



# Vincentian Solidarity Office

November 2021 Bulletin

## Building Upon a Firm Foundation After Lightning Destroys Parish Church

In March 2013, a lightning strike caused a large tree to fall on the Jubaguda Church. An entire wall turned to rubble and sheets of twisted metal lay on the ground, pieces of the former roof. An estimate of the repairs was too complicated and costly. The community agreed that they needed a new church building. The structure was only 35 years old, destroyed in a minute, and no one ever dreamed it would take eight years to rebuild.

Weather proved to be a long-term challenge for this remote rural mission. Jubaguda Vincentian parish is in the Kandhamal District, one of the poorest in the state of Odisha. The area is mostly dense forest with a small percentage of cultivable land. Remarkably, the once persecuted and dispersed Catholics cling to their faith despite the violent destruction of church institutions and killings of Christians in August 2008. There are 770 Catholic families spread out in 34 villages. In addition to the church, the Mission has a boys' and a girls' hostel with over 270 children, a dispensary, a presbytery, and a convent. An assembly hall in the boys' hostel was used for prayer and worship while there was no church building.

It took nearly five years, but by early 2018 there were enough funds to begin



Church exterior and entrance with decorations in

the construction of the new church.

The plan was to complete the new building by early 2019. However, various conditions caused construction delays in this interior area of India with its poor roads and unpredictable electricity. Delivery of materials was a constant challenge. When a particularly harsh rainy season ended, the roads were washed out so that no trucks could access the location. Then on October 12, 2018, Cyclone Thithili washed out the roads again. Then COVID-19 arrived in India. In April of 2020, the country entered lockdown and work stopped indefinitely. Months later, when the restrictions were lifted the contractor found it difficult to hire back workers. Maintaining all precautions for preventing virus spread, eventually he hired enough workers. Some of the local people were even employed to do the water curing of the concrete. Fr. Sebastian Thottamkara, C.M. supervised all the work. Mr. Ayineedi Pallarao, the contractor, made substantial contributions, and although Hindu himself, showed reverence for the 'mandir' (temple). When finished, parishioners and benefactors came forward with additional funds to sponsor statues, vestments and lecterns.

The handsome new Jubaguda Church is the pride of our Vincentian missionaries and the villagers. Fr. George Varakulum, C.M., project coordinator of the Province wrote, "This church is a dream come true of a people battered in persecutions who lost everything but faith and hope in a God who cares...., [and] a symbol of triumph over the forces of hatred and evil...." The church has a granite foundation, reinforced concrete cement pillars, brick walls, cement flooring and galvanized iron roofing. It was consecrated by the Archbishop John



Church interior with bright interior and gleaming floors



First Communion of 138 children on the same day as church consecration – April 10, 2021

Barwa, SVD of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar and inaugurated by Fr. Prakesh Tirkey, C.M. (d. 7 May 2021), former Provincial of North India, on April 10, 2021. That same day, 138 boys and girl received First Communion. Their hearts radiated the love of their Good Shepherd as they gathered within their new parish church. The misfortune of losing their worship site was replaced by a sense of gratitude to God for the support of local benefactors, the Vincentian Solidarity Office, and the Vincentian missionaries of Jubaguda.

Vincentian Solidarity Office |  
500 East Cheltenham Avenue |  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19144  
USA  
Telephone: +1 215-713-3998

Our goal: To assist the  
Congregation of the Mission  
with obtaining funds for its

evangelization and service of the  
poor.

How to contact us:  
Fr. Gregory Semeniuk, C.M.  
Executive Director  
Email: gjsemeniuk@gmail.com

Lauren Lynch, Project  
Manager  
Email: llynch@cmphslvs.org

Regina Rossi, Executive  
Assistant  
Email: rrossi@cmphslvs.org



Vincentian Solidarity Office  
www.cmglobal.org/vso

[Click here to give a gift in support of our projects](#)

## A Better Day for Women and their Families, Mysore, India

The Vincentian priests of Belwady village in Mysore India understood the relationship of income and investment in family nutrition, education and health. They saw that families would not develop by work in subsistent farms. Women employment offered a way out of the cycle of poverty. With few local employment opportunities, they created jobs. The new jobs arose from a simple business plan, every child attending school needs to purchase notebooks. Now, instead of buying finished products, they would buy the paper, cut it to size, and bind the notebooks. However, the mission would need a book binding machine. The VSO was able to provide the funds for this important purchase leading to employment. Unfortunately, the

COVID-19 pandemic interfered here two ways, namely, delays and cost overruns. Both problems were overcome by perseverance. The new book binding business now employs several women. The notebooks are sold at a much better price than they could get anywhere else. Parents pay less for the locally manufactured notebooks and the children think they are great. Husbands and children are happy to see mom come home from work. But that is only the half of it, now they have more food on the table and medicines in the cupboard. The women, too, have grown in self-esteem because of the dignity of their work and additional financial resources to advance the chances for a better future.



*Schoolchildren receiving their new notebooks from Vincentian missionary*



*Bookbinding machine in use by one of the women employed*



*Fr. Rafael Presidente, C.M., Provincial Superior of Central America delivers medicine and food to the leaders of the Community of Santa Eulalia, Huehuetenango located 400 kms. from Guatemala City in the Ciera de Los Cuchumatanes pictured with Señora María de León Mateo in her home.*



*Elena, an impoverished mother and street performer, receiving needed food assistance for her and her three children.*

## COVID-19 Food Assistance Project in Central America and Listening to the Poor

The Province of Central America is comprised of four countries: Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Panama. The Province has set a priority to care for the indigenous peasants, both in the expansive rural areas and the city. Only limited assistance from the governments of these countries ever gets to the very poor, even in the best of times. The global COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns caused tremendous unemployment among the indigenous and peasants in Central America. Basic needs were not being met. Many were going without food and faced daily hunger.

The Vincentian missionaries found a cost-effective means to address the short-term food insecurity brought about by the lockdown. They secured a VSO grant to purchase basic food items for distribution to hungry peasants. With the help of volunteers, they set up a food distribution plan. Families were given a monthly ration of food for five months. They also

purchased medicine, hygiene supplies and PCR tests to determine if someone was infected with COVID. The method of interacting with the beneficiaries was thoroughly Vincentian, namely, personable and with an eye to engage the poor in solving problems related to the pandemic. By listening attentively to the beneficiaries, the team of missionaries and volunteers discovered an entrepreneurial spirit among those being helped. Many wished to provide for themselves but needed a little encouragement and economic help. The Province sought the permission of the VSO to adapt the grant to create micro-loans. The people wanted to work, and the loan helped them start small informal businesses so they can provide for their families. One man used his loan to feed and raise chickens to sell. In all, over 500 people were helped from January to June of this year.

The VSO is grateful to the donors and agencies that make our work possible, including:

Franz Foundation  
Congregation of the Mission Western Province, USA;  
Congregation of the Mission Eastern Province, USA;  
Propagation of the Faith;

Kirche in Not;  
Archdiocese of Cologne, Germany;  
Diocese of Essen, Germany;  
Congregation of the Mission New England Province, USA;  
The Provinces and Houses of the Congregation of the Mission who contribute to the Vincentian Solidarity Fund;  
USA Donors;

And donors to VIMS for their support.



[www.VIMS1617.org](http://www.VIMS1617.org)