

**Pastor's Corner** | Building a World of Peace, Justice and Love



Today is New Year's Day which is celebrated as World Day of Peace. What a nice way to begin the New Year by wishing each other Peace, especially when there is so much violence in our world. In Laudato Si', Pope Francis invites us to become nonviolent in our words, deeds and thoughts. It is an invitation to give up greed and the amassing of wealth at the cost of destruction. Nonviolence is the weapon that can win — that can conquer and take us forward. Whereas, violence will only breed hatred and enmity. In his recent Message for World Day of Peace 2023, Pope Francis reiterated that “We must promote actions that enhance peace and put an end to the conflicts and wars that continue to spawn poverty and death. We urgently need to join in caring for our common home and in implementing clear and effective measures to combat climate change. We need to battle the virus of inequality and to ensure food and dignified labour for all, supporting those who lack even a minimum wage and find themselves in great difficulty. The scandal of entire peoples starving remains an open wound. We also need to develop suitable policies for welcoming and integrating migrants and those whom our societies discard. Only by responding generously to these situations, with an altruism inspired by God's infinite and merciful love, will we be able to build a new world and contribute to the extension of his kingdom, which is a kingdom of love, justice and peace.”



Mahatma Gandhi promoted nonviolence. Dorothy Fernandes of Global Sisters Report says, “The young people of today have alienated themselves from the values embodied by Gandhi. We have to keep Gandhi alive for our world, which is in dire need of nonviolence in the midst of the chaos that we have created. There is an erosion of human values... We must respect this legacy that has been handed down to us, and must keep the lamp alight for future generations to be inspired and walk the nonviolent path — we owe it to those gone ahead of us. Even though we are a small band of people, we remember that it was a small band of men and women who spread the message of Jesus.” For us too, all is not lost! Fortunately there still remains a small group of good people who keep such values alive and strive to make a difference.

Let me conclude by saying a word about our Newsletter LINK. It's hard to believe that this is the 307th issue of LINK as we step into the 27th year of our Diocese's existence. I like to recall the humble beginnings of LINK in July 1996 when it was merely 2-pages of Xeroxed Reports of Parish Meetings and the Bishop's program. Today it is a slick Newsletter with a thought-provoking Editorial each month by Fr. J. Pulinthanath SDB, with news from our Parishes and Institutions, and news snippets from all over which are neatly designed with colorful graphics by Fr. Prasad Rao. And LINK is out on the first day of each month, month after month! I thank all those who help me and you dear Reader for your support. THANK YOU. I wish you a joy-filled, Peace-filled, and Grace-filled NEW YEAR 2023. **+Lumen, CSC**



**Editorial** | New Year... New Beginnings...

There's a year-ending exercise in which one is required to reflect on the year gone by and write down things under three headings: 'Flowers' – things you loved, 'Weeds' - things you would rather get rid of, and 'Fertilizer' – things you could add or improve. As we have just stepped into another year, a look back at the 'garden' we've been tending is surely very much in place. Individuals and organizations do such evaluation in an effort to record growth or the



lack of it. In the sphere that Church operates, what are the indicators that signal growth and progress? As we look back at the year gone by from this perspective, we certainly have reasons to be grateful. As a Diocese, we seem to have grown on all fronts: the number of parishes, infrastructure, members, religious congregations, personnel, programmes and even our skills – organizational, and managerial, have improved as evinced by our Conventions, Processions, Retreats Sabhas and Christomelas. As an aside, it is interesting to note that with each passing

year 'Christomela' has not only gained in popularity but has become an accepted and much anticipated Christmas event in many Parishes. If my memory serves me right, its humble origins can be traced back to the Parish of Kamaranga. In the initial years, the term seemed to sound a bit jarring to the ears, but as time passed, it got into Church parlance.

Our annual assessment should, ideally, also cover the area of faith. We do frequently use phrases like 'growing in faith', 'strengthening faith', and 'deepening faith.' Perhaps it's neither easy nor desirable to measure the level of faith; but our

knowledge about the articles of faith (which is, of course, quite a different thing) is certainly measurable. One does not presuppose the other; nor do the many things we have registered growth in, listed above, automatically imply a corresponding growth in our faith.

