



MSMHC

FERRANDO INSTITUTE OF SPIRITUALITY

News Letter

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Editorial

Every human progress, inventions big and small, discoveries simple and great, breakthroughs and developments of every kind were first visualized before they became realities. Nothing ever happens without a clear vision. A vision leading to higher goals combined with an indomitable spirit will achieve great things in life.

We have examples of people who are trail blazers. One such person is Bishop Stephen Ferrando SDB, the Founder of the MSMHC. He had a far reaching vision and undaunted courage to pursue his goal. He heard the beat within and knew his soul's purpose. He marched to the beat and reached the goal, leaving behind a legacy for generations to come. When he took up the reins of the vast diocese of Shillong in 1936, he had a vision: to lead the whole of North East India to Christ. He had not only to maintain the impetus given by his predecessor Msgr. Louis Mathias SDB, but also to pool together all the efforts of the missionaries and to keep their morale high, despite insurmountable problems and difficulties. Two major problems troubled him in the new diocese: shortage of personnel and lack of funds. The greatness of Bishop Ferrando lies in the fact that in the midst of difficult and trying situations he was able to keep alive the missionary enthusiasm of all who were with him, and managed to maintain the focus on the mission throughout his episcopate. He undertook many missionary journeys even to the remotest villages fired with the zeal for souls like Francis Xavier (1506-1552). He personalized the missionary cry of St. Paul, "Woe to me if I do not preach the Good News" (1 Cor. 9:16); ...and forgetting the difficulties strained forward to the goal (cf. Phil 3:13-14). As Ferrando Institute of Spirituality (FIS) takes small steps, we are challenged to keep our focus on our missionary charism. May it inspire us to make use of every opportunity to be at the service of the Kingdom, and to proclaim the Good News in season and out of season.

(Sr. Mercy Philip msmhc)



Foundation Day Celebrations

24th October, the Foundation Day of our beloved Congregation, had to be celebrated meaningfully. Therefore, Ferrando Institute of Spirituality organized a 9 day novena of prayer in preparation for it. The aim of the novena was to help the students of Spirituality journey back to the roots of the Congregation and to the heart and mind of the Founder. With this in view the whole month of October was devoted to study, research and reflection on the life of our Father and Founder Bishop Stephen Ferrando. Sr. Philomena Mathew, the Directress of Ferrando Institute of Spirituality led the students to become familiar with the life and writings of the Founder and challenged them to go to the sources and to all the available documentation. The students explored the rich mine of the writings of Bishop Ferrando and prepared talks and prayer services for the novena days.

The actual day began with an inspiring morning prayer organized by the students. It transported everyone to the humble beginnings of our Congregation, and we were enabled to re-live the founding sentiments of our beloved Founder. The prayer session was supported and animated by a power-point presentation. The culminating point of the hour was listening to the live-voice of our beloved Founder. "My heart will always remain with you ... I will pray for you and our humble Congregation everyday ... Our Congregation is guided by Mary Help of Christians ...our Congregation was born in humility " continues to ring in our ears and challenge us.

Going back to our roots is always a sacred journey; it is a pilgrimage of hope and rejuvenation. It takes us back to that sacred moment of the original inspiration. We recalled the Inspiration of the Bishop, the Dream of the Superior, and the Desire of the girls, all merged into one to pave the way for the **Birth of the MSMHC**. In order to refresh the memory of the students of Spirituality a Quiz Competition covering the initial stages of our Congregation was conducted. The presence of Sr. Angeline Lotsuro, General Councillor for Formation as the Chief Guest added solemnity to the event. The participation of the Sisters of Perpetual Profession brought in lots of enthusiasm and glamour.



Celebrating the Foundation Day: Quiz Competition

Rev. Fr. Sebastian Karotempel, SDB presided over the Holy Eucharist at 11.00 a.m. The meaningful breaking of the Word and the Bread, accompanied by the melodious choir gave us a momentary foretaste of the heavenly Jerusalem.

