



The first five American Jesuits to arrive in Patna are pictured here with Irish Christian Brothers who had been in Patna since 1870. Thomas Kelly, SJ, and Edward P. Anderson, SJ, are third and fourth from left in the rear. William J. Eline, SJ, Henry P. Milet, SJ, and Patrick J. Troy, SJ, are third, fourth, and fifth from left in the front.

The Patna-Chicago Connection

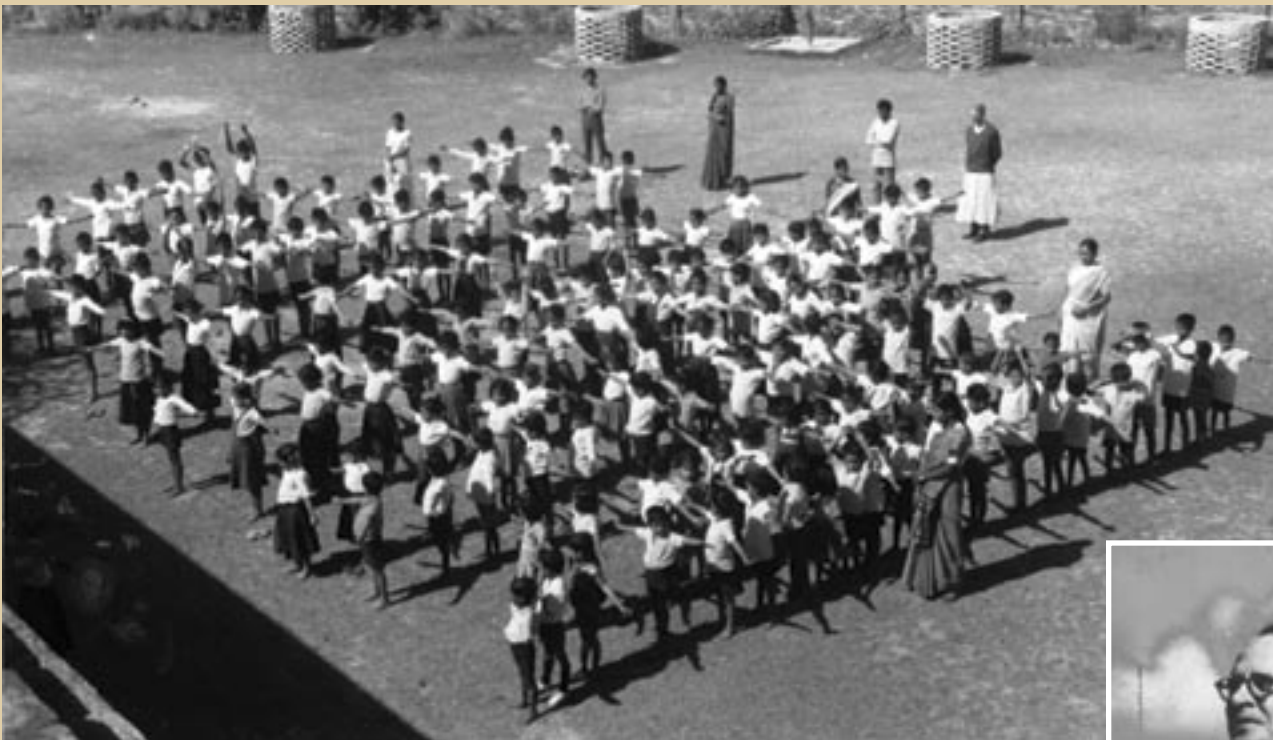
MORE THAN 75 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP FR. JERRY DRINANE, SJ

The history of the past 75 years shows a close connection between four provinces of the Society of Jesus: Missouri, Chicago, Detroit and Patna. It's inspiring to remember the great support in prayer, manpower and material aid that has made Patna Province what it is today.

It all began on September 10, 1919, when Pope Benedict XV issued his apostolic letter *Nova in Indiis*, establishing the Diocese of Patna, and entrusting it to the Jesuits. Fr. Vladimir Ledochowski, SJ, the General of the Society at that time, gave this mission to the Jesuits of the Missouri Province. In 1928, when the Chicago Province

was split off from the huge Missouri Province, the work of Patna mission was handed over to the Chicago Jesuits. When the Chicago Province was itself divided in 1955 to form the new Detroit Province, Patna continued to be the mission of both.

