



Pastor's Corner

New Year Time to be Thankful

A blind boy sat on the steps of a building with a hat by his feet. He held up a sign which said: 'I am blind, please help.' There were only a few coins in the hat. A man was walking by. He took a few coins from his pocket and dropped them into the hat. He then took the sign, turned it around, and wrote some words. He put the sign back so that everyone who walked by would see the new words. Soon the hat began to fill up. A lot more people were giving money to the blind boy. That afternoon the man who had changed the sign came to see how things were. The boy recognized his footsteps and asked, 'Were you the one who changed my sign this morning? What did you write?' The man said, 'I only wrote the truth. I said what you said but in a different way.' What he had written was: **'Today is a beautiful day and I cannot see it.'**



Do you think the first sign and the second sign were saying the same thing? Yes, in as much both signs told people the boy was blind. But the first sign simply said the boy was blind. The second sign told people they were so lucky that they were not blind.



Moral: Be thankful for what you have. Be creative. Be innovative. Think differently and positively. Live life with no excuse, and Love with no regrets. When life gives you a 100

reasons to cry, show life that you have 1000 reasons to smile. Face your past without regret. Handle your present with confidence. Prepare for the future without fear. Keep the faith and drop the fear. A good way to begin the New Year!

The most beautiful thing is to see a person smiling... And even more beautiful is, knowing that you are the reason behind it!!!

Vol. 18 of LINK heralds the beginning of the eighteenth year of the establishment of the Diocese. This is also the 205th issue of LINK which has been coming to you very regularly on the first day of each month, month after month. I keep saying that LINK is a humble and simple media tool keeping us 'linked' with each other. I am grateful to those who help me in churning out an issue each month not an easy task given our many constraints! The new issue has a new format thanks to Fr. Prasad Rao. I also thank Fr. Pulinthanath, sdb, who despite his many jobs helps with the Editorial. Finally, I thank you dear readers for the steady stream of 'one liners' encouraging us in our humble effort.

+Lumen, CSC



Editorial

New Year Wish!

Carrying forward' is something one does when accounting money from one month to another month, one year to the next and so on. Having just stepped into another New Year, we think of what we now possess that can be carried forward into the New Year.

We think of all the good things we have enjoyed during the year past. The love we received and gave, good deeds done to us and those we have done, success we enjoyed, friendship we shared, and so on. These are things we want carried forward, certainly.

There are also things we don't want carried forward - the hurts, the failures, our unhealthy tendencies that cause loss, shame, tears and tension, and so on. No, we do not want these carried forward.



We step into the New Year with grateful hearts aware of time given to us as talents to trade with. At moments of reckoning such as this, it occurs to us that perhaps the small things we do every day are more important than the big things we do once in a while.

Both as individuals and as a Diocese, we want to carry forward an even greater sense of trust in God this year, because we do not know what awaits us. All we know is that as the psalmist says 'with God we shall do bravely'.

Even as we see and hear indications and reminders of time's winged chariot inexorably hurrying past, we resolve to be better and perhaps stronger, this New Year.

We seek grace to be bolder in our resolves, resolute in our actions, and compassionate in our dealings. As we continue life's journey may we have the courage to stand for truth come what may, venture out into unfamiliar parts, and be unpretentious in our achievements.

In this New Year, may our ties be firmer, relationships truer, our families holier. As we carry forward the best that we have into the New Year, may God Himself carry us forward throughout this year and always. Happy New Year!

J. Pulinthanath, sdb

CONDOLENCES



Fr. Daniel Dalsianmung, CSC (33), was laid to rest on 23rd Dec at the community cemetery in Agartala. On behalf of the Diocese Bishop Lumen said, "We thank God for this young confrere and pray for the repose of his soul. O God please grant Eternal Rest to our brother Fr. Daniel Munga."



LINK wishes all its Readers A Happy & Prosperous
New Year 2014

Moharpara Parish

Parish Feast

The Parish Feast (Immaculate Conception of Mary) was celebrated with due solemnity on 8th Sunday at Moharpara. Bishop Lumen came on the previous evening and went to Sirduk village for administering the



Sacrament of Confirmation. One side of the chapel was full of *paddy* bags for blessing of the first fruits. On the other side were more than 80 people who were administered the Sacrament of Confirmation.

At Moharpara, Parish Feast Vigil was celebrated in a meaningful way. Fr. Bhuban gave a reflective talk on Mother Mary explaining the meaning of this particular celebration. Fr. Binoy, CSC, helped with the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Vigil ended with an hour of Adoration. On Sunday morning we began with the Holy Eucharist. A few representatives from other *mandolis* had gathered for the celebration. I thank His Lordship Bishop Lumen and Rev. Fr. Bhuban for their presence that added colour to the entire celebration.

