

“LET US ALSO GO, THAT WE MAY DIE WITH HIM” John 11,1

APOSTLE

Newsletter of the SSPX; #1 Marcel Lefebvre Place, Annie Nagar, Sivalaperi Rd , Palayamkottai, 627002

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

New Year's greetings from the Priory of the Most Holy Trinity! This tenth issue of the APOSTLE magazine comes to you after a waiting period of four months. Even as I sit down to type it out, I realize that not only have there been many events, but also more incidents are occurring whilst the magazine is at the printing shop. The next week will see the arrival of almost 40 orphans and aged people from the state of Andra Pradesh, moving in order to be closer to the traditional Mass and sacraments. A new “semi-permanent” structure is almost completed on our campus for the use of a church...later to be transformed into a dormitory or school. Furthermore, plans are being drawn up for a new church in Nagercoil and also in Trichy, and the last payments are being made for the completed (and very beautiful) stone church in Christurajapuram. Of course, besides these very material concerns, the boy's hostel and pre-seminarians at the priory keep the 3 priests very much occupied in teaching and character formation. Our stalwart trav-



Enjoying Barotha for dinner. (Clockwise: Fr Jackson, Fr Summers, Bishop Tissier de Mallerais, Fr. Chazal, Fr. Mathias.)

eler, Fr Francois Chazal continues every month to brave the trains, planes and buses of central-south India for a two week mission circuit to Bangalore, Goa, Bombay, and last but not least Chennai.

Besides all these “activities” which occupy much of our time in the mission fields, we were fortunate to have a priest retreat preached by His Excellency Bishop Tissier de Mallerais in the first week of January to keep our priorities in mind. It is a truth often forgotten that the work of the priest is firstly and foremost one of prayer and sacrifice. His primary duty is to be a mediator between God and man, to render the homage and offerings of men to God and reversely to distribute the gifts of God to His people. To seek the good graces of God, a priest must conform himself to the High Priest, Our Lord Jesus Christ. As Our Lord's life was ultimately one of sacrifice, so also must the priest's life be one of suffering and sacrifice. In doing this he wins graces for himself and his flock. As we enter this new year on the sub-continent of India, we remind ourselves that our mission is not firstly in building churches, convents, schools, etc., but in rendering an acceptable sacrifice to God. It is only by assuring this primary goal that God will send His graces and blessings to this country (and certainly there is no country which needs the grace of God more!). Since the “main-stream” church has ceased to offer sacrifice to God and is more concerned about the “Hinduization” of the Catholic Church in India, it presses the obligation upon us even more to fill the void left by them.

Certainly our heartfelt thanks and best wishes go out to all of you in this new year. Here at the priory, the priests, the pre-seminarians, the staff, and the hostel boys continue to pray for all of our friends and benefactors. We also ask your prayers for our humble mission here in India.

In Maria,
Fr. Patrick Summers

The Question of “Caste” in India

Editors Note: Very often the missionary priest returning from India is asked to explain the “Caste” situation. “What exactly is it”, “How does it function?”, “Is totally evil or is there some good in it?”. Unfortunately, the answer is not short and simple. Below is an extract from a Jesuit priest writing in the beginning of the 20th century. Although it is not an exhaustive essay on the subject, it seems to be a balanced summary of the “caste” problem.

“The social and racial fact peculiar to India is the division of society into *castes*. The words *Caste* and *Hinduism* are foreign. *Dharma*, which best corresponds to our word “religion” connotes conduct more than creed; and *Jathi*, the Indian equivalent for “caste,” connotes race, tribe, and social rank. It is childish first to frame definitions that make facts square with theory, and then to conclude that caste is Hinduism and *vice versa*. The tendency of the people is to classify their neighbors, not according to beliefs, but to social status. Few care for your creed; but all will inquire whether they can eat with you, or take water from your hands. The line of cleavage is social, rather than religious.

