

The MESSENGER of KOLKATA

« *What you are doing to the smallest of mine, it is to me that you do it* »

(Matthieu 25:40)

Brother Francis Mary editorial

Pace e Bene!

I am happy to join you from Dhaka, where I am at present in search of the parents of Rana, a 20-year-old boy having fled his country of origin, Bangladesh, in hardly credible conditions when he was 9 years old.

"Since 3 months, even feet in the water, we bring every day the medical care in the slum. Mother Teresa often said "we preach with our feet! "

Our mission does not stop developing. But it is before all a universal message on Life and on Love that we wish to live and to carry. To welcome every child as a gift of God, to offer him the service he is entitled to expect by making everything the best as possible, then to help him to find or to find back its place in the society. Our priority is always the same: To serve those who lost any reason for hope.

This message that we have the happiness of spreading is it not the key of the happiness?

Thank you for being with us in this mission of Love and helping us by your friendship, your prayer and your presence, "to go more, always more towards the peripheries of the existence "like reminds it to us ceaselessly Francis, Pope and server of the Poor people!

"There is more joy to give than to receive" (St Paul, Ac: 20,35)

A new year of mission soon passed by since the previous Messenger! Every day brought its harvest of joy, meetings, success and sometimes also regrettably sorrow. In any case, not one second of every hour was empty: there is always somebody with whom to share the moment, something to discover, to give a little of oneself, if only a smile, and so many marvels to be received from those whom God places on our paths! Brother Francis, as for himself, multiplied his steps not only to fulfill his mission, to testify during the International Congress Missionary in Rome in May, but also to participate ardently in two big Indian pilgrimages: the one of the Ganga Sagar in January and the one of Tarkeshwar, at the beginning of August, in full monsoon.

Diverse groups of volunteers followed one another in the course of the months in Calcutta. This new "messenger" hopes to make alive for you all these events.

The autumn was dedicated, as every year, to the missions in schools and parishes of France and Europe. These meetings are always intense moments which arouse wonderful actions on behalf of young people of very diverse horizons. Often they are actions carried out during Lent or of shows organized for the benefit of their Indian brothers. Still More, this year, some high school students decided to come to spend some time in Calcutta as volunteers!

Two particular facts stood out this autumn, 2014.

On October 18th, in the church Saint Marcel in the 5th district of Paris, Brother Francis-Mary celebrated **his 25 years of priesthood** surrounded by his family and numerous friends. It was a very beautiful celebration marked by a profound gratitude for all the graces received for 25 years, especially, as underlined by Brother Francis in his homily: the "bomb" which changed its life on February 11th, 2003: the grace of this **"inescapable, unconditional and irreversible call" to serve "the poorest of the poor people"**, and more specially the children " without roots and without roof " of the railway station of Calcutta, city where he began to work 10 years ago with John Saleme, whom John made us the surprise to be with us exactly on 18th! " Inescapable turn " between the States and Calcutta before leaving for joining the Pilgrims of Charity for a few months.

On October 23rd 2014 Brother Francis had the great privilege to be received in private audience by our Pope Francis. Brother Francis so had the opportunity to present the mission of the " Pilgrims of Charity " to the Holy Father.

The contact became established very simply and warmly between them as seen on this photo



This is what brother François-Marie wrote to us from ROME, 23/10:

Hello to all,

Small hello from Rome where our Mission / testimony with the groups of young people takes place marvelously and under a blazing sun...

During our Ministry I had the grace, as expected, to be received this morning by Francis, the Pope. In fact I was able to meet him on 2 occasions because yesterday, at the end of an audience disconcerting by its brevity, its simplicity, and its depth, we were able to greet him and already to tell him a word.

A sending insisting on THE BIBLE, in THE OPENING and in THE LOVE OF THE POOR PEOPLE could "synthesize" its homily...

This morning, I felt a man attentive to our mission, to the reality of Calcutta, to our action. This private meeting, immediately after the Eucharist, lasted approximately 10 mn, but not at the single moment I was able to realize that I was in front of and with the Pope. I had nevertheless had this experience previously, having met 5 times John-Paul II, but there, I was in front of a man filled with simplicity, more reminding me of a country priest than the Pope!!!

