

Addressing the gathering as the keynote speaker, Rev. Bishop Stephen Lepcha remarked that although Father Burns may not have been officially declared a saint by the Church, his immense contribution to society made him saintly in the eyes of the people. He stated that Hayden Hall would continue to follow Father Burns' path of guiding people towards a better and brighter life. Referring to the biblical significance of the word "Jubilee," he explained that such celebrations should reflect gratitude, service, and renewal. He also noted that while many organisations exist in the Darjeeling hills, Hayden Hall has consistently continued its mission and activities since its establishment.

During the programme, various products and fruits produced by Hayden Hall were symbolically offered in thanksgiving to God.

Senior members associated with the institution described Hayden Hall as one of the most historically significant missionary social organisations in Darjeeling. Veteran staff member Khagen Subba recalled that during the 1960s, under the leadership of Father Burns, Hayden Hall had introduced night schools and adult education programmes across Darjeeling and Sikkim. According to him, the institution once operated 187 night schools and adult education centres, along with 55 primary healthcare centres and more than 500 paramedical workers. Nearly 190 teachers, instructors, and supervisors were engaged in these programmes.

He further stated that Hayden Hall's true contribution could only be understood by closely observing its grassroots work among poor, helpless, and marginalised communities. Quoting Father Burns, he said that opportunities never wait for anyone and can only be achieved through continuous hard work and dedication. Night school classes at the time reportedly operated from 9 p.m. until 2 a.m., with a minimum of three hours of teaching required each day.

Another senior staff member, Radha Karki, shared that Father Burns, a Canadian missionary, had left his homeland to serve the poor in the hills. Rather than remaining confined to urban areas, he travelled extensively to remote villages and settlements to support vulnerable communities. She explained that Hayden Hall continues to carry forward his vision and philosophy of service rooted in love and compassion.

Sujata Lepcha, Executive of Hayden Hall's Education Department, highlighted Father Burns' remarkable contribution to social development in Darjeeling. She stated that adult education and night schools were initiated with the involvement of students from St. Joseph's College, and that Father Burns also introduced scholarships for girls' education at a time when gender discrimination was deeply prevalent in society. She added that Hayden Hall had begun working on maternal and child healthcare even before government intervention in the sector.

She further mentioned that the institution continues to work actively in the areas of education, healthcare, and humanitarian service, and that the year-long Golden Jubilee celebrations would continue until December, incorporating various national and international observance days each month.

Radha Karki also paid tribute to the late employees of Hayden Hall, describing the institution's Golden Jubilee as a matter of pride not only for the hills but for the entire Gorkha community. Khagen Subba remarked that celebrating the institution's 50th anniversary was truly a moment of great fortune and honour.