



Pastor's Corner

The fable of the Porcupine

It was the coldest winter ever. Many animals died because of the cold. The porcupines, realizing the situation, decided to group together. This way they covered and protected themselves; but the quills of each one wounded their closest companions even though they gave off heat to each other.

After a while, they decided to distance themselves one from the other and they began to die, alone and frozen.



So they had to make a choice: either accept the quills of their companions or disappear from the earth. Wisely, they decided to go back to being together. This way they learned to live with the little wounds that were caused by the close relationship

with their companion, but the most important part of it was the heat that came from the others. This way they were able to survive.

The Moral of the story: **LEARN TO LOVE THE LITTLE THORNS IN YOUR LIFE!**

There are no best situations in life and no perfect people either; but the best is when each individual learns to live with the imperfections of others and can admire the other person's good qualities. The story applies well to our life here in Agartala Diocese. Looking at our Diocese these past 18 years it is clear that we had to face many hardships. My life as a Bishop was like one long-drawn out struggle. I had to learn to give and take, to appreciate and question, to forgive and forget. Like most people, every time I faced a problem that sapped my patience and forbearance, I asked myself in despair: Why me? Why can't life ever be smooth and hassle-free? These questions remain unanswered even today! But we have moved on, and must move on.

I have learnt that the happiest of people don't necessarily have the best of everything; they just make the most of everything that comes along their way.

God bless. +Lumen, CSC



Editorial

Legacy of Excellence

The level of healthcare available in our state is pitifully low. The premier hospital in the state, the GobindBallav Pant

Hospital, generally known as GB, and its ever expanding infrastructure seems to give an impression that things are beginning to look up, but unfortunately they are not.

Nearly every flight that takes off from Agartala to Kolkata has a couple of patients on it leaving the state in search of better treatment. They belong to the small group that can afford the high cost involved. The vast majority has to undertake a tedious journey by bus or train to Silchar or Guwahati. Or worse still, be content with staying at home resigned to accept what fate has in store for them.

The state of Tripura, particularly the capital city of Agartala has seen considerable progress in many areas of life. Roads and urban infrastructure deserve special mention. But true progress has not taken place in the health sector. Or else the exodus of patients to hospitals outside the state would have considerably reduced.



Perhaps, ushering in progress is more than merely creating

infrastructure. There is the question of personnel that are competent, and committed. There is the big question of 'attitude'. There is the question of cleanliness and that of ensuring zero error in treatment to the extent humanly possible.

In Tripura we are far from most of these. In fact, time and again we come across frighteningly ludicrous instances of operations performed on the wrong person, or on the wrong organ, etc. This is, by no means, to undermine the commendable work being done by many doctors and hospitals in the state. Rather to point out that we need tremendous improvement in this sector.

The Church in India has traditionally been lauded for its services in the Education sector and health sector. Perhaps it is not merely the extent of our works in education and health care, but the commitment and dedication seen in these that has earned us such praise.

For the Tripura inChurch that has been playing a commendable role in the field of education for decades now, it is time, perhaps, to extend its services to the healthcare sector in a more pronounced manner.

J. Pulinthanath, sdb

Santir Rani Parish, Mariamnagar

Head on collision...but safe

The EASTER of 2014 will



remain etched in my memory for a long time to come. On 20th April, Easter Sunday morning, at about 9.30, Fr. Blasius Kujur (our Rector) and I set out for two villages for Mass to help our people to celebrate Easter nicely. It was about 10.00 am. We were approaching the Panchayat office of a place called Talakona, when a truck, carrying sand, came from the opposite side. Seeing that the truck was not giving side our driver moved out of the road; yet the driver of the truck took a sudden turn to the right and hit us, smashing a good part of the front of the vehicle. The wonder of it was that none of the three of us (including our driver) got hurt - not even a scratch! I can only thank God for protecting us so wonderfully.

When we went to the police station in the evening, the officer who had come to the spot told us: God was with you; otherwise you wouldn't be what you are now.

Fr. M. A. Isaac SDB

Parish Priest

St. Alphonsa Parish Khumulwng

Bishop unveils and lays Foundation Stone

People of Khumulwng (one of the sub-stations of the Parish) are enthusiastic and determined to construct a Chapel in their *motha* as early as possible and by their own funds. They got ready the foundation stone along with foundation pits and invited the Bishop to do the honours. It was for the first time that Bishop Lumen unveils a foundation stone before the construction is completed and lays the foundation stone for the Chapel on 24th April 2014. Khumulwng is the Head Quarters of the Tribal Area Autonomous District Council of Tripura. The Catholic community is quite enthusiastic and optimistic to construct the Chapel as early as possible and strengthen the local church.

Fr. Arun MinjSVD

St. John Paul II Parish, Baijalbari

Historic Inauguration



Don Bosco Centre, Baijalbari, situated in the Khowai District of Tripura State, is now St. John Paul II Parish. It is about 42kms to the east of Agartala Town. There are dozens of villages around Baijalbari the majority group is Debbarma with some families of Adivasi group. Since 1982 the Holy Cross Fathers started contacting the people of Khowai region. In 1985 when Moharpara became a Parish these newly contacted villages became part of

Moharpara Parish.

