mr. Norden Lepcha was appointed as the headmaster of the school. He resided in the house of Lachuman. One day Mr. Lachuman, Mrs. Padam Maya and Mr. Norden started a discussion on religion. Mr. Norden disclosed his identity as Catholic. Mr.

Lachuman and Mrs. Padam Maya expressed their desire of becoming Catholics. Mr. Norden introduced Mr. Lachuman to the Catholic priests at Gangtok and Pakyong. Fr. Victor Tucker baptized Smt. Bhai Ram, mother of Lachuman on 7th July 1973 at the Hospital at Gangtok. She was given the name Lucy that means light. Later, Fr. Joseph Kunnath baptized ten families on 22nd August 1973. The first Catholic community included:

1. Mr. Lachuman Joseph Rai and family
2. Mr. Arjun William Rai, younger brother of Lachuman Rai
3. Mrs. Bishnumaya Rai
4. Mr. Raharsing Rai
5. Mr. Boniface Rai
6. Mrs. Parnimaya Rai
7. Mrs. Nuntu Maya Rai
8. Mr. Rabidhan Michael Rai
9. Mr. Dadiram Rai
10. Mr. Mathias Rai

(Source : Church records: Baptism Register)²²⁵

The people of Gaucharan requested Fr. Brahier to inaugurate a school. Therefore, St. Patrick's school was established in 1990. The classes start from Lower KG to class IV. There are 121 students on the roll (School record: Attendance Register)²²⁶. The sisters of St. Joseph's of Cluny reached Gaucharan on 2nd February, 2001 and took charge of the school (*Convent Chronicle*: 02.02.2001)²²⁷.

In the field of socio-economic development, Fr. Brahier initiated Assam Service Co-operative Society. It was founded on 20th April 1974. The member fee was fixed at Rs. 5 while Rs. 10 was paid as share. The office bearers of the committee are the following:

1. Lachuman Joseph Rai - President
2. Arjun William Rai - Secretary

3. Santijit Peter Rai - Cashier
4. Robin Michael Rai - Director
5. Jal Bahadur Boniface Rai - Assistant Director
6. Fr. Brahier - Advisor

First of all, the members of the Co-operative bought all the necessary items like rice, salt, oil and dal from Ranipool and stored them in Arjun William Rai's house. The stock was sold to the people at a cheaper rate during monsoon. The co-operative also started giving loans to the members. The co-operative helped the members who had mortgaged their land. The co-operatives, with the view of rearing a good breed of cows, bought special Swiss breed. The people made a living through dairy. The co-operative focused more on providing loans at low interest to those who wanted to cultivate cardamom and plant trees on barren lands. The loans were also extended to those who wanted to rear pigs. Thus, the co-operative played an important role in improving the economic standard of the people of Gaucharan. Every year, a meeting is held during the last week of March. All the proceedings, including the loan are finalized during this meeting.

5.4.4 St. Joseph's Catholic Mission, Martam

The Catholic mission is situated by the Gangtok-Sang road that runs through Rumtek. It is seven kilometers away from Rumtek Monastery. The school, situated in an isolated area, has an ideal ambience for study and prayer.

The sisters of St. Joseph's of Cluny reached Martam on 24th August 1983 (*Convent Chronicle: Entry on 24.8.1983*)²²⁸. The pioneer sisters were Sr. Justin, Sr. Marie Elise and Sr. Rosalia Rai. Fr. Brahier accompanied the nuns as their chaplain. The land for the school was donated by Mr. Martam Topden, Mr. Tseten and Mr. Dawchung. The foundation stone for the school was laid by the then Chief Minister of

Sikkim, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari on 27th February 1983 (inscription from the plaque on the wall)²²⁹. The school started functioning as an English medium co-educational Catholic institution. It is affiliated to the ICSE of Delhi board. There are 661 students on the roll for the session 2005. There are 335 male and 326 female students. The break up of students by religion is as follows:

Table 5.7 Break up of Students by Religion, Martam

Buddhists	446
Hindus	130
Catholics	50
Protestants	30
Others	05
Total	661

Source: School Attendance Registers and Admission forms.

For the purpose of evangelization, Fr. Brahier established a small church in the school campus. The church has been constructed in a Gumpa style. There are two statues in the church, one of St. Joseph and the other of Our Lady of Lourdes. The altar inside the church has been designed following the Buddhist art and architecture. The canopy above the altar too is in Buddhist style (Field notes)²³⁰.

Martam was a deserted area before the arrival of Catholic missionaries. Now, an approach road has been constructed by the Catholic missionaries from the main road to the school. There are forty hostels, managed by the local people in order to accommodate outstation students.

5.4.5 St. Joseph's Catholic Mission, Rhenock

The Catholic mission is located in East Sikkim, between Pedong and Pakyong. It is approximately an hour journey from Pedong by jeep. Fr.

Rene Singh, after his retirement from St. George Higher Secondary School, Pedong, took up a mission at Rhenock. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Darjeeling bought seven acres of land for a mission. Then Fr. Rene started a primary school on 1st November 1994. Later, the school was upgraded to a high school affiliated to the ICSE board since 2002.

In the field of evangelization, there were no Catholics in Rhenock before the arrival of Fr. Singh. The school teachers were selected from among the Catholics of Pedong. Therefore, the first Catholics were from outside Rhenock. The first person to adopt Catholic religion was Chewang Bhutia who was baptized on 15th January 1995. (Church records: Baptism register)²³¹.

Now, there is a double storied building for the school. Priest's residence and hostel for boys are close to the school. A large football ground in front of the school adds beauty to the school.

The sisters of St. Joseph's of Cluny established their mission on 25th June 1999. They assist the priests in the educational work. The second work is pastoral care. The nuns visit the houses of the students. They also run a girl's hostel that accommodates fifty-five girls from Sikkim.

5.4.6 Shantiki Rani Girja, Turuk

The Catholic mission is situated near Sadam, on the way from Namchi to Malli. It is on top of a mountain. The history of Catholic Church in Turuk begins with the schooling of Bishnu Rai and Hira Rai, two young girls from Turuk to St. Philomena's school, Kalimpong. The two girls, after their completion of studies, decided to become Catholics. Therefore, Bishop Eric Benjamin and Fr. Augustine Gurung visited Sadam, Turuk on 13th August 1968 to verify the genuineness of the desire of the girls to become Catholics. Their desire was found genuine and they were

baptized by Fr. Gex Collet at St. Theresa's Parish, Kalimpong. As a result, the Bishop appointed Fr. Augustine Gurung as priest in-charge of Turuk.