The finale of the day was the staging of a mini-musical opera, named, the MSMHC in the 21st Century. The writers of the script, composers of lyrics and the protagonists of the same were the students of



*Students of FIS with the Founder:
staging MSMHC in the 21st Century*

Ferrando Institute of Spirituality. They left no stone unturned to make the day a memorable one. The presence of the Sisters and children from Ferrando Speech and Hearing Centre brought much cheer and merriment. We were blessed with the unexpected arrival of Sr. Catherine Anthony, Vice Provincial of Sacred Heart Province, Tinsukia, and Sr. Tessy Sebastian, former Provincial Superior of Tinsukia, who added much gaiety and mirth to the concluding ceremony. The last word was reserved for Sr. Mary Thomas, Superior of Bethel community who rushed back from Guwahati, in the nick of the moment to express her deep sentiments of love and

affection for our beloved Founder and Pioneers. She exhorted to imitate their faithfulness and challenged us to return the Congregation to its pristine beauty and glory by our commitment to the Original Charism. Once again everyone felt the presence of our beloved Father and Founder, Bishop Ferrando in our midst.

MSMHC Spirituality, Diploma Course - Graduation Day 2009

26th October 2009 was a memorable day for Ferrando Institute of Spirituality, as the first batch of its Diploma Students completed their Ten months' Course in MSMHC Spirituality at Hatigaon, Guwahati. The event was duly solemnized by the Sisters of Little Flower Convent, Hatigaon, under the leadership of Sr. Mary Thadavanal, our Superior General. The Holy Eucharist of the day was offered as an act of thanksgiving for the gift of the Sisters whose vibrant spirit and youthfulness filled the Generalate house for the past 10 months. At 6.30 p.m. there was a prayer service conducted by Superior General herself, along with the Sisters of the community. The climax of the prayer was the invocation of the Holy Spirit by the Superior General and all the members of the community upon the outgoing young Sisters.

Immediately after the prayer service, the group was led to the Seminar hall which was well set for the graduation ceremony. Sr. Mary Sangma, compere of the function, welcomed everyone in the name of the community. The Guest of honour was Sr. Mary Thadavanal, Superior General, Sr. Mary Sebastian, General Councillor for Social Apostolate, Sr. Philomena Mathew Directress of Ferrando Institute of Spirituality, Sr. Mercy Philip Assistant Directress, Sr. Jessy James, the Dean of Studies for the Diploma Course and students of the Master's Degree from Bethel, were the distinguished guests of the occasion.

The names of the recipients of the first ever Diploma in MSMHC Spirituality are: Srs. Ajencia Toppo, Anisha Kharsyiemiong, Anita Tirkey, Anna Matevei, Blinda Marwein, Catherine Langsiankim, Esther Zonunsangi, Helen Chhangte, Helen Thanglamniang, Hilaria Lyngdoh, Jancy Rani, Jyothi Thota, Kanga Margaret, Lakhina Marak, Lamtilin Tabah, Lucia Suting, Manti Barowa, Mary Sanga Sarkar, Nitya Toppo, Philisita Jyrwa, Prema Tirkey, Ritngen Khongsar, Rose John, Rosila Matlani, Selma Varghese, Sushila Basumatary, Wansuk Mary Lyngdoh

The highlights of the function were the presentation of the annual report of the Diploma Course by Sr. Jessy James, the Dean of Studies, a message from the Superior General and the conferring of the certificates and mark-sheets to those who successfully completed the course. The Superior General



congratulated and encouraged the outgoing students to excel in whatever they do. She exhorted the Sisters to face the challenges of life with optimism and faith following the example of our Founder and pioneers. Sr. Philomena Mathew, Directress of Ferrando Institute of Spirituality related a short anecdote from the life of our beloved Father and Founder Bishop S. Ferrando, showing how he faced confusing situations by the power of intense prayer. She felicitated and awarded the best students of the year: first in the list of excellence was Sr. Lucia Suting. She was awarded a merit certificate in the name of the first spiritual director of MSMHC, Rev. Fr. Attilio Colussi, SDB. The second was merited by Sr. Wansuk Lyngdoh, in the name of Rev. Fr. N.J. Kenny SDB, the second spiritual Director of MSMHC. The third award was given to Sr. Selma Varghese, in the name of the first Mother General, Rev. Sr. Luigina Saletta, FMA.



MSMHC Spirituality, Diploma Course students with their certificates

In order to make the event very special, the Master's Degree students from Bethel, staged the mini-musical opera titled MSMHC in 21st Century. It depicted the Founder and the founding days of the Congregation and some of the present concerns and challenges, and how the Founder intervened and solved them.

