COMMUNITY OF THE HOLY TRINITY, TINDIVANAM

Community : Holy Trinity, Tindivanam
Address : St. Joseph’s Hospital, Police Line, Jeyapuram, Tindivanam – 604 002, Villupuram District.
Established : 2001
Archdiocese : Pondicherry / Cuddalore
Community Activities : Health Care, HIV/AIDS and Leprosy Center at Panchalam and Deepalaya Social Service Centre.

Our St. Joseph’s Hospital had a very humble origin. From 1898 to 1903, the Sisters looked after the orphans and the inmates of the convent with simple Home and Herbal remedies. From 1903 to 1955 their medical care extended to the people of Tindivanam and its surrounding villages as far as Gingee, Villupuram, Kiliyanur and Acharapakkam. They undertook long and tiring journeys by bullock cart. With little medical skill but with tremendous amount of faith in God, love and selfless care, they brought forth health and well being to the villagers.

Their effective and loving care attracted the people. Hence they demanded outpatient care. Up to 1960, the out-patients were treated in a thatched hut. More and more patients flooded in. Hence the inpatient care became a dire need.

At the request of the people, a small hospital with a bed-strength of 25 took shape in 1960. Maternity cases started flowing in and very soon the hospital was known far and wide as a famous only maternity centre in Tindivanam. The faith in Jesus inspired by the Sisters enabled people to rush into the hospital in all kinds of emergencies. Serious illnesses and life threatening snake bite cases were treated successfully. The ‘Snake Bite Medicine’, due to its affectivity, prepared by our Sisters in the Dispensary, gained world popularity.

From 1960 to 1980, the hospital was staffed with qualified Sister Nurses – there was tremendous inflow of patients to the hospital. All the while, ‘Rural Health Services’ continued. The power of the Lord so mightily worked through the Sisters, that the Convent Hospital (வல்லுனர் குடும்ப குடியாரை) was always a referral centre to the neighbouring villages.

From 1981, our Hospital was blessed with a Sister Doctor whose presence inspired greater sense of security and confidence in the people. When we look back at the path which we have tread, we fall on our knees in gratitude to the Lord who worked miracles in our Health care. The simple faith of the people in Jesus and Our Lady had accomplished what sophisticated medical science could never accomplish.

Most of the delivery cases from villages were seen in advanced labour with life threatening complications, such as impending rupture of uterus, abstracted labour, fatal bleeding and severe anemia. They were brought by village ‘Birth Attendants’ (Dhais) after having tried and abandoned. Often patients were seen with a few rupees or with no money at all. The Lord who is so mighty and powerful never failed to face these poor unfortunate children of Him.
We could carry out our Rural Development programme, Health Education and Catechesis along with our Hospital works during this period.

As we encountered more and more complicated maternity cases, there arose a pressing need for caesarian facilities. An Operation Theatre was blessed and opened on 30.09.1995. Now the Hospital is well equipped with an ultrasound scan and Laboratory with all the investigation facilities.

Responding to the call of the hour, Evangelization 2000 AD, we are using our Medical Care as a means of Evangelization. The Spirit of God has empowered us to continue these ministries. Now we go out to the villages not only with medicines but also with the Word of God.

(Extract from the ‘Centenary Souvenir’ of St. Joseph’s Convent, Tindivanam: 1898-1908)

**Updates:** In 1999, the construction of a new Hospital at Jeyapuram started, along with a residential house for the Sisters, in the cultivation land belonging to the Community of St. Basil. This is located ½ km off the Tindivanam-Puducherry main road. On 22nd September 2001 these buildings were blessed and inaugurated by Most Rev. Dr. S. Michael Augustine, Archbishop of Pondicherry-Cuddalore.

- The new Hospital has got 80 beds, with maternity, surgical, medical, pediatric, operation theatre, laboratory and other emergency facilities.
- For 24 hours of the day and night medical facilities are made available by our Medical personnel Sisters and Doctors, including our Sr. (Dr.) Sindhu.
- In 2013, we have started a “Palliative Care Unit” for the terminally ill patients.

**Leper Colony / HIV-AIDS Centre:** In the early 1960s about 40 Leprosy patients were living in a settlement near Tindivanam, off the Trichy–Chennai High-ways. For help and support they used to approach Rev. Fr. Edward Francis, the then Director of TNBCLC, Tindivanam. Often the High Ways Department used to dismantle their little huts, and those lepers were becoming displaced now and then. Seeing their plight, Fr. Edward Francis approached the Collector and successfully obtained “Patta” for their residential land; got 29 houses built by the Government and settled them at ‘Panchalam’, the present area.

