CHAPTER - II

Genesis of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart
GENESIS OF THE BROTHERS OF THE SACRED HEART

Palayamkottai is one of the very ancient towns in Tamil Nadu. Under the Nayaks of Madurai, a fort was built in this place by Ariyanatha Mudali, the general of Viswanatha Nayak. It was named as Palayamkottai. It is a historic place in the history of Tamil Nadu. It is not only the headquarters of the Tirunelveli District, but the chief Catholic centre of the Southern District also. It has been the headquarters of the Parish for more than two centuries. Therefore, it has become the religious and administrative centre of the ecclesiastical district of Palayamkottai. Moreover, it serves as the Civil Headquarters of the Tirunelveli District.

The Parish of Palayamkottai has about 10000 Catholics and many Christian institutions. One among them is the Congregation of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart which has created a record of its own among the Christian public in religious educational and social service. It is one of the best legacies of Christianity to Palayamkottai. It is the incorporated syndicate of the zeal for the spread of devotion to the Sacred Heart.

The highest authorities of Catholicism of the last century took special interest in the deliverance of Indians. A coin issued by Pope Leo XIII in 1894 stands as testimony to this. It indicates that the salvation of India must be worked out by her own people. This has perhaps granted to the Indian Catholic heads a kind of liberty and fillip to do some special service with added vigour. Rev. Fr. Adrian Caussanel, the then Superior

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5 Ibid., p. 10.
6 Directory of the Diocese of Palayamkottai, 1989, p. 27.
of Society of Jesus in Palayamkottai was the first to make good use of this opportunity given by the Pope of Rome. From that day onwards, Fr. Caussanel was dreaming of founding a Congregation of Brothers.

As the Mission superior, zealous missionary and a great devotee of the Sacred Heart, Fr. Caussanel found a dearth of missionaries to take up any new assignments. In the meantime, he was aware of the usefulness of a band of apostles of the region, if trained in the region to carry on religious and social service with the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Such a spiritual and humanitarian idea made him found the Congregation.

Meaning of Devotion to the Sacred Heart

The concept and devotion to the Sacred Heart was developed from the five wounds of Jesus Christ, which he suffered when he was crucified. It was developed especially from his ribside wound. It became universally renowned as a result of the piety of great saint Margaret Mary. It is universally known that the burning heart of Christ is a symbol of divine love. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is simply a return of human love for his divine love. The Heart of Jesus is the visible symbol of His love, His mercy, His consuming charity and purity. He manifested them not even with a stint of stain through out his life and particularly during his passion. Therefore, His Heart has become an object of adoration and worship. As Fr. A. Tanquerey puts it,

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9 The Indigenous Religious Congregations of India and Ceylon, p. 86.
11 A Souvenir to Brothers of the Scared Heart of Jesus- Rome, Palayamkottai, n.d., p. 3.
12 S. Sebastian, Alikinar (Tl.), Palayamkottai, 1978, p.11.
there are two essential elements in the devotion to the Sacred Heart, one is sensible... and the other spiritual..., the two elements are but one.\(^{14}\)

The Congregation of Sacred Heart of Jesus has an intimate connection to the essence of the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The object of this devotion is the Heart of Jesus which said to St. Margaret Mary “Behold the Heart”. This Heart suffered agony and shed blood in the garden of Gestamani. This heart was pierced by the soldiers lance in calvary. Though it was dead at the time of being pierced, it is still alive in the glorified state of Christ Jesus.\(^{15}\) As His Heart is the symbol of peace, human endurance and mercy, the human beings throng to invoke it. As He lives in their hearts, they love His heart. Thus His Sacred Heart has become the hope of mankind.\(^{16}\) Man cannot be content with the love of human beings. At times of trouble, man seeks the help of the divine heart to shower on him some mental solace.

Such man finds in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the ultimate Heart of God.\(^{17}\) These thoughts struck a responsive chord in the Heart of St. Margaret Mary and the same found in the Heart of Fr. Caussanel, who found the Congregation of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. To remember Christ’s sufferings, during his passion, St. Margaret Mary kept on her table a painting that represented a heart wounded and bleeding, encircled by a crown of thorns and surrounded by a cross.\(^{18}\) The service of Brothers is needed to direct such men to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. These are Brothers who have made a total surrender of their minds, memory and will to the Sacred Heart.

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\(^{16}\) A. Biskapek, The Litany of the Sacred Heart, Milwaukee (USA), 1956, p. 115 also p.p. 66-67.


