



PASTOR'S CORONER

New Year's Day is celebrated as World Day of Peace and it is fitting that we wish each other a Peace-filled New Year 2021. Something that struck me as a good way to be peacemakers is what psychologist Everett Worthington calls **REACH**, a five-step forgiveness intervention plan. REACH is an acronym for the following: **Recall** the hurt, because to heal, you need to acknowledge the fact that you've been hurt; **Empathize** with your offender and replace negative emotions like hatred with positive emotions like love and compassion; **Altruistic** giving enables you to overcome the hesitation to forgive and will inspire you to wish well of the other person; **Commit** to the forgiveness experience; and **Hold** on to that experience. Worthington, says "REACH is a therapeutic model that promotes good health and wellbeing. To be unforgiving is stressful; nursing grudges and negative feelings towards an offender can seriously impact your physical and mental health and leaves little room for joy. To be forgiving lightens your burden; you feel free and loving, and you are rid of a lot of baggage that was weighing you down." We could use the 'forgiveness intervention' and make it our New Year resolution.



NEW YEAR 2021 WITH A 5-STEP FORGIVENESS INTERVENTION

The Diocese turns 25 in 21! With the Jubilee motto 'Rejoice with Gratitude and Renew with Hope' we move into the Jubilee Year. Our newsletter LINK also turns silver in 2021. You are reading the 283rd issue of LINK that began in July 1996 which at that time was 2-sheets of Xeroxed Reports and the Bishop's program. Today's LINK is a 5-page up-to-date Newsletter and wears a new look with new feature titled 'Throwback Memories'. I am grateful to Fr. Prasad Rao the page designer and Fr. Pulinthanath SDB, the accomplished scribe, who have supported me in this endeavor all through.

Today we are stepping into the New Year with lots of hope especially after a year of uncertainty and fear due to the pandemic. Covid19 fatigue has taken hold in India though people are increasingly lowering their guard despite the high risk of contracting the virus. Many restrictions have been lifted; there is some semblance of normalcy; but the pandemic is far from over. We however, step into the New Year with hope. When we embrace the poignancy and vulnerability that come with thankfulness, we are reminded that the time is limited and experiences are fleeting. But don't die before your time. Love one another, Live for each other. Let us enjoy deeply what we have now and live more fully into what we know really matters. I wish you a peace-filled New Year 2021. **+Lumen, CSC**



EDITORIAL

Happy New Year dear Readers of LINK! Not many New Years in recent memory have we as a race perhaps stepped into, with greater sense of humility and thankfulness, than the one we have just stepped into today. Last year brought home to us some truths we tend to forget easily. For instance that, 'life' - not in the profound sense, but in the rawest sense, simply 'having ability to breathe', is an extraordinary blessing. It is simply 'not being able to breathe' that denied thousands the chance to see this day like we do today. Being able to inhale and exhale, that is, take air in and send it out without the aid of external machines, is indeed a capacity and blessing beyond parallel. Surely, more consequential and wondrous than many other capacities we acquire along the way and take pride in embellishing ourselves with.



NEW YEAR THOUGHTS

We are still unsure if the year behind us was a bane or a boon, but the one in front of us, we know is a gift, gratuitous and hope-filled. We look forward with hope on this first day of the first month to plans, projects and dreams that coyly shimmer at the backyards of our tentative minds. Almost involuntarily we whisper a prayer that all may be well. Having seen and perhaps lived through some of those vagaries and vulnerabilities that flesh is heir to, we have learnt to be a little less sure of ourselves and also to rely a little more on God.

It is also the Silver Jubilee year of the Diocese and its Pastor. Our preparations for it had a suitable sobriety about it, thanks to the unaccustomed atmosphere the pandemic unleashed upon us. We continue our collective journey of faith as a Diocese towards the Jubilee and beyond trusting in God's providence and his never-failing care.

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Despite news of a second wave of the virus in some parts of the world, we seem intent and eager on restoring some semblance of normalcy to our lives. Even if that happens quicker than many prognosticate, our familiar ports of call would perhaps look a tad different, almost unfamiliar. The virus sure has a way of targeting one's outlooks too.