In the field of evangelization Jitman Philip Rai was baptized in the chapel of Turuk on 14.11.1968 by Fr. Augustine Gurung. (Church Records: Baptism register)²³². The inhabitants of Turuk found the new religion more liberative than the traditional Rai customs. The ethnic classification of the Catholic population in Turuk is as follows:

Table 5.8 Catholic Population at Turuk, Community-wise

Community	Number
Rai	46
Gurung	28
Mangar	22
Subba	15
Tamang	14
Lepcha	11
Total	136

Source: Church record

The following Catholic priests have worked at Turuk between 1968 and 2005: Fr. Augustine Gurung, Fr. Charles Mukhia, Fr. Anthony Namchu, Fr. Victor Khawas, Fr. Patrick Golay and Fr. Alphonse Lingdamoo. In the field of education, the Loreto nuns opened a primary school at Sadam. The classes include LKG to class IV. There are altogether 168 students, both male and female, pursuing studies.

In the field of medical care, Fr. Anthony Namchu introduced Mother-child Health Programme of Seva Kendra, Siliguri. He has also set up a dispensary for the people. The health care was taken care of by a trained nurse, appointed by Fr. Namchu.

5.4.7 St. Francis of Assissi Catholic Mission, Jorethang

The church is situated in South Sikkim, in the heart of Jorethang town, on the bank of river Rangeet in Salghari Revenue Block. The distance from Gangtok to Jorethang is 87 kilometers. Fr. Charles Mukhia was the first priest to start a mission at Jorethang. He acquired the present property from a Majhi family and started a primary school. Gradually the school was upgraded year by year. It has been affiliated to ICSE board of Delhi.

The Sisters of the Daughters of the Cross arrived at Jorethang on 29th February 1980 to assist Fr. Charles in the smooth running of the mission. The invitation letter from Bishop to Sr. Marie Therese reads, "Let the Cross shine through its daughters from the Himalayan hill top to the valley below." (Bishop Eric's letter to Sr. Marie Therese, dated 25th February, 1980)²³³. The management of St. Francis Assissi church is by the daughters of the Cross.

In the field of evangelization, Mr. Sebastian Thapa from Sacred Heart Church, Singamari was brought here as Catechist. Mr. Sebastian toured the villages in South-west Sikkim, exploring the possibilities of establishing a Catholic mission. At the same time the nuns had taken up house visiting. The convent chronicler records in the house dairy:

"Visited a few houses introducing ourselves and getting acquainted with them" (Convent Chronicle: Entry on 8th March, 1980)²³⁴.

Fr. Elias Pinto, a visitor from Darjeeling undertook missionary expeditions to Himalayan villages in South-west Sikkim. The first baptism has been recorded of Mrs. Priscilla Rai by Fr. Elias Pinto. (Church Records: Baptism register 1971)²³⁵. Sr. Fransisca Lepcha, a musician interacts with the local people through her music. There are 23 local students learning music at Jorethang.

Table 5.9 The Ethnic Composition of the Catholic Community Jorethang

Ethnic Community	Number
Rai	27
Thapa	17
Subba	13
Mukhia	12
Bagdas	12
Chettri	07
Ghattani	06
Gurung	02
Total	96

Source: Church Records

5.4.8 Namchi Public School, Namchi, South District

It situated near Loyola College on Namchi-Damthang road. In 1990, Mr. Bhandari, the then Chief Minister of Sikkim handed over Namchi Public School to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Darjeeling. Fr. William Miranda was appointed the first Catholic Principal of the institution. During his tenure as Principal, he brought up the academic standard of the school. The next principal was Fr. Paul D'Souza, who expanded the infrastructure of the school. He gave equal importance to studies and sports and was instrumental in making a football ground in the school campus. During his tenure, the ICSE and ISC students obtained cent per cent result. The present Principal is Fr. George D'Souza, who is an academician and disciplinarian. He instills in the students a sense of research. The Sisters of the Congregation of Jesus assist the priests in the administration of the school. The Vice Principal is always chosen from among the nuns. Sr. Josephine handles the administrative work in the absence of the Principal. Now, there are 780 students studying at Namchi Public School from Nursery to class XII. (School records: Attendance Register 2006)²³⁶.

5.4.9 Loyola College of Education, Namchi

The institute is situated at Namchi, the headquarters of the South district of Sikkim, in a sprawling and picturesque ten acres of land at the foothill of the Himalayas. It is two kilometers away from Namchi town, on Namchi-Damthang road.

The college is a Catholic private institution under the management of the Jesuit order. It was started in response to the request from the Government of Sikkim. The agreement between the Jesuits and the Government reads as follows:

*The Darjeeling Jesuits and the Government of Sikkim felt the need of training quality educators for the Himalayan region of Sikkim. Therefore, both parties entered into an agreement on 12th February 1993 in order to start a Jesuit B.Ed. College at Namchi. The land is a gift from the Government of Sikkim. (The Deed signed on 12.02.1993 by the Government of Sikkim and Darjeeling Jesuits of North Bengal)*²³⁷

The first batch of trainees was admitted in July 1994. In the past twelve years, 1200 students have graduated from this institution. The trained teachers are absorbed into Government and Private schools of Darjeeling and Sikkim hills. At present, there are 100 students pursuing the training programme at Loyola.

5.4 10 St. Peter's Catholic Mission, Namchi

The Catholic mission is situated by the side of Namchi-Siliguri road. It is one kilometer away from Namchi town. Though Namchi is the centre, the mission work is done in the neighboring villages like Salleybong, Pabong, Bul Kalikop and Singtam Pallong.

The Catholic Church entered Namchi in 1982. Fr. Charles Mukhia, a resident of Jorethang made frequent visits to Namchi to meet the Catholic teachers. The first Catholics of Namchi are the following:

1. Mr. O. D. Lepcha
2. Mr. Joachim Rai and family
3. Mr. K. B. Rai and family
4. Mr. Somraj Rai and family
5. Mr. Pius Pradhan and family
6. Mr. Prem Chettri and family.

