

Srikakulam 1963

Srikakulam is one of the districts of the state of Andhra Pradesh, situated in the north, bordering the State of Orissa. Srikakulam town is the district headquarters. It was formerly called as Gulshanabad (Garden city) during Muslim rule. It was renamed as Chicacole by British colonial rulers and after independence it was renamed as Srikakulam. The River Nagavalli flows through Srikakulam town. Srikakulam town is surrounded by many villages and people daily come for work from different sides to the town. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Annecy from the communities of Salur, Palkonda and Parvathipuram had to make frequent visits here in connection with their schools and boardings. A priest resided here and his parish included a number of neighbouring villages, but there was no Convent or school.

In the early 60's, late Bishop Joseph Baud of Visakhapatnam had bought about 22 acres of land from the Maharaja of Vizianagaram in anticipation of Srikakulam becoming a new diocese. He also had built a house for the "New Bishop". However, this project did not materialize immediately. So, Bishop Baud persuaded the Sisters of St. Joseph of Annecy to take over the house and a small plot of his ground for a Convent and an English Medium School for the children of the officials living in the district headquarters. After repeated requests, Mother Therese Marie, complied with the wishes of his Lordship, bearing in mind the wish of the founder Father J. P. Medaille "to make known the Father's plan of love in Jesus Christ to all those to whom we are sent". It was decided that the Sisters should be in the newly constructed house and occupy the plot of land assigned to them.

On 2nd July 1963, after Mass, Sister Mary Bernardine and Sister Austin set out for the new foundation. They got into a lorry laden with all the things gifted by the other communities. The Sisters had their lunch at their own community at Vizianagaram. They resumed their journey in the afternoon and reached Srikakulam at about 4.00 p.m. To their surprise they realized that there was no one to receive them unlike other places. The parish priest, Father Thomas Parel had gone out of station. Sister Regina from Palkonda community, who had promised to be there with one or two servants to help out, also came after a day. The rooms where they were supposed to put all their things were full of wood shavings. With the help of the lorry driver, they cleaned up the place and unloaded the things. The compound around the house was like a jungle. There was no electricity and no chapel for prayer. For Mass, they went to the parish church and for a few days, the parish priest provided breakfast for them. A week after the arrival of the Sisters the electrical engineer visited them and seeing their plight sent his men to restore electrical connections.