As we step into the New Year placing ourselves totally in God's mighty loving hands, we pray for the world to become a better place. We pray that commercial frenzy, heartless efficiency and mindless competition will give way to compassion, commitment and concern for others especially the weak and vulnerable. Hope that springs eternal in the human breast tells us, all shall be well, all manner of things shall be well. Happy New Year.

J. Pulinthanath, SDB

MOHARPARA PARISH**Resurrection Church Hadupa and Bishop Lumen's Silver Jubilee**

December 6th, 2020 marked a red letter day in the chronicle of Hadupa *mondoli*. A day to thank God for 25 years of faith journey and a day to celebrate for the blessing and love that God has showered to faithful of Hadupa. The celebration was doubly colorful and solemnized by our loving shepherd Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, the Silver



Jubilarian. The unforgettable day commenced with a grand welcome to our Shepherd and the Jubilee Memorial Stone which was inaugurated and blessed by our loving Bishop. This was followed by the solemn Holy Eucharist with ten concelebrants along with Bishop Lumen. After the Holy Mass a short felicitation program was held in which the guests were welcomed and felicitated with a memento and a *risha*. During the program, Bishop's Jubilee was celebrated by cutting the Jubilee cake and Bishop was felicitated with gifts from each *mondoli* of the Parish as a sign of love and appreciation. The Jubilee Souvenir Book was released by our Bishop. The celebration comes to a close with a common meal.

Marriage Preparation Course

Moharpara Parish organized Marriage Preparation Course on 11th and 12th of December. Seven couples from different villages



took part in the program. Topics like Marriage a Sacrament, Challenges of family life, formation of model Christian family, Christian parenting, Children as God's gift, and Christ is the Centre of family,

Family prayer and Natural Family Planning enlightened the participants and brought awareness to them about the holiness and sacredness of marriage. Our thanks to the Resource Persons: Fr. Hormis CSC, Mr. Amar Prem, and Catechist Mr. Thomas Hrangkhawl, for making the program a success. At the end, the participants expressed their joy for what they received from the program. **Fr. ArbokLyngdoh, CSC**

KARBOOK PARISH**New beginning in a new Parish**

A new beginning, a new stage in the continual journey through



which the joy of the gospel, the *Evangelii Gaudium*, builds itself a tent in the midst of the ups and downs of humanity: This is how Pope Francis interprets our contemporary life today. This is the discernment he shares

with believers. The discernment shows how our foundation and beginning of the new Parish Our Lady of Good Health will flourish as faith building community. On 29 November 2020, the new Parish became a reality in our Diocese. Fr. K.M. Allwin was installed as the first Parish Priest of Karbook Parish which was bifurcated from Depacherra Parish. The colorful celebration began with inauguration of the new Parish which was followed by the Holy Eucharist presided by Bishop Lumen Monteiro and concelebrated by many Priests from the Diocese. After the holy Mass there was a short felicitation program which was followed by a fellowship meal. **Fr. Praveen Kumar**

KUMARGHAT PARISH**Rectification of Marriages**

The Parish conducted 'Rectification of Marriages' on 12 December



at the Parish Centre. It was a joyful moment for the 22 Couples who were alienated from the Sacraments due to the unsettled marriage. First was the Input Sessions by Fr. Lathees, Fr. Amalraj Secretary of the Family Commission of the

Diocese, Catechist Mr. Subia Debbarma and Mr. Roitua Darlong, the Parish Council Secretary. The Sessions were interactive as the couples also shared their own experiences. This was followed by the rectification of marriage ceremony. The Couples felt very happy to have their marriages rectified with proper understanding of the sacrament of Matrimony. The Parish is welcoming back Catholics "who went astray" as well as welcoming non-Catholic spouses "into the fold of the Church. **Fr. Francis, CSC**

KAMARANGA PARISH**Importance of Women's Leadership**

Women are no more behind in the main stream of life... why should they be in faith community? Women play a vital role in shaping



spiritual life of the family school. They should be encouraged and strengthened to do more... We organized a day's Seminar, to enhance Women leadership at St. Raphael Parish, Kamaranga on 30th November 2020. 40 women participated actively in it. Sr. Susheela Xess SSPS from

Agartala was the Resource Person for the program who emphasized the important role of mothers in the family and society for faith formation.

