**Annual retreat for Priests by a Nun: October 12-17, 2014**

The Jamshedpur diocese organized the annual retreat for the priests between October 12 and 17, 2014 at Vikas Bharathi, Sunder Nagar, Jamshedpur. Sr. Inigo SSA, the former Superior General of the Congregation and a renowned writer and preacher, guided the 30 priests that also included one Jesuit from the Jamshedpur province in their wilderness experience and spiritual journey. Sr. Inigo is presently involved in prison ministry at Tihar Central Jail, Delhi serving the spiritual needs of the prison inmates. It can be noted here that the Society of Sisters of St. Anne (Chennai) was founded for the empowerment of the powerless and Sr. Inigo has been championing this cause with absolute zeal and total commitment.

Sr. Inigo in the introductory session on October 12 evening reminded the priests that the yearly retreat is not to be seen as an annual ritual or a guilt-ridding practice. Retreat is rather a wilderness experience, wherein the retreat-makers have real God-experience that leads them to genuine inner transformation. Retreat is God making an appointment with the believer inviting him to receive from Him the fullness of life and grace (Jn 11:28). Hence, the retreat must become a faith experience for the Priests.

On the first day, Sr. Inigo dwelt on our understanding of faith. Faith is not that we get what we ask for. Faith is listening to God who is calling each one of us by name and we in turn letting God act as He desires. Faith is allowing God to make things happen in us. Faith is one’s total surrender to God’s plan (Jer 29:11, “I have a plan for you”). Moreover, Sr. Inigo helped the priests to reflect on the reality of the co-existence of good and evil in every human being. The evil one tries his best to overpower the good in us. However, we are also divine at the same time. Therefore, we must allow the divinity in our nature to dominate so that the good and truth prevail. This also means that a major aspect of the priestly ministry is to heal people of the devil and his influence. In order to achieve this, we all need to strip ourselves of the worldliness.

On the second day, the priests meditated on how to be an effective priest in life and ministry. To be an effective praying and preaching priest, he needs to be ceased of by the Spirit. Jesus was busy the whole day and night praying, preaching and healing. Jesus began his day with prayer; he prayed during the day; and he ended his day with prayer. Jesus drew strength from his intimate communion with the Father. Priests need to draw inspiration and strength from their life of prayer and good works, which enables them to remain in close communion with the Trinitarian God. Consequently, people will recognize their priest as a man of God (Mk 15:39).

Thereafter, Sr. Inigo spoke at length on the Ten Major Attitudes of the Parish Priest (PP) like Praying, preaching and prophetic Priest. Each of these attitudes include the BEING (what a priest is) and DOING (what a priest does) of the parish priest.

The retreat ended on October 17 noon with the solemn Eucharistic Celebration presided over by Rt. Rev. Felix Toppo sj, the Bishop of Jamshedpur. The Bishop exhorted his priests to be authentic and effective shepherds and to be close to the Lord in all moments of their life and ministry.

This is the first time a woman religious has been invited for the Priests’ retreat in Jamshedpur and Sr. Inigo made an excellent impact on the priests by her gentle approach and at the same time by her strong and firm convictions and personal faith-experiences. The priests expressed great joy and gratitude at the wonderful God-experience that they had during the retreat. They extended their heartfelt gratitude to Sr. Inigo for her special charisma and for having led them through this desert experience, which truly helped them to undergo intense personal transformation.

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