Women Seminar



The women of Twithampui Village had a one day Seminar with Sr. Punita SJA, Diocesan Secretary for Women Commission, on 14th

December. More than 30 women from the village participated. The topic was, 'Managing the Family'. It was an interactive session and women actively participated in it. Bro. Binod Debbarma did the translation for Sr. Punita and made it very interesting.

Fr. Hormis John, CSC

Khumlwng Parish

Christmas on Wheels...with Rocks!

St. Alphonsa Parish Khumlwng shared the message of Christmas creatively this year.



Carol singing and crib making

competition at every house already began by the first week of December. One creative crib was beautifully made on the boat symbolizing human life as a journey which is incomplete without the birth of Jesus bagged the 1st prize in the Parish. On 14th December, the enthusiastic parishioners organized a vehicle rally to share the message of Christmas with all in the area. There were about 30 cars and 25 motor bikes engaged in the rally. Well decorated vehicle led baby Jesus, Joseph, Mary, angels and Santa Claus on the busy roads singing and playing drums. Christmas messages were given at three markets-Somarbazar, Bidibazar, Jampuijala and Khumulwng respectively. The rally began at 11am and ended at 5pm. It was proud moment for the parishioners to share the message of Christ's birth-the message of GOD'S LOVE.

Fr. Arun MinjSVD

Tuikarmaw Parish

Retreat as part of Silver Jubilee

Retreats are being organized as part of the ongoing celebration of the Silver Jubilee year of the Parish. There were Retreats at two different places at



Ichacharra and Lokicherra for convenience and better participation of the faithful. The preachers were Fr. Pradeep Mondal and Fr. Puban Sarkar from Kolkata. There were more than 250 people took part in Ichacharra's retreat on 20th and 21st Dec. Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro CSC, DD, Bishop of Agartala celebrated the concluding Eucharist and confirmed 40 young people. Retreat at Lokicherra was meant for Reang circle and about 300 people took part from 22nd and 23rd Dec. Carol competition too was held as part of the ongoing celebration of the jubilee year of the Parish. It took place at Itchacharra and 8 *mondolis* took part in it. The Carol competition was videotaped and broadcasted in the local cable network on the occasion of Christmas Celebration. *Fr. C. Abraham, CSC*

Mariamngar Parish

A local daily reported the following interview with Fr. Ronald SDB, Parish Priest of Mariamngar on Dec 15:

Barely nine days left for the celebration of Christmas; the Catholic families would engage in the spiritual practice of Christmas carols from tomorrow for peace that has been passed down since time immemorial and a constant in all paths and religions. There are no hard and fast rules to singing Holy Names," said Fr. Ronald to Tripura Times. After chanting hymns from the Holy Bible in the evening, the priest and other members of the church would visit houses of

nearly 63 Catholic families including other families at Madya Kashipur and Mariamngar for the Christmas Kirtan. Later, talking about the Christmas vigil, Fr. Ronald stated that in the first ages, during the night before every feast, a vigil was kept. In the evening the faithful assembled in the place or church where the feast was to be celebrated and prepared themselves by prayers, readings from Holy Bible, etc. "The Christmas day usually starts with midnight Mass or at least an early morning Mass. This is the official coming of the Christ child for which we have been waiting all during the advent period." said Father Ronald. It is worth mentioning here that the Easter vigil, namely, the Great Vigil of Easter, is a service held in traditional Christian churches as the first official celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus.

Kumarghat Parish



Kumarghat Parish has got yet another two Village Chapels. The Village Chapel at Kathalbari was inaugurated and blessed by Bishop Lumen on 15th December 2013.

The function organized at Kathalbari began with a welcome ceremony for Bishop Lumen. Thereafter we had the blessing of the chapel followed by the Holy Eucharist. There was also short felicitation program organized by the people of the village. The work of the Village Chapel was begun by Fr. Thomas Pereira. During the function, Fr. Arul acknowledged and appreciated the initiative of Fr. Thomas to erect a Chapel in an interior area of the Parish.

The Village Chapel at Moracherra was inaugurated and blessed by Bishop Lumen on 16th December. The function began at 8.45am by welcoming Bishop to the village. The Chapel named after St. Andre was blessed and inaugurated by Bishop Lumen. People expressed their gratitude to Bishop for his gracious presence in their village. They were also thankful to Fr. Thomas Pereira for helping them to build the Chapel. Fr. Arul, CSC, the Parish Priest, thanked Fr. Thomas Pereira for taking all trouble to build the chapel. "It was the result of Fr. Thomas's pastoral zeal that brought the church at Moracherra" he added. The function came to end with a simple fellowship meal. *Fr. Agi Paul csc*

