



Léo Jalais lighting the golden jubilee flame in the presence of the French vice-consul in Calcutta

ANUPRERONA

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Howrah Service
to the Poor
SINCE 1976

"The poor won't come to us, it's up to us to go to them."

DONATE

Letter from Father Laurent

Dear friends,

It all began in Pilkhana's humble little room, through humble work and prayer. It is there that HSP draws its roots and vitality, and where it can celebrate its Golden Jubilee this year. With this jubilee, we celebrate 50 years of compassion and service to the poorest of the poor.

We inaugurated the program of celebrations with the grand feast on January 17th in Ashaneer, Howrah. The celebrations will conclude with the closing celebration in Jalpaiguri, at Sarat Sadan, on December 19th.

This celebration is not self-congratulation. We are not here to congratulate ourselves. We must strive to continue listening to the cry of the poor, which is often lost in the tumult of the world. We must allow ourselves to be moved by these cries of suffering. Drawing strength from God's unconditional love, we will find the strength and joy to serve the most vulnerable. This is a work that, day after day, builds peace on this earth.

For this, we constantly entrust ourselves to Mary, the mother of all our homes, to whom we dedicated the new offices inaugurated on February 28th. In the old offices, we are already preparing the installation of a Museum of Compassion and Service to pay tribute to our founder and all those who followed him in nurturing and developing the charism of HSP.

We need your prayers and unwavering support now more than ever. Thank you in advance.

Lots of love,

F. Laurent +

Invitation to the charity dinner

Message from the Action for Calcutta Association:

We are delighted to invite you to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Indian association Howrah Service to the Poor (HSP) on Saturday, May 30th.

The program includes: an Indian charity dinner to benefit HSP, a talk by Damien Boyer (director of the film "Baroudeurs du Christ"), testimonials from former volunteers, a photo exhibition, and more.

This is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate this symbolic anniversary together and to express to HSP our enduring friendship, which has spanned decades, during which we have worked hand in hand to provide aid to the poorest people of West Bengal.

Reservations are required and space is limited. Please feel free to share this invitation widely with your friends and family!

DINER CARITATIF



SAMEDI 30 MAI • CONFÉRENCE ET DINER
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VENEZ DÉCOUVRIR L'ASSOCIATION INDIENNE
HOWRAH SERVICE TO THE POOR À L'OCCASION
DE SON JUBILE D'OR (50 ANS) AVEC LE
TÉMOIGNAGE DE DAMIEN BOYER,
RÉALISATEUR DU FILM :
“**BAROUDEURS DU CHRIST**”

17H/18H : APERITIF
18H/19H30 : CONFÉRENCE
19H30/21H : DINER



I book



Golden Jubilee

It's time for the grand golden jubilee! The inauguration of the jubilee year brought together nearly 600 people on January 17th in Ashaneer, Howrah.

Beneficiaries, former beneficiaries, staff, former staff, friends, donors, former volunteers, NGOs, families, priests—everyone was invited to the grand celebration. Indeed, we wanted this celebration to be for everyone. Thus, many beneficiaries of our SMCS programs, the Ashaneer special school, the special assistance program for the elderly, and the families of children in our homes were invited, because this jubilee must also, and above all, be for those we have served for 50 years.

The program was rich, beginning with a time of thanks for the contribution of all these volunteers. These thanks were extended to those who joined Father Laborde from the very beginning, and then to those who joined him along the way. It is obviously difficult at times like these to compile an exhaustive list of acknowledgments. Indeed, many people and organizations have played a crucial role in our unique history, such as the German Doctors or Dominique Lapierre, who are no longer with us. **Nevertheless, this jubilee is not just a celebration of the past; it is simply a milestone in the long history of HSP, a history we sincerely hope will continue for many years to come, especially with your support, dear friends of HSP.**

In the afternoon, a play was performed by nearly 60 children from our homes, recounting the history of HSP. Three times a week for two months, the children rehearsed this play diligently, each with a specific role.

The celebration lasted all day, but this is just the beginning of this jubilee year, which promises to be especially joyous.



You can find all the photos from the jubilee celebrations below.

