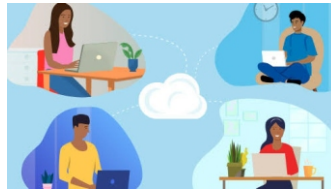




PASTOR'S CORNER

The Covid-19 ailment knows no boundaries. Some families are totally affected by it; some are in the hospitals and some are in Corona Care Centers. Those who tested positive for the virus are separated and left to fend for themselves because of the contagious nature of this pandemic. Some lost their loved ones and are not able to see them for the last time, which is heart-wrenching. Indian Currents has been especially monitoring the number of deceased Priests and Religious in the past one year. As of today (25th June), 286 Priests and 260 Nuns have succumbed



Month - wise		
MONTH	PRIESTS	NUNS
2020 April	1	0
2020 May	2	0
2020 June	0	1
2020 July	4	9
2020 August	4	2
2020 September	8	1
2020 October	9	5
2020 November	6	2
2020 December	9	2
2021 January	5	2
2021 February	5	6
2021 March	9	2
2021 April	84	82

to this virus in India. Let us pray daily for those affected by Covid-19, especially Bishops, Priests and Religious who are affected by Covid-19. We also pray for those who succumbed to this ailment and ask God to grant them eternal rest.

The post-Covid world is expected to settle down to a handling of personal, professional and social responsibilities in the light of lifestyle changes. Mr. D.C. Pathak says, "any observer can pick up at least some pieces to reconstruct a framework of learning and course corrections to delineate what the 'new

normal' would be in the times ahead... A chastened view of what was behind the Covid-19 threat makes people accept the preventive do's and don'ts, understand the woes of fellow citizens, and abide by the calls of governments. People would emerge with a sense of mental togetherness despite 'social distancing'. The pandemic has proved to be a great equalizer on account of shared vulnerabilities and has brought back the indefatigable spirit of man to retain positivity by being prepared to render some help to others. They would realize how, even from a distance, some services could be provided to those in difficulty like offering a link for communication and messaging; helping in the search for some medicine or equipment; arranging delivery of food for needy, etc. All this is done quietly, reviving the spiritual legacy of mankind and enriching the future of humanity. The disaster has induced a higher thinking on 'life' itself." (Tripura Times) Pope Francis has invited the whole Church to think about a different, better "post-COVID" era, in which no one is left behind, and to build it together. For this to happen, those whose sufferings are greatest, those who are confined to the outskirts of human flourishing, and whose voice is usually ignored, must play an active, vigorous role in shaping the world to come. Those who commit to engage and assist must listen to them, learn from them and share with them. Only such a path of dialogue-based action honors the human dignity of all.

+Lumen, CSC



EDITORIAL

India Christians are set to celebrate 1970 years of Christianity in India on 3rd July 2021. The Church keeps 3rd July as the martyrdom day of Thomas the Apostle who is credited by tradition for founding the Indian Church in 52 AD.

While it reminds us that Christianity in India is as old as many other religions, it also offers us an opportunity to consider some points. It is a mortifying thought that although Christianity is nearly 2000 years old in India Christians are mere 2.3% of its population (2011). But at the same time, it is heartening to see that the impact of the services rendered by various Churches far exceeds the reach generally expected of such a numerically modest entity. The contribution of the Church to



nation building, education, health care, advocacy and poverty alleviation continues to be significant. The active involvement of the Church in the above sectors during the ongoing Pandemic is another case in point.

In Tripura too the situation is not very different. Substantial Christian presence in the State began only about 100 years ago or thereabouts. The Christian population in the State does not yet amount to even 5% of Tripura's population. The figure is a mere 1.43% if we separately speak about the Catholic Church (*Census 2011 & *UIAI for 2021 Estimates*). Yet the Church in the State has reasons to thank God because it has not confined its services solely to the adherents of our faith but has rendered them to all sections of people. This is

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especially so in the fields of education and developmental activities.

That said, we do ourselves disservice if we discount the significance of numbers. Living in a State whose people have acutely felt the impact that numbers or the lack of it can have on destiny itself, it would be naïve to feel numbers don't matter. The right of every human being to come to know the truth of the Gospel and its values of love, joy, forgiveness, justice and dignity ought to make us reflect on available numbers and its implications. This, even as we continue to concede the inability of numbers to be a stand-in for either quality or commitment.