Sr. Wansuk Lyngdoh and Sr. Blinda Mary Marwein, in the name of the students voiced the sentiments of the group. They expressed gratitude and joy in being privileged to be the first batch of Diploma Course, under Ferrando Institute of Spirituality. They appreciated the course contents and its usefulness.

Sr. Mercy Philip, the Assistant Directress of FIS, proposed the vote of thanks inviting the students to ponder on the words of our Founder "always better and always more, for the glory of God and for the salvation of Souls." The function ended with a note of thanks and praise to God Almighty for the marvels done in the lives of our young Sisters, as they experienced renewed inspiration, enthusiasm and energy to face the challenges of life and to proclaim the good news, following the example of our Founder and Pioneer Sisters.



Students' Column

Flashback ... from Ferrando Institute of Spirituality

Ferrando Institute of Spirituality, still in its infancy, is taking slow and steady steps, in an effort to finding paths to the future. The Lord of the history, who called us, the first batch of students, to be part of his dream for the Kingdom, continues to accompany us, as we engage in soul-searching reflection, assiduous study and determined effort to make a difference in the life of our dear Congregation. The past months helped us to deepen our experiences in the following aspects of our life and mission:

The study of the **History of Religious Life**, from the Desert of Egypt to the Second Vatican Council helped us to see consecrated life at the very heart of the Church. Sr. Philomena Mathew took us to meander through the various epochs and the challenges faced in each phase of its development. The chronological and systematic presentation, beginning from the eremitic and solitary life of the hermits, up to the present day religious orders, congregations, and secular institutes, enabled us to understand how men and women were inspired to live Gospel values radically.

Through the **Spirituality of Major Religious Families**, Sr. Mercy Philip led us to journey to the Benedictine, Dominican, Carmelite, Franciscan, Jesuit and Salesian spiritualities. It unleashed before us the rich spiritual heritage of these families which adorn Mother Church. The various Religious families with their distinct spiritualities, all rooted in Gospel values, shaped by different ecclesiastical realities, lived in a particular time and place, enrich the patrimony of the entire Church.



FIS students with Archbishop Dominic Jala, SDB

Most Rev. Dominic Jala, Archbishop of Shillong, with his prolific knowledge on **Liturgical Spirituality** helped us to delve into the rich treasures of *Mysterium Dei*, especially of the Sacraments. Jesus Christ, through his words, deeds, signs and wonders proclaimed a new creation, a message of hope and liberation for all peoples. What Jesus achieved at one moment of world's history is continued in the Church through the Sacraments. The insightful classes unveiled the importance and sacredness of the Sacraments.

Asia is proud to be the cradle of major World Religions. People from the West, from the North and South, flock to Asia, to breathe its

air of tranquility and serenity. However, one cannot overlook the tears of pain and misery arising from the same soil of Asia. In this context, Asian Spirituality is an invitation to be open and responsive to the realities of Asia, and to contemplate Asia with the eyes that looked upon the crucified Jesus. Sr. Lisy George with her expertise on **Asian Spirituality and Forms of Spiritual Life**, challenged us to touch the wounds of Jesus in our peoples' wounds, and to participate in the struggles of the people and in their search for spiritual awakening.

The seminar on **Rule of St. Benedict** took us to the roots of Western monasticism and its continuing influence on modern religious life. As the founding father of the monasticism St. Benedict composed



the Rule for his followers, and scarcely aware that it would have such an enduring impact on the entire religious life throughout the ages. His seminal Rule served as a model for most religious orders and congregations that came after him. The journey with St. Benedict intensified our quest for the ultimate goal, union with God.

Some of the basic elements of spiritual life such as, Goal of our Striving, Models of Holiness, Progressive Purification, Means of the Spiritual Growth, Grades of Prayer and Aids to Spiritual growth were presented through classes on ***Spiritual Theology*** which continues to inspire us.

Bro. Gerard Alvarez CFC challenged us to experience God in the NOW, by moving from rituals to reality through ***Contextual Spirituality***. Everything can be contextualized when we can find God in all things. He presented to us the meaning of contextualized liturgy, contextualized reading of the Word of God, and contextualized praying of Psalms.

