

## **Paralakhemundi 2005**

Paralakhemundi is an ancient Zamindari lying in the western corner of the southern portion of the Ganjam district in Orissa and it is bounded in the West by the district of Visakhapatnam and on the North by the Jaipur state and the eastern ghats which are called Maliyas or tribal agencies. The most important feature of Paralakhemundi is that there is apparent Telugu influence upon almost all aspects of its culture.

It was a long cherished desire of Rt. Rev. Joseph Das, the Bishop of Berhampur diocese, Orissa that the Sisters of St. Joseph of Annecy should open a community in his diocese. He grew up in Cuttack and knew the Sisters well and was closely associated with the Sisters from his childhood. He used to say that he was born in the Convent jeep.

The diocese of Berhampur had started St. Joseph's English Medium School at Paralakhemundi. A group of Dominican Sisters had been doing the collaborative ministry in this school. When they moved out from there, the school was facing great difficulties. Some of the parents started withdrawing their children. At this stage Rt. Rev. Joseph Das contacted Sister Mary Catherine, the then Provincial Superior of Visakhapatnam Province. After much prayer and discernment, they decided to collaborate with the diocese in the apostolate of education. Sister Marietta, Sister Vijaya and some girls from Seva Nilayam had gone ahead to prepare the place for the opening. The Convent was blessed and inaugurated on 15th May 2005. Sisters from Waltair, Palkonda and Srikakulam communities were present for the inauguration.