The ancient Hindu law books divide the people, on racial and functional lines, into four classes: - the non-Aryan *Sudra* or manual worker, the Aryan *Vaisya* or farmer and merchant, the *Kshatriya* or warrior, and the *Brahman* or priest and teacher. Manu mentions some fifty castes besides. Class represents the external and caste the internal view of the social fabric. The Indian classes correspond to the upper, middle, and lower classes of European society. But in India all goes by heredity. In Europe, warriors, priests and traders are made, not born. In India, birth alone can make them. The real cause of the caste system is that spirit of selection and exclusiveness, due to a variety of conditions, which has worked for centuries and split society into a thousand fragments. Each collection of endogamous groups that bear the same name



The goddess “Kali”

and have the same traditional occupation, reputed origin, social status, and religious observances, considers itself an autonomous social unit, a homogeneous community, a caste. If one or more of these common features are wiped out, or further marriage restrictions come into force, we obtain a sub-caste. The two main characteristics of caste, its outer walls of seclusion, are endogamy and commensality. The census of 1911 showed in the Madras Presidency 479 sets of people, each wearing a distinctive label; and castes and sub-castes are always on the making; change of religion is enough to create, say, Christian and Hindu sub castes, grafted on the same social body. Several hundred groups call themselves *Vellalars*, form separate endogamous units of about the same social status and occupation, and behave like different castes. Many communities like the Brahmans do not intermarry, and differ widely in race, status and social customs, but have the same traditional occupation and the same reputed origin. The great Udaiyān, or farmer, caste (some 300,000) consists of three groups, the Malaimān, the Nattamān and the Sudarmān, who do not intermarry, but eat together and recognize the bond of common descent. Chetti is a caste name now assumed by many traders. The Nāttukōttai Chettis, the great Indian bankers of the Ramnad and Sivaganga Zamindaris, are representatives of that caste. In general, when any cause drives together stray families, the law of attraction collects them into a tribe or caste, while the law of exogamy works them into an inner circle of prohibited degrees, and strings them upon the tribal bond of union, like rings upon a curtain rod. There is a change also in tribal occupations. In 1911, only 12 in every hundred Brahmans returned themselves as employed in religious service; only 14 in every hundred Nādārs were toddy-drawers, and only 22 Sakkiliyars were leather workers. 90 in every hundred Kallars and 79 Maravars were cultivators, but have still of course leisure hours; inordinate attachment to their neighbors' goods and cattle makes them figure largely in jail statistics for theft and dacoity, their hereditary calling. The District Magistrate must bring occasionally some of their settlements under the operation of the *Criminal Tribes' Act* passed in 1911.

The rise and fall of castes open up the romantic question of social precedence and caste aspirations. The honest Kallan, says the proverb, may become a Maravan, and, if prosperous, an Agambadaiyan; then slowly a Vellālan. The lower castes and the “untouchables” stoutly and reasonably too, deny nowadays their polluting capacities. The Nādārs of Tirunelveli, rightly no longer content “to pollute without eating beef”, wrongly claim to be genuine Kshatriyas or Rajputs. The Kammālars, convinced they are the children of the divine architect Visvakarma, claimed in the days of Fr. Dubois more than a century ago – and claim still with some success – to be ranked as Visva Brahmans. Others bring cuttings from the Sastras and reason thus: “Vaisyas are traders. We are traders. Therefore we are Vaisyas.” They won-



Fr. Chazal takes a closer look another version of the attractive statue of the goddess Kali.

der why you laugh at their logic.

Undoubtedly a process of change, imperceptible like the movement of the hour-hand of a clock, goes on in the strata of Indian society. The idea of distinction survives and possibly waxes stronger; that of innate superiority or inferiority is being exploded from underneath. There is no official control over caste evolutions. Each social unit obtains in the long run from society what it deserves. It is valued by its own standard. Whether caste be hierarchical exclusiveness, the assured transmission of a function towards society, or a means of livelihood to oneself, it ultimately rests on social interdependence. It is consecrated by heredity, and it is backed by the law of Karma, the Brahmanic myth that some men are born untouchable inheritors of unknown sins, and other, living embodiments of unknown virtues. This fable finds no supporters outside India; whereas the caste *system* has friends and foes. The place of caste in Hinduism is now under debate among Hindus themselves. Hindu fundamentalists indentify *varma* and *āsrama* (color and stages of Bramanic life) with the Hindu *Dharma* (religion); strange to say, Hindu opponents of caste identify them also.

Mr. B.R. Ambedkar, Ph.D., a Depressed Class leader, writes in his recent book entitled "Annihilation of Caste":

"The effect of caste on the ethics of the Hindus is simply deplorable. Caste has killed public spirit and killed the sense of public charity. Caste has made public opinion impossible. Virtue has become caste-ridden and morality caste-bound. There is charity, but it begins and ends with the caste; there is sympathy, but not for men of other castes....Wherefore make every man and woman free from the thralldom to the Shastras,...tell the Hindus that what is wrong with them is their religion;...destroy the authority

of the Shastras and the Vedas."

