



### PASTOR'S CORONER

In this Season of Lent we have undertaken a journey of spiritual conversion in which we can and should fast from food. Nonetheless, this is not exhaustive! Fasting can be done in many other ways too; e.g. fasting from laziness, fasting from being overly critical and judgmental, etc. But there is yet another form of fasting: fasting of the tongue, fasting in speech, fasting from offending others with our words, fasting from idle gossip and quick judgment. Time and time again Pope Francis exhorts us to avoid gossip, back-biting, and speech that damage others. The Season of Lent is a time for conversion of life; this also includes conversion of the way we speak. Saint James reminds us: "We should be slow to speak and quick to listen."

Yet another area is fasting from hatred. Prof. Bholanath Dutta, Founder and President of MTC Global presents hatred allegorically: "I never knew it was that costly. I wanted to know the cost of HATRED, so I decided to branch to a shop where it's being sold." As a good businessman who was looking for a buyer, the salesman rushed out to ask what I wanted. I told him I wanted just a cup of hatred, and then he smiled and asked if I can afford it. 'How much does a cup cost?' I asked. Hmmmm! He took in a deep breath and then started: It will first of all take away your inner



peace. It will cost you incurable worries. It will eat up your heart. You will be deeply bitter whenever you set your eyes on the person you hate. When others are celebrating him or her, you will always be looking for why he or she doesn't deserve it. You will become very weak and tired of seeing the person. Whenever he or she laughs, you will cry. While others are busy planning their future, you will be busy looking for how to pull him or her down.

The Spirit of God will leave you and you will become the temple of devils where demons reside. You will begin to have different health issues like high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke, cancer, liver disease, kidney disease, etc., as long as you drink from the cup of hatred, bitterness, grudge, non-forgiveness, malice, anger, jealousy, envy, and resentment. Worse still, prayers or drugs cannot help much because you have disobeyed the natural and supernatural laws.

The seller was still counting what a cup of HATRED will cost me, when I stopped him, realizing how EXPENSIVE hatred was and I knew deep down that I couldn't afford it. "I refuse to pay such a huge amount when I can LOVE so easily and cheaply", I muttered and left.

So please, don't allow anybody to take away your joy and sell or give you hatred. Avoid gossips, bitterness, anger, etc., because a lot of times, it is what you hear about somebody that breeds hatred. This Lenten Season let us take a close look at what the Bible says about treating others with kindness and love and let us practice it! **+Lumen, CSC**

### THE 'COST' OF HATRED



### EDITORIAL

Come to think of it, we haven't yet entirely got over our tendency to prefix any mention of 'Agartala Diocese' with adjectives like 'young' and 'fledgling', and already a Jubilee is round the corner! At unguarded moments even now we forget that twenty five years have passed by since it all began on that Pentecost afternoon at Holy Cross grounds in Agartala.

The run up to the Jubilee commenced a year ago and will culminate in the grand finale due to take place in May later this year. The occasion is also, naturally, the Silver Jubilee of Bishop Lumen, the Holy Cross Priest who was ordained Bishop and took over the



### THOUGHTS ON THE APPROACHING SILVER JUBILEE

Diocese on the very day it was inaugurated, 26<sup>th</sup> May 1996.

The pandemic caused a setback to some of the programs that were planned as preparation for the upcoming Jubilee. Yet, once the grip of the Covid-19 induced lockdown slackened a little, many Parishes got into the act and organized celebration of the twin jubilee in their Parishes. They became occasions for people to be instructed on the significance of the Jubilee celebrations and opportunities for renewal. The new-found enthusiasm, despite being celebration-driven, has helped Parishes feel upbeat about their faith life. It also forges and

strengthens a sense of unity and identity as a Diocese, welcome factors indeed, especially on the eve of a

Contd. On page 2

Contd. from page 1

### Silver Jubilee.

While looking back at yesteryears, as one must on occasions such as these, there comes an urge to sum up the past now turning silver. Statistics readily come to mind as an easy way out: 1996 - nine parishes, eleven thousand Catholics; 2021 twenty five parishes, fifty thousand Catholics and so on. And yet, despite the seeming clarity of such figures, we owe it to ourselves to delve deep into the uncanny regions of the past that elude easy inferences and summations. To explore those grey areas of uncertainty, pain and struggle in the midst of which, we now know, felicity still reigns, and blessings still abound. To revisit those ecstasies and agonies of the past, now shimmering in the dark like jubilant fireflies... For it is there, in the stillness of that invisible dance that our days and ways turn truly silver..

