

ACRCI (Association of Catholic Rehabilitation Centres of India)

Report of the Fourth National meet held at St. Joseph Vaz Spiritual Renewal Centre, Cruz Dos Milagres, Old Goa from 10 to 12 May 2016

The fourth national conference of ACRCI was held at St. Joseph Vaz Renewal Centre, Cruz Dos Milagres, Old Goa from 10 to 12 May 2016. 160 participants attended the conference. They were from almost all the states of India. The theme selected for the conference was “Catholic Rehabilitation: Sharing the Divine Mercy of the Heavenly Father.”

The fourth national meet of ACRCI was inaugurated by His Grace Most Rev. Filip Neri Ferrao, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Goa & Daman and the Patriarch of the East at 10. 30 a.m. on 10th May in the meeting hall of St. Joseph Vaz spiritual renewal centre. The Archbishop congratulated the participants for involving in such a great ministry of the Church. He warmly welcomed all the participants from all over India to Goa and to the Renewal centre. He said that it is blessing to have this meeting in this spiritual renewal centre which is named after St. Joseph Vaz who was a great missionary from this land and he served in this church before he left for Srilanka as a missionary. He exhorted the members that in the present socio political scenario this kind of coming together is very important to increase the quality of our service and to strengthen each one of us. Here is a brief summary of the message of the Archbishop at the inauguration of ACRCI national meet:



He said that the entire life of Jesus, his teachings, ministry etc. prove that the service to the poor, the needy and the marginalised is the will of God. Through this ministry for the differently abled we prove that we are true disciples of Jesus. Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom. Four traits of this Kingdom are:

- A new relationship with God as father- every human person is created in the image of God and is a child of God.
- This relationship gives us freedom- this freedom is to serve one another.
- This freedom to serve must be used to foster fellowship and solidarity.
- This fellowship is to build a new humane, brotherly, sisterly world

This year of mercy invites us and compels us to be instruments of God's Mercy. Jesus spent his life to serve others. If we want to share God's mercy our service should have three characteristics- it must be a humble and tender service, it must be a joyful service and it must be a merciful service.

After the inaugural address the Archbishop inaugurated the website of ACRCI and congratulated all who are behind this attempt.

Rev. Fr. Maverick, the Director of Caritas Goa, Mr. Victor Vaz, the national Sports Director of Special Olympics Bharat, Fr. Baiju Maniambrayil from Bijnor and Sr. Shruti A.C. also spoke at the inaugural session. Rev. Fr. Joseph Puthenpura, the president of ACRCI welcomed the dignitaries on the stage and the participants for the national meet. Sr. Josephine Boniface expressed the vote of thanks. Sr. Rashmi CSJ and Sr. Terezinha conducted the programme.

The inaugural session was followed by an ice breaking session- group dynamics for mutual introduction and interaction, led by Fr. Roy Kannachira CMI.

In the post lunch session Fr. Biju Sebastian led the participants to areas of communication skills for effective administration. He did this through an activity and discussion based on this activity.

In the evening at 6. 30 p.m. we had the inaugural Mass celebrated by Rev. Fr. Pauly and concelebrated by all the priest participants. During the homily Fr. Pauly narrated several incidences from the Bible where Jesus, moved with compassion, helped those who were sick and deformed and made them perfect. He also explained how Jesus interacted with people who came to him with various requests. They all went back with satisfaction and internal peace. People who approach us may be coming with lots of frustration. What is their experience after meeting us? He concluded his message with lot of appreciation to the work of rehabilitation services.

The second day started with morning prayers at 7.15 a.m. in the meeting hall. After the breakfast, all gathered in the hall. Rev. Dr. Michael Peters CPPS led a session on the Theological and Scriptural foundation of rehabilitation services. He explained the development of thoughts on disability in the Bible- in the Old Testament and how Jesus approached it in the New Testament.

His Excellency Most Rev. Thomas Mar Koorilos, Bishop of Thiruvalla and the chairman of KCBC special schools visited the national meet and gave message. In his message he expressed his appreciation to the whole team and said that the Church



accepts the dedicated contribution of our catholic special schools and in this year of mercy the special schools and other rehabilitation centres show the real face of the Church and act as the face of Jesus.

The second session was dealt by Dr. Avinash D'Souza, a Psychologist from Mumbai, who dealt in detail on the psychological issues faced by the children with disabilities and their parents. It was very useful as all the participants faced the problem and Dr. Avinash shared several practical tips so that they can understand the child and the parents properly and help them in such situations.

The post lunch session was dedicated for the election of the new Governing Body of ACRCI. Since the present Governing Body had completed the term of three years it became necessary to elect the new Governing Body. Fr. Joseph Puthenpura, the present president, who is also the Founder president, initiated the process. Fr. Joseph, in the beginning itself, expressed his desire to retire from the post as it is difficult for him to function. The following tem was elected as the new Governing Body for a period of three years:

1. Fr. Thomas Chenganariparampil MST (President) Kerala
2. Fr. Roy Kannanchira CMI (Vice President) Kerala
3. Fr. Baiju Maniambrayil (Secretary) Uttarakhand
4. Sr. Shruthi A.C. (Joint Secretary) Karnataka
5. Sr. Roseline SABS (Treasurer) Tamil Nadu
6. Fr. Tom George Maliackal (Member) Madhya Pradesh
7. Fr. Joseph Pais (Member) Odisha
8. Fr. Jose Manjaly (Member) Kerala
9. Sr. Kanta Rathod (Member) Gujarat
10. Sr. Prabha SND (Member) Karnataka
11. Sr. Biji Rose CMC Member) Kerala

Fr. Thomas Chenganariparampil (Fr. Thomas C.T.) thanked all the participants for electing the new team. He also thanked the present team and in a special way Fr. Joseph Puthenpura who initiated the concept and process of ACRCI. The whole community of the participants thanked Fr. Joseph and requested him to remain united with the Association to guide it further.