In the year 1990 some young people of the area who studied at and knew of Don Bosco Educational Institutions of Shillong invited Don Bosco Society to the area, while eight families donated land for Don Bosco Institution. About 20 acres of land was donated. In the year 2008 when the Parish of Mandwi was opened and entrusted to the Salesians, the area of Baijalbari-Khowai region, which was till then with Moharpara parish, formed part of the new Parish of Mandwi.

In 2009 Fr. Thomas Lakra, SDB, first PP of Mandwi, opened a school and hostel for boys and girls at Baijalbari. The infrastructure was very simple (sheds built of bamboos and tins). On 17th May 2010 Fr. Paul Panachikkal reached Baijalbari. At the time of the arrival of Fr. Paul, there were 124 students in the school from Nursery to class V. At present there are 650 students in the school (class nursery-class VIII).

Fr. Juel Ekka reached Baijalbari soon after his ordination. He reached on 24th January 2013. He took charge of the school as Headmaster. Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Mananthavadi, Kerala, reached Baijalbari on 10th April 2013. St. Vincent de Paul Convent was inaugurated on 8th June 2013 by Bishop Lumen Monteiro in the presence of Fr. George Maliekal, Salesian Provincial. The first group of Sisters consisted of Srs. Vincenza, Pushpa, and Theresa.

Since the beginning of the new Province of Silchar, a dialogue had begun with Bishop Lumen regarding the possibility of a Parish Baijalbari. Today, 27th April 2014, the new Parish was officially inaugurated Bishop Lumen Monteiro in the presence of the Provincial Superior Fr. George Maliekal, SDB and Fr. Paul Panachikkal SDB was installed as the first Parish Priest. A huge crowd of people, priests and students attended the historic inauguration. Fr. Juel Ekka SDB is the Assistant Parish Priest.

Fr. Paul Panachikkal, SDB

St. Mary's Parish, Tuikarmaw

Faith Fest

During the summer vacations St. Mary's Parish, Tuikarmaw organized Faith Fest for children studying from class I to X. During the Fest children were taught Mass prayers, other prayers and catechesis. There were 276 participants in total. The Fest was conducted in 5 villages with a fabulous response from the local church leaders and from the parents. The Parish is indebted to the valuable service rendered by Catechist Indrajit Sangma, Poilesh Marak, Sr. Valsina SSpS and Sr. Elizabeth SABS. This was the second time the Fest was organized in the Parish.



Fr. Sijo Joseph CSC, Assistant Parish Priest



Our Readers Write

Congratulations on your upcoming 18th anniversary, with thanks to God for your wonderful ministry and your tea-stall efforts in evangelization. **Tony, USA**
Thanks for the Link, which brings the tidings of growth in the Diocese and for its communities. You are blessed with a priest from the diocese.

Congratulations! **Fr. Francis Thadathil msfs, Guwahati**
Your timely and comprehensive Newsletter, is very informative covering the span of your Diocese. Love and appreciate it very much, and look forward to receiving it. **Fr. Kingsley, Jamaica**

Thank you for the Link and happy to see the website development of the Diocese. **Fr. Arulraj, CSC, Bangalore**
I received the attached copy of "LINK MAY" and thank you very much for sending it. **+Andrew, Tura**

After a gap of at least 6 months I have read the LINK for May 2014 on day one itself. I'm happy to know the activities and the great news of your Diocese of Agartala. **Melita, Mumbai**

Thanks for sending the LINK issue of May. I read it a few times and enjoyed the contents. May God bless you with good health, joy and happiness. **Mr. OJ, Erode**

Bishop Lumen Inaugurates Seminary Academic Year



The Diocesan Minor Seminary has 15 Seminarians this academic year. They belong to five different tribal communities of Tripura growing together. Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC, inaugurated the Seminary academic year 2014-15 on 24th April at Diocesan Minor Seminary-Champaknagar in a well prepared liturgical celebration. The Bishop reiterated the seminarians that minor seminary is the first step to the destination. A seminarian must strive to achieve perfection at this stage of formation. The Seminarians were highly encouraged and energized by the seminary academic year inauguration ceremony. It might be mentioned that the Seminarians performed a beautiful devotional dance at Fr. Lawrence Darlong's Ordination ceremony (first tribal diocesan priest) at Kathalcherra on 22nd April 2014. **Fr. Arun Minj SVD**

Ferrando School for Speech and Hearing, Nandanagar

We the children at Ferrando School for Speech and Hearing Nandanagar are filled with gratitude to the Sponsors of HOLY CHILDHOOD for enabling ten of us at FSSH to hear the surrounding voices and vibrations through BTE (Behind the Ear) Hearing Aid from one of the best company, Star key. Left to ourselves,



we will take years to own one of such type of instrument. THANK YOU dear Bishop and to all who have been instrumental for us to access this .Remembering and praying for you all that many more who are like us may EXPERIENCE,SEE and HEAR God through each of you who are His chosen ones. **Mallika, Jimen, Biswapriya, Chandan, Binod, Arup, Manish, Sonali, Anyakumari and Manjuranani**

News Tidbits

Francis has caused faithful to flock to Rome

Bringing in 7 million visitors and generating \$5 billion a year, religious trips in Italy have become more popular than ever before. What could be responsible? All signs point to Pope Francis. The "Francis effect" has faithful flocking to St. Peter's Square, seen through its numbers of attendees having tripled. Some attribute his voice in this time of crisis as comforting, causing pilgrims



to see Rome as a safe haven during a difficult economic time and one of crisis. Rome's tourism entity confirms this growth trend, noting Europeans, Asians, and South Americans being drawn to the Eternal City.