Such is also the program of the Moscow-inspired Self-Respect movement in South India. But other Hindus stand midway. They grant that for many centuries Hinduism has been a purely ethnic or racial creed and the Hindu defined as one so born, and never so made – a theory echoed by the neo-pagan German myth of Aryan blood and race worship. But they maintain that caste is nothing more than *a social system produced by a combination of causes racial, economic and political.*

"Caste is not", they say, "divine in any special sense; it is purely human and reflects all the virtues and failings of human nature. If both the fundamentalists and the virulent critics of Hinduism recognize this fact, the former will cease to be an obstructive and the latter a disruptive force in Hinduism. They will then cease to praise or censure Hinduism for the virtues and failings of the caste system, even as they do not praise or censure Christianity for the similar effects of medieval feudalism and modern industrialism. (*The Vedanta Kesari*, August 1936).

About the caste system non-Hindus are also divided. Caste has led, says Nesfield, to "a degree of social disunity to which no parallel can be found in human history"; whereas Fr. Dubois ascribes to caste an important historical role in securing political and cultural stability. It has also served a useful purpose as a check on immorality.

Buddhism and Islam are also professedly caste destroyers. "Caste, say Protestant writers, keeps India away from Christ. It is the supporting wing of Hinduism, the fort whose outworks surround the inner citadel with massive and impregnable walls. It vivifies Hinduism in its progression from Vedism to devil-worship. It is incompatible with Christianity. It is the keystone to the arch of Hinduism." Naturally the greatest supporters of caste are those who lose most by its abolition. A high caste man, anxious to keep his social rank, will conform to the customs, practices and even prejudices of persons of his own position. There have been bloody contests about caste privileges even between shoe-makers and the tom-tom beaters. The rules of caste form the standard of public opinion, a mighty power.

The system has, to be sure, its *pros* and *cons*. We need not take sides. Both opponents and supporters have erred at times through excess of zeal, for not distinguishing between religion, morality and caste – *Veda*, *Dharma*, *Jathi*, or between the system and the spirit or feeling of caste. Don't at once ascribe to caste or Hinduism whatever may be hard to understand in Indian social life. Often mere convenience lies at the root of the matter."

(*Father Joseph C. Houpert, in his book "A South Indian Mission"; 1937.*)

New Stone Church in Christurajapuram

December 31st, 2005 is now permanently fixed in the minds of the good faithful of the village of Christ the King. It was on this day that the Church construction begun by Fr. Thomas Blute in 2002 was finished. In the summer of 2005 the India mission discovered that His Excellency Bishop Tissier de Mallerais was coming that December. Immediately the construction work on this hand-carved stone



Summer 2005: Frs. Blute and Summers surveying the work already completed.

church was put as the highest priority, with the hope that it would be completed in time for the bishop to bless it. September found the new prior (Fr Summers) and his 1st assistant (Fr Francois Chazal) looking over the plans of the church and making some modifications to harmonize the English Gothic style. A large bell tower was added to the front center of the portico and the altar designs were revamped. Much to the chagrin of the acting engineer (Michaelas), the French architect wanted to make an enormous altar which had never been seen before in India. An order was placed to carve 12 enormous columns from red granite to serve as the base for the altar top (*mensa*) which would be 7 inches thick white granite and nine feet



long by four feet wide. Already thinking of the ramifications of a three-ton custom altar to be put in place in this village church, both the prior and the engineer had a few reservations to say the least. However, the fervor and zeal in which the Fr. Chazal argued his case settled the matter once and for all. The great adventure had begun.

Funds were diverted from other projects to pay for the beautiful marble flooring and marble walling in the sanctuary. Two massive statues (Christ the King and Our Lady Queen) were purchased in Kerala for the Epistle and Gospel sides of the sanctuary wall. A trip to Cochin produced a twelve foot Crucifix for the wall behind the altar. The former porch roof was knocked down and the stone bell tower began in earnest. For the months of October through December the progress of the construction would take over the thoughts of the engineer and Fr. Chazal. Innumerable four-hour trips by bus were made between the priory and the village to settle all the details of the ongoing construction.

The bell-tower took on a life of its own, soaring well above the expectations of the villagers. Finally finished, it rose more than 45 feet, sending its four cornered fleur-de-lis pinnacles above the tree line. The 330lb bell was (cast in Palayamkottai) was blessed by Fr Jackson on-site before it was hoisted by pulleys and manpower to its final resting place in the tower.