Here is in a few words this great and beautiful moment, that ended by the delivery of our PATH OF LIFE and our movie. "

At the beginning of December Brother Francis took back his flight towards his "children" of Calcutta, those one looked forward to him and a forty of them had arranged to come to welcome him at the airport with a dump truck !

An intense work immediately started again. Days are given rhythm by the care at the railway station and at the slum, in the morning generally, unless an urgency as the driving at the hospital of a sick person or the accompanying a young one in training school.

At the end of the day Brother Francis gives an increasing importance for his visits to the sick of the governmental hospital. It is necessary to say that the conditions in which the sick are welcomed are there terrible both by the inevitable crowding and by the insalubrity of the place and, that, in spite of the efforts of a medical staff full of willingness. This immense building is quite close to the railway station of Sealdah and it welcomes up to 5000 patients.

Tuesdays and Thursdays is the time of the informal school. More and more young participate in it.

Numerous also taking advantage of the apartment to spend the night far from the dangers of the railway station.

On Sunday Brother Francis visits the families of the young of which he takes care. On Monday he tries to keep some time off to get fresh ideas but often he has to face new emergencies.



Christmas arrived and was cheerfully celebrated.

Then, in February, Jack and Moni became parents of a girl Myriam.



March 2015

In March, new visitors arrived to Calcutta: Françoise and Fabrice at first then Michel and Cécile. As every year Françoise realized one "check up" of the children and noticed with pleasure that, altogether, they enjoy a good health.



Michel and Shumbu, his godchild

We took part in Brother Francis's activities in the railway station, in the slum, with the children.

For Cécile, the new girl of the team the feeling of a wonderful welcome will remain engraved in her heart but the most difficult experiment remains the visit of the governmental hospital. We saw Chitka, on her poor trolley in a sinister corridor with cockroaches running on the wall, with for only friend a cat curled as a ball at her feet. Brother Francis invited us to sing a hymn which seemed to calm a little the poor women. On Sundays evenings, Brother Francis usually brings her some tea, a thin small pleasure in this close and dirty univers.

Michel had the happiness to celebrate the welder's diploma obtained by Shumbu his godchild.

Here is his narrative.

Shumbu, child of the railway station, obtains his welder's diploma.

« *Your godchild Shumbu is waiting for you with impatience* » Brother Francis Mary had told me while I got ready to visit him in Calcutta at this beginning of year 2015, " **he reserves you a surprise!** "

For two years already, Shumbu had left for Raipur, city situated at approximately 700 km in the southwest of Calcutta. Two years since he had left Calcutta for the first time and more particularly the railway station of Sealdah, his refuge during the largest part of his youth. He was so going to follow mechanic welder's apprenticeship in a friendly association: SEVA NIKETAM. (This foundation, managed by a priest, welcomes children and teenagers to offer them a vocational training in various disciplines).

Although having attended dedicatedly the class of preparation given by Brother Francis-Mary within the framework of the " Not formal school ", it had not been easy for Shumbu to leave his friends and the railway station, its place of survival. But especially, having enjoyed a total freedom, the most difficult were to submit itself to a discipline.

Nevertheless, supported by the encouragements of his educators, Brother Francis-Mary and his Godfather, Shumbu was able to end splendidly its training and obtained its mechanic welder's diploma.

His first work was the realization of a big heart in thread of steel decorated with multicolored small lights, beautiful present which he handed to me at the same time that he presented me its diploma.

From now on, Shumbu can leave to look for a job and envisage the future with optimism : Yes it was for me a very pleasant surprise.

Michel Durand



NARRATIVE OF THE CAMP IN DARJEELING

" If our monthly " Mela " (picnic), launched in 2005 were an immediate success, the teenagers missed a highlight to discover and live in an universe other than that of the railway station. We launched the first camp in 2014, by the sea, to Puri. Then this year the one of Darjeeling... " **BFM.**

In this Monday, March 2nd, the impatience grows as the hours pass: this evening we take the night train at Sealdah to join "NJP", New Jailpaguri, that is the region of Siliguri from where we shall climb up to Darjeeling!