This same inauguration took place a week later in Jalpaiguri at the Jordighi home. The resources were more limited, as the larger celebration in Jalpaiguri would mark the end of the jubilee year, but it was no less moving. We were delighted to welcome the Bishop of Jalpaiguri and the head of the Jalpaiguri district to this celebration. This also demonstrates that HSP's work is recognized locally. Beyond these important figures, we were able to reconnect with many former residents of the Jordighi home. They shared moving testimonies on stage, recounting their journeys. Some have had their disabilities almost completely overcome thanks to our rehabilitation programs, while others still bear a heavy burden, but all expressed their gratitude to HSP. This message resonates deeply with our staff, who dedicate so much of their time to the most marginalized members of society. That's also what the jubilee is about, a time to remember all the moments of joy and realize all the work accomplished over the past 50 years and above all to be able to see the impact that HSP has on these children for their entire lives.



The Bishop of Jalpaiguri with Bakuabari's girls

Finally, the last inauguration **took place in Asansol**. This small home in the countryside also had its own inauguration. This very special home, where the spirit of Father Laborde still lives on, has truly been transformed to welcome everyone. Once again, it was a truly joyous occasion, with the girls giving their all in their dance. We were honored by a visit from a member of the West Bengal Assembly, demonstrating the home's importance to the local community. In fact, the entire village was invited to the celebration. We were able to welcome many former residents of our homes, but many of them, despite living in the area, did not live at the Asansol home. Instead, they joined the Jalpaiguri homes when they were still open to children without disabilities.

Below is a video of one of the dances performed by the girls of Asansol, dressed in their traditional saris.

Asansol Jubilee

Howrah South Point



Regarder sur

Golden Jubilee Pictures

We must acknowledge the friends of HSP who were kind enough to come and celebrate the inauguration of the golden jubilee with us.



First, **Emmanuel and Laetitia Jousse**, the Fidesco volunteer couple who came to Jalpaiguri for two years in 1991 and later served as presidents of APC for a time, were delighted to attend the golden jubilee inauguration in Howrah. Despite the passage of time, they were able to reconnect with old acquaintances and even former residents of our homes who had become staff members!

Then **Etienne and Marie-Pierre Gaisne** came to Kolkata for the week. Etienne is a friend of Father Laborde and is now a retired hand surgeon. He notably made several trips to India, to Asansol, to operate on leprosy patients in the Asansol colony.



- Etienne and Marie-Pierre Gaisne's daughter, **Thérèse**, along with her six children and her husband Etienne, who live in Pune, India, came. Thérèse was also a former HSP volunteer more than 10 years ago!
- **Father Bertrand de Bouran** of the Paris Foreign Missions Society was also present for the occasion. This MEP priest, who spent almost 30 years in Madagascar, was able to discover HSP and also the similarities between the two countries in terms of living conditions and poverty. He took advantage of his stay to visit our home in Asansol!
- Finally, **the French Vice-Consul General in Kolkata, Philippe Kerbiriou**, was the guest of honor at our ceremony. He had already attended in September with the French Consul, who was unable to attend the inauguration.



Father Bertrand with the two volunteers of HSP



Thérèse with her family

Administrative Issues

The decision to change our name has been a very long process, initiated last April. This decision led us to uncover a number of accumulated administrative issues: an outdated official address, unpaid taxes, and licensing problems in several households. We immediately set about rectifying all of these situations.

Things are progressing well. We have received the FCRA license, validated our official address, validated the name change, and resubmitted all updated financial documents. For several months now, our bank has understandably refused to credit funds received from abroad until the name change is officially registered. Since January, we have therefore been living off our savings. The situation is uncomfortable, but manageable, thanks in particular to the remarkable work of our finance department.

However, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. The last remaining obstacles have been resolved. **We hope that everything will be settled in the coming weeks,** and we will be pleased to announce the end of this administrative ordeal in the next newsletter!

This anniversary is also an opportunity for HSP to undergo a major transformation—our new website is the first visible sign of this. Our email addresses will also change, with the adoption of a new domain name. This transfer will not take place immediately: you will be notified as soon as everything is finalized.

End of the Journey with HSP !