On the threshold of the Jubilee, less than three months this side of one of history's small milestones, we acknowledge we are still 'young' and 'fledgling' as a Diocese, and as fellow travelers in the pilgrimage of life. "The Lord has done great things for us, we are filled with joy." (Ps 126:3)**J. Pulinthanath, SDB**



occasions: the Parish day and the Silver Jubilee of the Episcopal Ordination of our dear Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC. The day began with the Holy Eucharist which was presided over by the Bishop himself and concelebrated by the confreres of our community. During the Holy Eucharist our Bishop conferred the sacrament of Confirmation to 37 candidates. We also had the first communion of 10 children. During the homily the Bishop spoke about Don Bosco who was a champion of the poor and his contribution to the Church and the society of that time. This patrimony is seen by the sons and daughters of Don Bosco today and he thanked the Salesians and the Salesian family for rendering the same service to the Church here in this Diocese. After the Holy Eucharist we had a felicitation program for our dear Bishop which lasted for two hours and was followed by a fellowship meal in the school canteen.

**Fr. Christopher, SDB**

## KUMARGHAT PARISH

### Annual Parish Sabha

Under the able leadership of Fr. Lancy the Parish Priest of St. Paul's Church Kumarghat the 25<sup>th</sup> annual *Sabha* was organized at Twinaisa village on 30 & 31 January 2021. 300 people participated in the program. The main theme of the *Sabha* was "Be a Holy Family." The *Sabha* was inaugurated by hoisting the flag and prayer followed by lighting the lamps. The word of welcome was proposed by Fr. Lancy keeping in mind the Year of St. Joseph. The Resource Person was Fr. Abraham VC, P.P. Mariannagar Parish.

In the afternoon session we had the presentations of the report from Villages, Youth, Maria Sango, Parish, SCC, Parish Council and Family Ministry. In the evening opportunity was provided for Adoration and Confessions. After the supper a colourful cultural program was also organized.

The following day's Holy Eucharist was presided by Fr. Davis CSC, and concelebrated by Frs. Lancy and James. After the holy Mass general discussions were held on matters pertaining to the Parish. Announcement was made of the new parish at Kailashahar, to be bifurcated from Kumarghat Parish. Some individuals came forward to assist us financially. At the end there was an evaluation of the *Sabha*. The Vote of thanks was proposed by Twinaisa President Mr. Betharai, followed by Mr. Roitua. **Sr. Bastian, FS**

### Dual Celebrations at Kumarghat Parish

It was a great joy and privilege to each one of us to welcome our dear Bishop Lumen to Kumarghat Parish on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2021. The Parish celebrated Bishop's birthday and the Silver Jubilee of his Episcopal Ordination. All the parishioners from all the *mondolis* were present for the holy Mass. After the holy Mass Bishop cut the cake and was felicitated with a shawl and flowers.

Dalong traditional dance was performed by young and energetic girls and boys from Kanchancherra village along with fruits that were presented to our dear Bishop. Bishop Lumen expressed his gratitude to Parish Priest Fr. Lancy and all the parishioners. The program ended with tea and snacks to all the participants.