The 18 young people selected by Brother Francis for this camp are the ones who show themselves the most diligent in NF (not formal school). They are "big" from 14 to 20 years, all have to gather at Sealdah for 7 pm. Soon the night falls on the parking where people settled down for the night... It is a little bit strange to feel in the middle of a kind of dormitory!



Brother Francis and Wasim gather the troop, give some indications and make recite a brief prayer. The boarding in the train is not a small matter but everybody settles down without incident and the **kanchankanya** starts almost at the right hour. On the way thus for 11heures of night-travel.

We reach NJP with only twenty minutes of delay and, it is aboard two jeeps that we begin the ascent towards Darjeeling.

After two good hours of travel, we are at the Jesuits in the church of the Sacred Heart at North Point. Some tea and momos buck up us in a small inn in front of the convent, then each one settles down.



In the evening, in the meeting room, all were anxious to prepare a special program to honor the eighty years of Michel: songs, presents, small speeches and cake, nothing was forgotten.

The following morning the group visits the zoo: it is a beautiful opportunity to discover the fauna so particular to the Himalaya. The young people take advantage of everything and cavort in paths by making one thousand one pause photos. Some eventually accuse a certain fatigue or some headaches: the adaptation to the height is not obvious at 2500 meters. The museum on

mountain climbing fascinates them less, although Wasim gathered all of them for a small time of improvised teaching.

On Thursday, Brother Francis and Wasim take the boys to Tiger Hill to attend the sunrise on the chain of Himalaya. The wind and the small rain of the day before washed the sky and it is an incredible show on the background of azure which offers itself for them: the high snowy summits, among which Kanchendzonga (8586 meters), seem to ignite one by one under the beams of the rising sun... The grandiose and fascinating show leads to forget the cold of the air. Some boys are so much amazed that they dream to go to see closer the big mountains next year!



By coming down again they visit a Tibetan temple. Later a stroll in cable railway over "tea gardens" allows a new disorientation. The slow scrolling of these quiet landscapes in a pure air where floats a light perfume of flowers is absolutely delicious. Today we also celebrate the birthday of Rana.

On Friday it is the last day of this magnificent camp. A first time is dedicated to the evaluation of the stay: each one is invited to give its impressions.

The young express themselves alternately, some say that the ascent frightened them, others remind the beauty of the sun illuminating the mountain. One of them underlines that this camp was the opportunity to gather in good agreement " those of the South of the railway station and those of the North railway station "... The railway station of Sealdah is a microcosm with its "gangs" according to sectors and it does not reign necessarily a good agreement in these places of survival. We can say that it is a beautiful victory to have gathered these young people without the slightest incident to disturb these few days!

To end Brother Francis celebrates the mass in front of an audience multi-religious but strangely fervent. Shuki is in charge of reading a short passage of Gospel, what he fulfills with a lot of meditation.

All these boys, formerly lost, with the lives sometimes so knocked down from the childhood, sing in accord hymns proposed by Wasim...

Lord, that your works are beautiful, and bravo to those who are instruments!!!



After the lunch it is necessary to think of coming down again towards Siliguri where we shall take the night train to return to Calcutta.

Hell of a descent! There is fog and the bends are hardly secured... but by the grace of God! One of the young people tells something to Wasim and start a wonderful giggle. Wasim translates us the remark: the boy asks to stop " to wait for his soul " direct allusion to a parable told by Brother Francis... Not only these young people retain everything, but they are cunning and make fast good use.

The descent still reserves some entertainments. At first the locomotives of the Toy Train then the parades of people, flooded with powders of lively colors, dancing and playing up in a deafening noise. It is the party of Holi that celebrates the return of the spring.



The descent ends without incident. A small spare time is granted before a short gathering on the parking of NJP, to send a thanksgiving for the success of the camp. Always precious in the organization Wasim negotiated a dinner for all of us and we take back the train. Eleven hours later we find back Calcutta, its noise and its heat...