It's curtains for our Class X youth. At the beginning of February, **26 young people from our homes took the Madhyamik exam.** This exam marks their entry into high school but, more importantly, the end of their time in the HSP homes. These are very significant moments for our young people; some have been here for about ten years, so their departure is a major turning point in their lives. Furthermore, this is where a very big challenge arises for these young people: what will they do later in life? This largely depends on their motivation. The prospect of pursuing higher education isn't always appealing, despite all our efforts to inform them about the opportunities available to them. We try our best to offer them concrete possibilities tailored to their expectations, but social realities catch up with them. Some already want to work as day laborers, and it's always difficult to hear this because it's not what we want for our young people. These jobs don't offer decent working conditions, but they have the advantage of being easy to get and providing an immediate salary.

More broadly, it's not just a question of education, but a real question about their life plans, and few of them have a genuine long-term vision of what they want to become. So how can you find motivation when you don't know where you're going?



To celebrate their departure, 19 students from Class X, accompanied by volunteers, Marie Denizou, and her aunt, went to Nicco Park, an amusement park in Kolkata. We hope this experience will leave them with wonderful memories of the end of their time with HSP. After this lovely day, each host family had the opportunity to say goodbye to their classmates through testimonials from the children and staff. It was a very touching moment as this chapter of their lives comes to a close.

Camps Asha TICl

As in August, three computer camps were held at **Asha TICI, a Don Bosco Ashalayam center that houses a carpentry workshop run by a Frenchman named Christophe Plais**. These week-long camps allow young people to acquire basic computer skills.

The third camp was a bit special because it was for girls who had just finished their final year of high school (Grade X) who attended a more advanced computer camp. They were also able to discover the apprenticeship program between Don Bosco Ashalayam and Decathlon. This is a real opportunity for these girls, who can graduate with valuable professional experience and potentially find employment afterward. Of course, they must be willing to come, adapt to the demands of the professional world, and be eager to learn as much as possible.

As a special feature, among the instructors at this third computer camp was a former resident of our Baksarah home named **Adhyto Roy!** He had joined the carpentry apprenticeship two years earlier after his Madhyamik and studied design in parallel; we are proud to see his journey and we hope that others will be able to follow him in this path.



Visits in HSP

In addition to the Golden Jubilee celebrations, former volunteer and APC president **Marie Denizou** returned for two weeks with **her aunt Hermeline** to visit all the children. She held the position of donor relations officer in 2023. Her return is a joy for the children and staff, as they know they are not forgotten. Many children struggle to understand the temporary nature of the volunteers' mission, and some are still waiting for the return of former volunteers. This return, two years after the end of her mission, is a true testament to us here at HSP that we remain in the hearts of the volunteers.



For a change of pace, a class of **11th graders from the Saint Dominique high school in Neuilly-sur-Seine spent the day at HSP**. This high school has been organizing a charity trip for a group of 11th graders every year since 2018, in partnership with Don Bosco Ashalayam. The aim of their trip is to visit several NGOs in Kolkata and support them financially or by purchasing supplies locally. A secondary objective of this type of trip is to encourage these high school students, who come from very privileged backgrounds, to get involved in social causes.

They decided to visit HSP this year. These 16 students were able to discover Ashaneer and the Baksara center, where our young people created a truly special moment of sharing through dance. The teachers accompanying the trip expressed their gratitude and, above all, their desire to repeat this experience with HSP next year with the following graduating class. Some students even told us that their favorite day of the trip was the one spent at HSP!



Bertrand Figarol A friend of Léo Jalais, who worked for many years at L'Arche and contributed to fundraising for Asansol, was commissioned by the Prado (Father Laborde's congregation) to write a biography of Father Laborde. Father Laborde had already recounted his childhood, his arrival in India, and his life in the Pilkhana slum in his book *I Met Jesus in the Slums*, but little has been written about his 46 years at HSP. Bertrand interviewed those who had been with him in the early days of HSP, as well as those who had been involved towards the end, in order to complete the story of Father Laborde's life. Interestingly, his son, Jean, also volunteered at Ashaneer in 2012!



Daliya Dhara (Jalpaiguri's director), Father Sunil Kujur (ex governing body member), Bertrand Figarol, Father Denis and Bidyut Majunder (HSP director)

Jean-Marie Grillon, better known as Ali Baba came to visit us at the beginning of March. He visited the non-formal school in Shikarpur, located in the Jalpaiguri tea fields, and spent some time in our Howrah homes.

Other Swiss friends, a bit older this time, **Pierre Jacot**, nephew of Pierre Joseph, and **Adrien Ruchti**, spent an afternoon at HSP. They visited Agnès Baroi and chatted with Father Laurent.