40 years in Tripura--Then 1973 and Now 2013

These are a few memories of the past as I am completing exactly FORTY years as a missionary in Tripura. I do it from a religious as well as secular point of view for the curiosity of those who go through LINK every month. Fr. Hormis, CSC

Then (1973-1974)

Number of Church personnel -- 12
 2 Parishes -- Mariamnagar and Kumarghat under Silchar Diocese.
 2 Schools, one Bengali medium (up to Class VIII) and one English medium (primary level).
 2 Boarding houses for Boys and one for Girls.
 One religious Congregation of men (Holy Cross) and one of women (Bethany Sisters) and no Diocesan priests.
 A credit society called Catholic Jana Songho operated in eleven villages to promote Self Help Groups.
 Liturgical language was English and Bengali.
 No electric supply in both Mariamnagar and Kumarghat Parishes.
 One Ecumenical Christmas celebration at Agartala Children's Park in 1973.
 The old building opposite to Agartala Buddha Mandir was a haunted house and abandoned.

Now (2013-2014)

Number of Church personnel -- 180
 18 Parishes and under Diocese of Agartala.
 35 Schools (all English medium) including one College.
 15 Boarding houses for Boys and 16 for Girls.
 Five men religious congregations, fourteen women religious congregations and five Diocesan priests.
 JUST (Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura) is engaged in other development activities reaching out to all sections of society with over 550 Self Help Groups.
 Today English, Bengali and Kok borok (Tripuri).
 No Parish or sub-centre without electric supply.
 Now we have Holy Eucharistic Procession every year.
 Today Nirmala Shishu Bhavan by MC Sisters caters for the marginalized and the abandoned ones.

In the Secular field (1973-1974)

On December 17th 1973 my flight from Calcutta to Agartala was Jam Air and the fare was Rs.100.
 Paid Rs.01.35 for a litre of petrol
 Only one railway station at Dharmanagar in North Tripura.
 Concrete bridges were a rarity including the two at Asthabal and Battalla in Agartala Town.
 My land phone for local calls got connected
 Did not hear about computer.
 Congress Government was ruling the State.
 No Radhanagar Bus Stand, but a dumping ground and mosquito breeding pond.

In the Secular field (2013-2014)

Today the fare is Rs. 3,000+ and there are 12 flights daily.
 Now we pay Rs.69.80 per litre of petrol.
 Today train service is up to Agartala and work is underway up to Sabroom in South Tripura.
 Wooden bridges are becoming a rarity.
 I get connected at my will from anywhere in Tripura to anywhere in the world.
 Impossible to live without one.
 Communist Marxist Party is ruling the State.
 A beautiful Bus Stand at Radhanagar, Nagerjala, and Chandrapur.

News from JUST (Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura)

Work shop on Gender Violence (Women Empowerment)



On 16th and 17th November, a work shop on "Gender Violence" was organized at Northeastern Diocesan Social Service Society (NEDSSS) Guwahati. The Resource Person was Sr. Helen, Secretary of National Women Commission. The Workshop began by a welcoming word and introduction followed by general introduction by all the participants. Activity reports by all the representatives of the dioceses of Northeast were presented. The Resource Person then explained gender violence in the society and how we need to create awareness in the society so that all the people are informed about the injustice done to women and the girl child. The Resource Person also spoke on different legal provisions that have

come into existence at the cost of many courageous women of different times. The Resource Person gave some exercise on how to fight against injustice against women in the society. On the second day the Resource Person spoke on the qualities of a leader and human trafficking.

Achievement (FARM Northeast)

Mr. Monta Debbarma lives at Tamakari Radhanagar under Hezamara block, West Tripura. He is a farmer by profession. He started cultivating vegetables like cauliflower, Palangshak, Dhania, Carrot, Brinjal, Chilli, Tomato and Beans from 2010. He had been using chemical fertilizers from the time he started farming. He would spend Rs. 5000 to 6000 per cultivation for purchasing fertilizers. Mr. Monta Debbarma then came in contact with the animators of FARM Project by JUST and became a member of the Farmers Club under Tamakari Radhanagar. He attended a training program on preparing traditional manure. He then followed the process as taught and prepared traditional manure in his house. He started using the manure in his farm and found fast changes in the crop. He was very happy as he could see good result from the manure he had



prepared and used for the plants. Mr. Monta Debbarma expressed his joy and thankfulness to JUST for providing such training. He said that from now on he would be organic! **Vincent Deburma**



Our Readers Write

Thank you. Another good shot. Congratulations. +

George, Miao AP

It is in the first snow that the warm LINK comes in carrying the happy news of the Diocese of Agartala... And reminds us that the brain has to be put to use!...at times!... **Conrad, Montreal, Canada**

I received your kind email in which you have attached Link December 2013. Thank you very much for sending the Link regularly. +**Andrew R. Marak, Tura Meghalaya**

