



PASTOR'S CORNER

Feast of the Assumption; Independence Day; and Shades of sentiments hard to comprehend

The month of August has two important Feast days that coincide. While the Catholic Church commemorates the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mother Mary on 15th August, our nation celebrates its Independence anniversary on that very day. Mother India or *Bharat Mata* got its political freedom with the blessings of Mother Mary or *Mata Mariam* on that very day! Independence Day is a time for every citizen to feel proud to be an Indian. It is a time to renew our pledge of dedication and service, not just asking what the country can do for me; rather, what can I do for my country. At a time when we hear and read of atrocities and violence against fellow citizens, of bigotry and suspicion, it is not easy to feel patriotic. But then, let us ask ourselves, what have I done to help my country rise above the evil and violence, the pain and misery? The answer will surprise you. Fr. Felix Raj SJ begins his STORY TIME on CNUA thus: It is a true story and precious. A man pushed his wife to save himself from a sinking cruise ship. What kind of a man was he? Well, before you tighten your fist and clench your teeth, know that there is much more to this story than meets the apparent. It is a story that makes us reflect particularly about people we love. A cruise ship met with a calamity at sea. On the ship was a couple, after having made their way to the



lifeboat, they realized that there was space for only one person. At this moment, the man pushed the woman behind him and jumped onto the lifeboat himself. The lady stood on the sinking ship and shouted one sentence to her husband. As she was narrating the story to her class students, the teacher asked them, "What do you think the lady shouted?" One student stood up and said, "I believe she would have shouted Take care of our child!" The teacher was surprised, and asked the student, "Have you heard this story before?" The boy shook his head, "Nope, but that was what my mom told my dad before she died to disease". The teacher was deeply moved and whispered to the class, "The answer is right". The cruise ship sank. The man went home and brought up their daughter single-handedly. Several years later after the death of the man, their daughter found his diary while cleaning his room. It turned out that when her parents went onto the cruise ship, the mother was already diagnosed with a terminal illness. At the critical moment, the father rushed to the only chance of survival. He wrote in his diary, "How I wished to sink to the bottom of the ocean with you, but for the sake of our daughter, I can only let you lie forever below the sea alone." As the teacher completed the story, the class was silent. She knew that the student had understood the moral of the story that of the good and the evil in the world, there are many shades of sentiments which are hard to comprehend.

+Lumen, CSC



EDITORIAL

An Epidemic called 'Loneliness'

We all do have a 'date of birth' attached to our names. Over the course of time it will assuredly have a 'date of death' too. According to a recent video about elderly people in Japan, some will soon have another entry against their name: 'date when his/her death was discovered'! Each hour three elderly people die 'alone' in Japan, the video says. Their death comes to be known anytime between three to ten days after they have died. At times' it's the pub owner who grows suspicious of his regular customer's continued absence and cares to find out; at times it's the stench of putrid flesh that makes those in the nearby apartment alert the authorities.



By decreeing that henceforth the Church will annually observe the 'World Day for the Grandparents and the Elderly', Pope Francis made the world take note of a very vulnerable section of society. And the Bible verse "I am with you always" (Mt 28:20) that he chose as the theme of this celebration seamlessly captures the central crisis of this global phenomenon, 'loneliness'.

Traditionally one associates 'strong family ties' with our

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LINK wishes its Readers Happy Pastors Day on the Feast of St. Mary Vianney on August 4. Also Happy Independence Day and Happy Feast of the Assumption of Mary on August 15.

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country India. We also say in tribal communities there are no orphans. Whatever the veracity of these, can we take them to mean that elderly people in our country, or in our State, do not experience loneliness? One must here acknowledge that there are many families that painstakingly care for their elderly and go out of their way to ensure that *Nana* and *Dadu* do not feel lonely. In those homes they are made an integral part of all the high points of the family.

But such families are few and far between. The harsh truth is that many families conceal, beneath a veneer of respectability and political correctness, heart wrenching stories of cruelty and injustice meted out to the elderly. They consider the Grandparents a burden and hence intentionally deny them even basic rights. In such homes, the only thing the elderly have in abundance is 'loneliness.'