Youth Awareness Program

Youth are the future of the Church and society. They need support and guidance to be faithful and committed in the Church. They need catechism and faith formation especially in sacrament



of matrimony. They need guidance in matters relating to inter-denomination and inter-faith marriages. We organized Youth Awareness Program on 9th December to help the Youth of our Parish. Fr. Ivan D'Silva SVD was the Resource Person, who highlighted the adverse influence of modern media on youth today. 45 Youth attended the awareness Seminar.

Christo Mela goes Green amidst Pandemic



Even the pandemic could not stop parishioners from celebrating the now famous *Christo Mela* at Kamranga on 20th December. Unity and harmony of the Parish defeated the pandemic in celebrating it. Observing the

SOPs, parishioners gathered in the parish church for Adoration followed by Holy Mass. All village leaders were welcomed and honored. Christmas cultural completions followed by Christmas carols and blessing of the crib. The entire responsibility of *Christo Mela* celebration was taken up by the parishioners. The celebration ended with Christmas fellowship lunch on the green campus of the School. *Christo Mela* has truly united the parishioners.

Fr. Arun Minj SVD

CLARETIANS START MISSION AT SUKNACHARI

Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel blessed



Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel at Suknachari Village under the newly erected Karbook Parish was blessed by Bishop Lumen Monteiro of Agartala Diocese on 19 December 2020 in the presence of Priests, Religious, lay faithful and village elders. Suknachari under Karbook Parish is a village with 13

Catholic families (35 baptized Catholics) who are provided pastoral care by the Claretian Missionaries. Feeling the necessity for a place of worship, the Catholic faithful and under the guidance of Fr. Janardhan Munnelli CMF, this village Chapel was constructed with the help of people themselves. I must say it was a joy for me to experience their enthusiasm and even I joined them in the construction work. It is a simple little Chapel, but it was constructed with much love. The grand inauguration with the

presence of our Bishop and Priests was a great source of encouragement for all of us.

Fr. Janardhan Munnelli CMF

AMBASSA PARISH

Christmas Peace Rally

Ambassa, 20th December 2020: Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Ambassa celebrated advance Christmas on December 20th. Parishioners gathered in front of the crib and the Parish Priest Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD blessed it. More than 450 people participated in the Holy Mass and offered homemade Christmas snacks. After the Mass greetings and homemade snacks were shared.



The second part of the program was Christmas Peace Rally to Neithungul Halam tribal Village, 8 kilometers away from the Parish Church. Parishioners joined in the Rally with their vehicles (Bus, Cars, and 2-wheelers through Ambassa Town and distributed blankets, mosquito nets, bed sheets, mats and clothes to 45 poor families. Prior to this event the Marian Association members (mothers) had purchased 90 blankets and collected clothes to be distributed to the poor families. The parishioners also shared their home-made snacks with these poor families and everybody rejoiced to mark the birth of Christ. *Ivan D' Silva, SVD*

CHAMPAKNAGAR PARISH

Sacrament of Confirmation administered

The Sacrament of Confirmation was organized at St. Alphonsa Parish on 13 December. Bishop Lumen Monteiro administered the sacrament to 103 faithful, who were prepared well in advance to receive the Holy Spirit. There were candidates from all the 13 *mothas*. The Holy Eucharist was well organized by the Parish Youth leading the choir, the readings and all the other decorations. There were few guests Priests who joined for the Mass in addition to all the parishioners from all over the Parish. The Eucharistic celebration was followed by a short felicitation program, for which Bishop was the Chief Guest. The whole day's schedule was well planned and systematically executed. The Parish Secretary thanked everyone present on the occasion for their valuable time and availability. All the participants were provided with a little refreshment at the end of the program. *Fr. Fredy, SVD*

NEWS BRIEFS FROM THE DIOCESE

Marian Association in Ambassa

Ambassa, 29 November, 2020: Mothers Prayer. Mrs. Nioti Molsom shared her experience of childhood connecting to her present life. She said, "My mother, though was initially a Hindu, but nurtured us in the fear of God" She further added, "it was after we became Catholic, we learned family values and importance of prayer. I thank Catholic Missionaries who taught us how to foster a holy family". Women Leaders discussed and evaluated their works in their own sub-stations. They elected new Office Bearers for another term and discussed action plans. *New Bureau, Ambassa*