Our Bishop has declared this year as the Year of the Eucharist in our Diocese. As the Eucharist is at the centre of Christian life and worship, this year offers us a chance to truly strengthen our faith and enhance our knowledge of faith-related matters. We resolve to do all we can to get the best out of this opportunity. Happy New Year.

*J. Pulinthanath, SDB*

## In Memoriam

**Sr. Dr. Marie-Leoni SJ.** We are deeply saddened to learn of the passing away of Sr. Dr. Marie-Leoni SJA at the age of 86. We express our heartfelt condolences to the SJA Province of Bhubaneswar who mourn her death, and we pray for her soul.

Sr. Dr. Marie-Leoni SJA had worked in Agartala Diocese at St. Joseph Hospital for three years after completing her term as Superior General of the SJA Congregation. In a very short time she endeared herself to the patients who would flock to meet her with their ailments because of their faith in her efficacious treatment. The Diocese of Agartala remains grateful for her services and above all for her loving ways. After a long and fruitful ministry of healing in many parts of India and the world, she retired from active life and her health gradually waned. She breathed her last peacefully on 3rd of December 2022 in Vishakapatnam, AP, in the presence of her Sisters. We pray for the repose of her departed soul and ask God to grant her eternal rest.



**LINK Wishes our esteemed Readers a HAPPY NEW YEAR 2023**



## Parish News Briefs

### CATHEDRAL PARISH

#### Parish Feast



Agartala: St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Agartala, celebrated its patron feast on December 3rd & 4th. On 3rd all the Priests in the Diocese joined the Bishop for a concelebrated Mass. Bishop Lumen Monteiro C.S.C., was the main celebrant for the Holy Eucharist on 4th. In his homily he exhorted the faithful to be imbued with the missionary zeal of St. Francis Xavier. He said St. Francis had an ardent zeal and passion for Jesus. Therefore, as a true missionary he came to India to be a witness and to proclaim the Good News in southern part of our country. During the Breaking of Word Bishop insisted, all have to imbibe the missionary zeal of St. Francis Xavier. To mark the Feast more significant one-day spiritual animation was arranged for the

faithful and many received the Grace through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. On the Feast Day 38 candidates received the Sacrament of Confirmation and 6 Children received first Holy Communion. A large number of people gathered for the patron feast at the Cathedral. At the end of the Mass on behalf of the Parish Priest, the Parish Secretary Mr. Swapan Debbarma expressed gratitude to one and all. Light refreshments were served.

*Fr. Bhuban Sarkar*

### MOHARPARA PARISH

#### Chapel Blessing



It was a day to be remembered in the chronicles of St. Andre Catholic Church Hamjakma of Moharpara Parish.

Their dream of having a chapel was fulfilled on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November 2022, the first Sunday of advent. The faithful welcomed our beloved Shepherd Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC with a bouquet and welcome dance. The memorable event commenced with the inaugurating and blessing of the newly built Chapel followed by the Holy Mass. During the homily the Bishop exhorted the people to be united and strong in their faith by being regular to the Church.

Soon after the Holy Eucharist, a short felicitation program took place to honor our beloved Bishop and other dignitaries. The joy and happiness of the event ended in a concrete way by sharing the agape meal with the whole motha.

### Parish Day & Eucharistic Procession



A week prior to the Parish Day there was a spiritual renewal (Retreat) for all the 4 Zones. The people of Immaculate Conception Parish gathered together for the Parish Day and the Eucharistic Procession on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December at Moharpara Parish Center. The event commenced with the Holy Eucharist with Fr. Jeevan Kenedy SVD as the main Celebrant and a number of Priests. Fr. Joe Paul CSC in his homily exhorted the people to develop a love for mother Mary because she is always available for us.

Soon after the Holy Mass we began with the Eucharistic procession. Hundreds of faithful from 34 sub centers of the Parish professed their faith, praising and glorifying God all the way up to Duski Bazar. It was a blessing moment for the faithful because the Eucharistic Lord accompanied his people throughout the way. At the end of the Procession we had the Praise and Worship service led by Fr. Jeevan and the choir team from Twithampui. After the final blessing, a short felicitation program was held in which the Guests were felicitated. The memorable event came to an end with the common meal shared by all the participants.

