

LIGHT for the BLIND

St Joseph's Hospices

Helping the Blind, Dying Destitute and Mentally ill of India

Registered Charity No. 1085698

<http://lightfortheblind.org.uk/>

In the absence of our Founder-Patron, the Rt Revd David Konstant, Bishop Emeritus of Leeds, who died on the 9th October, the honours devolve onto me to welcome the present Bishop, the Rt Revd Marcus Stock, as our new Patron. Bishop Marcus has shown great interest in our work for the dying destitute in Tamil Nadu by visiting our Hospices in January, when he also blessed and declared open our newest St Joseph's in Chengleput.

But I must write a few lines about Bishop David here. When, owing to ill health, I had to go back to India, it was he who suggested that I might start a Charity here in Yorkshire to support my work in Tamil Nadu. He himself presided over the inaugural function in the Leeds Civic Hall in August 2000, along with the then Mayor of Leeds. We had a wonderful turn-out of parishioners from the various parishes in which I had served.

Thereafter, he showed such a keen interest in our work that every year when I revisited, he insisted on reviewing all the photographs covering the progress we had made over the preceding year. 'Light for the Blind' is therefore his baby, grown now into three Hospices, giving human dignity to over 700 dying destitute, with an average of three deaths taking place every day.

May his soul rest in peace and rise in glory.

"Blessed is the womb that bore thee and the breasts that suckled thee," said the woman.

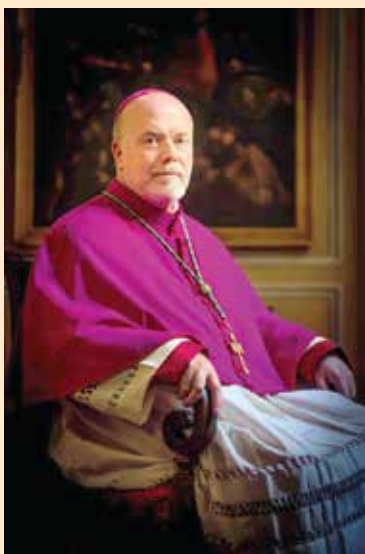
Jesus replied, "Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it."

Giving birth to many Jesuses in the persons of the destitute dying, and suckling them by our loving care till their end, is our mission, like Mary's, this Christmas and always.

A very happy Christmas and God's choice blessings to all our readers.

Father Thomas

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FOR 'LIGHT FOR THE BLIND':



Christmas is that time of year when children and families are at the centre of our thoughts and attention. Family life can bring happiness and fulfilment to so many of us. Yet, sadly, that love and care is not a reality in the lives of large numbers of people around the world. For the dying destitute in India, the love and care of family and loved ones might only be a dim memory. During my visit in January 2016 to the reception centre and the hospices for the dying destitute for those who have been rescued from the streets in and around the cities of Chennai, Dindigul and Madurai, I saw for myself how those who are amongst the poorest of the poor are being given love and dignity at the most vulnerable period of their lives.

Although I was only in India for three days, I was greatly moved and inspired by the work that Fr Thomas Rathappillil and the charity, Light for the Blind, have developed there over the last eleven years. I am proud therefore to be invited to become a Patron of Light for the Blind. Even the smallest donation we can give to this charity will make a real difference and will be a fine gift to the Christ-child who is always very near to those who are poor and helpless.

To all of you who already give towards this work, I thank you warmly for your constant and generous support. May the Lord bless you, your family and all those whom you love and care for this Christmas.

Marcus Stock, Bishop of Leeds

Bishop Marcus conducts the opening ceremony of St Joseph's Hospice Chengleput January 2016



The Bishop of Leeds, the Rt Revd Marcus Stock, along with Trustees of Light for the Blind with their spouses, and supporters from around the world, touched down at Chennai airport in January 2016. St Joseph's, Dindigul, is the first Hospice we built, and now our dedicated staff care for 324 dying destitute patients. These patients are brought in from railway stations, bus stations, from under the bridges or lying by the gutters in our towns and cities, abandoned by family and friends and left to die in utter ignominy. In the Hospice, on average, at least one death takes place on every day, but our patients die with dignity, nursed with care and compassion.

To return to the evening Reception: The Church of Tamil Nadu was represented by the Archbishop of Chennai, the Archbishop of Madurai, the Bishop of Chengleput and the Administrator of the Diocese of Dindigul. For four of the dioceses where we are working to be so splendidly represented by their top brass shows how much the Indian Church appreciates this great work of mercy achieved by one of the priests of the Diocese of Leeds. They came to thank our Bishop for this service rendered by the Leeds diocese. The presence of many people from around the world, benefactors and supporters, demonstrates the international character of this work of mercy for the poorest of the poor.



We travelled on to our largest Hospice at Paleswaram, near Chengleput. This St Joseph's has been built to accommodate 500 dying destitute, and already we are caring for 36. Here too there is on average one death taking place every day. It took about five years to complete the building work at Chengleput, owing to paucity of funds, but at last and with great joy Bishop Marcus blessed it on the evening of the 23rd January at a function attended by all our foreign dignitaries, benefactors and friends from India itself. Bishop Marcus's visit was hugely encouraging for Fr Thomas and his staff teams working at all the Hospices.

Our Bishop also would have liked to visit the sites for future projects at Pondicherry and Vellore, but he ran out of time: on the very next morning in London he was due to officiate at an episcopal ordination. So short but very sweet! "Whatever house you enter, say peace to this house...eat and drink what they offer..." (Luke 10) Your three days with us were most edifying. Your simplicity, humility, adaptability and warmth, which transcend all human prejudice, were so powerfully evident. What a model of a Christian we experienced! Thank you!

With all good wishes and prayers for Christmas and New Year

Father Thomas.



To help save costs and resources, if you would be willing to receive the newsletter and update via email rather than via UK post, please send an email to: light.4.the.blind@gmail.com

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