Fr. Victor Khawas, through his simplicity and hard work, established a small group of Catholics at Salleybong. Mr. Kamal Jogi was Fr. Victor's Catechist.

Realizing the need in the field of education, Fr. Charles rented a small room near Baichung stadium and started Little Flower School. The people of Namchi began to show interest in educating the children in a Catholic school. When the Government of Sikkim handed over Namchi Public School to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Darjeeling, the staff and pupils of Little Flower School were absorbed into Namchi Public School.

In order to uplift the economically challenged people, Fr. Victor Khawas introduced piggy, broom cultivation, cattle rearing and tree plantation. Fr. Khawas also made arrangements for the landless and homeless to have shelter.

5.4.11 Don Bosco Catholic Mission, Malbasey

The Catholic mission is situated by the side of the road from Jorethang to Soreng. Malbasey comes from the word 'mallibas' which means the place of abundance of bamboo.

The Sikkim Government offered a plot of land to the Roman Catholic Church of Darjeeling to establish a school. The Bishop approached the Salesians of Don Bosco. After proper discussion and discernment, the

Salesians accepted the offer. Regarding the beginning of the school, Fr. Nicholas Lo Groi in *The History of the Kolkata Province of St. John Bosco* writes:

“On 16th January 1990, The Council takes the decision to accept Sikkim, after a conversation over phone with Msgr. Thomas D’Souza, Vicar General. Fr. George Tiru Malachalil is asked to take up the first steps by setting up a temporary shed for a school that would be started in March 1990 in agreement with the bishop’s request” (Lo Groi, 2003:514)²³⁸.

The sisters of St. Joseph’s of Cluny along with Salesians opened KG and class one. Meanwhile, Fr. George purchased more land from Ratnaman Gurung. He prepared plans for the school. The subsequent years have witnessed a gradual growth of the school. Presently, the school is a full-fledged co-educational school from KG to class twelve. The school is affiliated to the Delhi Board of ICSE and ISC. The students obtain cent percent results every year. There are 490 students on the roll for 2006 academic year.

In the field of evangelization, the first baptism was of Ratnaman Gurung on 26.04.1992 by Fr. Thomas Polackal, the Salesian Provincial (Church record: Baptism Register)²³⁹. The interaction between the Salesians and the local people over the years has resulted in creating a Catholic community at Malbasey.

The ethnic composition of the Catholic Community is as follows:

Table 5.10 Ethnic Composition of Catholic Population, Malbasey

Ethnic community	Number
Gurung	42
Tamang	34
Chettri	22
Subba	14
Mukhia	14
Rai	13

Lepcha	12
Thapa	12
Darnal	10
Khawas	08
Sherpa	06
Bhutia	04
Bishwakarama	02
Total	193

Source: Baptism Register

5.4.12 Don Bosco School, Rinchenpong

It is situated in west Sikkim, 38 kilometers away from Jorethang. It is run by the sisters of the Daughters of the Cross, under the proprietorship of Don Bosco, Malbasey. The classes are from LKG to class VII. There are 248 students, 145 males and 103 females. The religion-wise break up of the students is as follows:

Table 5.11 Religion-wise Break up of Students, Rinchenpong, 2005

Hindus	127
Buddhists	73
Protestants	38
Catholics	10
Others	Nil
Total	248

Source: Application forms

5.4.13 St. Mary's Convent School, Geyzing, West District

The Honorable Chief Minister, Nar Bahadur Bhandari invited the Catholic Missionaries to establish an educational institution at Geyzing, headquarters of West district. After selecting suitable plots of land three kilometers away from town by the road from Geyzing to Pelling, two

lease deeds were signed between the government of Sikkim and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Darjeeling. The first plot comprises 4.3740 hectare. Later an additional plot of 1.4460 hectare was given to the Bishop by the Government. Bishop Eric Benjamin, the head of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Darjeeling, invited the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, a branch of Catholic Church to start an educational institution. Therefore, an agreement was made on 25th March 1994 between Bishop Eric Benjamin and Sr. Henrie Thevashennel, provincial of the sisters. Bishop invited the sisters “to participate in the educational and pastoral apostolate of the Diocese” (Agreement between Bishop Eric Benjamin and the provincial of Daughter of the Mary help of Christians, signed 25/3/1994)²⁴⁰.

After constructing a temporary school building, the formal classes commenced on April 4th 1991, with 34 students and four teachers. (School records: Attendance Register)²⁴¹. There are 433 students for the session 2005. There are 217 male and 216 female students (School records: Attendance Register 2006)²⁴². The break up of the students by religion is as follows :

Table 5.12 Students by Religion

Hindus	242
Buddhists	100
Catholics	51
Protestants	27
Others	13
Total	433

Source: School Attendance Registers and Admission forms

The description of the Mission campus is as follows. The plots are located above Geyzing town. The ranges after ranges are visible on a clear sky

from here. A magnificent structure spreads out for more than half of the campus. A Sikkim style gate welcomes the local children to schools. A football ground and a basketball court add to the scenic beauty of the terrain. The statues of Catholic Saints are placed on raised platforms at prominent places in the campus. The Principal's office, school office, class rooms, computer room, hostels, staffrooms for male and female teachers, convent, auditorium and staff quarters create befitting ambience for the hill children to pursue their search for truth.

The agreement states that a presbytery and prayer hall should be allowed within the school campus. The nuns, students and the local Catholics may participate in the worship. Fr. Victor Khawas was the first Catholic missionary to reside at Geyzing. The first baptism was recorded in the register on 2nd January 1993. On that day, Lucy Tikadevi Rakhali was baptized by Fr. Khawas.