Japan is a case in point that societies that have low birth rate are more prone to this epidemic of isolation and loneliness. That should set off alarm bells among families and groups who are staunch supporters of the single child or two children policy. Among some tribes in Tripura, it is hardly ever that one comes across a family with more than two children!

The prospect of dying and remaining unnoticed for days on end is something we do not wish for ourselves, our dear ones or for anyone. Nevertheless, these dreadful things are bound to happen in families where relationships are weighed merely against the material benefits they bring and where simple virtues like respect and love for the elderly, concern and compassion for the needy are not fostered. **J. Pulinthanath, SDB**

KATHALCHERRA PARISH

First Fruits Festival

The Puranbari village *mondoli* celebrated the *harvest of the first fruits* with a festival on 11th July.



There were a large variety of fruits and vegetables but the most important were **p i n e a p p l e s**, exclusively brought to the church for first fruits blessing. It may be noted that this area is known for the best variety of

pineapples in the whole State, with almost every family having their own orchard where pineapples are grown in plenty.

The occasion gathered the whole Catholic community for the Holy Eucharist which was celebrated in the village Chapel after long time due to the lockdown.

Tribute from the Diocese of Agartala to Fr. Stan Swamy SJ

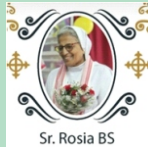


The jailed elderly Indian Jesuit Father Stan Swamy died on July 5, two days after he was put on a ventilator after his health deteriorated, in Holy Family Hospital Mumbai. Father Swamy was accused in the BhimaKoregaon caste violence case and was arrested from Ranchi on October 8,

2020. He was brought to Mumbai, the same evening and a court sent him to jail the next day. Father Swamy was shifted to the hospital from the Taloja Central Jail on May 29, on orders from the Bombay High Court. Father Swamy, who had worked for tribal people in Jharkhand for more than five decades, was charged by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) with links to Maoists.

Even in prison, Father Swamy found ways to keep his thirst for justice alive. "We 16 co-accused have not been able to meet each other as we are lodged in different jails or different 'circles' within the same jail," he wrote in a letter from prison earlier this year. "But we will still sing in chorus. A caged bird can still sing."

Father Swamy had worked tirelessly for the underprivileged, giving voice to the voiceless, and standing up for their rights, to bring truth and justice to light and advocate for the rights of vulnerable people. We thank him for his dedicated selfless service and commit ourselves to take forward the legacy he has left behind. In the meantime we pray for the repose of his soul.



Sr. Rosia BS

Sr. Rosia, a Bethany Sister, passed away in **Concetta Hospital, Kinnigoli, Karnataka**, on 16th July. She worked in Tripura for many years in all the Bethany communities and was the Education Secretary of the Diocese of Agartala for three years. We thank her and pray God to grant her eternal rest.

Born	: 21.04.1953
Entered Bethany	: 15.05.1969
First Profession	: 23.04.1973
Perpetual Profession	: 10.05.1980
Slept in the Lord	: 16.07.2021

Welcome Sr. Vinei BS

The Parish community at Kathalcherrawelcomed the new community member of the Bethany Sisters, namely, Sr. Vinei Veronica BS. It was a joyous moment to wish her well as she will render her services in the health and healing ministry in the parish. Welcome Sr. Vinei.



Centenary of the Bethany Congregation celebrated

The Congregation of the Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany is 100 years old. Founded in Mangalore, with four Sisters in 1921, the Bethany Sisters have today more than 1,360 members spread throughout India and a few countries in Europe



and Africa.

The BS community at Kathalcherra Parish celebrated

the centenary feast of their Congregation on 15th July at the community level. Rev Fr. Lancy D'Souza CSC, the Vicar General of the Diocese and Vicar Forane of Kumarghat Deanery was the main celebrant. After the Holy Eucharist the parishioners were given sweets and cakes. *Fr. IshwarHappa, CSC*

AMBASSA PARISH

Youth Seminar on Covid-19 Pandemic

Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Ambassa organized one day animation program for the Youth of the Parish. Earlier the Parish Pastoral Council members decided to gather the Youth and educate them on the Covid19pandemic.



