

## JASSODRA'S STORY

What evangelization means for me. God chose me to become Catholic. When I was a child, my father and I went on outings. I saw we passed different churches but I did not know what Church. I did not see the notice board. I saw the Church when I walked past the Church everytime.

I was Hindu. I could not understand what the pundit said their way and there were not interpreters. I was a student of Cascade School for the Deaf. Every Friday, I went to Religion Class for Catholics but I was Hindu. I listened to the catechists talk about God's word. One day I was inspired by the gospel story about Jesus saying 'Come follow me'.

I went to Church, I was not yet Catholic. People went to receive Communion. As I looked at people I wanted to receive Communion. I dreamed of Jesus. He was beautiful and he could sign language. Jesus told me, "Yes! Go to the Church you will become Catholic." Then I woke I was crying a little. I was surprised and smiled.

Christina Araujo, R.C.I.A catechist, taught me about God and Jesus then I now understood God's word. In 1997, I was baptized at Easter Vigil and became Catholic. I was happy. The first time I received Communion. I felt inspired all over my body. This Jesus touched me.

When I was on job training at Touch of Christ Centre for the Deaf, I told the co-ordinator (Christina) that I could not draw pictures of the bible. Christina told me to try. My hand improved for drawing. They were praying for me that God would touch my hand. Jesus gift, Holy Spirit touched me. I can draw. I said "Praise God!!!" I draw pictures of Bible Readings for Liturgy and catechesis every week.

Jesus is wonderful. Now I'm catechist at Cascade School. I also taught confirmation class. Confirmation candidates were good. They question everything about God and they improved well.

We compare the Old Testament and New Testament and our life (Example; “So Naaman went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan as Elisha had told him to do. And his flesh became clean once more like the flesh of a little child” (2 King 5:14); “Ten lepers came to meet Jesus. They stood some way off and called to him, ‘Jesus! Master! Take pity on us’. When he saw them he said, ‘Go and show yourself to the priests.’ On the way they were made clean.” (Luke 17:12 - 14)).

Now in our life we have wrong things. Jesus comes to touch us, heal, take away sin. We are baptized with Jesus. Jesus is joined to us. Jesus is wonderful working.

Jesus is truly alive. Jesus is calling people. This year 2003 one Deaf woman Hindu became Catholic. Last year three young men were baptized on Easter Vigil. Jesus is my life. Thanks! Praise Jesus!

## KENWYN’S STORY

What evangelization means for me. God gave me life.

When I was small, my grandmother took care of me because my parents had fulltime jobs. One day, my grandmother carried me to church. I learned the words about God (Jesus, Mary, Joseph, etc.) from my grandmother.

I loved the church because my grandmother “Tina” continued to go to church every Sunday. Another day, my grandmother Tina fixed the altar and cleaned the chapel church. I was about 8 or 9 years old, I helped her to clean the room. Tina gave me a picture bible and old paper that was the story of Lady of Mount Carmel. I read it. Tina explained it for me using finger spelling. I reflected how God’s wonderful.

My mother and father raised me through baptism, first communion and confirmation, which, as my parents, they prepared me for. I am true Roman Catholic. As Catholics, my parents were married one year ago. I began a new life in the family with newly married parents. We attend Mass as a family in Saturday evening. Every Sunday, I go to Deaf church in different places.

When I was 13 years old and I was a young teen. I entered a confirmation class. At activities, I went to Youth 2000 Prayer Festivals, Ordination of a priest, Association of Catholic Intercessors (A.C.I) rally and Charismatic rally and other things (I can’t remember). I was confirmed, the Holy Spirit came, I felt inspired all over my body. Later on, my mother

told me that Christina Araujo asked if I wanted to come to a meeting. I thought I go back to class again. I thought again a few minutes, as God said “Go”. I obeyed what God said. My mother saved money for me to travel.