*Fr. Arbok, CSC*

### KUMARGHAT PARISH

#### Elders' Day & Initiation of Altar Servers

On the 4th December 2022 Elders' Day was celebrated along with the initiation of the Altar Servers at the Parish Centre. 90 elderly people attended the celebration. The Holy Eucharist began with a grand procession with 34 children who were to be initiated for the Altar service, and a few elderly



people. Fr. Lancy D'Souza CSC presided over the Mass. After the homily 25 girls and 9 boys were initiated into the Altar service by taking an oath. Special blessings were given to both the Elderly people and the Altar Servers. After the recessional, the Parish Council Secretary Mr. Roitua Darlong and one of the Council Members Mr. Lala Darlong spoke about the greatness of elderly people and how we ought to respect and honour them. As a symbol of love and gratitude, a blanket each was presented to them.

*Bro Jojoppa*

### AMBASSA PARISH

#### Christmas Peace Rally & Blankets Distribution



Ambassa (Tripura) December 18, 2022: Holy Spirit Catholic Church, decided in the Parish Pastoral Council to have advance Christmas and blanket distribution for the poor. Accordingly, on December 18<sup>th</sup> parishioners assembled at the Parish Church, bringing along homemade sweets for the offertory, and after the Mass they were shared with all. Prior to the celebration, money was collected for the blankets and other clothes. Mothers' Associations packed them well to distribute to the families. It was after the Mass a Christmas Peace Rally was held with so many convoy of vehicles that proceeded to a village called Kolasori. The village is situated at the outskirts of the Town and inhabited by the poor Reang Tribe. More than 100 parishioners gathered from different sub-stations to mark the event. People sang carols, danced cultural dances and the Parish Priest Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD, gave the Christmas Message in the tribal language. After that the blankets and other clothes were distributed to the 50 families whose list was made ready by the local community leader Mr. Aniya Reang. He had made all the arrangements for the smooth proceedings of the occurrence. Mr. Aniya thanked everyone and especially the donors.

*News Bureau, Ambassa*

## Deanery Level Programs at Kumarghat Deanery

### Leadership Training for Parents to make Families Holier



One day Deanery level Leadership and Animation program was conducted at St. Paul's Parish Kumarghat on 26<sup>th</sup> November. The program aimed at helping the Parish Leadership Teams and strengthen the family life with family prayer. This would improve the quality of family life in the Parishes of Kumarghat Deanery. 45 participants from 5 Parishes namely Bagbasa, Kathalcherra, Kailashahar, Chailengta and Kumarghat were present for the program.

After the inaugural ceremony which began with prayer and veneration of the Holy Bible, Rev. Fr. Lancy D'Souza CSC who spoke about the basic requirements of a leader both in the family and society. He also spoke on the importance of family prayer especially reciting the Rosary. He cited the example of Venerable Patrick Peyton CSC, who moved millions of people to recite the rosary. The Session was a dialogical one. Fr. Lancy kept on reiterating the importance of family prayer saying that "the family that prays together stays together". After lunch break, there was a Panel discussion. The Speakers were Mr. Lala Darlong on responsible parenting; Mr. Piangloma Darlong on the Rosary; and Mr. Johnuna Darlong on social responsibility of Christian families. At the end of the Sessions a feedback was taken which revealed that the program was very useful. The Holy Eucharist was celebrated by Fr. Harry D'Silva CSC, the PP of Chailengta Parish.  
*Bro. Jojoppa*

### SCC North Zone Meeting at Kumarghat



On the 10<sup>th</sup> of December a Deanery level Meeting of Small Christian Communities was held at St. Paul's Parish, Kumarghat. 38 representatives from the two Deaneries Ambassa and Kumarghat, attended the

Meeting cum Animation program. SCC Zonal Secretary Mr. Piangloma Darlong read the Report and Fr. Ivan SVD, the Zonal President of SCC passed the Report. Then the parish Secretaries presented Reports of their respective Parishes. Next Fr. Lancy CSC reiterated the importance of SCCs. He said, we need to own the SCC because it is one of the main focus of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan (DPP).