Fr. Marcel Rai, the present pastor says "Prior to the arrival of Fr. Victor Khawas, Catholic priests from Jorethang, Darjeeling and Malbasey visited the houses of local people. The frequent visits established a strong bond between the missionaries and the local people. The local people believed in the prayers of priests" (Interview with Fr. Marcel Rai on 21.10.2004)²⁴³. Therefore, when the Government offered land for missionaries at Geyzing, the offer was readily accepted by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Darjeeling. Fr. Victor Khawas stayed at Geyzing for six years. Edward Rai describes the missionary methods of Fr. Victor in the following words: "Fr. Victor was a simple pastor who visited almost all the houses in Geyzing. He would talk to any one whom he meets. He spoke about Jesus and the healing power of Jesus. His traveling kit included a sleeping bag made of sacks, mass articles and minimum clothes. Whenever he visited a Hindu or Buddhist family, he would express his desire of spending the night in that family. He would ask for accommodation in

the cow shed" (Interview with Edward Rai on 2.10.2004)²⁴⁴. The simple life style of Fr. Victor attracted many at Geyzing towards Christianity. Daniel Thapa says about the second pastor, Fr. Marcus Yonzon, "a true local missionary who cared for everyone irrespective of caste, creed and religion (Interview with Daniel Thapa on 22.10.2004)²⁴⁵. According to Sanju Shilal, "Fr. Marcel Rai visits the sick very often and brings solace in their lives" (Interview with Sanju Shilal on 22.10.2004)²⁴⁶.

There is a small hostel for Catholic boys in the campus known as Viyaney Study Centre. There are fourteen economically disadvantaged boys who avail the facilities of the centre for their education.

Table 5.13 Catholic Population: Community-wise, Geyzing.

Community	Number of Catholics
Rasaily	36
Sunuwar	28
Tamang	26
Rai	24
Subba	14
Thapa	12
Kalikotay	12
Gurung	12
Chettri	08
Shilal	07
Sundas	05
Thatal	04
Bhutia	03
Sherpa	02
Total	193

Source: Baptism Register

Table 5.14 Distribution of Catholic Missions in the Darjeeling Hills

Catholic Missions in Sub-divisions	Darjeeling	Kurseong	Kalimpong	Total
Churches	05	03	21	29
Convents	12	06	15	33
Educational Institutions	22	07	22	51
Hostels	11	05	11	27
Dispensaries	10	03	12	25
Social Service Centres	01	01	01	03
Formation Houses	02	00	02	04
Pastoral Centres	01	00	01	02

Source: Church Records

The above table indicates the number of Catholic Missions in Darjeeling hills. The Catholic missionaries have established these institutions over the past a century and a half. It is evident from the table that the Catholic missionaries established more Catholic missions in Kalimpong than other places. Kalimpong received priority in the planning of the Catholic missionaries because of its remoteness and backwardness.

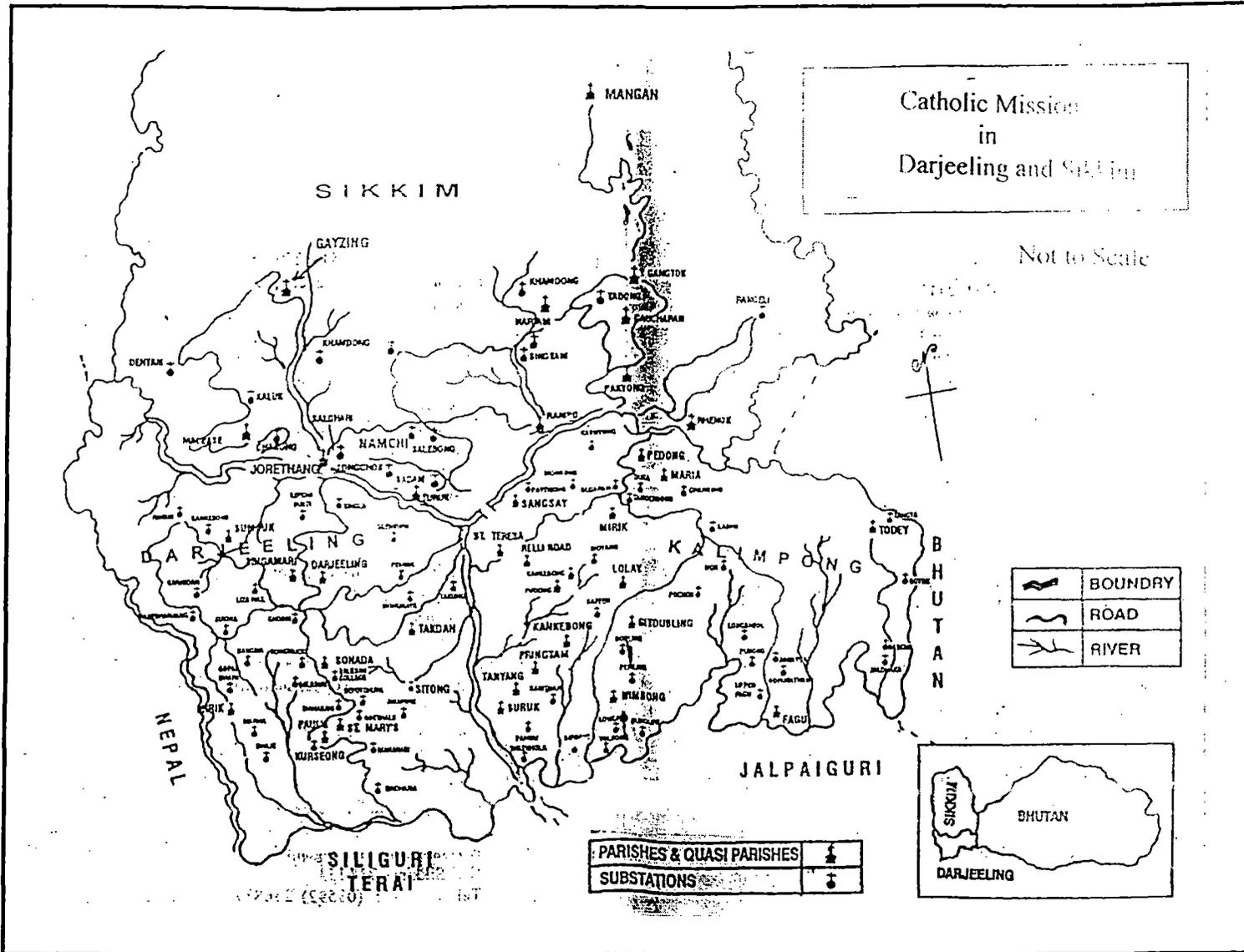
Table 5.15 Distribution of Catholic Missions in Sikkim

District	Churches	Convents	Educational Institutions	Hostels	Dispensaries	Social service centers
South	04	04	06	02	01	00
West	02	02	03	02	00	00
North	00	01	01	00	01	00
East	08	07	07	06	03	01
Total	14	14	17	10	05	01

Source: Church Records

The above table indicates the strength of Catholic Missions in Sikkim that developed in the past fifty-four years. Though Catholicism entered Sikkim comparatively later, the impact is strongly felt. As the table and the map in figure No. 2 indicate, the concentration of the Catholic Mission is

(Fig. 2)



more in East Sikkim, presumably because of its proximity to Pedong, a well-known Catholic Mission area in neighbouring Kalimpong subdivision of Darjeeling Hills. In North Sikkim, till date Catholic missionaries have not been able to make much headway and there is no resident priest. However a school with a dispensary was opened in 2004.