\(^{18}\) Interview with Rev. Bro. Edward on 03.08.2010.
and develop in them a fraternity of Brotherhood. They fervently pray for all as the follows:

“Oh! Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Thy Kingdom come” is the end of their religious life. Fr. Caussanal had great devotion and admiration for the Heart of Jesus. The overwhelming love for the heart of Jesus led him to name his Congregation Sacred Heart of Brothers. The Sacred Heart of Jesus becomes the object of personal devotion among the Benedictine monks. St. Ignatius Loyola insists in his spiritual exercises about the personal attachment of Christians to Christ. Thus Fr. Caussanel gave utmost importance to the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

**Origin:**

Fr. Caussanel put strenuous works and sincere prayer in his effort. With a fond hope, he began his work by the beginning of 1902. On March 12th, the same year, he wrote to Rev. Fr. Fasewille, the then Superior General of the Madura Mission to permit him to start a Congregation and thus he got official sanction to start the Congregation.

The Congregation had to be started under the title of “Institute of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus”. On 11th February 1903, the day of the feast of the martyr Saint John De Britto, the Congregation was started by Rev. Fr. Adrian

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* St. Benedict was born at Nussia in 480 A.D. He founded a monastery in Monte Cassino in Southern Italy. The Benedictine order comprises monks living under the Rule of St. Benedict. By that rule, the monks should take three vows namely to lead a life of chastity, poverty and obedience. They built many churches in Europe. St. Benedict encouraged his monks to take up social and intellectual work such as tending to the sick and the poor and teaching children at schools. They made copies of the Holy Bible and Greek and Latin classics. St Augustine, who was the author of ‘The City of God’ was a famous Benedictine monk.
22 Ibid.
Caussanel\textsuperscript{23}. The History of Tamil Nadu will etch the name of Fr. Caussanel in letters of gold because of the foundation of this institution\textsuperscript{24}.

**The congregation at Irudayakulam, in Earlier Period**

The congregation of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was started at Irudayakulam, a pleasant and lovely village at the foot of the Pothigai Hills in the Western ghats in Ambasamudram Taluk, Tirunelveli District\textsuperscript{*}. A seed was sown at this place by Rev. Fr. Adrian Caussanel, a French Jesuit missionary who made history and strode like a colossus across the stage of the infant Christian Church at the turn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century in this part of the world. The seed sown by him grew up into a stately tree spreading its branches far and wide and yielding fruit plenteously\textsuperscript{25}. This Congregation is purely Indian in character. It was started with lofty ideals that to make known the Sacred Heart of Jesus to the Christians by retreats and instructions\textsuperscript{26}. The village name Ucchangulam was changed into Irudayakulam by Fr. Caussanel\textsuperscript{27}.

A band of eight young men of promise came forward as the first novices of the Institute\textsuperscript{28}. Fr. Caussanel foresaw that the Congregation, which he founded with a small band of committed young men who formed its nucleus, would be an effective catalyst in moulding the Indian Society to a degree of moral perfection. It is said that God had chosen him as an instrument of His love giving him the mandate to go to the people who stood at the cross roads and help them find where the best road lay and walk in it\textsuperscript{29}.

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\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p.3.
\textsuperscript{24} Fr. M. James, “Brothers to the Mould of Caussanel”, 100 Years Anniversary Souvenir – Our founder Mission in India 1889-1989, pp. 28-29.
\textsuperscript{*} See – Plate No. 1
\textsuperscript{25} Brothers of the Sacred Heart (India), Palayamkottai, August 1994, p.3
\textsuperscript{26} Our Patrimony, Op. cit., p. 3.
\textsuperscript{27} R. Kulandai Arul Op. cit., p. 79.
\textsuperscript{29} Brothers of the Sacred Heart Op Cit., p. 2.
The Founder Father of the Congregation wished all the Brothers in the Church to be its humble workers. They may form Catechists, baptizers, school masters, conduct school, dispensaries, orphanages, prepare disciples, teach carpentry, tailoring cookery, administration of properties, and all agricultural works. Fr. Caussanel expected all the Brothers to undergo rigorous training for two years and after that they had to spend five more years to become permanent members. He wanted them to be equal to everyone and instructed them not to undertake any work other than what is assigned to them by the Church.

