



Pastor's Corner | Grateful for my Episcopal Ministry

Today I remember with gratitude the 27 years of the Diocese and my own shepherding ministry during these past years. My memories keep going back to Pentecost Sunday of 1996 and all the years that followed that have brought me to this day. And so I have many reasons to thank God. I must confess that it wasn't always that way! Quite like the Apostles who were strengthened by the Holy Spirit after Pentecost, I too began my life as a Bishop quite ill-equipped for the task ahead of me. But something within made me strong – the Holy Spirit and the Holy Eucharist. These brought some steadiness into my ministry of shepherding. Added to this there were the priests and religious and a few supportive laity who joined me in the missionary work. They joined me on foot, in travelling rough roads and climbing slippery slopes to meet with the 'sheep' and instruct them in the faith. The other areas of my ministry were new beginnings – new presences, new religious congregations, a new minor seminary, new infrastructures, new educational institutions, a new hospital, new chapels and churches, new social development works, etc. All these fell in place as I asked God to Lead Us Onward. Then there were the many renewal Programs –by the CCR, the SCC, the CLT, the Youth, the Women and the many Meetings –Clergy, Religious, Pastoral, Catechists, Inter-religious, etc., that have



all strengthened our bonds as a church community. This is synodality –journeying together, and not leaving anyone behind. The word synodality was never used then, but the elements of synodality were at work in this Diocese. The 'shepherd having the smell of the sheep' was not spoken of then, but it was practiced and lived here. I can boast of my weekly visits to villages, week after week, season after season, till this day, in the jeep or on foot! All these were added to the paucity of personnel, infrastructures and finances, and today we can call ourselves a growing Diocese. Not just that. We are also beneficiaries of help from benefactors from India and abroad and the infrastructural developments are a proof of the same. And when beset with insurgency, malaria, corona virus, etc., we have been safe despite so much of danger on our doorsteps and health hazards in the State. We have been truly blessed! With these blessings, how CAN I NOT BE GRATEFUL? I join you all in lifting my heart to Almighty God in joy and gratitude as I step into the 28th year of my episcopal ministry. **+Lumen, CSC**



LINK along with the Clergy, Religious and the Laity of the Diocese of Agartala offer Congratulations and warm wishes to Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, on the anniversary of his Episcopal Ordination on May 26th. We thank him for his dedication and leadership. We wish him continued blessings and success in his Episcopal ministry in the Diocese.



Editorial | Boarding Houses versus Homestays

Parental guidance and disciplining of children are direly felt needs in the present times. This very column has time and again dwelt on that. Tales abound of good children going awfully wrong once they reach teenage. They vehemently resist whatever they perceive as limiting and controlling their absolute right to unimpeded expression and freedom. Our boarding houses, which in the past have played a vital role in the education of rural youth and were much sought after, are seen now by young people,



and at times by parents, as places that constrict freedom and growth rather than help study and character formation. Today's growing trend of many students leaving the Boarding once they reach Class IX is symptomatic of teenage disenchantment with control and discipline and of their inability to live without a mobile phone. Homestays have become the new craze. It seems to provide the right mixture of freedom and shelter. With insistence on timely payment of rent being often the only interference from the house owner, everyone is happy. Of course, parents who are conscientious, leave nothing to

chance. They ensure that their wards are cared for, guided, and monitored, often themselves making a great sacrifice.

Others leave their children to wade through the heady mix of freedom, peer group pressure, and their secret world on the mobile phone, all by themselves. It is difficult to assume that in such situations, things will always turn out the way we anticipate or want. Recently, someone reported the case of a father who had to take his son to the Police station himself. The ugly aftermath of Drug addiction was beginning to exceed all imaginable limits!

And we are aware, drug addiction isn't the only

danger, even if it is, perhaps the scariest. The reopening of schools and colleges is also migrating time for many students – to other States, to a new School, to the Town from the village, from the Boarding to homestay, and so on. Ideally, the challenge of finding a place to stay should not make one impervious to lurking dangers, although it is easier said than done.

These changing times are challenging times for our Institutions too, which are used to running Boarding houses from time immemorial. Do we dare read the signs of the times and explore other options that might actually work, without having to compromise on our core beliefs?