After 3.30 all the participants set out to the visit of Old Goa and for the Holy Mass at the Basilica of St. Francis Xavier. After visiting the nearby places all gathered at the Basilica and we had the concelebrated Holy Mass, led by Fr. Savio Fernandez, at the Basilica at 6. 30 p.m. It was a great experience for all that we could celebrate Mass at this holy place. After the Holy Mass all went out for a boat ride in the famous Mandavi River.

The third day started with Holy Mass at 6.30 a.m. with Fr. Joseph Pais from Orissa as the main celebrant. During the Holy Mass Bishop Thomas Elavanal of Kalyan Diocese gave the homily. In his homily he explained the cost of discipleship (Luke 14:25-33). He said that if we want to be the true disciple of Jesus we have to renounce everything and live a selfless life. Quoting the example of Mother Teresa he explained the importance of renunciation and discipleship. The ministry for the disabled also demands this attitude of renouncing and accepting every child that come near to us.

The 9 o'clock session was dedicated for region wise gathering. The whole participants gathered in six regions and discussed the ways to strengthen ACRCI at the diocesan and regional level. Regional level coordinators were also selected during this gathering. The following are elected as the regional level coordinators:

1. Eastern Region (Bihar, Orissa, Jharkhand & West Bengal)- Sr. Catherine Colaco
2. Western Region (Maharashtra, Goa & Gujarat)- Sr. Anciena SMMI
3. Southern Region-1 (Karnataka, A.P., T.N. & Telangana) – Sr. Josephine Boniface
4. Southern Region-2 (Kerala)- Fr. Jacob Menachery CMI & Sr. Prasada DM
5. Central Region (M.P. & Chattisgarh)- Fr. Thomas Varghese CMI
6. Northern Region (U.P., Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, J&K, H.P., UA)- Fr. Vasant John IMS

The members discussed the problems that they face in different places. The following are a brief summary of the region wise discussions:

Eastern Region

- members felt that there are many other catholic centres who do not know about ACRCI. The team members will try to contact them and try to bring them together.
- There are many institutions that have not yet got PWD registration and they are trying to register them.
- Many of the institutions are not getting grant from the Government
- They find it difficult to help the persons with disabilities who are Catholics for their sacramental life

Western Region

- Some of the institutes are aided institutes. They find it difficult get sanction for the new appointments
- They experience too much interference of Government officials in the administration of the institutes.

- They have formed a core group of six people, they will gather in August and will have the regional meeting in October, this year.

Southern Region- 1

- They do not get proper information from the Government
- They are planning to tap the CSR fund for their programmes
- They lack funds and no grant from the Government
- They have decided to organize a workshop on legal aspects and NGO management. They are ready to help others also in this matter.

Southern Region- 2(Kerala)

- They informed that they have already prepared a hand book to prepare the children with disabilities for First Holy Communion.
- 32 special schools in Kerala have been selected for aided status.
- The special schools in Kerala are well organized under KCBC
- They are ready to take lead for hosting the 5th National Conference of ACRCI

Central Region

- They find it difficult to get grant in aid from the Government
- Many of the institutions are not registered with National Trust
- They have decided to write to all Bishops of the region regarding ACRCI
- They face problems with regard to administration of sacraments to the persons with disabilities.
- Need of Bible in Braille and sign language.
- Decided to organize the regional meet in August in Bhopal

Northern Region

- Many institutions are not yet registered under PWD Act.
- Difficulty in getting grant from Government
- Many of the Catholic institutions are not ready to come together.

After the common sharing Fr. Thomas C.T gave a few general informations, like,

- ACRCI Directory is in the final stage- if there are any more entries, kindly give the details within one month
- Our website has been launched. The domain name is www.acrci.org
- Anybody can send news items/ programme details/ photos etc. that can be uploaded in the website. Kindly send the matter to 2013acrci@gmail.com
- The regional coordinators shall try to strengthen ACRCI at the diocesan and regional level.

- Kindly give immediate reply to the emails sent from the centre.
- Kindly share information regarding the disability sector at any level.

The concluding session of the 4th national meet of ACRCI started at 11. 30 a.m. His Excellency Bishop Thomas Elavanal was the chief guest of the concluding function. Fr. Thomas C.T. gave a brief description of the three days meeting and welcomed all. Bishop Thomas Elavanal gave the concluding message. In his message



the beloved Bishop said that ‘the central theme of Bible is God’s mercy, the manifestation of God’s love. Jesus’ method of preaching was showing mercy to the needy. The wealth of the church is the dedicated sisters and priests who are committed to the charitable services. The service of the priests and sisters in the disability sector is a sublime service. The hands that serve are more holy than the hands that offer sacrifice. There is no dichotomy between service and worship’. The Bishop encouraged the participants telling that “you are the most blessed people because you are showing mercy. The most beautiful person on this earth is person who is serving with a smile.”

Fr. Jose Manjaly and Sr. Julia OSA also shared their experiences in the field and shared their views on ACRCI. Sr. Prabha thanked the dignitaries in the concluding session. She also thanked all those who helped to organize the national meet in a successful way. The programme ended with a thanks giving hymn.

After lunch all set out to visit various places of Goa and after that all started their return journey.

Thanking you all for your loving cooperation,

Fr. Thomas Chenganariparampil MST

President, ACRCI