Rev. Fr. Sebastian Karotemprel, SDB, enlightened and mesmerized us with his enigmatic knowledge on ***Marian Spirituality***. The renewal brought about by Vatican Council II in Marian Theology, especially the shift from Mariology of exaltation to the Mariology of imitation was a new insight. The Catholic Church through Vatican II and the contemporary Marian documents teaches that Mary is worthy of imitation because she is the first and most perfect disciple of Jesus.

It was interesting to trace the origin of ***Devotion to Mary Help of Christians*** which goes back to 4th century. It became popular in Europe during the pontificate of Pope Pius V after the battle of Lepanto in 1571 AD. It was further established into a feast, to be celebrated on 24th of May, by Pope Pius VII. Don Bosco (1815-1888) popularized this Marian title and the development of the Salesian works in several countries made it universal.



Sr. Angeline Lotsuro with students

Sr. Angeline Lotsuro, threw light on ***Feminist Spirituality*** with particular reference to women in Asia. Feminist theology in Asia is not written with a pen, but it is inscribed on the hearts of many who experience the pain of being oppressed, and yet dare to hope. This new discipline of Feminist theology and Spirituality stirred us from within to commit ourselves to uplift Asian women.

The climax of our present semester was the study of the person ***Stephen Ferrando: Founder and Missionary***.

Reading, reflecting and analyzing the writings of our Founder enabled us to enter into his heart and mind. There we discovered our identity of being Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, and the very purpose of our existence as MSMHC. We became conscious of the rich spiritual heritage he has bequeathed to us. He challenges us, inspires us and motivates us to be true to our charism and missionary vocation.

We presented a seminar on ***'The Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life' on 30th November***. Classes on ***Spiritual Direction*** was efficiently dealt with in the beginning of December by Fr. Devasia Manalel MSFS. We mastered some basics in Latin with the help of Sr. Brigit Deingdoh, and at the end of it the short winter vacation dawned.



Annual Picnic Day

12th November 2009 dawned with an unusual brightness and glow. It was the annual picnic day and the Bethel community, especially the students of Spirituality beamed with joy. To everyone's amazement the picnic spot was the site where the future structures of the Ferrando Institute of Spirituality would be set up. On reaching the location all were thrilled to behold the scenic



beauty of the place and the sisters vied with one another to prepare delicious dishes. We cooked, sang and danced in the heart of the nature. When all enjoyed the sumptuous meal, prepared with a merry heart, we shared our experiences of the day and thanked the Author of beauty. As evening shadows began to fall over the mountains and valleys, we made our way back home, singing happy songs and joyful praises to the Lord of creation.

Canonical Visitation of Superior General

According to Bishop Stephen Ferrando, the visit of a major superior is an event of great joy as it instills ardour and enthusiasm. Bethel, Retreat centre and Ferrando Institute of Spirituality were blessed with the presence of our Superior General, Sr. Mary Thadavanal from 2-5 December 2009. Her keen interest, inspiring exhortations, personal meeting with the members of the community and enriching conference rejuvenated our spirits and we are challenged to live more radically our religious vocation firmly rooted in our charism and spirit.



Sr. Mary Thadavanal, Superior General, addressing the staff and students.



Forthcoming Courses and Programs

December 2009

20 - 31 Winter Vacation

January 2010

4 - 8 Pauline Spirituality
11-16 Spirituality of Prophets
18-23 Missionary Catechesis
25-30 Liturgical Spirituality

February 2010

1-5 Spirituality of Psalms
8-11 Johannine Spirituality
15-17 Youth Spirituality
18 - 24 Examinations

March 2010

1-3 Spirituality of Don Bosco

4-6 Salesian Spirit and Spirituality
8-12 Dimensions of Formation
15 Registration for Philosophy Course
15-31 Language: Italian

April 15 -June 18:

Intensive Course In
Philosophy (Open also to non-
MSMHCs)

June 2010

June 1 Second year students return
after summer vacation

June 21 Inauguration of the Academic
Year 2010-2011

Ferrando Institute of Spirituality (FIS) welcomes all those who want to participate in the courses offered by the centre. The intensive course in Philosophy is open to religious sisters who may be interested in pursuing theological studies in the theological institutes of India. Fresh students for the new academic year at Ferrando Institute of Spirituality will have to attend the philosophy course, which commences on 15 April 2010. The second year students will resume their classes on 1st June 2010.

The staff and students of Ferrando Institute of Spirituality wishes all our dear readers and well-wishers a grace laden and blessed New Year 2010.

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