When the month of December began, work was still dangerously slow and behind schedule. All the entreaties and beseeching of the priests could not move the work any faster. The altar columns were made incorrectly (three times) and in fact were nothing like the drawings of Fr Chazal. In true Gaulic spirit he fought tooth and nail and sent the work back to the carvers (located in Chennai) to be done properly. Finally, one week before the big day, the columns and capitals were deemed aesthetically acceptable. Where is the altar top (*mensa*)? The priests are informed that it is coming from Bangalore, that it will make it in time. However, the sepulcher for the relics needs to be carved out and the five stone crosses need to be etched on the surface! Three days before the ceremony, Fr Chazal is sent to live on location and oversee the final stages, especially the placement of the altar.

Friday afternoon, less than 24 hours before the ceremony, the remaining priests accompany the bishop the four hours to Christurajapuram to perform the ceremony of the holy relics. Upon arrival at 5:30pm they notice a large truck with the altar top (*mensa*) backing up to the church front. The altar had only just arrived! Fighting sentiments of despair and

(Continued on page 5)

frustration, the clerics were reassured that it would be put in place that night and be ready in time for the ceremony. After a few harrowing hours of preparation for the next day, the priests accompanied the bishop to a local lodge to get some precious hours of sleep before the ceremony the next day. Frs. Jackson and Summers and Mr Steinmetz rose early to say Mass in a temporary chapel and then got to work with the last minute preparations for the ceremonies which are scheduled for 10am. All the local boys were put to work cleaning the church floor and the plaza outside the front of the church. At 9:30 the entire parish population went to the intersection of the main road and village road to escort the bishop into their village. The bishop was placed upon a chair in the bed of a pick-up truck and surrounded by a procession of singers, flower girls, boys in cassocks, parishioners, and (of course) loudspeakers. After a 45 minute journey the procession reached the new church and the bishop was let down from his throne. All the preparations having been taken in hand by Mr. Steinmetz and Fr Jackson, the ceremony started at 10:40am. First the bishop blessed the church according to the pontifical books, then vestments were changed and the bishop continued with the solemn consecration of the main altar. Finally, with great pride and satisfaction, Fr. Chazal looked upon his masterpiece as finished and consecrated. After the lengthy rite of consecration, a Solemn High Mass was celebrated on the beautiful altar much to delight of the 200 plus people who were in attendance.



After all the ceremonies were completed and the sacred ministers were divested, boys scrambled up trees to obtain tender coconuts and cut them open for the juice to give to the bishop and priests. Refreshed by several glasses of this satisfying liquid, the bishop was ready for the next ordeal, photographs! After countless poses with individuals and families the clerics were served a tasty homemade dinner of chicken, rice, appalam, potatoes, eggs, and more coconut juice. After a walk around the property and conversation with the good people who traveled hours for this ceremony, the bishop and priests retired to a lodge for a well earned rest. The next day they would be back for Confirmations....



The interior view: Fr. Pancras distributes Confirmation cards before the ceremony on January 1st.

Confirmations in Tamil Nadu

December was witness to the long-awaited arrival of Bishop Tissier de Mallerais into India. Due to an unfortunate Visa problem the bishop could not make the first week of his confirmation tour in Bombay and Goa. The visit to these two cities will be made later in the year in order to remedy this problem. However, the faithful in the eight Tamilian Mass centers were very pleased to welcome and entertain His Excellency in three different Confirmation ceremonies. The Bishop began in Chennai with a Confirmations and High Mass for almost 200 people and nearly 30 confirmands. Unfortunately his stay was short in the capital city, but he was able to visit the “Little Mount of St Thomas”, the cave in which St Thomas spent many hours of prayer and took refuge when there when the local Hindu Raj put the death sentence on him. 1600 years after this the great missionary St Francis Xavier spent many nights in this cave praying



His Excellency Bishop Tissier de Mallerais arrives in Chennai for his whirlwind tour of South India.



The male confirmands in Palayamkottai

for guidance from the first Apostle of India. On the morning of Christmas Eve, the Bishop and his cortege took an early flight to Madurai and from there drove the three hours to the priory. The new “chapelshed” was almost completed and immediately upon the arrival of the bishop, the workmen’s pace quadrupled. Christmas Midnight Mass was attended by the bishop and Fr. Summers created the new custom of “candlelight only” Mass, much to the surprise of the faithful, (who wanted their fluorescent tube lights). Christmas day, buses began swarming onto the priory grounds for the 10am Confirmations and High Mass. Faithful Trichy, Madurai, Singampari, and Tuticorin came bearing candidates for the holy sacrament of Confirmation. Fortunately in November, the pre-seminarians were sent out “two by two” to give the catechism to the candidates of confirmation. By the time the ceremony was over, almost 70 faithful had

received the indelible seal upon their souls.