This term being very busy with visits, **Axelle Noyer from the MEP volunteer** program spent three days in our homes, notably to see how the mission of the two MEP volunteers currently present was going. Unfortunately, the news for the volunteers is not very good because, due to the French government's budget cuts, VSI (International Solidarity Volunteering) contracts have been considerably reduced, and the MEP volunteer program no longer has many available. These contracts are for young people who go abroad for at least a year and allow them to receive compensation, a return bonus, pension contributions, and unemployment benefits upon their return from their mission. These are benefits that volunteers going for periods of less than a year do not have. We therefore hope to have long-term volunteers despite this drastic reduction in contracts.

Sophie Bonacina from La Guilde also came to visit the volunteers' mission. The Guild is the organization that manages the VSI, including the administrative side; thus, it manages volunteers throughout the world and actively fights with the government to restore the number of VSIs.

To conclude this tour of HSP's friends, **Father Laurent's mother, Elisabeth Bissara**, visited us. Unfortunately, her third stay at HSP did not go as planned due to health problems caused by the air pollution; she had to shorten her stay in Jalpaiguri and remain in Howrah.

Inauguration of our new office for the foundation day

This year's Foundation Day was obviously particularly special. **For Howrah, it was marked by the inauguration of our new offices.** A large procession was organized throughout the home to install a statue of the Virgin Mary to consecrate the building. This procession was followed by numerous dances performed by the children from the homes. It was a truly beautiful moment.

The following day, the director of the EPN school, who is also a Brahmin, came to bless the building during a long Hindu prayer.

Why new offices? We chose to renovate a building in the Ashaneer center to bring the departments together and improve communication. But the second objective is to connect with the beneficiaries, as our administration, finance, social services, SMCS (Social and Medical Care Services), and special assistance for the elderly will all be located in the same place. This way, all staff members will be in contact with our beneficiaries, providing additional daily motivation for our work and fostering a better understanding. **We are very grateful to the Missionary Childhood of the Pontifical Mission Societies for funding this renovation.**



Sumit Roy (financial director), Father Laurent, Bydiut Majunder (HSP Director), Léo Jalais et Swapan Sarkar (Treasurer)



Before/After



Before/After



New meeting room and new office of SMCS

This foundation day was also celebrated in Jalpaiguri at the Mogradangi children's home. The celebration was a bit more traditional but nonetheless of very high quality. Sabita Jana, our former director, organized everything with the children for this very special day. As this day was also Father Laborde's birthday, everyone was able to pay him a special tribute with, once again, a play prepared by the children!



Disabled children of Mogradangi

Portrait

Krishna Tudu, young boy of 14 years old living in Jordighi home

Krishna is from the Darjeeling district (adjacent to Jalpaiguri) who comes from a very poor family of ten living in a small pucca house in a remote rural area. When he was six years old, he fell off his bicycle and suffered an open fracture of his left knee. Poorly treated, his wound became infected, and he had to spend three months in the hospital. Unfortunately, the infection had serious consequences, as his left leg received no further treatment, leaving him with a knee that contracted over time, eventually reaching only 75% of its normal range of motion. **He suffered for many years from this disability caused by the accident and the fact that he could not use his left leg.**

A veterinarian familiar with Krishna's situation and the work of HSP put us in touch with his family, and we conducted an initial home visit. The second step was convincing the parents to entrust Krishna's care to us so they could have their surgery. With the support of the same veterinarian, the parents agreed, and Krishna was finally admitted to the Jordighi home in 2023.

Thanks to the support of Pro-Interplast, he underwent his first surgery in December 2024, followed by a second in August 2025, during which he spent almost a month recovering in Howrah. Once the surgeries were complete, his leg could be straightened and extended. With the care of the staff, the physiotherapist, and his grandfather, who accompanied him throughout his operations, Krishna's condition improved considerably. After many months of physiotherapy, he can now use his left leg to walk with an ankle and foot brace made by our workshop in Jordighi. However, the journey is not yet over, as he still has many years of physiotherapy ahead of him for optimal rehabilitation.

The three photos below show its evolution over time from its arrival in Jordighi to the present day.