I went to the meeting. It was preparation for Deaf Youth 2000 in 1996. I was 15 years old. I was Master of Ceremonies in Deaf Youth 2000. Fr. Tom Coughlin came to Deaf Youth 2000 in 1996. Deaf young people were interested to listen to Fr. Coughlin about God’s word and the world.

Presently, I work at Touch of Christ Centre. I do a lot of work for accounts, prepare newsletter and Ephphatha newspaper supplements and also co-ordinate events. I am a catechist and leader of youth group. I am impressed with Jesus’ life. I sign songs for Deaf church. I believe in God.

Good News!!! Catechists, lay ministers, lay people have experienced God and the Bible but they want to know deeper God’s word. The homilist preaches to explain what God’s word means and asks questions. Deaf people have question to the homilist. Some more Deaf people become interested to know God. Some people serve God and church. I respect God and serve God and also Deaf people. God is my Father because I believe in God. Praise God!

### WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW?

Catechesis – school – Every Wednesday Lorna Rodrigues, catechist, goes to Audrey Jeffers School for the Deaf and to Deaf students mainstreamed in a near by school (Marabella Junior Secondary School). Every Friday three catechists – Maria Moolchan, Jassodra Bedasie and Kenwyn Philbert Noel - go to Cascade School for the Deaf and have classes for different age groups.

Confirmation class – Ten young people were confirmed in July, 2002. They had classes for two years. Jassodra Bedasie was catechist. Before confirmation, Bryan Rodrigues led the group in a four days retreat. The catechists supported Bryan and helped. Two other boys who had been initiated at Easter also joined the retreat. This year we had no confirmation class. We hope to register for confirmation class in September.

Life in the Spirit Seminar retreat – Four people – Lorna Rodrigues, Marcia Hutton, Bryan Rodrigues and Kenwyn Philbert Noel – want to form a covenant community. Six deaf adults, two teenaged daughters of Deaf parents and two hearing adults went to Retreat House in Caroni, Trinidad last May. They had an experience with God. They have a prayer meeting.

Youth groups – We have two groups that are North group and South group. Kenwyn Philbert Noel and Bryan Rodrigues are responsible for youth group and also South Youth meeting. South youth group have third Saturday of month. Young Catholic and non-Catholics are involved in the south youth group. Those activities are outing, celebrating a person's birthday in their home or other place and other things. There is one adult advocate. North Youth group has first Saturday of month. It began in March.

Youth Training – The South group began in February, young Deaf people learn to live and to know the bible. They need to be good and mature. Bryan leads this. Every month, one Saturday in the South and one in the North.

Family Life Workshop – Youth and adults learn about different things, (1) friendship, relationships, preparing for marriage (2) setting goals and planning (3) preventing AIDS and different diseases.

Marriage preparation – Deaf man and woman, who prepare to marry, comes for marriage preparation six sessions. A couple from marriage encounter lead the meetings for Deaf couple.

Deaf Lay Ministers – Marcia Hutton and Gloria Pereira, lay ministers, are responsible for North. First three Sundays of month, they serve deaf church in North Trinidad – Port of Spain, Mount Lambert and Arima. Fr. Christian Pineau F.M.I., hearing priest, uses sign for Deaf Mass on first Sunday of month. Lorna Rodrigues, lay minister, is responsible for South. Fourth Sunday of month, and if we have a fifth Sunday of month, Lorna serves Deaf Church in South Trinidad – Marabella and Mayo.

Sign Language Class – We have Sign Language class to help people learn how to communicate in Sign Language. Deaf tutor teaches sign language to public.

Training at Bible School – Bryan Rodrigues has been a student at the Catholic Bible Institute in Trinidad from September 2002. He graduated on July 12<sup>th</sup> this year. He wants to work in full-time ministry with Deaf people.

Retreat – Last year Fr. Mike Depcik came to Trinidad. Thirty (30) Deaf people went to a weekend retreat in Emmaus Retreat in Arima, Trinidad. Deaf people were excited about Fr. Mike's talks. We expect Fr. Mike will come to Trinidad next June in 2004.