Thank you very much for December LINK. Congratulations for all the good works **Sr. Cecilia, VSDB, Shillong**

Thanks for the LINK. The joke about the housemaid did make me laugh! **Alan CSC, Nairobi, Kenya**

Pope Francis TIME's Person of the Year



TIME magazine has named Pope Francis "Person of the Year 2013". The international news magazine chose to bestow the honor on the Holy Father largely because of

his humility and compassion. "In a very short time, a vast, global, ecumenical audience has shown a hunger to follow him," TIME's managing editor, Nancy Gibbs, wrote in an article explaining their decision. "For pulling the papacy out of the palace and into the streets, for committing the world's largest faith to confronting its deepest needs and for balancing judgment with mercy, Pope Francis is TIME's 2013 Person of the Year." zenit.org

Blessed Joseph Vaz

The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka has been petitioning the Vatican for Blessed Vaz's canonization through the national secretariat of the cause for his canonization. Archbishop Filipe Neri Ferrao of Goa and Daman conveyed the good news to the small gathering during the Eucharistic service celebrated outside the Archbishop's House at Panjim-Goa on Nov.19. The process for canonization of Blessed Joseph Vaz has reached a crucial stage as one of the miracles submitted for his



cause has been accepted as worthy Archbishop Ferrao urged the faithful to pray for the canonization of Blessed Vaz. Following his beatification in 1995, Blessed Vaz was made the patron of the Archdiocese of Goa and Daman. Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Salvatore Pennacchio was present and blessed the statues of Blessed Vaz and Blessed John Paul II that were installed in the compound. catholicnewsnetwork

Nelson Mandela dies at 95

South African anti-apartheid hero Nelson Mandela died peacefully at home at the age of 95 after months of fighting a lung infection, plunging his nation and the world into mourning for a man revered as a moral giant. The former president and Nobel Peace Prize laureate had been frail and ailing for nearly a year with a recurring lung illness that dated back to the 27 years he spent in apartheid jails, including the notorious Robben Island penal colony. But while his passing had been long expected, President Jacob Zuma's announcement of the death shook South Africa. The streets of the capital Pretoria and of Johannesburg were hushed, and in bars and nightclubs, music was turned off as people gathered to quietly talk about the news. A somber Zuma told the nation in a televised address that Mandela "passed on peacefully in the company of his family around 20h50 on the 5th of December 2013. He is now resting. He is now at peace," Zuma said.



Jesuit Father Felix Raj awarded by Madrasa Board

The West Bengal Board of Madrasa Education has nominated Fr. Felix Raj, SJ, the Principal of St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Kolkata, for the "Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad Award 2013" on the



occasion of the 125th Birth anniversary of Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad on November 11, 2013, which is

also the "Education Day" and felicitated him for his excellent work towards the Minority community and the Society as a whole. catholicnewsnetwork

The Pope from the new world

On 24 November, a new documentary on the life and thought of Pope Francis, the man who has fascinated the world since stepping onto the international stage earlier this year, was released in Canada. It was produced by the Knights of Columbus.



This new documentary delves into the life story and thought of Pope Francis. He is the first Pope from the Americas, the first Pope who is a Jesuit, and the first to take the name Francis. The hour-long program features interviews from around the world. The Pope's close friends, his fellow priests and co-workers, his biographer, and the poor of Buenos Aires spoke about the man they had come to know. Most of the interviews and much of the film were shot on location in Argentina. "Many details of Pope Francis' life, the work he has done, and the ways in which he has defended the voiceless and Catholic principles still remain largely unknown to the public. This documentary delves into those stories" said Supreme Knight Carl Anderson (SJWEB via CNUA)

BISHOP'S PROGRAMME FOR JANUARY 2014

- 01: New Year's Day Parish Mass
- 04-05: Parish Sabah, Gandacherra Parish
- 12: Parish Mass, Nandanagar
Holy Cross College Blessing, Agartala
- 13-20: Home Visit
- 25: Hostel Blessing, Gachirampara
- 25-26: Kumarghat Parish Sabah, Kanchancherra
- 27: Clergy Meet & Recollection, Agartala
- 28: Caritas Field Visit, Mandya
- 29-30: Caritas DDC Valedictory, Bangalore

Visitors at Bishop's House

- Fr. Ronald Pereira, SVD, from Orissa
- Fr. Augustine, SVD Provincial from Guwahati
- Sr. Rosely, FMM from Delhi Province
- Fr. Pradeep, CsSR from Krinshnagar
- Bro. Jacob, SVD Economer from Guwahati
- Fr. Uttam Bongcher, SDB from Assam
- Bishop Stephen Rotluanga, CSC, from Aizawl