After a day of rest, the bishop gave four days of conferences at the priory on the life of Archbishop Lefebvre, to the great edification of all listening. Friday afternoon all the clerics went by taxi to the village of Christurajapuram for the dedication of the new church (see page 4-5).

Sunday, January 1st, was the confirmation day for south South India. Using the newly blessed church, faithful came from Ramanputhor, Carmel Nagar, Asariapalam, Pillaitoppu, and even Coimbatore seeking the sacrament of Confirmation. The ceremony finished with more than 50 people being strengthened by the Holy Ghost for their militant life as a Catholic. After an excellent meal served on location, Fr. Pancras arranged for some guides to



The female confirmands in Palayamkottai

take the bishop on top of the local stone hill to enjoy the view. The bell tower rose majestically above the jungle and the brass cross shimmered like gold, much to the satisfaction of the bishop.



Left: Christ the King Church towers above the coconut and palm trees. In the distance one can make out the shores of the Arabian Sea at a distance of 3 miles. It was Fr Pancras (stationed at this new church) who found the fathers a new retreat center in Kerala with lodging only a few hundred meters from the sea-coast. During the retreat the priests were relaxed with the constant roar of the waves upon the shore and watching the native fishermen in their fragile boats ply the waters for a good catch. More than one priest made the easy comparison between the apostolate of the priest and these fishermen.

Right: The bishop makes the triple sign of the cross over the confirmed boy and then gives him a gentle slap across the face to remind him of the suffering he must be prepared to undergo in the profession of his faith. Truly it can be said that this sacrament has a special significance here in India. The Catholics are the definite minority, with over 85% Hindu and almost 10% Muslims, the Catholics account for less than 2% of the population. The enormous social pressure and peer pressure against Catholic culture cannot be adequately described to those who are not witness to it. E.g. Sunday is never a day of rest according to the Hindu religion and even the Catholics begin to absorb these anti-Catholic practices.



Left: (Palayamkottai) All the priests and faithful at the priory are anxious to finish the interior of the new chapel and move in. The new 3000 sq.ft. building will serve as a chapel for some time until permission is granted for the building of a real church. After the permanent church is finished, this building can be used as a school, dormitory, or even an auditorium. This building was finished in only one month and the last pieces of the roof were installed at 8:00 pm on Christmas Eve!

Photo Gallery of Most Holy Trinity Priory



Swarna Vongala carries the Blessed Virgin Mary and her orphanage to Palayamkottai to be closer to the traditional faith and sacraments. More details in APOSTLE XI....



Left: Mr. Steinmetz manages the workforce of hostel boys in creating Fr. Jackson's garden.

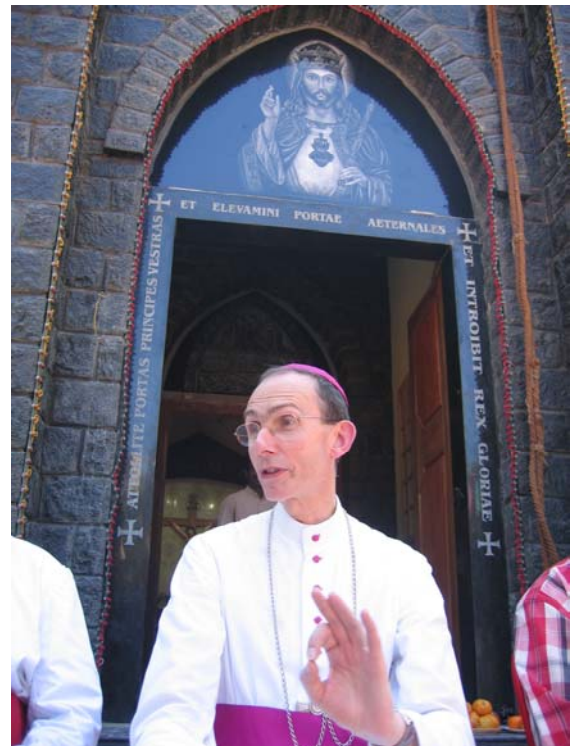
Below: Fr. Summers with the pre-seminarians between classes.



“We are not in Wisconsin anymore!” says Mr. Joseph Steinmetz laconically. This robust seminarian is on loan from St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary for a year helping out in the India Mission. Will he be allowed to retain his beloved beard upon his re-entry into the USA?



“All things to all men”.. Fr. Jackson is a real convert to the use of the State Bus system in Tamil Nadu.



“C'est Magnifique!”