

Palkonda – 1909

Palakonda or Palkonda is a town, Revenue Division and a mandal in the Srikakulam district in the state of Andhra Pradesh in India. In the beginning of 20th century it had a population of about 3000 people, living in a fertile valley, 120 kms North-East of Visakhapatnam. According to the descriptions of the early Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, the land was generally cultivated because of the many water canals providing irrigation. The main crops of this area were rice, indigo, sugarcane and oil seeds. Among the British troops then stationed at Palkonda, there were a few Tamil Catholic soldiers who had built a small chapel with a cemetery close to it. They had asked for a priest and Father Avrillon M.S.F.S. was the first Catholic priest sent from Visakhapatnam in 1858. Since then, the mission developed and took deeper roots through the untiring work of many valiant missionaries who followed Father Avrillon.

Palkonda was the first mission station of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Annecy. Sister Mary Zita and Sister Philomen Joseph, the chosen pioneers of the mission left Waltair at 8.00 p.m., **on 26th January 1909, and arrived at Palkonda on 27th at midday.** Rev. Fathers Eugene Ailloud and Joseph Rey welcomed them and took them to the chapel to implore God's blessings on their new endeavour. The priests then took them to their small hut "Bethlehem". This small community of Sisters was to help the priests with the religious instruction of women and young girls, to take care of the sacristy and church linen and to do the "Baptism Work".

