

Blessing and Inauguration of St. Arnold's Boys' Hostel (INC), Assunta Bhavan, Oгна, Udaipur, India

November 5, 2013: On the Birthday of our Founder, St. Arnold Janssen, Most Rev. Devprasad Ganawa SVD, the Bishop of Udaipur Diocese and Administrator of Jhabua Diocese, in the presence of the Vice Provincial Superior (INC), Fr. Dominic Emmanuel SVD, Vicar General of Udaipur Diocese (Pioneer of Oгна Mission), Fr. Andrew, Mrs. Jude and Mrs. Margo (Benefactors of Oгна Hostel from Australia), Fr. Pashkal Tirkey SVD, the Parish Priest, Br. John Menezes SVD, Confreres, Sisters, Parents, Parishners and Students of Assunta Bhavan School, Oгна blessed St. Arnold's Boys' Hostel at Assunta Bhavan Campus, Oгна at 11 am. Fr. Dominic Emmanuel SVD, the Vice Provincial Superior INC inaugurated new the building by cutting the ribbon and unveiling the stone. After the blessing and inauguration, Most Rev. Devprasad Ganawa



SVD presided over the Eucharist Celebration. In his homily, Fr. Dominic Emmanuel SVD called on the students of Oгна Hostel, to be light to the people of the area as of Diwali (Festival of Lights). He also presented sweets to the students on this occasion. After the Eucharistic Celebration, a felicitation programme was organized by Fr. Pashkal Tirkey SVD, the Parish Priest who welcomed and thanked everybody especially, Mrs. Jude and Margo who are helping 25 children towards their education, Sisters who are very supportive, Br. John Menezes SVD who is helping the station in many ways, former parish priests starting from Fr. Andrew to his predecessor, Fr. Habil Lakra SVD. Nearly 250 people attended this simple ceremony. St. Arnold's Boys' Hostel was sponsored by Manos Unidas Madrio, Spain and the Central Indian Province (INC), Indore, India. A big thanks to Manos Unidas Madrio, Spain.



Assunta Bhavan, is situated in the ranges of the famous Aravali Mountain (oldest in the world) of Rajasthan, in an interior village called Oгна. Oгна is a small village town in the Jhadol tehsil of Udaipur district. Assunta Bhavan is involved in socio-pastoral and other human developmental activities such as health, education, and economic development etc. 95% of the total population is of the tribal who belong to Bhil and Graacia tribes. They are very poor and backward in all the spheres of life. The rest 5% population belongs to others casts. They are living mostly in village towns. They are Brahmins, Rajputs, Kumhars, Malis, Harijans and other backward castes. There are a few who belong to business class and play a vital role in the lives of the tribal. Almost all the tribal have got some land, but majority of them have got very little.

According to the statistics, literacy rate of Rajasthan is 61%. But among tribal it is below 20%. In Gogunda tehsil the literacy rate is 50.12%, among male 67.74% and among female 32.32%. In Jhadol the literacy rate is 59.26%, the male 74.73% and female 43.43%. The Kotra tehsil is the lowest among all the tehsils in Rajasthan. The record shows that the literacy rate is only 24.52%, among men 37.55% and among women just 11.14%. So we can understand the pathetic condition of education. At present there are schools in most of the villages. Many children go to the schools these days. Most of the government schools have only one teacher. Teachers do not want to stay in the villages but in the cities. From there they come to the school daily by bus or by other means. It means that the most of the teachers reach school late to start the classes. They also close the school early to go back to their residence in the cities. During village visits, our confreres also found that there was no school building existing nor did the teacher come to teach the children. But children's names were listed in register.

This mission has taken up various social projects to enhance the economy of the tribal people. We have taken up water shed management programmes and formation of self help groups in number of villages. The social service society of the diocese helps us with finance and animation. A number of awareness programmes are also organized in various villages on various social issues. We believe that education is the root of all social changes and transformation. The literacy rate of the people is very low in the villages, hence we have started a few Non formal education centres in few villages and balwadis (nursery) for children. Besides, to impart a better education we have a small hostel with 90 children at the centre. We are also running a primary school, which of course needs to upgrade eventually as the facilities made available. A hostel in this interior area is a boon to the people of the area. It is a boys' hostel. There is a girls' hostel already existing nearby which is looked after by Sisters. There is a primary school for number of years. But very few are studying. Now, the hostel has come into existence which will attract many more students. Hope with this hostel facility, many more children will benefit.

