

March 25, 2025

Dear Confreres,

In February, I traveled to India to lead the annual retreats for the confreres in the district and to experience the country that I had heard so much about. I was first introduced to India, particularly Hinduism, during a world religions course in college. I was fascinated by the devotion of the people, especially their reverence for the many gods and goddesses.

In 1997, Tom Garvey, who was a missionary to India at the time, visited our novitiate house and introduced us to the Indian mission. He encouraged us to

consider becoming missionaries in India. I thought about going to India for my cross-cultural year, but things didn't work out as I had initially hoped.



The U.S. Province has significantly contributed to the development of the Indian District by providing both financial and personnel

resources. Many of our members have spent considerable time serving in India, including Tom Garvey, Richard DiLeo, Tom Fix, Charles Bisgrove, Tom Cassidy, Leonard Zaworski, and Wayne Jenkins. Jim Schroeder and Charles Brown have taught or led retreats there. Andrzej Sudol and Zbigniew Morawiec also served in India when they were members of the Polish Province.

What inspired these SCJs to dedicate themselves to the mission in India? Charles Bisgrove provided a compelling answer when he told me that he went to India and fell in love with the mission because it was full of life and potential.

That life and the vibrancy continue to be seen in the entity today. The Indian District is one of the youngest and fastest-growing entities in the congregation.

In its 31 years of existence, the district has grown to 140 members, including professed students. Most of the members are under 50, with the oldest being 61 years old. The Indian District will soon transition into becoming a region.

While many entities in the congregation, including ours, are experiencing decline, the Indian District is actively focusing on expansion both within the country and internationally. It currently serves in 13 dioceses in India and has sent missionaries to various parts of the congregation. The district, which was once a missionary-receiving entity, is now a missionary-sending one.

During my visit to Andhra Pradesh, where our theology program is based, I had the opportunity to see six mission churches administered by our confreres. All of these churches are small and lack resources. I learned that in many areas where we serve, the daily wage is only \$2, which amounts to about \$60 a month. Some of the churches are facing maintenance issues, such as crumbling walls and leaking roofs. Due to low wages, many parishioners can only contribute to the maintenance or construction of their churches through their labor rather than finances.



The success of the Indian District can be attributed to the work of the tireless commitments of missionaries from the congregation in its early years. Thirteen entities in the congregation have contributed to the growth and stability of the district. This reflects the spirit of “We, the Congregation,” as embraced during Bishop Virginio Bressanelli's administration.

I will always remember and be grateful for the genuine hospitality shown to me by our confreres during my time in India. We wish them God’s grace as they strive to respond to the people in accordance with the Gospel and our Dehonian charism.

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'V. de', is written below the text 'Fraternally,'.