The Institute possesses some proper subjects, the Bishop and Superiors of the Mission must appoint for the formation of the first generation of the religious, some pious and clever missionary capable of discharging this responsible work of master of novices. As soon as the Congregation has got trained Brothers capable of conduct in the mission, the Institute may be left to itself, though the Bishop and Superiors keep the general supervision and guidance of the Brothers. It is said that the last devotion of the world will be the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Head of the Holy Catholic Church Holy Father Leo XIII has by a solemn consecration given the whole world with its variety of races and castes and creeds to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He said that “You are called to live and die as a Brother for the Sacred Heart of Jesus”. The founder Father Caussanel stressed, the Brothers that, “The Sacred Heart has selected you as the foundation stones of a society of Brothers of His Sacred Heart”.

The works of the office of the Novitiate were divided into prefect Director’s works, Store Keeper, Sacristan, Catechist, Infirmarian, and Accountant for the hills. A band of eight youngmen became the Novices. They were Bro. Gabriel, Bro. Gnana.

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33 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
Pragasam, Bro. Louis, Bro. Francis, Bro. Joseph, Bro. Alexis, Bro. Elie, and Bro. Angelo. Three remained as Postulants. They were Bro. Maria Antony, Bro. Soosai Marian and Bro. Maria Soosai. Some of them were sent away to home because they were proved as unfit for religious life.34

The first novice Gabriel was given in 1903 by Father Martin the Superior of Tiruchirapalli to supervise the orphanage of the Cathedral.35 Brother Angelo discharged at first the office of Prefect. The postulants had to be assistants to the several offices.36 In the year 1903, the feast of the Sacred Heart was celebrated with great pomp. The Bishop of Tiruchirapalli presided at the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. During the initial period, Father Capelle and Mr. Odendhal, who was a former governor of Indo-China passed some days in the Novitiate in 1903. In 1904, Dr. Benziger, coadjutor of Quilon and Bishop Barthe visited the Novitiate.37 During 1903 and 1904 several improvements took place in the residence and in the village. The village was reconstructed to a large extent.

The chapel tower was built. New wells and a new garden were created. Some 205 acres of land was purchased, close to Irudayakulam. There were great disturbances on the hills owing to several prosecutions against the Brothers. There was great union between the Brothers. There was no disorder of any sort. Father Maria Louis used to come from time to time to give some theological lessons. The class was presided by turns by the 5 novices who had to make their vows on the 11th of February 1905.38 Father Arputham, a Jesuit Priest was the Chief Guest during the inaugural function of

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34 Ibid., pp. 10-11.
36 Ibid., pp. 13-14.
37 Ibid., p. 16.
38 Ibid., p. 17.
the training programme for brotherhood took place, 9 participant brothers and 3 were selected to become priests.\textsuperscript{39}

After this period of Novitiate, five of them blossomed into carriers of the Sacred Heart and took their first vows on February 3, 1905. They were the pioneers of the community.\textsuperscript{40} The five brothers by name Angelo, Louis, Mariya Antony, Alexis and Royappan took oath as Sacred Heart Brothers and they lighted the candles and assumed office as priest. During each and every session, Fr. Caussanel used to administer enlightening classes.\textsuperscript{41} During that beginning period, the Brothers wore long white Shirts and White Dhoties. They never used foot-slippers for them and lived as poor among poorers. On Sundays they visited villages, met the poor people and did catechist works. They even met the tribal people called ‘kanis’\textsuperscript{*} and did catechist works in the Papanasam mountainous regions.\textsuperscript{42}

For the first time, an election among the five Brothers was held to elect the Superior of the congregation. Accordingly, Bro. Angelo was elected as the Brother Superior General. Fr. Caussanel confirmed him in that post.\textsuperscript{43} Bro. Angelo was the Brother Master of Novices also. The other four brothers had been named as Brother Manager of Hills, Brothers Manager of Plains, Treasurer and Brother in charge of schools and Catechism.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{39} R. Kulandhi Arul, Op. cit, p. 82.
\textsuperscript{40} T. Gabriel, Op. Cit, p.10.
\textsuperscript{42} S. Sebastian, Oliyai Ettuvom., Op. Cit., p. 47
\textsuperscript{*} The habitations of the Kanis (Kanikkars) of whom there are only about two hundred in this district, they are numerous in Travancore are in the regions of Kannikatti and the Singampatti forests. Their settlements which they call Vadis consist of huts made of bamboo and grass and are situated as a rule away from the tracks of men and animals. Some of them have on this account moved across the Tambraparani to the Singampatti Zamindari. In the Kattalamai estate, the property of Jesuit mission, a number of Kanis have become Christians and have settled down as agriculturalists.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., pp. 41-42.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., p. 42.
Fr. Caussanel discussed all future plans of the Congregation with Bro. Angelo. He instructed that in every three years, the Superior General should be elected in the Congregation. The election should be conducted by the first ten eldest Brothers or the House Superiors. In that election four of them should be elected as Advisors. But all these election systems were wiped out in 1906. Once in three months the houses submitted their accounts to the Superior. But all these rules and regulations came into existence only after 1925\textsuperscript{45}.