Association of Ambassa Parish met in St. Arnold village Chapel in Kachuchara. Around 69 Women Leaders from different sub-stations had come to this annual gathering and one day Seminar organized by Mrs. Lata Marak the Secretary. The celebration started with the Holy Mass, presided over by Fr. Ivan D'Silva the PP of Holy Spirit Ambassa. After Mass the Resource Person Sr. Susheela SSpS who gave an Input on importance of Family values and

Promotion and strengthening of local markets through certification of organic products

Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura (JUST) conducted Promotion and strengthening of local markets



through certification of organic products at Uruabari village 30th November. During the program JUST distributed cloth bags, different types of seeds like

bitter gourd, tomato, ladies finger, potato, chilli, etc. Tarpaulin was given to all our Farmer's Clubs and polythene sheets were distributed to all the FARM vegetable sellers of our Farmers' Clubs. The Director of JUST Fr. Lathees encouraged the Farmers to take care of the materials given and make proper use of them. He also encouraged the Farmer's Clubs to make Fixed Deposits which is more secure than inter-loaning.

Promotion of good traditional farming

practices through replication and exchange program



Promotion of good traditional farming practices through replication and exchange program was conducted by JUST at Subalgarh Para on 19th November. The Farmers from different Villages came

with their organic seeds to the venue for the exchange program. Indigenous seeds like cucumber, pumpkin, bitter gourd, laipata, paddy, maize, bottle gourd, etc., were brought by the Farmers for the exchange. The Coordinator shared the concept of the project and motivated them to do collective farming to strengthen their groups. Farmers interacted with each other and shared their different views and their ways of farming and success stories. Lead farmer Mr. Sachin Debbarma shared his success story on how he got linked with different Government Departments and became a successful Farmer.

Mr. Cyril Darlong

Tripura Engineer receives innovation award

An Engineer from Tripura has developed a technology to generate power from wet clothes that can be used to charge mobile phones or to use medical diagnostic devices. This innovation won him the Gandhian Young Technological Innovation Award in November. It was presented by Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh



Vardhan. Shankha Subhra Das from Khedabari in Sepahijala District of Tripura, used a cloth cut to a particular size and inserted it in a plastic straw to fix in a half-filled water container. He

attached copper electrodes to both ends of the straw. "The water is transported to the top after some time, due to capillary action, and around 700 millivolts are registered in the voltmeter," Das said. To increase power, Das and his Team connected a series of 30-40 such devices. According to Das, this generates 12 Volts, enough to charge mobile phones, microchip, mini gadget, medical diagnostic kits, and even light a small LED bulb. "This is part of a funded research project wherein we have explored the scope of powering medical diagnostic devices that can be used in remote places. We have found cloth-based devices useful for our project. Our challenge was to eliminate external pumping input for water flow," Das said.

INDIA NEWS BRIEFS

OUR READERS WRITE

I learned from the "Link" about the announcement of five new Parishes in the Diocese. Congratulations to you and blessings upon the Diocese. I appreciate your Jubilee gift of the Parishes to the faithful of the Diocese and I also understand your tireless efforts in finding the right group of people to administer the new Parishes. The missionary spirit is enduring in the Diocese. I pray that the missionaries live *for* the Altar and *from* the Altar that they embody the powerlessness of the Cross and the Joy of the Gospels in their private lives and public relations. Missionaries who are renewed in the Spirit of the Lord will unite and renew the entire Diocese.

Fr. KJ. Abraham, CSC, Rome

OUR DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

- Mar Pauly Kannookadan, Bishop of Irinjalakuda
- Msgr. Joy Palieakara, VG of Irinjalakuda Diocese
- Rev. Fr. Varghese Arikatt, Bursar of Irinjalakuda
- Mr. Cyril Mathias, brother of Fr. Robert CSC from Bengaluru
- Mr. Sibi Alex, Director of Divine Grace Institutes Bengaluru
- Mrs. Beena, from Divine Grace Institutes Bengaluru
- Mr. Amal Shaju from Divine Grace Institutes Bengaluru

Fr. Hormis John, CSC, Recalls the Significant Event

People of Tripura, more so the Catholics, received with great joy and gratitude the announcement of the fact that Tripura is going to be a Diocese known as the Diocese of Agartala and the then Dean of Tripura Rev. Fr. Lumen Monteiro, C.S.C, has been appointed as the First Bishop of that new ecclesiastical Province. That announcement was made on 11th January 1996 and the Episcopal Ordination took place on Pentecost Sunday on May 26, 1996. I am asked to give short account of that memorable event as we are about to celebrate its Silver Jubilee.