Celebration in HSP

To complement the previous Anuprerna article on festivals in West Bengal, here is what we were able to celebrate at HSP during the last quarter:

- **Swami Vivekananda's Birthday**

Swami Vivekananda was a 19th-century Hindu monk, philosopher, and author born in Kolkata, considered one of India's greatest intellectuals. He was one of the first to introduce Hinduism to the Western world, giving lectures in the USA and England. He also made a significant contribution to the development of Indian nationalism under the British Raj.

- **Saraswati Puja**

Celebrated on January 23rd, Saraswati is the goddess of education, knowledge, and the arts. She is a very important goddess in Hinduism, as she is part of the feminine trinity with Lakshmi and Parvati. It is a very important festival for all students, as many pray to her for good academic results. Each household erects a small shrine in honor of this goddess, and during the Hindu prayer led by a Brahmin, all the children place their school notebooks around the statue of the goddess. At the end of the day, the statue of the goddess is thrown into the Hoogly River.

- **Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's Birthday**

Subhas Chandra Bose was a prominent figure in the Indian independence movement of the early 20th century. His title, Netaji, means "Respected Leader." He joined Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent movement in the 1920s and became one of its leaders. Before World War II, numerous tensions arose between him and Gandhi regarding their vision of Indian independence and the non-violent movement. Furthermore, his alliances with Nazi Germany and the Empire of Japan tarnished his legacy after his death in 1945, but he remains a hero of Indian independence.

- **Republic's day**

Republic Day celebrates the adoption of India's republican constitution on January 26, 1950. Every home and school raises the flag while singing the Indian national anthem and marching in a parade followed by military salutes. Military parades reminiscent of Bastille Day can be seen on the main avenues!



Saraswati Puja in Ashaneer



Républic day in Jordighi

- **Holi**

This Hindu festival celebrates the union of Radha and Krishna, as well as the arrival of spring. It is one of the best-known festivals outside of India and also one of the oldest. Beyond its spiritual aspect, it is above all a wonderful time for play, where children are thrilled to throw as many colors as possible at each other.

- **Women's day**

Every household celebrated this beautiful day in honor of women. The status of women in India remains complex, and they still face numerous inequalities in all areas of society. Therefore, it was the men who gave gifts to all the women, whether they were called "didis" or beneficiaries. This day is all the more meaningful because within HSP, women called "didis" hold a very special place, representing more than 60% of HSP employees!

- **Eid-ul-Fitr**

For this occasion, the celebrations don't take place in our homes but in the homes of the Muslim children in our households. This festival marks the end of Ramadan, notably with a large meal and the sacrifice of a goat, usually for those who can afford it. Our homes empty out quite a bit during this festival because all the Muslim children return to their families.

- **Ram Navami**

It is a Hindu celebration commemorating the birth of the god Ram, who is also the seventh avatar of Vishnu.



Holi in Mogradangi and in Baksarah !

News

Conselling for the children and the staffs

A priest from the diocese, accompanied by two sisters from Calcutta's family ministry, now comes to HSP every Thursday to provide mediation and support. This service is aimed at our most vulnerable young people as well as our staff. We will also be implementing counseling services with a professional.

Akash Kujur

One of the young people at the Baksarah children's home fractured his tibia and fibula in early January following a tackle during a soccer game. Despite his intense pain, we never heard him complain, even after his surgery. This fracture occurred two weeks after his father's suicide. His greatest achievement was passing the Madhyamik exam despite his post-operative condition. We wish to emphasize his exemplary courage in the face of this ordeal, and we sincerely hope that it will pay off when the results are published.

Pique-nique of the staffs

For our annual picnic, we went all out, deciding to head to the Bay of Bengal, south of Kolkata. This picnic, which was more of a weekend getaway, allowed around forty staff members to escape the stifling atmosphere of Kolkata. It was a very convivial occasion that strengthened team cohesion at HSP.

New car for Asansol

During Giuliano's visit to Asansol in October, the home's car unfortunately broke down, and having a car is essential for the home as it is located in a remote rural area.

At Giuliano's urging, his friends in Calcutta made a generous donation to purchase a new car.



Thank you all for your support; we always need it greatly, whether it be spiritual or financial!

If you would like to help us financially, please note that:

- No donation is too small!
- There is an income tax reduction equal to 66% of the amount donated, up to a limit of 20% of taxable income.

Thank you in advance for your generosity, which benefits the children, young people, and adults of HSP.

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