Cécile.

On March 19th it is the turn of the younger to leave for picnic to Bandel !



The day was very livened up and joyful with besides delicious ice creams to refresh everybody.

April May 2015 in Calcutta

" Here it reigns an overwhelming heat: hot and filthy heat wave, but we hold out! At the moment, we have to face an overflowing work of health care: we have 8 sick at the hospital. For a month we were not able to work in the slum so much our presence on the railway station and on the hospital require our time! "

I am still on " the blow "of " Roni and Cintka" write Brother Francis.

"Roni, A 30-year-old man, a father of three children, arrived on April 19th at 18.00 to emergencies, the brain affected. The doctor considering his case hopeless, did not admit him. His friends waited for a taxi to return him to the village, so that he can die in peace. It is at the exit of the hospital that I discovered him, stretched out, inanimate to the point that I considered it dead. Then I asked to pray for him. The power of the prayer of cure can do everything ... Doubtless he died. It is one of our big poverty there: we ask, we never know the continuation, but God knows, and it is the main part, that we have to accept. "

"Cintka, " The angel " of the governmental hospital NRS (near the railway station of Sealdah where I work for 11 years), surviving in the morbid corridors, lying on an iron trolley, at the end of a sinister corridor, just comes " to take her ticket for the sky ". Finally she can drink the champagne with her Lord and her God for whom she looked and with Whom she lived the mystery of the Cross. 40 years of suffering in the grime and the stench, having for friends only some cats which deigned to join her at the end of the corridor and myself on Sundays evenings when she asked me to come to sing and to play to her a piece of flute... That she was becoming beautiful then, with the twinkling eyes and her beautiful smile which seemed "to dissipate" her darkness. "

"4 days back, **Rita**, a mother, whose husband works with us, was harassed and flogged by a policeman. We transported her immediately to Hope Foundation, where she regain health little by little.

"Wasim, who was our coordinator for almost 2 years, left us at the end of March because he decided to resume his studies with the aim of a doctorate in social work. It was necessary for us to find a successor. After having prayed, the Lord send us Agniswar Paul, age 22 (Agniswar means "fire")! Christian, he loves Jesus and fast learnt to love the poor people. After a time of prayer and exchanges, he will be the caretaker of our brotherhood in India. Indeed this name is less official and more evangelic than coordinator. His coming is a blessing! This Brother has numerous qualities and he preaches admirably well! Let us hope that his " Come and see " will be" successfull ".

"Our night shelter does not empty. And we do not count the hours spent with the police (GRP / RPF) to free children inequitably put in prison, often beaten or harassed by policemen drunk or on drugs !"

" Thanks to God we have just found training centers for 4 teenagers of the railway station. Let us ask the sky to inspire them loyalty and perseverance... The willingness it is already brilliant, but it is not enough. All of them are wonderful, tiring but wonderful!

"Recently, I discovered **Anir** while I was coming back exhausted from work and dripping with sweat. At this moment, I strongly felt that God asked me to take care of this small Muslim boy found in the street...

Bapy and Bijoy led him to the FBA in Krishnanagar for a new life".

"**Bapi** (20 years) is God's blessing: he has completely the Spirit of the Pilgrims of Charity. Bapi is a Pearl !!!

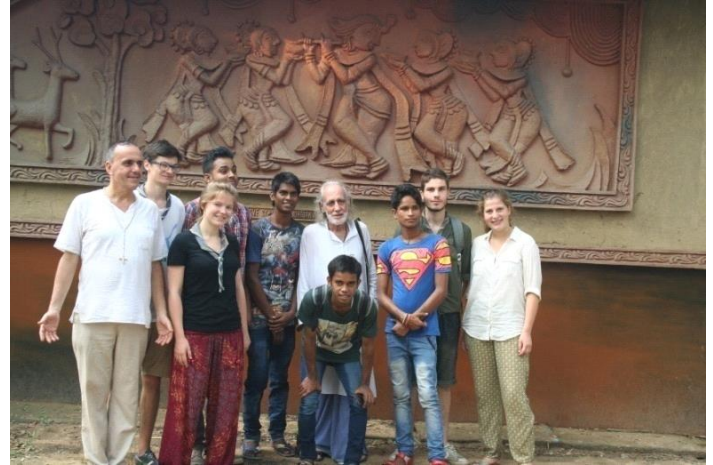
"In May, at the request of the **Mutual-aid Missionary International** gathered in Rome for its congress, I went to testify of the grace of our mission".

