

= Roman Catholicism in Nepal =

The Roman Catholic Church in Nepal is part of the worldwide Roman Catholic Church , under the spiritual leadership of the Pope in Rome . As of 2011 there are over 10 @, @ 000 Catholics in Nepal , organized into one Catholic jurisdiction known as an apostolic vicariate .

Catholicism was first propagated in Nepal during the 18th century , though from 1810 to 1950 no missionaries were allowed in Nepal . Since 1951 , missionaries have again been allowed , though conversion to Christianity is still illegal . In 1983 a mission sui iuris covering Nepal was created , and in 1996 it was raised to an Apostolic Prefecture . The 1990 Nepali constitution did not guarantee religious freedom for Christians , but as of May 2006 Nepal has been declared a secular state . The interim constitution , finalized in 2007 , guarantees some religious freedom but prohibits people from trying to convert others . On February 10 , 2007 , Benedict XVI elevated the prefecture of Nepal to the rank of a vicariate and appointed Anthony Francis Sharma as the first vicar and first Nepalese bishop of the Catholic Church .

= = History = =

= = = Origins = = =

The history of Catholicism in Nepal begins with its inclusion in the diocese of Funchal , Portugal , and in 1533 as part of the diocese of Goa . From then on until 1983 , it was a part of many different Indian dioceses . Apart from a short visit of Jesuit fathers Albert d 'Orville and Johann Gruber who spent the month of January 1662 in Kathmandu , missionaries settled in Nepal proper in 1715 , when Capuchin fathers entered the Kathmandu Valley at the invitation of the Malla Kings . Father Sharma Anthony Francis , who has headed the Catholic mission and then prefecture since 1983 , has stated , " The priests were given full authority to preach Christianity and even build a church , called Our Lady 's Assumption , somewhere in Lalitpur District " . Assumption was built in 1760 , and another church called Annunciation of Our Lady was built in Bhaktapur . After the unification of Nepal by Prithvi Narayan Shah into a Hindu kingdom , the priests were asked to leave for fear they were British spies . In 1769 the priests and many Nepalese Christians left for India and settled in Chuhari , Northern Bihar , where they have remained . One Catholic priest did remain until his death in 1810 . After that , there was no Christian presence until 1950 . On May 19 , 1893 , the whole of Nepal was added to the Prefecture of Bettiah , India . It was then a part of the Patna , India apostolic vicariate from 1919 until the establishment of the mission covering only Nepal in 1983 . With the introduction of democracy in 1951 , Jesuit missionaries started educational institutions but were not allowed to evangelize . Saint Xavier 's School was established in 1951 .

= = = Mission Sui Iuris 1983 @-@ 1996 = = =

The Catholic Mission was established in 1983 with territory taken from Patna diocese in India and entrusted to the care of the Jesuits . The Apostolic Vicar , Anthony Sharma , spent Easter day in 1986 in a police station for preaching to non @-@ Christian relatives of some of the faithful attending church with them . Conversion to Christianity was forbidden by law , and was reiterated by the 1990 constitution that created a multi @-@ party democracy . Since 1990 , the law had not been enforced . In 1992 the Church of the Assumption , a new church built with its name hearkening back to the original Assumption church , was officially recognized . In 1996 the Mission was elevated to the rank of Apostolic Prefecture .

= = = Apostolic Prefecture 1996 @-@ 2007 = = =

Before King Gyanendra was stripped of his powers by the Sansad (Nepalese parliament) , there had been hope of official recognition by the state since the king was educated at a Catholic school (

St Joseph ' College , Darjeeling) and was a pupil of the current Apostoli Vicar , Nepalese Jesuit Father Anthony Sharma .

In May 2006 , church leaders welcomed the parliamentary declaration that Nepal is now a " secular state , " a change from what had been the only officially Hindu country in the world . The first open air Christian musical program was hosted to celebrate the beginning of religious freedom for the first time in Nepal 's history . A convent was inaugurated along with a training center in western Nepal in June 2006 , a first for western Nepal . Six Nepalese youths went to World Youth Day 2005 in Cologne , Germany despite having a difficult time obtaining visas from German officials . In a display of inter @-@ religious cooperation , the Olympic torch was brought to the top of the sacred mountain of Makalu , having been blessed by both Pope Benedict XVI and the Dalai Lama .

On February 10 , 2007 , Pope Benedict XVI raised the status of the missionary jurisdiction to an apostolic vicariate . While remaining exempt (directly subject to the Holy See , not part of any ecclesiastical province) , the pre @-@ diocesan jurisdiction for Nepal is since entitled to a titular bishop .

= = = Apostolic Vicariate 2007 - Present = = =

At Nepal 's first Catholic church , the Church of the Assumption in Kathmandu , there are English masses said on Sundays . Catholic Relief Services conducts many programs in the country , including counteracting the trade in women and children and aiding those affected by floods and landslides . Caritas Nepal , in partnership with Caritas Australia , helped train 12 @,@ 000 Nepalese farmers to optimize their small land holdings . In 2007 , Nepal adopted an interim constitution . It guarantees each citizen the " right to profess , practise and preserve his / her own religion as handed down to him / her from ancient times " . However , it expressly forbids people to convert others to their religion . In 2009 three missions on the border with China were opened , and land was being acquired for more churches and for Catholic schools . A delegation was not sent to World Youth Day in 2008 or 2011 , but a group of 15 youths did attend with help from the Neo @-@ Cathecumenical Way . Population estimates from 2011 show the number of Catholics exceeding 10 @,@ 000 . In 2011 the Nepal legislature proposed a series of laws making the changing of religions a crime Catholic groups and individuals raised the issue of Nepal 's anti @-@ conversion laws to the United Nations Human Rights Council during the January 2011 review cycle . The Church in Nepal provides assistance to the 35 @,@ 000 Bhutanese refugees in eastern Nepal .

= = Diplomatic relations = =

At the ambassadorial level , Nepal has exchanged diplomatic representations with the Vatican . The Holy See traditionally vests the office of Apostolic nuncio to Nepal in the Apostolic nunciature to India .

= = Persecution = =

Maoist rebels have targeted Catholic institutions in recent years , such as their torching of two Catholic schools in 2002 in the Gurkha region . A mission in Eastern Nepal was subject to attack by Maoist insurgents in 2003 , destroying a residence , clinic , chapel , kindergarten and kitchens . In July 2007 , Father John Prakash , rector of the Salesian School , was murdered by people thought to be connected to the Nepal Defence Army During Maoist attempts to call a national school strike , they attacked a small Catholic school in mid @-@ western Nepal with a bomb . In May 2009 a group called the Nepal Defence Army bombed Assumption Church in Kathmandu during a prayer service , killing three people . The church was also blackmailed for money in August 2012 by someone claiming to be a member of the group .