There were 79 Youth from different villages of Ambassa Parish who attended. The program

began with Holy Mass. The whole liturgy was well prepared and organized by the Youth. After Mass the Youth President Mr. Saviour Hrangkhawl welcomed Youth and the Resource Persons for a Seminar. Mr. Laleng Moy Halam the Youth Secretary moderated the sessions. The Parish Priest Fr. Ivan D'Silva gave the key note address on human trafficking in Tripura. He said, "Youth can fall prey to the traffickers who tempt them with good money and jobs." He added, "During this pandemic when the youth are immersed with the social media, traffickers are there to lure the young girls, you need to be aware of it". Sr. Rini SSpS encouraged the Youth to be focused in life. Dr. Asok Debbarma gave classes on health and faith. The Youth had many queries on Covid19 and the Vaccine. The Youth Seminar ended with action plan, prayer and lunch. They decided to come together for a 3-day Seminar in October 2021.

Medical Camp for Refugees

Ambassa, 5 July, 2021: Holy Spirit Catholic Church



Ambassa, in collaboration with the Oishobani Society conducted a Health Camp for the refugees of 302 families who have settled at Haduklou village in Ambassa.

Mr. Philip Apetoin charge of the camp invited us to organize the medical camp because many people were getting sick due to no proper water, hygiene and no appropriate nutrition. Dr. AsokDebbarma, Fr. Ivan D'Silva and other health workers from the Parish reached the settlement camp with boxes of medicines. For those who had fever blood test was done for Malaria and other sicknesses were treated.

There were 129 patients who came with different ailments. Most of them were given medicines and those who were serious were referred to the Ambassa District Hospital. The scene in the settlement areas heartbreaking, especially the unhygienic condition in which they live. Many children were undernourished and breast feeding mothers and pregnant women were looking pathetic. Should there be an outbreak of an epidemic there will be more casualties for sure. The BruSettlement Management Committee thanked us whole heartedly and requested us to organize more Health Camps for these migrants. *Ivan D'Silva, SVD*

INAUGURATION OF ST. JOSEPH HOME, GOKULNAGAR

"By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches." *Proverbs 24:3-4.*



We do hear from the mouth of Jesus about building a house on rock. "Everyone who hears these words of

mine and acts on them may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock." Building a house can be compared to building a life. Making sure the foundation is solid as concrete, laid perfectly with little or no cracks, so that the house settles well over the years. Here we are blessed to have this new house with all the efforts and artistic plans of our Bishop Lumen and the supervision of the works by Fr. Shaiju, CSC. The new Priest's Residence is named Saint Joseph Home at Gokulnagar, in this Year of St. Joseph. Our dear Bishop Lumen blessed and inaugurated Saint Joseph Home on 26th June, 2021 and presided over the Holy Eucharist in the new Chapel. The day's event ended with a fellowship meal.



Fr. Antony Balan

KUMARGHAT PARISH

Parish Feast, Inauguration of School Extension & Green Sunday



St. Paul Parish at Kumarghat celebrated the Parish

Feast on 4th July with all grandeur, the solemn choir and beautiful decorations. The Feast Day Mass began at 10am with the allotted number of faithful. Fr. Lancy D'Souza, CSC, the Parish Priest, welcomed the gathering and Bishop Lumen who presided over the holy Eucharist along with 13 other concelebrants. The Parish community also welcomed Sr. Bernadette D' Costa FS, and two MC Sisters, as they join the mission at Kumarghat. Two other MC Sisters were given a fitting send off as they are transferred from the Parish.

Inauguration and Blessing of the School Building Extension

Observing the Covid-19 protocols the Inauguration and Blessing of the new Extension of the School was done in the presence of a limited number of distinguished persons.



Fr. Robert Mathias CSC, the then Provincial, who, knowing the demands of the School at Kumarghat had initiated the Extension work. Today he unveiled the memorial stone. Fr. Simon Fernandis CSC, the Provincial Superior, inaugurated the new wing of the School building by cutting of the ribbon. Bishop Lumen

Monteiro, CSC, blessed the new Extension of the School.

The Principal gratefully acknowledged the vision and hard work of all those previous Principals, Managers, Sisters, Workers and significant others who contributed to its completion. The new Wing of the School building has added a distinctive hallmark to the existing structure of learning at Holy Cross School, Kumarghat. On this auspicious day Sr. Bernadette D' Costa FS was welcomed as the new Headmistress and we wish her all the best.