Plate 15. Mrs. Regina (Chimito) Lepcha, who accommodated Fr. Leonard Molomo in 1951. Catholicism entered into Sikkim through this pious person.

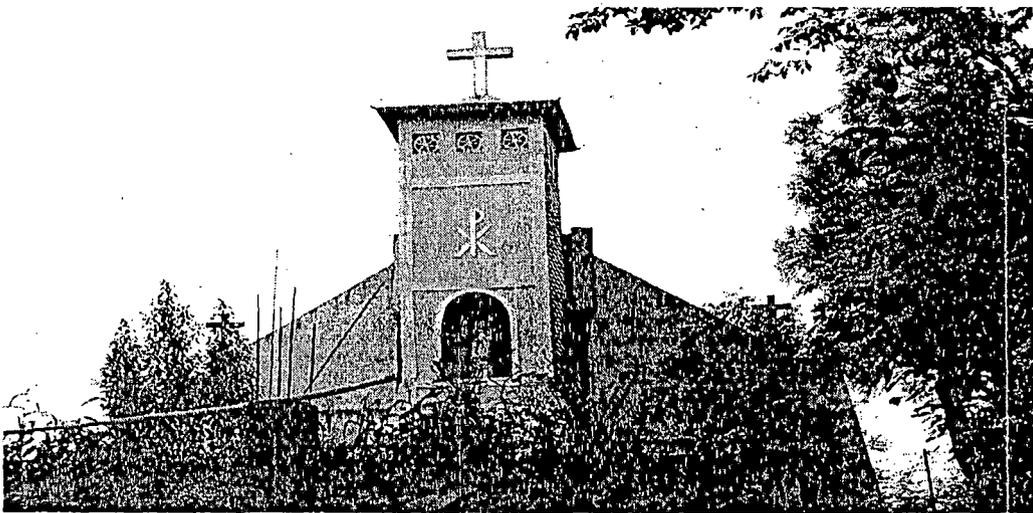


Plate 16. Christ the King Church Pakyong, the first Catholic Church in Sikkim.



Plate 17. Father Brahier, who initiated Catholic Mission at Martam and Gaucharan in East Sikkim. He was the only Swiss Catholic Missionary who worked in Sikkim.



Plate 18. St. Paul the Apostle Church, Tadong. It was inaugurated on 15th April 2006

The entry of Catholic missionaries into Darjeeling-Sikkim Himalayas is an interesting and exciting event in the history of Eastern Himalayas. In Darjeeling hills, the Catholic missionaries, through their educational institutions, medical care and community developmental programmes influenced the urban and rural inhabitants. In Sikkim, educational institutions alone served as an entry point into the lives of various ethnic groups. The beneficiaries of Catholic institutions and programmes often facilitated the establishment of mission campus in Darjeeling and Sikkim for various humanitarian works.

References

1. Loreto Sisters: The Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary was founded by Mary Ward at St. Omer in 1609 for the defense and propagation of faith. Mother Frances Teresa Ball founded the Irish Branch in Dublin in 1821. At the request of Bishop Carew, the first group of sisters, known as Loreto sisters, came to Calcutta in 1841.
2. Bengal Catholic Herald, dated 15th April 1946, p 7.
3. The Archbishop had the authority to send the nuns wherever he wanted and the nuns had to be obedient to Bishop. Therefore, Mother T. Mons had to leave Calcutta for Darjeeling on 10th August 1846 when she received the order to the effect from the Bishop. The event has been recorded in the diary of the Archbishop.
4. Mother Teresa Mons' letter to Archbishop Carew dated 15th October 1846.
5. *First The Blade*. Calcutta: Loreto House p,58
6. Fr. Mc Girr's diary: Entry on 8th February 1848.
7. School Admission Registers
8. Fr.Mc Girr's Dairy: Entry on 8th February 1848.
9. There was misunderstanding regarding the jurisdiction over Darjeeling between Dr. Carew and Bishop Hartman. Soon after

the arrival Loreto nuns in Darjeeling, Bishop Hartman exerted his authority and visited Darjeeling in 1848.

10. The Loreto sisters built a small house in front of the convent to house the orphans. When a parent died the other parent found it difficult to take care of the children. The sisters looked after such children. Later the orphanage was shifted to Entally, Calcutta.
11. The Convent Chronicle records that a party of Loreto nuns arrived at Darjeeling to form part of the convent community. The nuns were accompanied by Bishop Hartman. This was Bishop Hartman's second visit to Darjeeling. The entry in the chronicle was on 29th September 1853.
12. The School Attendance Register of 1867, February to December.
13. Indo-European correspondence, dated 13th January 1867:2
14. The inscription on the wall of Loreto convent school.
15. Ibid
16. The building, where the aspirants to nunhood get training is called Novitiate. The aspirant is known as novice. Mother Teresa of Calcutta underwent training in this building at Loreto convent Darjeeling.
17. School records: Admission Register of 1917.
18. *The Darjeeling Times* dated 27th October 1926.
19. *Our Field* 1938 p.244
20. The College Chronicle: Entry on 1st August 1961
21. Mother Damien's letter to her Provincial dated 03.04.2004.
22. Fr. Depelchin was born on 10th October 1822. He joined the Society of Jesus on September 25th 1842. He arrived in Calcutta on November 28, 1859. After serving at St. Xavier's, Calcutta and Bombay, he took charge of St. Joseph's College, Darjeeling in 1888.
23. *Our Field* 1938:250