Camps – Most years we had camp. In 2001, we had a camp in South at Point Fortin. That deaf young people is age of 12 – 18. Activities are fun and games, prayer, group session for drama, outing and other things. This year, we have no camp. I hope we will have camp next year.

Bible study - We have two Bible studies one in North and the other in South. North Bible study uses a small chapel. Gloria Pereira, who is married, is responsible for Bible study but Bryan helps with teaching. Six or seven deaf people go to bible study every Wednesday.

South bible study at Lorna's home in Mayo. Lorna Rodrigues is responsible for Bible study including R.C.I.A this year.

R.C.I.A. – Jesse DeVlugt became catechumen last December. He is involved in bible study and South youth group. This year Vanessa Kangoo, who was Hindu, was baptized at Easter Vigil.

Deaf catechist training – Lorna Rodrigues, Maria Moolchan, Jassodra Bedasie, Kenwyn Philbert Noel and Bryan Rodrigues, who are catechists, attend catechist training. Catechists prepare to teach God's word for all schools.

## RELATIONSHIP WITH CHURCH

Our staff at Touch of Christ Centre are paid by our archdiocese. Every three months we have a four-page supplement in the Catholic News to share with others what is happening with our Deaf community. We were very much part of the Synod held earlier this year. We try to take part in Archdiocesan events.

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### RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PEOPLE

Disabled People's International (Trinidad and Tobago) are advocating for equal rights for people with disabilities.

We have been supporting them. They had a rally in City Hall in Port of Spain and we participated. Kenwyn spoke about equal opportunities for Deaf people.

D.P.I is now working with us to help with employment and housing for Deaf people.

Bryan was interviewed on television and spoke about Deaf experience with education.

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CHALLENGES – our group is very small. Many people were Catholics. Some Deaf people leave our Church to join Jehovah's Witness or Baptist or Pentecostals. These have many people who sign. They visit Deaf people all over Trinidad and Tobago.

We have few Catholic people working with the Deaf. We Deaf people do not have enough education but we learn about God and the Bible and we are trying to help other Deaf people. Many Deaf people never experienced the right way. Sometimes parents did not communicate with them. Challenge with us

# PLANS FOR FUTURE

- 1.) SIGN LANGUAGE CLASS in  
**Parishes wanting to support Deaf people**
  
- 2.) COVENANT COMMITMENT TO  
**COMMUNITY of some Deaf people who feel inspired to  
this.**
  
- 3.) DEAF MAN to be trained for full  
**time ministry (ordained or otherwise)**

**4.) A CENTRE where Deaf groups can  
come for camps, weekend workshop/ training, etc.**

## **RELATIONSHIP WITH CHURCH**

**1.) ARCHDIOCESAN SYNOD –  
January and February, 2003.**

**Two Deaf Delegates took part along with the Co-ordinator of the Centre.**

**- Synod accepted a resolution for one priest to be trained in Sign Language for each vicariate.**

**2.) ATTEND ARCHDIOCESAN EVENTS: Some of us  
go to**

**- Charismatic Rally**



- **Youth Assembly**
  - **Neophytes Mass**
  - **Corpus Christi celebration at Cathedral**
- 3.) Our DEAF COMMUNITY is integrated with a parish for the Easter Triduum (a parish where our signing priest).**

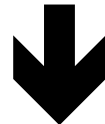
**Most people go to their parish churches for Mass sometimes. Some go often.**

**One parish has sign language interpretation. (La Brea)**

# RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PEOPLE (NOT CHURCH)

SUPPORT

Disabled People's International (Trinidad and Tobago Chapter)



Getting Information  
About Deaf people

Presentation  
at Rally

Signatures for  
Petition to



To help with Employment  
and Housing

Prime Minister  
for Equal  
Opportunities