

# **Stella Maris College Extension Project Centre at Thirupachur, Tiruvallur District, Tamil Nadu, India**

*Our inspiration, "Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible" – Francis of Assisi*

In 2006, the most Rev. Dr. Chinnappa, then Archbishop of Madras - Mylapore, made an appeal to all the Catholic institutions in the city to reach out to the rural areas and to work for the development of the people. In keeping with the vision of their Foundress, whose life was marked by a deep love for the poor, Sr. Cecilia Joachim, then Provincial Superior, responded to this appeal and requested the Management of Stella Maris College to look for a plot of land in a rural area. The search for a suitable place, initiated by Sr. Annamma Philip, former Principal of the College and supported by the two Superiors: Dr. (Sr) Florine Monis and Dr. (Sr) Rita Marneni ended with a generous gesture by Mr. Narayanan, who owned the land in Thirupachur and was willing to sell part of it for an educational institution.

Thirupachur was not unknown territory for Stella Maris. Staff and students, especially of the Social Work department, had been working in this area long before the land was purchased and had organized camps and many awareness program for the people of the village.

The Foundation stone of the building was blessed on May 9, 2013 by Fr. Raymond Peter, the Parish Priest of Thiruvallur.

Stella Maris management together with the Principal Dr. (Sr) Jasintha Quadras and faculty of the college, guided by the Superior, Sr Susan Matheikal, have studied the area and plan to respond to the needs of the people by organizing different activities. UGC-funded research program was conducted by the Department of Social Work, the findings of which fed into the planning and execution of the many initiatives to meet the needs of the local community. The collective teams of sisters and faculty at Stella Maris College have great plans for this centre and all are very enthusiastic about sharing their knowledge and expertise with the people of the area.

A generous donation of Rs.50 lakhs from Shri P.R. Ramasubrahmaneya Rajha, Chairman, Ramco Group, was an immense encouragement to start the construction of the building after its plan was approved by the Panchayat President of Thirupachur and his team, whose selfless service was gratefully acknowledged. Renewable energy in the form of solar power is used for lighting and fans.

The Stella Maris College Extension Project Centre at Thirupachur Village, Thiruvallur District of Tamil Nadu, was blessed and inaugurated by His Grace Rt. Rev. Dr George -Antonysamy, Archbishop of Madras - Mylapore on Saturday 15 November 2014 in the presence of Sr. Leena D'Souza, Provincial. The day was specially chosen by The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, Stella Maris Convent, Chennai, since it commemorates the Feast day of their Foundress, Blessed Mary of the Passion. Several FMM sisters, priests, benefactors, friends and well-wishers were present for the function.

Many projects were inaugurated and these were printed in two pamphlets in English and Tamil.

Power-point presentations illustrated the following:

Detection of food adulteration, food and nutrition, food and health, water analysis, working with women in SHG in the preparation and packaging of juice, squash, sauce, jam and pickle, and in the preparation of herbal products like herbal shampoo, pain balm, axe oil, foot care cream, etc., offered by the Faculty of the Department of Chemistry;

The Department of Botany and Social Work would provide hands-on experience to SHG women in the preparation of herbal medicinal products and offer sessions to children in schools on environmental issues and eco-initiatives;

Basic computer courses by the Department of Computer Science and Information Technology;

Spoken English classes for children and adults by the Department of English Literature;

Life skills, soft skills and employability skills by the Department of Social Work, NSS Program officers & Co-coordinators of the Social Awareness Programs;

Community radio and video conference facility, and Rural Development projects by the Stella Maris Centre for Networking and Communications.

Tailoring by an external Professional – 15 gleaming, new sewing machines set up in a classroom on the first floor were waiting to be used that afternoon by a batch from the 40 registered students.

Everyone who helped with the project was felicitated on the occasion including all the workers.

The Centre will be open to all staff and students of the FMM schools and college in Chennai, where students can come to experience rural life amidst the verdant setting of nature and reach out to the local community in a mutually beneficial environment. Together, they will learn to build a vibrant community, self-sufficient and be active in development work, and capable of lending support to each and every member.

”How much good there is to be done, I wish I had a thousand lives”, said Blessed Mary of The Passion. The Stella Maris College Extension Project Centre stands as a new testament to the spirit of selfless service of the Sisters of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. The vision of the Foundress finds expression through the thousands of female students who pass through the portals of FMM schools and Colleges.

– **Sr. Susan Matheikal, fmm**



Visitors welcomed traditionally



Stella Maris College (Autonomous) Extension Projects Centre (S.M.C.E.P.C) at Thirupachur



Sr. Leena D' Souza, fmm, Provincial lighting the the kuthivilakku



The F.M.M sisters pray together at the inauguration on Nov 15, 2014



His Grace Rt. Rev. Dr George Antonysamy, Archbishop of Madras - Mylapore blesses the building



Dr. Sr. Annamma Philip, fmm former Principal with Dr. Sr. Jasintha Quadras, fmm Principal in the audience



Power point presentation in Tamil & English of programs launched by different departments of the college in SMCEPC



His Grace Rt Rev Dr George Antonysamy, Archbishop of Madras - Mylapore hands over the first copy of Tamil pamphlet to the President of S.H.G. Adiparasakti



Sr. Leena D' Souza, from Provincial releases and hands over the first copy of English pamphlet to the President of Panchayat Union of Thirupachur Village, Thiruvallur District



Sr. Leena D' Souza, Provincial felicitates Mr. Narayanan, Land Owner at Thirupachur village, while Sr. Susan thanks him for selling land to SMCEPC.