Well over 100 American Jesuits came to Patna through the years from those three American provinces and, through their efforts, Indian vocations were fostered from the earliest days. Hence, when it became difficult to get anything but tourist visas for American Jesuits, Patna was well able to continue and grow with the solid base of its Indian vocations. Due to this growth, Patna became first



Students gather before classes at the Barauni Mission School. Many of the first American Jesuits assigned to Patna worked in mission schools like these. Tom Tobin, SJ, is visible in the rear of the above photo.



Fr. Marshall Moran, SJ, founded St. Xavier's School in Patna in 1940 before moving north to the Kingdom of Nepal where he founded another St. Xavier's School, which remains today a premier education institution in Nepal.

a vice-province, and then, in 1962, an independent province. In the course of time, Patna too was divided, with two dependent regions: Nepal and Delhi.

Early Days

On March 6, 1921, the kindly and fatherly Belgian, Fr. Louis Van Hoeck, SJ, after 29 years of missionary life in Ranchi, south of Patna, was ordained Bishop of Patna. Ten days later, he welcomed to Patna the five "founding fathers," the first American Jesuits in the Patna mission: Frs. William J. Eline, SJ, (Superior), Edward P. Anderson, SJ, Thomas Kelly, SJ, Henry P. Milet, SJ, and Patrick J. Troy, SJ.

The Patna mission was not just beginning in 1921: each of the new missionaries found himself assigned to a neat little church and a small flock of 'born' Catholics: Indians, Anglo-Indians, and Europeans. In fact the mission already had many churches, established by the Capuchin Fathers: seven south of the Ganges River, and fourteen in North Bihar. Around these 21 churches, and in many villages, there were 5,021 Catholics. There were 9 Catholic

schools with 512 students.

Between 1921 and 1937, Missouri and Chicago Provinces sent 59 Jesuits to Patna. Of the first five "founders" only Fr. Eline died in India, in 1943. The others, over the years, returned to America because of poor health. As for the lovable Bishop Van Hoeck, he visited the American Midwest in 1924 and remained Bishop of Patna until 1928, when he was called to become the first Bishop of Ranchi. He gained a great deal of support from the Midwest Jesuits, and with this he was able to expand the school system in Patna. When he departed for Ranchi, there were 28 schools with 1,833 students: nearly a four-fold increase in seven years. In addition, he was the founder of the Sacred Heart Sisters, the diocesan congregation that has done so much to strengthen the Catholic communities through education and health care.



Dan Rice, SJ, one of the Jesuits who worked tirelessly on behalf of the Santal people in India. Fr. Rice, who died in 1991, is remembered by all as a truly loving and simple person.

Growth

The first phase of the Jesuits' work in Patna can be summarized in the name of a pleasant people, the Santals. Fr. James Creane, SJ, another early Patna missionary, came upon them while exploring his mission in Bhagalpur District. Bishop Van Hoeck encouraged him, and he started a school for Santal children in Simra, south of Bhagalpur city. Meanwhile Fr. Henry Westropp, SJ, another great pioneer, discovered Santals in Munger District and started a school and dispensary at Chakai. The success of this work can be measured by the fact between 1921 and 1938 the number of Catholics in Patna Diocese grew from 5,021 to 21,240. It wasn't easy to hand over such a successful apostolate to others, but Patna's Hindi-speaking areas

were in need. So, in 1938, the Third Order Franciscans from Pennsylvania took up the work in Bhagalpur District and the Jesuits turned their attention to the other vast areas of the mission.

Second Phase

The second phase of growth took place among the depressed classes of Indian society whom Mahatma Gandhi called *Harijans*, or "the people of God." Today they are known as Dalits, or "oppressed" in the caste system. For them, the Christian message was a call for liberation in every sense of the word. Fr. Westropp had already begun this work in Chuhari and surroundings. Later, after his transfer from the Santal mission, he continued it south of the Ganges. The people there, weary from centuries of oppression, were turning towards Christianity or Buddhism in hopes of gaining a sense of equality and human dignity. At first the Jesuits' work was among those of the Chamar caste; now it is casteless, the beloved portion of the one universal 'people of God'.