Fr. Caussanel made Bro. Gnana Prakasam as in-charge of Kattalai Malai. There were two sorts of residences for the Brothers; residence on the hills and on the plains. The chief residence of the institute was at Irudayakulam. It has become a tradition that the Brother Superior General resided at Irudayakulam before its transfer to Palayamkottai\textsuperscript{46}. The other residence was a branch house on the Hills, i.e., at the Regis Farm\textsuperscript{47}. The Superior General used to visit the branch houses of the Congregation once a year and audited the accounts of the houses once in three months. The founder of the Congregation used to direct the Superior General that, he was mainly responsible for the Holy See, the Bishop of the Diocese and all the matters regarding the congregation\textsuperscript{48}.

A tribal sect of people called Kanis lived in the hilly region near Irudayakulam. The brothers preached the doctrines of Jesus Christ and Catechism to them\textsuperscript{49}. There they were able to convert about 250 Kanis to Christianity\textsuperscript{50}. A school was started for their children. They were taught to pray. Social contact was established between them

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., pp. 44-45.
\textsuperscript{46} Our Patrimony, Op. Cit., p.4.
\textsuperscript{47} S. Sebastian, Oliyai Ettuvom, Op. Cit, p.49.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., p.45.
\textsuperscript{50} Bro. Rajan, “Role of the Brothers in Building up the Church”, 100 years Anniversary Souvenir-Our Founder’s Mission in India, 1889-1989, Palayamkottai, 1989, p. 35.
and the people of the plains\(^{51}\). To do some good to the Kanis, Fr. Caussanel constructed the churches of Sacred Heart of Jesus, St. Joseph and St. Ignatius\(^{52}\).

After getting baptism, they never roamed like ramblers. They settled in one firm place and lived as a civilized man. During the Sundays they did not go to any work. Around the Church, they constructed their dwelling houses. Daily they went to the Church on morning and evening to pray.

The children learnt to read and write. Even the children below five years could tell all the prayers of *Chinna Kurippidam*\(^*\) a prayer book\(^{53}\). For the welfare of the Kanis, Fr. Caussanel tried to lay a road, but the Forest Department was deadly against it and a case was filed in the court. Regarding that problem, the founder challenged the court for many times. Yet, no solution could be reached about it. Any how for the welfare of the Kanis, the Brothers dedicated their lives and their motive was to preach catechism to them\(^{54}\).

Before the end of 1905, the number of novices increased to fourteen. Hence, it was felt very inconvenient to train them. It was at this time that Fr. Caussanel was transferred to Veeravanallur. His transfer left the infant Congregation as an orphan. From there he was transferred to Vadakkankulam in 1907. That prevented him from meeting the Brothers in 1907. Therefore, the Superior General and other priests had decided to transfer the Mother House of the Congregation to some other place\(^{55}\).

\(^{52}\) Bro. S. Sebastain, Thennagathin Oli, p. 69.
\(^{53}\) Ibid., p. 92.
\(^*\) *Chinna Kurippidam* is a Catholic children’s prayer book consist of traditional prayers.
\(^{54}\) Ibid, pp. 95-97.
\(^{55}\) S. Sebastian, Oliyai Ettuvom pp. 50-51.
Transfer of the Mother House to Palayamkottai

Next to Fr. Caussenal, Fr. Francis Sebathe showed some special love for the Congregation. The Bishop of Tiruchirapalli wanted to transfer it to Tiruchi\textsuperscript{56}. It was during these days that the Bishop and the Superiors thought of taking certain measures for the consolidation and expansion of the Congregation. It was with the intention of expanding the congregation, the Mother House* was transferred to Palayamkottai in July 1907\textsuperscript{57}. All Brothers except four came to Palayamkottai along with Postulants and Novices. The four brothers looked after the administration of school and the House at Irudayakulam. Among them Bro. Louis became the superior of the House\textsuperscript{58}.

The Congregation at Palayamkottai had only 8 Brothers, 13 novices and some postulants. Bro. Angelo continued to be the Superior General. They were allotted their accommodation in the eastern side of the St. Xavier’s Hostel, which belonged to the diocese. Besides, a garden and a small building were also there\textsuperscript{59}. Living in a simple building, the Brothers used a large room there as Church, while the novices were allotted the northern side room, the postulants the southern side room. The Superior General took a separate room as his residence. Toilets and kitchen facilities were provided in the eastern side of the building. The Brothers and the novices used the southern side room as their dining hall\textsuperscript{60}.