Green Sunday celebrated

On the occasion of the Parish Feast day celebrations, Green Sunday was also observed at the Parish level.

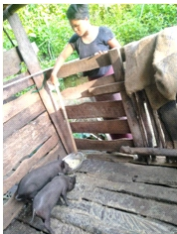
The District Forest Officer, Mr. Jayakrishnan V.K., from Kumarghat, was present to solemnize the occasion and encourage us on behalf of the Forest Department. Around 500 healthy saplings were distributed to the Parishioners with an awareness speech asking people to plant more trees and to care for the nature. Rev. Bishop Lumen initiated the planting which was followed by several other significant individuals.



Fr. Lourdu Sahaya CSC

JUST provided Livelihood Support to SHG Members for IGA

The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown has impacted the life and livelihood of many poor families because they were unable to do any work or livelihood activities during the lockdown. The socio-economic condition of the target population revolves around *jhum* cultivation. Economically, they are very poor and *jhum* cultivation is the main source of their livelihood. 90% of the people of the target area are engaged in *jhum* cultivation. JUST having realized the deplorable



conditions of the poor people under Ganganagar R.D Blocks with regard to their livelihood distributed 26 livestock such as Piglets and Poultry (local breed) and 6 Sewing Machines to the JUST Self Help Group (SHG) Members.

JUST along with the Diocese celebrates Green Sunday

JUST along with Diocese of Agartala has been celebrating 'Green

Sunday' for the last 3 years by planting different types of fruits and

tree saplings. This year on 20th June 2021 the 4th Green Sunday was celebrated in different parts of Tripura. In preparation for Green Sunday a Webinar was organized on 14th June with the topic



'Ecosystem Restoration' for all the Village Leaders in which Dr. Wangdup Bhutia IFS the Resource Person shared about the importance of restoring our ecosystem. On the occasion of 'Green Sunday' a cleanliness drive, sapling plantation, and online drawing competition were conducted. More than 9000 saplings of different species were planted in different parts of Tripura. The day was celebrated to encourage and make people aware of the importance of planting trees and protecting the environmental.

Mr. Cyril Darlong

Pope Francis meets 'Spider-Man' at weekly audience in the Vatican

A 'superhero' swung by Pope Francis's Wednesday general audience at the Vatican. Dressed in a 'Spider-Man' costume, superhero impersonator Mattia Villardita sat in the VIP section of the audience in Vatican's San Damaso Courtyard. Pictures and videos showed the Pontiff delivering his sermon, completely unfazed by the 'superhero's' presence. The 28-year-old has been performing in paediatric hospitals dressed as the comic book superhero for the past four years. He was rewarded with the VIP seat at the Pope's weekly audience for his selfless service. "The real superheroes are the children who are suffering and their families who are fighting with so much hope," Villardita told the Vatican's media outlet, Vatican News. Villardita said he asked

Pope Francis to pray for the children and their families. The masked man even had a chance to shake hands with the Pope and gift him a Spider-Man mask. *(Courtesy Indian Express News)*

Franciscans elect Italian as 121st Successor of St. Francis of Assisi

Members of the general chapter of the Order of Friars Minor elected Rome-born Father Massimo Fusarelli as the new Minister General of the worldwide Franciscan Order. The general chapter from July 3-18 brought together 116 Franciscans representing some 13,000 friars. The election of the new head of the Order took place on July 13. The Order of Friars Minor, commonly known as the Franciscans, elected Father Massimo Fusarelli, 58, to be Minister General of the Order. Father Fusarelli, OFM succeeds U.S. Franciscan Father Michael Perry, OFM. *(CNS via CNUA)*

World News Briefs

Bishop Lumen: A Missionary of all time



It must have been in 2003, when I was in Gandachara we had planned to inaugurate two village chapels in Monuram Para and Tribaigo Para. These two villages were very far from Gandachara town. The only way to reach the place was to go on foot and it would take around two and half hours to cover the distance. Bishop Lumen Monteiro had arrived ahead of time all the way from Agartala along with the military convoy. A leader from Monuram Para Mr. Achagla Reang came to take us to their village. We were a group of at least 15 people from the parish centre going to bless the village Chapels in two villages along with the Bishop. Mr. Achagla wanted to take us through the short cut on the boat and we boarded a machine boat. It was like a picnic singing and making merry. At one point he stopped the boat. We all got down and started walking towards the hill. Mr. Achagla was leading the way but the short cut was exhaustive because we had climbed more hills and valleys than needed because he had lost the way! We saw Bishop merrily enjoying the walk, never seen grumbling. The village leader was feeling awful because he led us through the wrong path; yet Bishop was encouraging