In 1987 when Fr. Edward Francis became the Bishop of Sivagangai, he requested Mr. Gaspar Guntipalli - a Professor at TNBCLC, and a local philanthropist to take care of this Leper Colony. Under his able guidance, the renovation of the 29 houses took place with a face-lift, new flooring, proper doors, concrete roofing, electricity connection, etc. A plot of land was purchased and a little chapel was constructed for their place of worship and an over-head tank for continuous water supply. After a prolonged yeomen service, Mr. Gaspar was unable to continue his service due to his old age. He wished that the noble work began by Bishop Edward Francis be continued for the development of Leper People and their children.

On 17th July 2008, this mission was graciously accepted by us, Cluny Sisters, which was handed over to us through the Archdiocese of Pondicherry-Cuddalore.
We undertake useful interventions for the welfare of Leprosy victims, such as: food aid, medical aid, vocational guidance, educational aid for their children, etc.

On the same day (17.07.2008) we also started the “St. Joseph’s Care and Support Home” for the HIV/AIDs patients, opening a wing in the Prayer Hall cum Chapel. Gradually we started constructing a spacious wing with necessary facilities to take care of these patients. Again with the financial support from the “Holy Childhood, Australia” another wing was constructed.

Through the St. Joseph’s Care and Support Home at Panchalam, we provide the following services:

- Caring for HIV/AIDs patients
- Caring for Leprosy Deformity patients
- **Providing medical treatment** – with the support from different Centres, such as: Tindivanam LAC, Villupuram ART, Tambaram ART, DOTS, etc.
- **Education**: the non-affected children of Leper and HIV/AIDs patients are placed in different Schools: at Cheyyur, Tindivanam, Vandavasi, etc. We pay their School fees, Hostel fees; provide school uniforms, books and stationeries. They are welcomed to spend their holidays with us. During those days we spend for them to study useful skills or attend seminars for their growth and promotion.
- **Awareness programmes**: Different programmes are organized for them to make them aware of the cause and effect of their disease, and the prevention of diseases.
- **Prayer and Yoga**: In order to keep them healthy physically, mentally and psychologically we teach them Yoga once a week. Prayer sessions every day help them to get inner strength to lead a happy life.
- **Rehabilitation**: We teach them skills - to make candles, incense, surf, waste canvas, etc. We provide them with goats to rear and tri-motor cycle so as to earn a living.
- We provide their **basic needs** of food, clothing and shelter – free of cost. Sometimes, people who know about this Centre, help with their cash or kind.
- **Out Patients**: We regularly visit the patients who are in their families. We provide them with medicines and counseling, and when needed their material needs are met. We also educate their children.

**Deepalaya – The Remedial School**: Having witnessed the status of socially out caste people - the *Dalit Cobbler Community* - who were deprived of human dignity, the right to live a decent living, denial of education, etc. Sr. Anthony Savarinathan, started to collaborate with an NGO, in 2009, to run Remedial Classes in 25 villages around Tindivanam town, to cater to 1,500 students.

At present, with the help of one more Sister, 2 Field Supervisors, 3 Vocational Training Staff and 30 Remedial School Teachers, she carries on “The Rights Based Education” in 30 villages under the Cluny Social Service Society.

On 1st June 2012 she shifted Deepalaya office and Training Centre from the Hospital Campus to St. Philomena’s School campus, with more space and facilities. Within a span of 3 years they
helped develop the educational rate among the children of 30 villages. 10 dalit cobbler students have passed their Std. X Government exams and continuing their Higher Secondary.

The Deepalaya Team also conducts the following programmes regularly:

- **Remedial School** - in 30 villages, in their local church campus, for classes 1 to 9, from 5.30 to 7.30 p.m. every day, categorized according to their reading ability.
- **Vocational Training**, (Job oriented):
  - Spoken English Course (started in 2010)
  - Basic Computer Skills (started in 2011)
  - Tailoring & Dress making (started in 2011)
- **Child Right Programme**:
  - Right to Survival - Health and Hygiene
  - Right to Development - Culture, Sports, Development of skills and talents
  - Right to Protection
  - Right to Participation
- **Teacher Capacity building** - to train & update the knowledge and skill of Remedial School Teachers
- Formation of “Children’s Sangam” in 30 villages among their Target Group
- **Personality Development Workshop** - a one day training programme to promote Self Awareness, Time Management, Team Spirit, etc.
- **Health & Hygiene through Medical camps**
- **Sponsorship Programme for 7 students**

*(April 2013)*