

REPORT 2014

BETHANY NOVITIATE ASHRAM, ASHOKAPURAM, ALUVA

Bethany Ashram Ashokapuram is the Novitiate house of the OIC congregation and is also known as 'Tapovanam', which means the place of meditation, yoga and religious discipline, situated at Aluva, in Ernakulum district.

History: When we analyze the history of this house, it is clear that, with the leadership of Fr. Jacob Perumpral OIC, then the Superior General of the Congregation, bought this land in 1966 and shifted the novitiate house from Thiruvalla Bethany Ashram and started the Novitiate formation under the leadership of Fr. Jacob Perumpral OIC and Fr. John Bosco OIC in 1977 at Aluva. From that time onwards many fathers served this community and it is good to remember them all now.

Rev. Fathers like, Jacob Perumpral OIC, John Bosco OIC, Peter Kozhimannil OIC, Lawrence OIC, Thomas Reji OIC, Thomas Sajeew OIC, Placid OIC, Chacko Erath OIC, Ninan Cherupuzhathottathil OIC, spent their time and energy for the formation of the younger generation of the congregation.

When we analyze the functioning of this house, especially last six years, around 35 novices had completed their canonical year of novitiate formation. At present, here we have eight brothers doing their pre novitiate and novitiate formation respectively and three fathers as superior & rector, spiritual father and procurator, helping them in their formation programs. We take care of the spiritual, intellectual, physical and human formation of the students and different subjects are taught by different teachers inside as well as outside of the congregation.

The aim of the novitiate formation: It is to prepare oneself for the life of perfect dedication by the practice of the evangelical councils of chastity, poverty and obedience and understand the aim and nature of the congregation. In our formation program we try to realize this aim and charism of Bethany which states that "the charism of the Order of Imitation of Christ is following Jesus Christ in his life of prayer and action, realized in oriental monastic tradition and Indian sanyasa and aimed at the evangelization of India through the spiritual renewal of the Malankara Church" (Holy Rule 1.4). In order to actualize this aim and charism, we have our own formation programs. Through which we help the novices to become well integrated persons and mature in their relationships. They are given practical guidance to build up a community life based on love, fraternity, spirit of service, forgiveness, mutual co-operation and appreciation.

Spiritual formation: In the formation program, we give stress to the prayer life, which is the important part of our religious life. Different methods of meditation like, St. Ignation method, method of shared prayers, Jesus prayer, Bhajan, Eco meditation etc, help novices to unite with God, the source of holiness. By participating in the daily Qurbano, they are able to deepen their faith, vocation and dedicated life. Spiritual conferences, observation of lent, fasting, monthly recollection, chapter of faults, private devotions, Bible reading, confession, spiritual guidance, spiritual reading practice of silence, life evaluations and yoga also help them to develop their spiritual life.

Manual work : As part of the formation program, manual work is also got importance and all are supposed to participate in different works like gardening, farming, vegetable cultivation, taking care of the coconut trees, plants, tapioca etc to partake in the Bethanian life. Here we have 32 acres of land and the rubber plantation is the main income generating source of this house. Other than rubber, we promote agriculture and dairy farm as part of the Bethanian life style. Games and recreation, academy etc, also help them for their integral development.

Intellectual formation: Curriculum for the novices is strictly followed with different topics like liturgy, moral studies, religious life, psychology & personality development, spirituality, yoga, church history, Indian studies, music and scripture. Since there is no university studies during the novitiate time they can very well concentrate on their own personal growth.

In short, after analyzing all, we know that this house and its activities are influencing and inspiring each and everyone in their committed life and stands as a model for the whole congregation. We bow down our heads before the merciful God. Thus, from the very early time onwards especially during the last six years, we have been experiencing the abundant mercy and grace of the Almighty God in all formation programs and activities. At the same time we acknowledge and thank for the support and care that we have received from Very Rev. Fr. Superior General and his councilors and the whole congregation as such.

This is the brief report, prepared by Fr. Thomas Prasanth OIC, the superior of the Bethany Ashram, Aluva and signed by Fr. John Bosco OIC and Fr. John Kripanand OIC, spiritual father and procurator respectively.

With love and prayers,

Superior,

Fr. Thomas Prasanth OIC

Fr. John Bosco OIC

Fr. John Kripanand OIC