**Sr. Bastian, FS**

## MANDWI PARISH

### Blessing of Foundation for Parish Church

December 17<sup>th</sup> 2020 was an important day in the life of Mandwi Parish when Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro, CSC, together with many priest, religious, parishioners and school children laid the foundation of Parish Church of Mary Help of Christians Mandwi, during the Silver Jubilee year of the Diocese and our Bishop. The Parish that was

## New Parish at Chailengta

St. Joseph Parish Chailengta, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Parish in the Diocese was inaugurated on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2021 by Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC. It was a coincidence that just when it was decided to name Chailengta Parish after St. Joseph that Pope Francis announced the Year of St. Joseph. The whole atmosphere in Chailengta was joyful especially with the presence of 37 Priests, 20 Religious, and around 650 faithful from different Parishes. Fr. Simon Fernandes the Provincial of Holy Cross N.E. Province and Sr. Berchmans, Provincial of the



SRA Sisters graced the occasion with their presence. Fr. Thomas Pereira CSC was installed the first Parish Priest of Chailengta during the Holy Eucharist. After the holy Mass there was a short felicitation programme followed by Agape.

The new Parish in Chailengta was bifurcated from Kathlacherra Parish. Fr. Abraham CSC and Team looked into all the logistics and made all the necessary arrangements for the smooth division of the Parish. The SRA Sisters also inaugurated their Convent at Chailengta on 20<sup>th</sup> February. **Sr. Veleena, SRA**

## NANDANAGAR PARISH

### Parish Feast and Felicitation for Bishop Lumen

This year the feast of St. John Bosco was on Sunday. Like other years, on the eve of the feast we invited neighboring communities for rosary service in the church and after that supper. This year the feast of our patron saint combined two

inaugurated in 2008 and after almost 12 years the Parish is working towards a permanent Church building. Mandwi had witnessed many an upheaval in its travesty. However, the registration of the land last year and reconciliation with many *mothas* has paved the way towards “a new time” for Mandwi Parish. In his welcome speech, Fr. Davis Aricatt, SDB the Asst.



Parish Priest and Administrator of the community said that “the Parish Church building will be a sign of unity” and in building the church, there is great need to build the parish community too. Bishop Lumen Monteiro who was the Chief Guest and after blessing the foundation stone, he thanked everyone who worked in the past and especially the two agencies from Europe who contributed a sizable amount of money for the construction, and wished that the parishioners will work towards greater unity and responsibility in building up the Church. Fr. Hubert Thyrsiang SDB, the Parish Priest, thanked the Bishop and others and exhorted the parishioners to contribute towards building of the Parish Church. The program concluded with a hearty meal for everyone. **Fr. Davis Aricatt, SDB**

### MOHARPARA PARISH

#### Marriages rectified and celebrated

Immaculate Conception Parish Moharpara organized a mass Marriage rectification on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021. The ceremony commenced with the Sacraments of Baptism and Confession, followed by the Holy Eucharist presided over by Fr. Arul J CSC, the Parish Priest. During the homily Fr. Arul exhorted the nine Couples to be faithful to the Marriage Covenant till the end of their life. He further encouraged the Couples to build a God-centered family after the Holy Family of Nazareth. The Couples shared their joy by offering their gifts and thanksgiving to the Lord in a symbolic offertory. After the program, the Couples shared a common meal prepared in their honor. Heartfelt thanks to our Catechists Thomas Hrangkhawl, Gurumohan Molsom, Padma Molsom,



### Annual Sports Day celebrated

The Annual Sports Day was celebrated on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021 with full excitement in the ten JUST Coaching Centers under Ganganagar R.D. Block in Dhalai District. Various Games and Sports were organized by the Teachers. Around 350 Students participated in the event. The Students were divided into different age groups and different events like running race, long jump, blind hit and football, and were made to compete among one another. Prizes were distributed to the winners by the Project Coordinator and the village leaders. Guardians and the villagers came out to watch and encourage their children who were competing in the Sports and Games. The children also received some special messages and lessons in unity and brotherhood from their Teachers through this program. Apart from building relationship and friendship this celebration brought happiness and love amongst the students.