Education

The first group of Jesuits quickly realized that a Catholic high school was an imperative need, both to foster local vocations and to provide higher education for the Catholic laity. Thus began Khrist Raja High School, an extension of the middle school in the famed Bettiah parish. The year was 1927, and in 1929 the school was moved to its new and spacious premises outside the town. Meanwhile Patna,



Early Jesuit communities in the Patna Mission were filled with American faces, like this one at St. Xavier's Patna. Pictured above are then Provincial Louis de Genova, SJ (3rd from right front row), then principal of St. Xavier's, Gordon Murphy, SJ (4th from right), Richard Rosenfelder, SJ (2nd from right), Charles Scott, SJ (2nd from right middle row) and Bob Schmidt, SJ (4th from right back row).

the state capital, was growing, and the Church along with it. The Bishop resided there, and many thought the influence of the Jesuits could be greatly extended through a high school. Fr. Marshall Moran, SJ, undertook this task with the encouragement of Fr. Frank Loesch, SJ, Superior of the mission at that time, and founded St. Xavier's in 1940.

A further far-reaching step was taken in 1943. When Sir Mirza Ismail, the Diwan of Jaipur in the State of Rajasthan, visited St. Xavier's in Patna, he was so impressed that he prevailed on Fr. Loesch to open the same type of school in Jaipur. Today that school has a reputation that goes far beyond the boundaries of Rajasthan. Finally, the Archbishop of Delhi persuaded the Jesuit General in Rome to ask the Patna Jesuits to open a school in the nation's capital, Delhi. Since 1960 this school, one of the youngest of them all, has grown to be the biggest with over 3000 students.

The next big educational venture was for a small group of Jesuits to go to Nepal, where in 1951 Fr. Moran again pioneered a St. Xavier's school. Today it is a premier institution in the mountain kingdom.

Just 40 miles west of Patna, another proof of the growth of the Church was the development of Ara into a full-fledged high school to cater to Catholic boys south of the Ganges River. This school has just celebrated its golden jubilee, and hundreds of young men (and now young women as well, since it has become co-educational) are prospering because of their Ara education.

Diversity

Since 1970, a lot more diversity has come into the work of the Patna Jesuits. Social action centers were started in Bettiah, Khagaul, Sasaram, Aurangabad and many of the parishes which are entrusted to the care of the Jesuits. This has meant more emphasis on village schools and primary education, non-formal education, and adult literacy programs. Another area of social justice concern is our legal aid apostolate in Patna and Bettiah. Several Patna Jesuits have law degrees, and two are practicing in the Patna High Court. Through the initial efforts of Fr. Jack Barrett, SJ, and Fr. Raphael Sah, SJ, an active apostolate of the press has developed. But while the work has expanded in various directions, the importance of education has not been forgotten.

Three new high schools in Latonah, Barbigha, and Aurangabad, have been started. In Nepal and Delhi also, in addition to the formal schools, there are many other areas in which Jesuits contribute to the development of the local people: centers for social action, youth care, rehabilitation of drug addicts, and more. Much of this work is supported and aided by former students of our schools who now have influence in government and society.

Bonds with Chicago

Generous people throughout the United States have contributed substantially to the growth of Patna mission, but the vast majority of their efforts have been channeled through the Chicago Province Mission Offices in Chicago and Cincinnati. Many of the Indian Jesuits of Patna have been financed in their higher studies in the States through the help of benefactors of the Chicago Province. Patna Archbishop, Benedict Osta, SJ, former provincials Abraham Puthumana, SJ, and John D'Mello, SJ, did their theological studies at West Baden College in the Chicago Province. To this day, some Patna Jesuits every year are helped in getting degrees in the United States through donor support. This bonding also continues through the "convenio" union, which calls for deepening collaboration between the Patna and Chicago Provinces.

Our Debt of Gratitude

Hence it is with a deep sense of gratitude that we in Patna congratulate the Chicago Province on its "platinum" jubilee. Looking back, it is truly a miracle of Divine Providence that has accomplished so much in a land so far away. We sincerely thank the Jesuits of Chicago Province, our benefactors and friends, for making Patna Province what it is today. And we pray that God may bless our mother province with many vocations and an abundance of spiritual gifts. ■



Today the communities are filled with Indian Jesuits, as evidenced by the recent picture of novices from the Patna Province. In fact, thanks to the tremendous growth in native vocations, the Patna Province today has roughly 400 members as compared to 250 in the Chicago Province.