

Father K. Maria Arulappan

Dear Youth,

I am Fr. K. Maria Arulappan, from Cape Commorine, India, working in this region of India as a missionary, since 1980. I hail from a family very much devoted to our Lady. So much so that all of us in our family bear the name of our Blessed Mother.

I can proudly say that if I am a priest of Christ today it is mainly due to my Heavenly mother Mary. I am very much indebted to her. I am working in Mizoram, a hill state of India, which lies in between Burma and Bangladesh. Ninety percent of the Christian population is Protestant. The Catholics are converts from Protestantism, and are a minority group. Their faith is not deep yet. The Protestants are very loose and allow anything just to get members. They allow divorce and abortion, which are major problems that we face here. Moreover, they despise Mary and devotion to Mary. So on the day of my priestly ordination, I vowed to our Blessed Mother that I would bring honor to her name in Mizoram. Since then I work hard to speak about Mary and her role in our salvation to everyone.



"Village houses have no sitting room or kitchen or bedroom. It is one hall - part of it is bedroom. The rest are one single room. Kitchen is in the corner and all sit around and chat - drink tea."



"Village children. This is how they carry their children when the mother is away for work in the jungle."

I took charge of this parish in 1985. I started a parish newsletter called, *Ave Maria*, mainly to write about Mary to the people around. Copies were freely distributed to the Protestants. Then in 1988, Marian Year, we built a Grotto of our Lady here in Serchhip. This is the first and only one in our Diocese to this day. Nothing could stop me from proclaiming the glories of my Mother. Our parish is dedicated to Our Lady of Assumption.

Our parish church was destroyed by a severe cyclone in 1989. Since then we are without a church to worship. We have our Holy Mass offered in the school hall. Now with the help of our Lady, we are building a beautiful church. *Missio* is sponsoring the building. We hope to complete it this year. We are only praying to God to open the hearts of some generous people to come forward. We don't know any source, where to approach. If you know any source, please inform us.

What I want to say is this: Our Lady is at work here at Serchhip. The people around us who were despising us for honoring Mary are quiet now. This I believe, because of the Rosary prayer we are having every day at the Grotto, since 1988. This year being the family year we have taken it seriously to spread the family rosary prayer. Most of our people do not even have a rosary.

I like to hear people speaking about Mary and the Eucharist. We have an annual procession of the Eucharist and Mary among the Protestants. We have in our parish adoration to the Blessed Sacrament on every Friday and on all Saturdays, the rosary, confession and Mass.

By the way this is a very poor mission. We are isolated, living in deep jungles here. Our life is very tough, we have hardly any leisure time. I am all alone in this parish. Please write to us sometimes. I also have 14 villages (sub-stations) to look after. I go to these villages on foot. I have to walk 8 to 10 hours to each village. It is a mountainous area with high hills and deep valleys. Villages are mostly situated on hill tops. No road communication to these villages. People are poor and depend on monsoon rains for cultivation. We don't have even drinking water here. We store rain water and use it sparingly. Most of the people have hand-to-mouth existence.

We are handicapped with lack of funds and materials to evangelize. So whatever we can get will be useful and helpful for this mission. Please pray for us.

Yours sincerely in Jesus and Mary,

Fr. Arulappan K. Maria - PARISH PRIEST

(Rev. Fr. K. Maria Arulappan, P.P.)



"Fr. Arulappan, with his team, crossing a river during a mission tour in the jungles of Mizoram."



"A view of Mizoram hills. On the far end on the top of a hill you see a village. That is Tlangpin village. It takes two days on foot from Serchhip to reach that village. We have three more villages beyond that."



"This snap is of our old kitchen which was blown off by cyclone. Whole roof was gone. This was taken during the repair works. The tanks that you see will give you an idea how we store roof water in rainy"