### Grinder breathes new life to Farmers' organic Agri-culture

Nicely packed ginger, turmeric and sticky rice powder are now easily available with farmers. These newly packed organic

Dhananjay Reang and Joy Bahadur Hrangkhawl, for the ground work which made it possible for the couples to come together.

**Fr. Arbok Lyngdoh, CSC**

### KAMARANGA PARISH

#### Emphasis on Word of God in our Parish

St. Joseph Freinademetz Katalutma Village community celebrated its Feast Day on 29<sup>th</sup> January with a spirit of missionary zeal. The village chapel is named after 1<sup>st</sup> SVD missionary to China, who believed that the language which everyone understands is the 'language of love'. Though European, the Saint had a great desire to be a Chinese even in Heaven.



The Holy Eucharist began with Bible procession. The community has given much emphasis on spreading the Word of God by reading the Bible in the family every day and by conducting a Bible Quiz at the end of every month. The village community too shared about the struggles and challenges faced by them to be faithful and committed to the Word. **Fr. Arun Minj SVD**

### DEPACHERRA PARISH

#### Senior Citizens Day celebrations in our Parish

“Old People's Day” was celebrated in Depacherra Parish on February 21, 2021 with the Holy Mass. More than 50 Senior Citizens were felicitated after Mass. Before the holy Mass they were welcomed in the Church with words of appreciation by the Parish Council Member. Fr. Bhuban praised these senior citizens for their firm and committed faith lived in these difficult times. In spite of the hard and difficult times that they have to face, they are people with great conviction of their Catholic faith, which itself is a great testimony and example for the younger generations. He also spoke about the respect that younger generations must have for the seniors and all have to listen to their stories because they have a wealth of experiences to share. During the holy Mass the whole congregation of the faithful prayed for their good health and a long life.



**Bro Khakchang Uchoi**

### JUST NEWS BRIEFS

products are now doubling their income without much hassle. Urua Farmers Club from Uruabari village in West Tripura District is one of the lead Farmers' Clubs under the JUST FARM NE-III Programme. The Members have been doing several collective activities such as Maize and Paddy cultivation and other vegetable cultivation for the past 6 years. Though they used to put in much hard work, they could hardly get the real value because finished products get more income than raw products. The Farmers used to struggle to take their produce to the Town for grinding and get a little better price in the market, but it was not worth.

At that time the FARM-NE Team of JUST, a partner of Caritas India, did the Need Assessment during Covid-19 pandemic with the Farmers and found out that this was not only time-consuming but also expensive. After consulting with the groups, Caritas India under the FARM NE-II programme provided them with a multi-purpose grinding machine.

The grinding machine provided to the farmers has now been used extensively by the whole area of people covering most of the FARM programme villages. People now do not need to go for grinding their products in the towns or far flung areas. Now it saves time, money and energy which can be used for other productive work. Moreover, the organic products such as turmeric ginger, sticky rice, etc., are consumed more and the demand for locally made products also increased.



The FARM NE team regularly follows-up with the group to ensure that the machine is being utilized and the income is generated. So far, the group has earned Rs. 26,000/- approximately and 30% of the profit is given to the group President.

JUST further plans to link Farmers with other Government Departments other than ICAR to strengthen strong linkages with government schemes and projects to generate the required assistance to benefit the smallholders. **Mr. Cyril Darlong**

## News Briefs from all over

### Victor Lyngdoh installed as Archbishop of Shillong

Most Rev. Victor Lyngdoh was installed as the Archbishop of Shillong Archdiocese on 6th February at the Cathedral of Mary Help of Christians in the North Eastern State of Meghalaya. Pope Francis appointed Most Rev. Victor Lyngdoh on 28th December, 2020. He was born on 14 January 1956, at Wahlang Village of Meghalaya. The installation ceremony was conducted by Archbishop John Moolachira of Guwahati Archdiocese in



the presence of Archbishop Dominic Lumon of Imphal, Archbishop Thomas Menampampil, Archbishop Emeritus of Guwahati, other Bishops from the Region, and several priests, religious and faithful from different parts of North-East India. Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, cabinet ministers, besides several MLAs and government officials also attended the ceremony.