Brother Francis-Mary P.C.

June July 2015

Chantal, renamed Shanti by the children, joined Calcutta in her turn, a little bit anxious of the merciless heat reigning over the city, but the joy to meet the children and in particular Rana her godchild, fast restored her wings to such a point that she made a gliding flight on the balast of the station, fortunately without damage! She spared no effort with the children with whom she gets on magnificently

Volunteers' coming is God's blessing! Madhuri, Chantal and now 4 boy scouts of Touraine, while waiting for the coming of a new group of high school students!



Account from Arthur, Eléonore, Florent and Suzanne

Here we are, it has been now 2 months since we returned from Calcutta. We, it is Arthur, Eléonore, Florent and Suzanne, 4 Boy scouts and Guides coming from Tours. 2 years were needed to prepare this project with the children of the railway station; 2 years to finance this project, learn to live together and to discover by far the association of the Pilgrims of Charity. But it is necessary to admit that this month in India changed us more that these last two years.

I remember a day when I was standing at the open door of a train in movement. I was accompanied by hundreds of travelers who pushed because they wanted like me to take advantage of the air which the speed of the train got us. I believe that it is at this moment that I really realized: these people have not less value than me. That was obvious, in a theoretical way, but I began only to make the empirical experiment. It is impossible for me now to do tourism without responsibility. In these countries which we visit to travel or to rest, there are populations which live, people who love each other, families which fight. These people are worth consideration, our respect and especially our gratitude for the temporary welcome which is theirs, not ours.

By returning, we did not know what to tell to our parents, our friends Nobody is able to understand this mixture of poverty and joy which we meet in the slum behind the railway station of Calcutta. Nevertheless, I believe that our parents saw a difference: we returned changed. Changed by all these smiles, changed by all these games which we learnt, changed by all these people whom we met. The young Indians which help their friends, even poorer than them, are the biggest proof of sharing and love that we lived.

The best in all this, it is the relations which we created. Maybe these young people have not the same stories as we, the same desires, the same passions but it is nevertheless very easy to become attached to them and to laugh a lot, and that has no price!

"My Roots are in the Sky..."

This Hindu proverb expresses the secret of our Mission. Yes, our "energy" we draw it from the Lord who calls us to pour his love.

The last months were marked by an intensive work in the medical domain. The arrival of the rainy season, and the vulnerability of many people surviving in the railway station of Sealdah and in the slum favors numerous calls to give medical care in abundance.

The rainy season came on June 13th. Before, the heat rose every day, until reaching 46 degrees at the end of May. The rain that's life. It was expected and it was a party for all: games of skid on the platform, improvised and unexpected showers under gutters or by shaking the plastic covers being of use as roof to many families.

The request for medical care does not stop increasing and every morning, with or without umbrella, our small teams as "pilgrims" whom nothing stops, take the path towards the poor people. To play with the children rest one of our main activities, allowing to give with more efficiency some advices of protection and prevention.

But for 4 months, what is doubtless the most spectacular are the "big surgical operations". It goes from a 10-month-old girl, affected by a meningitis and almost dying, until Didima, grandmother of Chitka, this boy affected by cancer in 2009, which we had accompanied until his departure towards the house of the Father.

Furthermore, a number of attacks and accidents obliged us to deal with sometimes dramatic situations.

It is there that we measure the necessity of working in connection with "friendly communities", Hope Foundation in particular, to which we entrust more and more children, teenagers or elderly.

Recently they saved this little girl and a lady knocked down by a car on the parking of Sealdah

We had to accompany also Rita, the wife of Kalo, who left us on May 15th.