Then he informed about the upcoming Agartala/Aizawl Zone Meeting at Kumarghat on 17/2/2023, for which the Resource Person would be Bishop Stephen Rotluanga CSC. Then Sr. Bastian read the Report of the SCC training program held in Shillong. It was mentioned that the next Zonal level meeting would be clubbed with a three-day SCC Convention at Kumarghat Parish. Br. Paul Bednarczyk, C.S.C., the Superior General of the Congregation of Holy Cross who was on his visit to the Parish spoke about the role of SCCs as being the basic building blocks of the Church. A sumptuous meal was served to all.  
*Bro. Jojoppa*

### Silver Jubilee – Don Bosco School Agartala



Don Bosco School Agartala celebrated the Silver Jubilee of its establishment through a delightful program held on 19th December 2022 at the School grounds. The presence of some of its former Principals, Vice Principals and Rectors made the program indeed a special one for everyone present. Fr M.C George SDB the founder Principal of the School, while addressing the large gathering of parents, students and invitees, recalled how 25 years ago it all began in a humble manner. Present on the occasion as Chief Guest was Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC, DD, who had blessed the School 25 years ago. Present also were former Principal - Fr Benny Mushahary, former Vice Principals - Fr George S. Lyngkhoi, Fr Gabriel Colney and Fr Junas Minj- former Rectors - Fr. Davis Aricatt and Fr Sunny, the Delegate for Education in the Province Fr Babu Stephen, other Salesians, Sisters and Hostelites from neighboring Auxilium and Ferrando Niwas, Holy Cross Fthers, Montfort Brothers and few city School Principals and the Salesian Pre-novices. Apart from the cultural dances and music, a powerful message about the need for working for the young boys and girls was presented through a musical drama on Don Bosco. The programme, streamed live, ended with glistening fireworks and music. The singing of the School anthem and the lowering of the school flag brought the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Don Bosco School Agartala to a close.  
*Fr. Sebastian Pallaty, SDB*

## JUST concludes Silver Jubilee Celebration



Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura (JUST) celebrated the closing ceremony of its Silver Jubilee on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2022 at JUST Centre Damdamia. The Chief Guest was Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro CSC, DD, the Chairman of JUST and Bishop of Agartala. The Guest of Honor was Fr. Sebastian Ouseparambil, Executive Director of NEDSSS, Guwahati. The former Directors Fr. Arul J. CSC and Fr. Jeevan Kennady SVD were the special Guests. The program began with a short prayer service by Sr. Jolly FS, thanking God's and

invoking His blessings for the future. The lighting of the lamp by the Guests was followed by cultural programs by the project Members. The Director of JUST Fr. Bosco Lathees remembered with gratitude the journey of Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura from the year 1997 until now. Speaking on the occasion all the Guests expressed their gratitude to JUST for their service to the people of Tripura for the past 25 years. They also congratulated and appreciated the Director and staff saying that we have achieved a lot through the services and brought blessings on all and

looking forward to reaching out more of the rural population though it is challenging. The Jubilee marks it as a stepping stone to the future. The organization is helping the people to get social justice and grow towards their own development. The two and half an hour long colorful program concluded by thanking God and all the Guests for their gracious presence. A grand lunch was served to all.

*Mr. Robert Lushai*

## Bishop's Program for January 2023

- 01: Parish Feast, Gandacherra
- 03: Clergy Meet, Agartala
- 04: CBCI Health Meet
- 07-08: Parish Sabha, Kailasahar Parish
- 14: Golden Jubilee Ratacherra *mondoli*
- 15: Parish Sabha, Kumarghat Parish
- 21-22: Parish Sabha, Kathalcherra Parish
- 23-30: CCBI Meet, St. John's Bengaluru

## Our Distinguished Guests

- Ms. Jimena Francos, Asia Rep from Manos Unidas, Spain
- Ms. Rosa Clemente, from Manos Unidas, Spain
- Frs. Soosai & Christin from Guwahati Archdiocese
- Frs. Thomas Artasheril & Francis Velayil from Aizawl Diocese
- Relatives of Fr. Simon from Udupi: Mrs. Jacinta Fds, Mrs. Lily Fds, Mrs. Venitha Menezes
- Mrs. Lovina Menezes, Mr. Philip Andrade, Mr. Frederick Menezes
- Mr. Johnson Pillai, Jesus Youth Asst. Coordinator from Gujarat
- Sr. Nanditha SRA Superior General from Austria
- Sr. Berchmans SRA Provincial Superior from Mumbai
- Fr. Ouseparambil, Executive Director NEDSSS, Guwahati