Archbishop Victor has the unique privilege of shepherding the three dioceses in Khasi-Jaintia hills nurturing one to adolescence, another into adulthood and now guiding the destiny of the Archdiocese, the Mother of the Catholic Church in NE India. In so doing, he is following the footsteps of zealous pioneer missionaries like Fr. Otto Hopfenmueller, Fr. Christopher Becker, and dedicated outstanding shepherds like Archbishop Louis Mathias, Venerable Archbishop Stephen Ferrando, Archbishops Hubert D'Rosario, Tarcisius Resto Phanrang and Dominic Jala. They have left behind a rich legacy of strong pastoral traditions, a vibrant and highly motivated community of faith, but above all, a team of enthusiastic and committed Pastoral leaders. The Archdiocese of Shillong has 65 diocesan

priests, 125 religious priests, 40 religious brothers, and 550 religious sisters. **By Fr. Tom Mangattuthazhe**

### The Wall of Jesus stands tall in Pakistan

Once a week, the locals of the Youhanabad neighborhood in Lahore head to the Wall of Jesus to collect food, warm clothes and other items. These include 35-year-old Mumtaz Bibi, who lives in a street near St. John's Catholic Church. The mother of three took a dress from one of the 16 drawers of the 3-meter-tall wall with a white cross atop. The drawers are filled with items including bridal dresses, warm clothes, school uniforms, shoes,



groceries, diapers and school bags. "Word on the street helped me to locate the Wall of Jesus. I will drop the books of my children at the Wall after the annual exams. I hope they help others," she said.

Catholic philanthropist Raja Walter initiated the project last December at his house in Youhanabad. The low-income area of Lahore is home to more than 50 registered churches and about 150,000 Christians including more than 7,000 Catholics. According to Father Francis Gulzar, parish priest of St. John's Catholic Church in Youhanabad, the idea of the Wall of Jesus was inspired by Deewar-e-Mehrubani (the wall of kindness), a charitable phenomenon introduced by an anonymous Iranian in 2015. "If you don't need it, leave it. If you need it, take it," stated the inscription next to some hooks and hangers on a wall in Iran's northeastern city of Mashhad. The idea quickly spread on social media. "The Wall of Jesus is another good initiative by a lay Catholic of Youhanabad. The poor are especially benefiting from the project. It can improve interfaith harmony in our area with a sad history," said Father Gulzar. The World Giving Index ranked Pakistan as the 69th most generous country out of 126 nations between 2009 and 2018.

**Courtesy UCANews**

## OUR READERS WRITE

Thank you very much for sending us the Link regularly at the dawn of every month. We wish you God's nearness more than ever as you step into a new year of life. The story you have narrated captures the heart and it has done its work.

**Sr. Mary Thadavanal, Udaipur**

Thanks for what you write and reflect upon, and invite us readers to reflect upon, in the Pastor's Corner month in month out. It is true that one can find inspiration and guidance and encouragement anywhere even from far away India - if only one opens one's mind and heart truly. **Marco, Milano, Italia**

Thank you for the LINK... Happy to know the flourishing news of the Jubilee year. **Sr. Celine FMA, Agartala**

Thanks for the challenging and at the same time hopeful call to be "Fire" with the example of Abba Joseph.

**Fr. Sunny Joseph, Diocese of Kohima**

Thank you for the February LINK and thanks a lot for the heartwarming story of the little comfort giver.