24. John Whelan (1988) *A Century Observed*. Darjeeling: St. Joseph's College, p 25.
25. Goethals was a Belgian Jesuit who became Archbishop of Calcutta. When St. Joseph College was ready the inaugural ceremony was conducted by Archbishop Goethals. He was the only high ranking ecclesiastical dignitary in Bengal at that time.
26. School Admission Register: 1892.
27. Special department meant studies after the completion of Cambridge. The special department grew up year by year and became university department or Degree College.
28. Fraser Hall is the official auditorium of St. Joseph's school. Since Lt. Governor of Bengal, Andrew Fraser donated cash for the construction of the hall, the auditorium was named Fraser Hall in 1907.
29. John Whelan (1998) *A Century Observed*. Darjeeling: St. Joseph's College, p 43.
30. Ibid, p43
31. The college authorities had decided to admit women students in 1948. An extension of the school was constructed in 1949 for educating women.
32. College Record: Attendance Register, 1949.
33. The nuns who belong to the order of St. Ann's arrived at Northpoint to look after the infirmary and primary division.
34. The present state of Jharkand was known as Chotanagpur. It was a mission field of the Belgian fathers.
35. Fr. Maurice Stanford arrived in Darjeeling on 31st January 1947, along with Fr. Daly, Bro. Robin, Fr. Predergast and Fr. Mackey. He was a member of the first batch of Canadian Jesuits to arrive in Darjeeling. He served St. Joseph's school as rector from 1950 to 1955 and from 1959 to 1965. The building of the commerce department of the college is named after him.
36. Church Records: Baptism Register.
37. Bengal Catholic Herald, 1st August 1883:3.

38. Since there was already a Bishop's house of the Anglicans, the new residence of Goethals was named Archbishop's house to differentiate it from the Anglican Bishop's house.
39. Fr. Scharlaeken' letter to his superior in Calcutta, dated 12.04.1906.
40. Ibid,dated 12.04.1906
41. Catechist is always a trained local person. He is a mediator between the missionary and the people.
42. The Canadian Jesuits reached Darjeeling in 1947 to assist the Belgian fathers but gradually took over the mission.
43. Church Record: Church Chronicle dated 30.03.1947.
44. Bishop Eric Benjamin was born at St. Mary's Hill, Kurseong on May 13th 1920. He was consecrated on 7th October 1962 at Valetta, the capital of Malta. He is the first Nepali prelate. He died on 12th May 1994 at St. Teresa's presbytery.
45. Fr. Ford's letter to his superior at Calcutta dated 20.06.1896.
46. All Soul's day is celebrated on 2nd November all over the world. The Catholics of Darjeeling and Sikkim decorate the graves of their dear ones in the cemetery. A Catholic priest sprinkles water on the graves. In this way, the dead are remembered once a year.
47. Corpus Christi means body of Christ. On this solemn occasion a procession is held to venerate the body and blood of Jesus. The sacred bread is taken in procession. The Catholics during the procession sing hymns and recite prayers.
48. Church Records: Baptism Registers.
49. Fr. Burns was born on 26th April 1925. He entered the Society of Jesus on 30th July 1943. He arrived in India 1953. He taught English at St. Joseph's College for 27 years. He inaugurated North point Alumni Association (NPAA). In 1971 NPAA started a hundred literary centres where adults were taught the rudiments of reading writing and arithmetic. Fr. Burns started Hayden Hall on Laden La road.

50. *Calcutta Jesuit News Letter*, January 1965.
51. Interview with Bro. Eric Rudum on 10.11.2004.
52. Convent Chronicle: Entry 10.05.1902.
53. Convent Chronicle dated 24.02.1956.
54. School Record: Admission Register.
55. Interview with Sr. Gerald P. on 15.01.2004.
56. School Record Admission Registers.
57. *Our Field*: May-June 1932:235.
58. *Our Field*, 17th March 1933:156.
59. School Record: Attendance Register.
60. House Chronicle: Salesian College, Sonada.
61. Fr. Lo Groi (2003) *History of the Kolkata Province of St. John Bosco*.
Kolkata: Salesians of Don Bosco.
62. House Chronicle: 02.04.1938
63. Interview with Fr. Jellici on 02.02.2004
64. *Our Field* 6th April 1925
65. School Record: Attendance Register.
66. School Record: Attendance Register.
67. Field notes, 03.02.2004
68. Church Records: Baptism Registers.
69. Interview with Daniel Loksom on 20.02.2004.
70. Interview with Rose Lima on 20.02.2004.
71. It is a vegetable abundantly found in Eastern Himalayas.
72. It is a soft broom made of amliso plant.

73. Bro. Nick was a Canadian Jesuit who introduced scientific agricultural methods in the Catholic Missions in Darjeeling and Sikkim.
74. Interview with Solomon on 20.02.2004.
75. Interview with Charles Mukhia on 02.03.2004.
76. Convent Chronicle: Entry on 22.06.1993.
77. School Records: Attendance Register.
78. Interview with Sr. Amalia on 06.04.2004.
79. The inauguration of the church took place on 30th April 2004. It was blessed by Bishop Stephen Lepcha of Darjeeling diocese.
80. The Pope of Rome had a desire to establish a Mission station in Tibet. One of the attempts was to erect Tibet as a Catholic Mission area. Therefore southern mission was officially inaugurated.
81. Missions Etrangeres de Paris means Foreign Missions of Paris. An abbreviation MEP is often suffixed to the name of a priest who belongs to the society.
82. The existence of Christianity in Tibet enthused the missionaries of 15th and 16th centuries to venture in to the plateau. The attempt to enter Tibet for the establishment of a Catholic mission is still on.
83. Fr. Desgodins was born on 16th October 1826. He joined the MEP on 26th September 1854. He came to India on 11th November 1855. He came to Kalimpong sub-division. He died on 14th March 1913 and was buried at Sacred Heart church cemetery in Pedong at Kalimpong.
84. Fr. Henry Mussot accompanied Fr. Desgodins in 1881 in a journey to Pedong. Later in 1883, Fr. Mussot left Pedong for Chinese border where he became a martyr.
85. The mule track is still intact. It is a stone paved path, which is behind St. George Higher Secondary School, Pedong.