This event took place at Holy Cross School campus Agartala and obviously, the then Principal and Administrator of the school, Rev. Fr. C.V. Jose and Rev. Fr. Paul Pudussery respectively, were the main people who played a great role in executing this project successfully. The socio-political atmosphere of Tripura State at that time was not as conducive as insurgency related problems were there and the railway had just reached only up to Kumarghat. All the same approximately seven thousand people had gathered on that day to witness that event. There were people from our parishes in Meghalaya, Mizoram, Silchar and Bangladesh, in addition to the relatives and well wishers of Bishop Lumen from India and abroad. Mention may be made of the presence of the then Holy Cross Superior General, V. Rev. Fr. Claude Grou, CSC, Rev. Fr. Willy Raymond, CSC and Rev. Fr. Thomas Fortin, CSC, the Founder of Kumarghat Mission. People were accommodated in the class rooms of the school and VIP's were accommodated in the different hotels at Agartala.

An Episcopal Ordination Committee was formed and the members of this committee looked into the nitty-gritty details of this celebration. We gratefully remember all those men and women who tirelessly worked for this event.

The weather on that day had been reasonably favourable, albeit very hot and humid. The colourful Liturgical celebrations began at about 10.am and got over by 2.00 pm. All the Bishops of North East Region of that time were present at the altar including present Cardinal Patrick D'Rozario, C.S.C and Bishop Theotonius Gomes, CSC of Bangladesh and Bishop Monis from W-Bengal. The chief Consecrator was Most Rev. Tarcisus Resto Phanrang SDB, then Archbishop of Shillong assisted by Most Rev. Joseph Mittathany and Most Rev. Denzil D'Souza.

As we recollect the marvelous and mysterious works of the Lord, we cannot but sing with our Blessed Mother 'my soul glorifies the Lord because He has done great things for me'. In 1969 a new Diocese by name Silchar emerged and in 1996 Silchar was suppressed but two new dioceses Agartala and Aizawl emerged. We are just servants, but the Master Builder is the Lord. Let's always cooperate with the works of the Lord because the Lord leads us on.....



Episcopal Ordination Ceremony



Presence of Family, Priests, Religious and Faithful



New Shepherd in the Pastoral Field

Fr. Cypriyan Pinto, SVD, Remembers the Mega Event ...

Twenty five years is a long time and I don't remember the sequence of events; but the spirit of the event is fresh in my mind. Bishop Lumen's Episcopal Ordination was on May 26, 1996. It was an unprecedented event in the history of the Catholic Church in Tripura. Tripura was under the Episcopal jurisdiction of the Diocese of Silchar. The then Bishop of Silchar Denzil D'Souza was planning to create a separate ecclesiastical unit of Tripura. The clergy and the faithful were eagerly praying and waiting for this event.

Fr. Lumen was appointed Bishop of the newly established Diocese of Agartala on January 11, 1996, but we could smell the aroma of the "secret news" on the day of the inauguration of Ambasa Holy Spirit Church on 30th January 1996 where Bishop Denzil and Fr. Lumen were present. One could hear some clergy asking one another in a low tone, "Is he the one"? Soon we came to know that he was the shepherd of His choice appointed by Rome for the new Diocese of Agartala!

It took five months for all the preparations. In the past such a mega religious event was not witnessed by the Catholic faithful in Tripura. The Agartala Holy Cross School ground was tastefully decorated for the event. About seven thousand people witnessed this ceremony. It was a new Pentecost for the faithful of Tripura. After the Ordination there was a brief reception program in which other religious groups were also involved. The program ended with an agape meal for all. People literally went home praising and thanking God for the gift of a Shepherd to the Catholic flock of Tripura.

We thank God for the gift of Agartala Diocese and for its shepherd Bishop Lumen. In the last 25 years the Catholic faith has spread far and wide under the able leadership of Bishop Lumen. We pray the Almighty bless him with good health and long life with the faithful in the service of the Word in the Diocese of Agartala establishing the Kingdom of God.