J. Pulinthanath, SDB

Parish News Briefs

MARIAMNAGAR PARISH

Divine Mercy Bible Convention



The three days of Divine Mercy Bible Convention was led by Rev. Fr. George Arackal VC. It was on 14th, 15th and 16th April 2023. The Retreat was preached in Bengali with simultaneous translation in Kokborok. About 650 people from different parts of Tripura attended the Convention. We also arranged live telecast of the program on YouTube. The Convention began with enthronement of the Holy Bible. There were also Jericho processions in the evenings led by Fr. Leenus Uthimattathil VC, Director. The Convention concluded with the solemn blessing of the Divine Mercy relic and pictures. Thanking all of you for sending people to participate in the Convention.

Fr. Leenus, VC

KUMARGHAT PARISH

International Women's Day celebration

On 16th April 2023, International Women's Day was celebrated at St. Paul's church, Kumarghat. The Resource Persons were Dr. Margaret, Sr. Jolly FS the Coordinator of Women Commission, and Sr. Bastian



FS, the Kumarghat Parish level Maria Sangha Coordinator. They dealt with different topics such as importance of health and hygiene, intake of food, how to take care of babies, importance of prayer, benefits of saying rosary daily, Christian way of parenting, teaching children to do certain sacrifices in life, use of mobile, women as good leaders, teach children good discipline and so on. Fr. Lourdu CSC was the main celebrant at the holy Mass. He encouraged Women to be active in the family, village and church. Women can do multitasking and bring peace and happiness in the society. Games were conducted and prizes were distributed to the winners. Total 80 Women from 15 villages of Kumarghat participated in the program. Parish level Maria Sangha along with Sr. Bastian took lot of trouble to organize the program. All of them enjoyed the day to the full. Vote of thanks was proposed by Maria Sangha President, Mrs. Biaki Darlong. At the end all were given snacks.

Sr. Bastian D'Silva, FS

Twin Deanery SCC Convention at Kumarghat Parish

This was a gem of an event in our two Deaneries, viz., Ambassa and Kumarghat from 25th-27th March, held at the Holy Cross School Hall all decked with pleasant buntings and flexes all were well-befitting the occasion. Most Rev. Stephen Rotluanga CSC, Aizawl Diocese's Local Ordinary as well the N.E. S.C.C. Regional Head, was personally present from the beginning till the very end. Our good Bishop Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro CSC who was present from the start



was the main Celebrant for the Solemn High Mass on the Feast of the Annunciation of Mary.

Painstaking effort had gone into such a mammoth event with the TOT (Training of Teachers). The M.C. and the Fatima Sisters, Hostel Girls & Boys, School teachers and so many others helped to make the Convention a grand success.

Rev. Fr. Lancy D'Souza CSC, the Parish Priest, Vicar General, the Dean of Kumarghat Deanery, and the Secretary of the SCC in the Diocese interactively presented "Who is the Church" and "What is SCC/Basic Ecclesial Community," the Four Marks of the Catholic Church, and the participants over 220 in number really got their "money's worth" having come from the two Deanery Parishes numbering 9 (Ambassa, Chailengta, Kamranga, Bagbasa, Gachirampara, Gonda Twisa, Kailashahar, Kathalcherra and Kumarghat).

Rev. Fr. Ivan D'Silva SVD the twin Deanery Coordinator was very powerful in presenting the Agartala Diocese's Pastoral Plan. He also conducted the Adoration with zest and meaning. We had ample time to prepare the Parish Level Action Plans pertaining to our own Parishes. Most Rev. Stephen Rotluanga CSC had brought along with him his Diocese's delegation consisting of Mr. Martin Rawngbawla, Sr. Agnes Lalsangberi MSMHC, and Miss Agathi Liansangpui Fr. Arul CSC, Fr. Sangram Senapati CM and along with them three lay leaders from Silchar.

Mr. Pianglawma Darlong, Miss Anjana Bongcher and Mr. Roitua Darlong did a wonderful job of compeering the whole event. In his thanksgiving speech Fr. Lancy thanked the good Lord for the great weather, and all those who took care of the food and lodging for such a big number of participants. It was a great, well attended and well participated SCC North Zone Convention.