At the end of July, Agniswar Paul ends its first stage of "Come and See", and wishes to become " Friend of Pilgrims of Charity ".

Our Not Formal School does not empty! It's totally unheard of: more than 42 young people last week! We had to make 2 classes (big and small) and we look for a bigger apartment.

" When the Lord had given me brothers "

New vocations show themselves: on August 10th, 2 young boys of the Orissa having the desire to become brothers, are going to join us for a while of "Come and See". Our brotherhood had the grace to welcome Bapi (in May) and Chandan in June!

Finally, an inconceivable event arrived to us: this year we had decided to live the Holy Week in brotherhood for the first time! In the evening of Maundy Thursday, after the washing of the feet, Bapi (Hindu) asked for the baptism! On Sunday, June 7th, it is at the heart of the eucharist that Rana (Muslim) demanded also, by 3 times, the baptism. Finally, on Thursday, June 25th after our School (NF), Rachid (Muslim also) expressed its desire to become a follower of Jesus.

The holy Spirit, which always overtakes us, is it not blowing where he wants? It was capable of "falling" on these 3 younger brothers... BFM

" Rahoul, Departed for Heaven"

On Wednesday, July 29th at 2 pm, our program seemed established well after 4 hours of medical care: to take a little rest, then, to make some shopping, but Divine Providence extracted us from this project.

At 2:15 pm, whereas I visit the sick at the hospital, I have a call from Bapi and Chandan who have just discovered a man dying on the parking of Sealdah! From 3 am I run up to this man, still young but in a disastrous state. In his look of which I admire the beauty, it is the look of Jesus suffering that I meet. While Bapi and Chandan leaves taking a little rest, I remain with him, my Bible in hands. I give to him to drink, he refuses to eat, he does not have the strength anymore. After a brief examination, taking its blood pressure etc., the urgency is obvious: I call immediately an ambulance which take a long time to come in spite of my insistence. To my question Tumar Name Ki (What is your name?) the man answers in a breath: "RAHOUL". I tighten him in my arms because he shivers with cold. At 4 pm, while Bapi and Chandan arrive to replace me Rahoul falls asleep between my arms, serene and freed from his sufferings.

We cannot refrain from crying : in so little time Rahoul gave everything to us, the beauty of its look, its trust and its smile.

To allow this Brother "to leave" as a man and not as a dog, him who was doubtless treated more badly than a street dog all its life, it is **"an important part of our vocation!"**.

BFM

" A STRIKING PILGRIMAGE! " Kolkata, August 5th 2015

Dear Friends,

Pace e Bene!

A word after my return from TARKESWAR, place of destination of our pilgrimage.

At the invitation of the guys of the station of Sealdah, we left together towards this spiritual main place, situated at 110 km from Calcutta. Dozens of thousand pilgrims, especially young people, went to Tarkeswar by praying, by singing, by DANCING! The beauty of faces, clothes (especially orange or saffron yellow), as the singing of litanies did not stop giving rhythm to this pilgrimage.

Four times a day, we bathed in sign of purification and new life. It was BEAUTIFUL!!!

Throughout the stages, the food was distributed free of charge and in the evening we slept by the roadside, because 3 conditions were absolutely required to carry out this pilgrimage:

NO. MONEY

NO. SANDALS or any SHOES

and... only TO WALK.

These tens of thousand Pilgrims came to adore "their gods", as a way to reach the only God. As during my Pilgrimage to Ganga Sagar on January 15th of this year, I join the conviction of my Guide and old Friend Father Ceyrac, by becoming aware that their path " is a providential way to reach Jesus.

With Saint-Paul, our vision of the Pilgrims of Charity is to be Brothers and Friends of all: brothers Hindus with the Hindus, Brothers Muslims with the Muslims. We believe and we experiment that the Message of Life and Love of Jesus is FOR ALL!!!!

I shall remember this wonderful Pilgrimage, as well as my feet... in blood!

BFM

Here are some news of our mission. How do not to return grace for all that the Lord realizes! Thanks to each of you to be with us by your prayer and your sacrifices of love.

Brother Francis Mary PC, server.

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