86. Fr. Desgodins could not go to Tibet. Therefore, he planted a cross below his presbytery that faces Tibet. The location is known as 'Crus dara'.
87. Fr. Desgodins' letter to his superior in France, dated 12.11.1882.
88. Mr. Wace was deputy Commissioner at Darjeeling at that time. Since he was a Catholic he granted three acres of land to the French missionaries at Pedong.
89. Church Records: Baptism Registers.
90. Fr. Desgodins started a Bhutia school for the Bhutia children in 1885. He was a scholar in Bhutia language. Pedong was predominantly inhabited by Bhutia and Lepchas.
91. School Register: Attendance Register.
92. *Missions Catholique* was a Catholic mission bulletin, published quarterly from the mission head quarters in France. The publication covered mission news.
93. British expedition to Tibet took place in 1888-1889 AD. Fr. Hervagault and Fr. Saleur served the British expedition as chaplains to Irish soldiers. As a reward for the service, R.C mission was donated a big plot of land on a hill opposite to Pedong.
94. Fr. Desgodins' letter to his superior, dated 05.12.1890.
95. Fr. Jules Douenel was born on 20th September 1866. He joined MEP on 7th September 1889. He came to India in 1892. On 15th February 1929, Pope XI created Prefecture Apostolate of Sikkim and Kalimpong and Fr. Dounel was appointed its first Prefect.
96. Fr. Hervagault was born on 11th November 1858. He joined MEP on 15th April 1889. He came to India in 1883. He stayed at Maria Busty for forty-four years. He died on 23rd May 1936 and was buried at Catholic cemetery, Maria Busty.
97. Maria Busty means the village of Mary. The fathers admitted only Catholics in this village. All the Catholics were placed under the protection of Mary.

98. Mary, the mother of Jesus occupies a prominent place in the life of a Catholic. The prayers may be addressed to Jesus through Mary.
99. Fr. Saleur was born on 15th April 1861. He joined MEP on 14th October 1881. He came to India on 25th December 1884. He worked in Maria Busty and Pedong. He died on 6th May 1980 and was buried at Sacred Heart Church cemetery, Pedong.
100. Fr. Desgodins' letter to his superior in France, 22.12.1891.
101. Fr. Desgodins' letter to his superior dated 30.03.1891.
102. *Missions Catholique de Pedong*, 1851:221-76.
103. The Church Chronicle: Entry on 15.10.1891.
104. Fr. Hervagault's letter to his superior dated, 10.12.1891.
105. Ibid
106. Church Records: Baptism Register
107. Fr. Hervagault's diary. Entry on 11.05.1892.
108. Fr. Hervagault's letter to his superior dated 10.06.1893.
109. Fr. Hervagault's letter to his superior, dated 02.06.1920.
110. Church Records: Baptism Register.
111. *Missions Catholique de Pedong*, 1916: 456.
112. Fr. Desgodins' letter to his superior, dated 23.11.1890.
113. Awasty (1978) *Between Sikkim and Bhutan (The Lepchas and Bhutias of Pedong)* Delhi: BR.Publishing Corporation, p,22 .
114. Fr. Hervagault introduced agriculture in Maria Busty. He planted tea in his Mission Campus. The tea plantation is still seen in the Mission campus.
115. Interview with Mr. Joseph Bhutia on 07.08.2005.
116. Co-Operative of paddy seeds supplied quality seeds to the farmers free of cost.

117. Dispensary Record: Entry 18.02.1957.
118. 'Doctorni ama' means mother doctor.
119. Interview with William Phipon on 05.04.2004.
120. Fr. Hervagault and Fr. Morinaux frequented Gorubathan during winter.
121. Fr. Benjamin Stolkey spoke Nepali fluently. He wrote Bible in Lepcha.
122. Mr. GT Sitling was a protestant pastor who became Catholic later.
123. Church Records: Baptism Register.
124. Field notes: 05.04.2004.
125. Fr. Eigenmann treated the Lepcha patients of Gorubathan. He visited Gorubathan once a month.
126. Franco-Swiss museum contains all the articles used by French and Swiss missionaries. It is situated at Pedong.
127. Fr. Hervagault's letter to his superior, dated 27.03.1897.
128. Fr. Hervagault's diary: Entry 19.09.1900.
129. Interview with Mr. Joseph Sitling on 02.05.2004.
130. Interview with Mr. Buddha Lepcha on 07.05.2004.
131. Church Records: Baptism Register
132. Sr. Jean was a French nurse. She worked in Maria Busty and Git Dabling.
133. Sr. Jean's letter to Mother General in Paris, dated 25.04.1949.
134. The church was built in the shape of a Cross. Fr. Schyrr was the architect and the church was completed in 1967.
135. *The Telegraph*, Thursday 13.01.2006.

136. Sr. Emma was a nurse in Maria Busty and Git-Dabling. She attended complicated delivery cases in the villages.
137. O'Malley (1907) *Bengal District Gazetteers, Darjeeling*. New Delhi. Logos Press, p 124.
138. Interview with Fr. Rene Singh on 01.06.2004.
139. Fr. Martin Rey took charge of Sacerd Heart Church, Pedong when Fr. Rene was appointed headmaster of St. George Higher Secondary School, Pedong.
140. Fr. John Bingham, an American Jesuit was in charge of the Catholics at Munsong for Two years.
141. The diary of Fr. Rene Singh: Entry on 03.11.1992.
142. Fr. Douenel's letter to Mother Ursula dated 16.03.1920.
143. SDO's letter to Sr. Ursula dated 03.07.1923.
144. Convent Chronicle: Entry on 26.07.1921.
145. SDO's letter to Sr. Ursula dated 03.07.1923.
146. The Deputy Commissioner wrote a letter to Sister 12.02.1925.
147. Sr. Marie Therese's letter to Mother General in Paris 04.06.1926.
148. Convent Chronicle: Entry on 03.03.1929.
149. Convent Chronicle: Entry on 06.06.1927.
150. Church Records: Baptism Register.
151. Fr. Andre Butty started a dairy farm at Kalimpong. He took care of the employees so well that he built houses for them.
152. Doma Tamang, one of the employees of Fr. Butty started a cheese cottage of her own. According to her Fr. Butty corresponded with her till his death. Doma, though a Buddhist, offers prayer in a Catholic Church for the response of the soul of Fr. Butty on his death anniversary. A cottage near St. Augustine's School has been named Butty Niwas, in memory of the founder of Swiss welfare dairy.