Fr. Harry D' Silva CSC

KHUMULWNG PARISH

New Church blessed at Joykrishnapara

On the 23rd of April, the newly constructed Divine Mercy Catholic Church at Joykrishnapara in Khumulwng, was inaugurated and blessed by Most Rev. Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, in the presence of Fr. Jeevan SVD, the new Regional Superior of Guwahati, 24 Priests, many religious Sisters and Brothers and over 400 faithful. The faithful from the different *mothas* and Leaders from other Christian denominations, Government officials and



local political leaders were also present for the momentous event. Bishop Lumen congratulated the Parish Priest and the faithful for all their efforts in successfully completing the work which took several years to complete, and added that the Church would certainly enhance the spiritual life of people in this area. After the blessing, the Solemn Holy Mass was presided over by the Bishop and concelebrated by the Priests. This was followed by a short felicitation program which concluded with a sumptuous festive meal that

was served to all. *Bro. Jojappa*

MANDWI PARISH

A new Chapel at Bhrigudas Bari blessed & inaugurated



The people of Bhrigudas Bari, under Mandwi Parish have been waiting for so many years to get a new Chapel. God in his mercy and love listened to their prayers and on 13th April 2023 the new Chapel was blessed, where the faithful can gather together for prayers and worship. Rev. Fr. Blasius the Rector of St. Xavier Pathaliaghat inaugurated and Fr. Paul Pannachikal the Parish Priest of Baijalbari blessed the Chapel in the presence of the Parish Priest, other Priests, Sisters, Parish Council members and faithful of Mandwi Parish, followed by the celebration of the Holy Eucharist with Fr. Paul as the main celebrant. The presence of the Choir of Mandwi Parish helped the faithful to participate prayerfully in the Holy Mass. After the Holy Eucharist the people felicitated the Priests, Sisters and the special invitees. Even though there are only few Catholic families in Bhrigudas, yet they had made a lot of sacrifices for their Chapel. They also contributed a much for the Chapel. At the end of this memorable occasion a sumptuous meal was served for everyone.

Fr. Hubert, SDB

KATHALCHERRA PARISH International Women's Day celebrated



International Women's Day was celebrated on 11th & 12th March 2023 with the Theme – “Digit ALL – Innovation & Technology for Gender Equality” at Good Shepherd Parish, Kathalcherra, under Kumarghat Deanery. The Women members were present from all the five Parishes namely Kathalcherra, Kumarghat, Kailashahar, Bagbasa and Gachirampara. More than 200 members participated in the two days program. Rev. Fr. Abraham CSC the Parish Priest of Good Shepherd Parish welcomed everyone and he offered Holy Mass on the first day. Rev. Fr. Lancy D'Souza CSC

the VG of the Diocese and Dean of Kumarghat Deanery was the Chief Guest and Mrs. Dolly Reang - EM TTADC was the Resource Person for the day. Fr. Lancy made his message very colorful and meaningful with lots of examples. He was the main celebrant for the Holy Mass on 12th March. In her message Mrs. Dolly Reang encouraged the Women to use the God-given time for good purposes and have a vision in life which will enable them to live their life meaningfully. Nothing is impossible for women, she said. Let us try to reach the top and be successful in life. Sr. Bastian D'Silva FS the Advisor for Kumarghat Deanery also spoke to the Women on various aspects of life. She stressed on the importance of family prayer and faithfulness to one another in their married life. The other Members present were Mr. Zonunna Darlong the Parish Secretary, Sr. Jolly FS the Diocesan Secretary for Women Commission, Sr. Greta BS, and Mrs. Ruth Bongcher the Deanery President together with other members from Kathalcherra Parish took trouble in organizing the two days program. The men from the Parish also did their job well. Another attraction of the two days program was the exhibition cum sale from all the five parishes. Games and competitions were organized and prizes were distributed to the winners.

Sr. Jolly, FS

News Briefs from the Diocese

Women Empowerment Summit at NEDSSS, Guwahati



Two days Women Empowerment Program was organized on 18th & 19th March by Sr. Sunanda SND, the Regional Secretary for Women Commission, Northeast Region at NEDSSS, Guwahati and more than 400 Women from the 15 Dioceses of Northeast participated in it. 28 of us took part from Agartala Diocese. It was indeed a colorful and meaningful program with lots of input Sessions especially on Women Empowerment and Gender Equality. Many dignitaries were present. Archbishop John Moolachira of Guwahati who is the President of NEIRBC, Bishop Dennis Panipitchai of Miao Diocese who is the Chairman for Women Commission NE Region gave the keynote address.