Father Federico Lombardi said, "Data on the frequency and origin of the pilgrims attests that the circulation has grown

considerably. Groups and people come from all parts of the world...In short, it is a universal flow of people of various nationalities with a very broad rotation."

Francis' arrival boosted Italy's religious tourism. Before Francis, less than 5% of those visiting Italy came for reasons of faith. Those that did generally visited Rome, Assisi, Padua. And then Pompeii, Loreto, Oropa, San Giovanni Rotondo, and Cascia, reported *La Stampa*. According to the latest research, foreign clientele make up 60% of the religious tourism segment: 45.3% comes from Europe and 14.9% from countries outside Europe. The study showed that 41.4% of religious tourists are between ages 30 and 50. *Zenit.org*

St. John Paul II Hospital

A new maternity hospital in Kenya is the first in the world to be named after Pope John Paul II. The St. John Paul II hospital, in the Kenyan town of Isiolo, serves rural women and children and has been operating for the past year. *Zenit.org*

Postage Stamp on Centenary of National Council of Churches

The Vice President of India Shri M. Hamid Ansari released a postage stamp on the occasion of NCCI centenary. Some excerpts of the Vice President's address: "I am happy to be here today for the release of the commemorative postage stamp to mark the centenary of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI). The NCCI is a truly representative organization of Protestant and

Orthodox churches in our country. It brings together the Churches and other Christian organizations for mutual consultation, assistance and action in all matters related to life and witness. Since its inception a century ago, inspired by Jesus Christ's eternal message of love, compassion, forgiveness and selfless service, the NCCI has made invaluable contributions towards the noble task of nation building. The NCCI provides a vibrant platform for various denominations of the Christian church and related organizations to exchange ideas and views on relevant social, economic and political issues of common interest and concern.

The Vice President of India said, "I congratulate the constituent members of NCCI for the 100 years of service to their faith and the nation. Your services towards promotion harmony in our society and

Visitors at Bishop's House

MC Srs. Josma & Ann Cecil from Shillong

BISHOP'S PROGRAMME FOR JUNE 2014

- 01: Parish Program, Agartala
- 03: Consultors Meet, Agartala
- Clergy Meet, Agartala
- 08: Pentecost, Ambassa Parish
- Installation of new PP
- 12: Missions Appeals, USA

progress of our people are admirable and deeply appreciated by all. The release of the Centenary Commemoration Postage Stamp today is a befitting tribute to the Organization and its work. I thank you for having invited me and I wish you all the best for the future. Jai Hind." (PIB via CNUA)



New Prior General of CMI

On April 5, the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI), India's first indigenous religious congregation for men, elected Fr Paul Achandy as its new Prior General for a six-year term. The election took place two days after Pope Francis approved the canonization of the congregation's founder Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Euphrasia

Elavunthikal, a member of the Congregation of Mother Carmel (CMC) that the saintly priest started for women.

Fr Achandy has a doctorate in management studies from the Indian Institute of Management, Chennai. He has set his priority as to propagate Chavara's radical, integral, holistic vision and spirituality.

CMI are a community of 2,362 professed members (1,766 priests) being sent to 28 countries as members of 15 provinces. The founding fathers of our congregation envisaged the congregation to support and enrich the Church in its overall growth through pioneering services and initiatives. *indiamatters.com*

Banga Bibhusan Award to Jesuit Father Felix Raj

The Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee called up Jesuit Father Felix Raj today who is in New York to address the Alumni of St. Xavier's and requested him to return by May 20 to receive the State's highest award, BANGA BIBHUSAN. The WB Government decided on Thursday, May 15 in a Cabinet meeting to confer the prestigious Award on Father Felix Raj in recognition of his enormous contribution to education.

He is also the recipient of:

- 2006 - Mother Teresa Millennium Award by Mother Teresa's International and Millennium Awards Committee, Kolkata.
- 2008 - First CAB Community Development Award by Catholic Association of Bengal
- 2008 - Mahdeolal Saraogi Award by Rotary Club of Kolkata
- 2011 - Lifetime Achievement Award by Core Sector Communiqué, Kolkata
- 2013 - Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad Memorial Award by West Bengal Board of Madrasa Education, Kolkata.

He is the author of six books and numerous articles in the fields of economics, education and spirituality respectively. *Goethals News via CNUA*