**Fr. Nirapel, Guwahati**

Thanks Bishop Lumen. It looks like you must have helped many to cry. Yes, indeed, this is the least we can do for everyone around in these trying times. From my basketball days to your ordination and to your visits to Canada.... yes Bishop Lumen, thank you for your presence in my life. **Chacko, Canada**

## OUR DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

- Fr. Paul Lyngkot, SDB Provincial from Shillong
- Fr. P.T. Mathew, SJ Vice-Provincial from Kerala
- Sr. Alphonse Mary, SSpS Provincial from Guwahati
- Fr. Pius, CMF Provincial from Shillong
- Fr. John KJ & Fr. Jaison Cyriac, CMF from Shillong
- Sr. Catherine, SABS Provincial from Dimapur
- Sr. Rose Mary, SABS Economer from Dimapur

- Fr. Simon P. D'Souza, CSC, from Bangalore
- Sr. Berchmans, SRA Provincial from Mumbai
- Sr. Avita, SRA Vice-Provincial from Mumbai
- Fr. Walter Fernandes, SJ from Guwahati
- Fr. George Arackal, VC from Chopra, WB
- Fr. Maxim Rodrigues, SVD Regional from Guwahati
- Fr. Francis Fds, SVD from Lumshnong



## “Small is Beautiful, Less is more”

As the Diocese of Agartala celebrates its Silver Jubilee, I am happy to have been part of its initial growth and development. It was at the prime and most fulfilling



time of my ministerial commitment in Khasi Hills, Meghalaya, I was asked to “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you (Gen12/1). Thus, I landed in Bishop's House (Andre House of yester years, adjacent to Holy Cross School,

Agartala) in 1997 after a month-long Bangla learning at Ranaghat, West Bengal.

The following three years of engaging myself in a diocesan ministry at its very beginning was thrilling, challenging and very fulfilling. The happiness and joy came not in having but in being. There was a purpose and vision in all that the Diocese undertook. The facilities were meager and the challenges were greater, however there was joy more than ever.

When the shifting took place from Andre House, to the present Bishop's House location, greater identity was emerging for the Diocese though still without sufficient infrastructure. Through insignificant ways, a gradual transition of identity was also taking place from everything till then as synonymous with Holy Cross. With the celebration of the Jubilee I believe, that sense of Diocesan identity has grown and is visible now than ever.

What touched me most in those critical years were the wonderful responses of all those who were connected with the Diocese. The faithful, clergy, religious, benefactors, well wishers and friends were all so full of positive responses. There was a family atmosphere of the Church as people of God bound by the commandment of love. The words of St. Paul in Acts 4/32 were real: “All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared



everything they had”.

The initial years were marked with a great sense of 'small is beautiful and less is more'. In the smallness of things, nothing was lacking be it spiritual or otherwise. No one had any complaints on anything! It did not matter that the clergy meetings were held at various parishes in rotation or that there were only common washrooms, or that the consultants' meeting took place on a small veranda with plastic chairs, or that administrator's office and the sleeping bed was adjacent to one another, or that the sleeping bed was used as additional seating arrangements for the visitors, or that there was no possibility to have minimum office set up of a computer with back up and its accessories nor a proper place for some rest in the excruciating humidity of Agartala weather. The thrust was not in having more but in being, to build a strong vibrant Local Church.

Looking back at the last 25 silver years, we can only thank and praise the Lord of goodness for His magnificent showers of blessings. The blessings have come through the faithful, clergy, religious, well wishers and benefactors. All those who were connected with the Diocese were blessings. Even the hardest challenges that sometimes came from within and not forgetting the epitome of insurgency in Tripura in those years, the Diocese was strengthened by the power of God's grace.

*Ad multos annos* to Bishop Lumen for leading the Diocese from the front as its first Shepherd. Congratulations dear Bishop for being a symbol of charity and unity of the mystical body, the Diocese of Agartala. Thank you, Bishop Lumen, for being an authentic teacher of the faith, for building up the Body of Christ and for being a witness to Christ

in a society that has often been riddled with misunderstanding and animosity.

Congratulations and gratitude for the tireless services of the faithful, clergy, religious and benefactors for their sacrifices and determination that has brought us to the 25 years of communicating the fruits of salvation to all people of goodwill. God Bless the Diocese of Agartala and may its Silver turn into Gold.



Roy Thalackan, CSC  
(Former) Secretary,  
Financial Administrator,  
Director, JUST  
(1997-2000)