153. Interview with Doma Tamang on 11.06.2004.
154. Interview with Norden Tsering Lepcha on 06.06.2004.
155. Convent Chronicle: Entry on 22nd Nov. 1981 SCN.
156. *Ten Lénves*, Vol 16, No. 4. 1988.
157. Interview with Joseph Lepcha on 20.06.2004.
158. Fr. Peter Ranger was an Anglo-Indian priest whose father was a tea planter. His elder brother having a cottage in the bazaar gave him an opportunity to make an opening at Algarah Bazar. Making a good use of the providential opportunity he started a small station in one of the rooms of his brother. It was also a halting station place for him en route to Gorubathan.
159. Michael Lepcha heard about the Catholic Missionaries in Pedong and Kalimpong. He discussed with his wife about accepting Catholicism. Since his wife had no objection he invited Catholic Missionaries to Mirik.
160. Interview with Joseph Lepcha on 20.06.2004.
161. Church Records: Baptism Register.
162. Amliso is a broom plant. It grows abundantly in the hills. The leaves are fodder for cattles.
163. Fr. Paul Thurler was born 17th Dec. 1900 at Estavayer-le-Lac, Switzerland. He was ordained a priest on 26th March 1932. He arrived at Pedong on 12.02.1937. He worked at Kalimpong and Pedong.
164. Fr. G. Rouiller was born on 10th September 1908 at Chemex, Switzerland. After studying in his village school and at St. Maurice, he entered the Novitiate (St. Maurice) in 1928. Ordained priest on 12th August 1934. He arrived at Kalimpong on 12.02.1937.
165. Interview with Aasing Joseph Lepcha on 27.06.2004.
166. Church Record: Baptism Register
167. Dispensary Chronicle 16th April 1955.

168. Interview John Lenus Lepcha on 04.07.2004
169. Church records: Baptism Registers.
170. Convent Chronicle: Entry 21.02.1986.
171. Interview with Thomas Passeeng Lepcha on 11.07.1895.
172. Fr. Desgodin's letter to his Superior, dated 04.05.1895.
173. Church Records: Baptism Registers.
174. Church Records: Baptism Registers.
175. Convent Chronicle, entry on 17.03.1995.
176. Interview with Sr. Dennis on 11.07.2004.
177. Chronicle entry on 01.01.1978.
178. Church Records: Baptism Registers.
179. Extract from the unpublished invitation 03.02.1974.
180. Church Records: Baptism Registers.
181. Interview with Michael Rai 18.07.2004.
182. *Our Field*: 1939:25
183. Fr. Koch's letter to Fr. Grosjean dated, 10th February 1889.
184. Sr. Mary's College Chronicle: Entry on 19.02.1909.
185. *Our Field*, April 1939, p.160.
186. Ibid, p.160.
187. *Calcutta Calling* 1964, No. 43 July- September, p.8.
188. Ibid.
189. *Our Field* 1941. p 27.
190. *Our Field* 1941. p 81.
191. Church Records: Baptism Registers.
192. Church Records: Baptism Registers.
193. St. Mary's College Chronicle: Entry on 06.01.1901.
194. *Our Field* 1953, March - April, p.17.
195. Fr. Motet's dairy: Entry 15.01.1891.
196. *Our Field* 1928, April, p.25.
197. *Our Field* 1933: September - October, p.44.
198. *Our Field* 1935: January, p.19.

199. Interview with Cecilia on 01.08.2004 at Kurseong.
200. Fr. Koch's letter to his mission Superior in Calcutta dated, 11th September 1885.
201. Josson (1912) *La Mission de Bengal Occidental*. Darjeeling: St. Joseph's College, p.37
202. Church Records: Baptism Registers: 14.03.1891.
203. St. Mary's College Chronicle entry on 15.01.1905.
204. Brennan, *Centenary Souvenir* 1905 - 2005, p. 23..
205. Visitor's Book, entry 15.11.1903.
206. School Attendance Register.
207. School Chronicle: Entry on 18.10.1907.
208. Sr. Mary Josephine's letter to her Superior in France dated 16.02.1910.
209. St. Helen's School Chronicle entry on 09.06.1899.
210. *Helena* 1939, p.22.
211. *The Goethalite* 1992, p. 3.
212. *The Goethalite* 1993, p. 5.
213. Goethal's School Records: Attendance Registers.
214. Holy Cross Convent Chronicle: Entry on 25.09.1956
215. Father's Kothi's means the presbytery.
216. Letter from the Board of Secondary Education to Secretary Don Bosco School, Minutes dated 06.04.2005.
217. News Bulletine 1886. Fr. Gratuze has written an article on Pedong.
218. *Anugraha* 2000 p.37.
219. Interview with Chimito on 25.03.2006.

220. Interview with Peter Lepcha on 25.03.2006.
221. Church Records: Baptism Registers.
222. School Records: Attendance Registers.
223. Church Records: Baptism Registers.
224. Church Records: Baptism Registers.
225. School Record: Attendance Register.
226. Convent Chronicle: Entry on 02.02.2001.
227. Convent Chronicle: Entry on 24.08.1983.
228. Inscription from the Plaque on the wall.
229. Field trip: 01.09.2004.
230. Church Records: Baptism Registers.
231. Church Records: Baptism Registers.
232. Bishop Eric's letter to Sr. Marie Therese, dated 25th September 1980.
233. Convent Chronicle: Entry on 8th March 1980.
234. Church Records: Baptism Registers.
235. School Records: Attendance Register.
236. The Deed, signed on 12th February, 1993 by the Government of Sikkim and Darjeeling Jesuits of North Bengal.
237. Nicholas Lo Groi (2003) *History of Kolkata Province of St. John Bosco*. Kolkata: Salesians of Don Bosco.
238. Church Records: Baptism Registers.
239. Agreement between Bishop and Provincial of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Signed on 25th March 1994.
240. School Records: Attendance Register
241. School Records: Attendance Register.
242. Interview with Fr. Marcel Rai on 21.10.2004.
243. Interview with Edward Rai on 22.10.2004
244. Interview with Daniel Thapa on 22.10.2004.
245. Interview with Sanju Shilal on 22.10.2004.