At the end of the campus, a sewing room, a book binding room and a drawing room were located. The visitors were permitted to meet the Brothers only in the parlour. Entry of ladies was strictly prohibited\textsuperscript{61}. For administrative purposes,

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p.51.
\textsuperscript{*} See Plate No. 2
\textsuperscript{57} “The Congregation of the Brothers of the Scared Heart”, a type written material, n.d. p.17.
\textsuperscript{58} S. Sebastian, Oliyai Ettuvom, p. 51.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p. 53.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
Rev. Fr. Saldanha was appointed as its Director and entrusted with the duty of instructing the novices. The Superior General and Master of Novices had to work under him.

In 1913, when the first batch of Brothers took their last vows, there were 34 members in the Congregation including the novices. The finance of the Congregation was maintained by the Bishop of Tiruchirapalli. Upto 1923, the Mother House was in the campus of the Jesuits. But when the Jesuits wanted to build their College Hostel, they had decided to shift the Mother House of the Brothers to “Grass Bungalow”.

The “Grass Bungalow” was the previous name of the present Mother House of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The campus belonged to Dr. James Supple of British East Indian Commercial Company even before 1848. Dr. Supple gave it to Mr. Ravel, the Commander-in-chief of the 31st Regiment of Madras Army on lease for Rs. 5/- Mr. Raval built the “Grass Bungalow” there. When Mr. Ravel was transferred, Dr. Supple gave its right to his wife Mrs. Maria Hosannah Supple, who had been given the full right to make use of it or dispose it of at her own will.

After her husband’s death, she bestowed it to the Bishop of Tiruchi Rev. Canos on April 9, 1874. Again, it was sold out. Now it was purchased for the diocese in the name of Rev. Bishop Canos on June 5, 1874 by Fr. Rottry. In 1923, the Bishop of Tiruchirapalli presented it to the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. The Rt. Rev. Leonard registered it on 21st October 1945 for the congregation of the Sacred Heart. This is the long history of obtaining the plot by the Brothers, where the “Grass Bungalow” was constructed. The “Grass Bungalow” was large in size and consisted of many rooms.

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62 The Indigenous Religious Congregations of India and Ceylon, Madurai, 1948, p.89.
63 Bro. S. Sebastian, Oliyai Ettuvom, p. 58.
64 Ibid., p. 76.
65 Ibid., p. 77.
66 Ibid.
with tiled roof. Once upon a time it acted as the quarters of the District Collector. After that building, a huge ground of land was there with full of trees. A well with pure water was inside. Many people took water from that well for drinking.67

In the beginning, the Brothers, the novices and postulants all resided in the same “Grass Bungalow” House. They made use of the same building for all good purposes. As it was felt that it was highly uncomfortable, they suggested to construct a separate building for Church and novices. Considering their suggestion, a foundation stone was laid on October 13, 1924 at the Eastern side of the Bungalow by the Vicar General of Tiruchi Rev. Fr. Flanchard for the construction of a building of about 150 ft. length and 60 ft. breadth.68 The Bishop of Tiruchi agreed to bear the major portion of the expenses incurred in the construction of the building. The Superior General received funds from Ceylon for this purpose. The novices and postulants had rendered physical assistance in its construction. Thus the building came up within five months.69 It was completed in the year 1927 for the expense of only Rs.2020/-. Year after year many buildings were gradually constructed within the campus.70

When the building was ready for service, many young boys came forward to join the Congregation. As a result, many branch houses came up in many other places.71 In the year 1928, the Congregation celebrated the Silver Jubilee. They conducted prayers and Masses in the birth place of the House i.e., Irudayakulum. The Brothers traveled to Irudayakulum on foot and conducted prayers and sang throughout the way.72 It is in this way that the Congregation is making a steady progress. The foundation of this institution is a great boon to the people. The devoted

67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., pp. 77-78.
69 Ibid., p. 78.
71 S. Sebastian, Oliyai Ettuvom, p. 79.
72 Ibid., p.80.
services of Fr. Caussanel and his followers thus helped to realize a long-cherished ideal of a dedicated spiritualist of France in India. The service rendered by Fr. Caussenal in Tirunelveli District is treasured very much in diocese circles and he rendered a huge service to humanity through the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. They responded to his fervent call for establishing a Church which was quite different from the other. This Congregation which had a humble beginning has grown into a banyan tree and now it is the centre of many other Churches.