him and all of us, not to lose the heart. It took us double the time to reach our destination; yet Bishop was not tired. This is one of many examples I have experienced of Bishop Lumen who is very active and energetic when it comes to walk to the interior villages. Most of us have noticed that on the weekends Bishop hastens to Parishes or Sub-stations for Holy Mass. Even if he arrives from abroad or other parts of the country without taking rest he hurries to reach the remote presbytery.

In the recently published Book, 'The Legacy of Catholic Church in Tripura, Pathways Ahead' Bishop Lumen writes his mind towards the end of the article. *"My motto has been Duc in Altum which freely translated means "Lead Us Onward." From the very beginning of my shepherding ministry I have been looking for new ways to lead the people of God onward. The grain of wheat could be taken as an example. If unchallenged it remains unchanged; but when challenged by the daring world, it bears fruit in abundance. I do believe that in the midst of difficulties and challenges there lies the seed of creative possibility. These possibilities need to be animated and empowered, if they have to become a reality"*. True to his motto, Bishop Lumen leads the missionary Church onward, in spite of challenges and hardships.
Ivan D'Silva, SVD, Parish Priest of Ambassa



Man of Vision and Focus

Fr. Thomas Pereira, CSC, Parish Priest of Chailengta

It is a privileged moment for me personally to write these few lines on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of Bishop Lumen Monteiro and the Diocese of Agartala.

Way back in 1984, after I had taken my first vows and was placed in Museum Road, Bangalore under the District Administration, Fr. Lumen was the Rector of the Minor seminary there. I remember one day I had given him a haircut. The same evening Fr. Lumen treated me with an expensive Ice-cream at MG Road. That was his Generosity.

In 1994 we had Junior Priests' meet in Moharapara. I had come from Mizoram. Fr. Lumen drove me all the way from Agartala to Moharapara by Ambassador Car. That was his Magnanimity.

One time Bishop Lumen was in charge of two Dioceses, Agartala and Aizawl. I invited him to bless the Presbytery at Champhai. He came most willingly all the way from Agartala to Champhai in spite of travelling being not easy those days. That was his Commitment.

I had the opportunity to work with Bishop Lumen as an Administrator of the Diocese for two years. By the time I stepped in as an Administrator, the Diocese had gained much stability. It was in its decennial year. The Diocese had number of new Parishes and Institutions established with increased catholic population. Many new religious Congregations had come in both of Men and Women. The life of the Diocese was

well structured and vibrant by then and of course, not without troubles and new challenges. I learned a lot from Bishop and I still cherish the good memories, some of which I would like to highlight.

Bishop Lumen has a clear Vision and Focus for the Diocese and he has the ability and administrative skills to make realize that vision. Bringing out the Link on the first day of every month and conducting Clergy Meeting on the first Tuesday of every month are no exception to his focused life. He is a well-organized and orderly person. We can see this in his documentation and filing system.

Bishop Lumen is always approachable. He makes everyone feel at home in his company. Once you are introduced to him you are in his directory. He is a true friend with ability to listen and communicate. He is clear in his thinking and uses appropriate words in his dealing.

His love for pastoral ministry is praiseworthy. He has made a point for last 25 years without fail to be in the parish/village on all Saturdays and Sundays.

Bishop Lumen is a good narrator. I remembered Bishop had travelled by train from Agartala to Dharmanagar when it first started. He could narrate his experience in sequence from buying a ticket to entering train, from Guard to ticket collector and from Tunnel to people's reaction. It had every minute detail.

Silver bells are still ringing all around as our beloved Bishop Lumen and the Diocese of Agartala have just completed 25 years, and they will go on until Pentecost of 2022. What was a tiny seed 25 years ago has grown into a big tree yielding fruits. Twenty five years of moulding and shaping the Diocese and making what it is today is not an easy task. It is worthy of congratulations, celebration and most importantly thanksgiving to God.