Sr. Lidwin Fernandes National Secretary for Women Commission CCBI, Prof. Lukose from Don Bosco University, Guwahati, Ms. Ruth Chihampi Luiram, Anti Human Trafficking Program Coordinator of Caritas India Northeast Region, Sr. Navya FCC National Secretary for Women Council of CBCI, Sr. Margret MSMHC, Fr. Tom M Secretary for Ecumenism of NEIRBC, Mr. Joanas Lakra, Zonal Manager, Caritas India, Dr. Manisha from Railway Hospital, Maligaon, Guwahati and other Panelist. All of them in their speech enlightened the participants with their messages and said Women empowerment basically means treating men and women equally and giving equal freedom to women to develop themselves. Women empowerment means to increase and improve women's social, economic, political and legal strength. The NE Region with its uniqueness should to be the forerunner of the change that our country needs.

Sr. Jolly, FS

Games Competition for Children

JUST, under the guidance of Fr. Lathees, organized games competition in JUST campus on 13th of April for all the School going children in the vicinity to cultivate a spirit of togetherness and competition to



achieve their goals and create interest in the studies. Various games were organized according to their age, and winners were awarded prizes for their performances. There were 64 students who actively participated in the games. It was a time of fun, enjoyment and learning for many as they left aside their daily routines and spent time to refresh and reenergize themselves. The children expressed their joy by thanking the organizers for conducting such a program and requested to organize more such kind as it gives confidence and to become more of an extrovert. The day came to an end with the distribution of the refreshments to all the children.

FARM-NE IV Programme launched

Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura (JUST) launched FARM NE - IV programme on 26th March 2023 at Holy Cross School Hall, Depacherra. There were around 85 Farmers and SHGs in the launching program. The Chief Guest was Dr. Ranadir Sharma, Senior Scientist of KVK, Amarpur. The Special



Guest was Fr. Lawrence Darlong, Parish Priest cum Principal of Holy Cross School Depacherra. The program began with a welcome address and introduction of the program by Fr. Lathees S, Director of JUST. Fr. Lawrence spoke about the needs of SHG's and Farmer Clubs. He extended his full support to JUST in the future. The Chief Guest spoke on the significance of International Year of Millets, saying that all types of millets can be cultivated in Tripura. He also said that KVK will render its help to JUST for training the Farmers and SHGs scientifically and traditionally and also provide seeds. After the program he distributed foxtail millet to the Farmers. The SHGs from different villages brought wild edibles and *jhum* products and sold them. Approximately each group earned Rs.5,000 to 7,000. 100 saplings of different species were also distributed to the people. The program ended with a sumptuous meal for all. *Bro. Anvesh*

Bishop's Program for May 2023

- 01: ADPC Meeting at Cathedral Campus Agartala
- 05: Diocesan Fraternity (DF) Meeting @ Damdamia
- 06-07: Parish Feast, Kathalcherra
- 08-09: IGSSS Board Meet, Delhi
- 10-12: CBCI Standing Committee Meet @ St. John's, Bengaluru
- 14: Installation of new PP at SFX Cathedral, Agartala
- 19-20: Silver Jubilee of Province, CSC Brothers Bangladesh
- 21: Doigola Chapel blessing and Silver Jubilee
- 26: Episcopal Ordination Anniversary, JDC Agartala
- 28: Episcopal Ordination of Bishop-elect Joachim Walder @ Silchar
- 31: 'Marian Moment', Mandwi Parish

Our Distinguished Guests

- Fr. Fred Jenga, CSC, President of Holy Cross Family Minsitry, USA
- SVD Fathers Jomon James & George from Indore
- Fr. Jeevan Kennady, SVD, ING Regional Superior from Guwahati
- Bishop Thomas Mar Joseph from Bathery Diocese, Kerala
- Mr. Saji Malankara Catholic Association, Kerala
- Bishop Thomas Mar Anthonios from Gurgaum Diocese, Delhi
- Fr. Pius, CMF Provincial Superior from Shillong
- Fr. John, CMF Provincial Bursar from Shillong

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