With corona related lockdowns and restrictions becoming the order of the day, we are discovering that almost everything is possible online. The number of people in Tripura that access online content of secular and political nature is astonishingly high. Yet, Christian content has embarrassingly limited takers, be it a Mass live-streamed or a homily posted. They remind us two things, one that 1.43% is all that there is; second, that ultimately it's not about numbers or percentage but about one's quality of belief.

J. Pulinthanath, SDB

MANDWI PARISH

Bishop's visit in pandemic times

In spite of Lockdown and restriction due to COVID 19, yet our Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC, as a good pastor did not confine himself only in the Bishop House. He looks for opportunity to go and visit the sheep in different places. In the morning of 30th May



2021 our Bishop had come to Mandwi to see the Priests, Religious and the faithful of Mandwi. At 8:15am he presided over the Holy Eucharist and gave a meaningful homily. After the Homily we had a short felicitation programme. Around the Bishop, all the Priests and Sisters of the Parish as a family had breakfast together.

The Bishop spent time together with the Fathers and the Sisters. He visited the new Parish Church which is under construction. He appreciated the work that is going on. He visited the Auxilium Convent and spent time with the Sisters in sharing and interacting with them. Around 1:30 we had lunch in the Parish and the Bishop spent time with us sharing and listening to our problems and difficulties. Our Bishop also spent time with the prayer Group called DTP (Discipleship Training Programme). He was happy to hear that the Group is doing very well in the work of evangelization and



strengthening of the faith in the different *mothas*. The coming of Bishop in our Parish brings lots of joy to the faithful. The visitation also brings joy to the Priests and the Sisters as we spent time in sharing and discussing many issues. Unluckily we could not bring many people together due to the existing pandemic restrictions. Yet we hope that the next time we will be able to meet with everyone in our Parish.

Fr. Hubert Thyrianiang, SDB

KARBOOK PARISH

Feast day celebrations at Suknachari Motha

The Catholic community of Suknachari (under Karbook Parish), celebrated the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on 12 June 2021 in a solemn manner at the village chapel which is named after Immaculate Heart of Mary. Fr.



Lawrence Darlong, the Parish Priest of Depacherra Parish, presided over the Holy Eucharist, and invited everyone to imitate the Heart of Mary in following Jesus by joyfully responding and living the Christian faith. Fr. Janardhan Munnelli CMF, the Claretian Mission Incharge at Suknachari, exhorted the faithful to grow deeper in love for Mary as she is the Patroness of the local Catholic community, by inculcating the values and virtues that she possessed.

The active presence of Religious Sisters, Brother and the local community added beauty and solemnity to the celebration.

Inspired by the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Claretian community, under the leadership of Fr. Janardhan Munnelli, CMF, distributed dry ration to 50 needy families on the occasion of the Feast. Police Officials, Local village leaders and various other people witnessed, acknowledged and appreciated this act of love for the needy. *Fr. Janardhan Munnelli CMF*

BISHRAMGANJ PARISH

Triple Jubilee cum Parish Feast Day

Over a year ago plans were made for the celebration of the triple mega events at Bishramganj viz., Silver Jubilee of the Parish (1995-2020), the Silver Jubilee of the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Lumen Monteiro as the first Bishop of Agartala, as well as the Silver Jubilee



of the appointment of Catechist Mr. Chandan Debbarma as the first Catechist of the Parish. However, these plans and preparations were stifled by Covid19 and we had to celebrate them in a subdued manner on 13th June 2021. This day will be etched in Silver in the annals of the Parish. A few Priests, Religious, Parish Leaders and some lay faithful took part in the solemn Holy Eucharist which was presided over by Bishop Lumen Monteiro. The Bishop expressed profound sentiments of his gratitude to God and to the parishioners for all the help and support he received.

After the Holy Mass there was a short felicitation

programme for the Bishop and Catechist, as well as all the Priests who worked in the Parish from the time of its inception. Fr. Remol Marak the Parish Priest felicitated the Bishop and the Catechist with a Memento each and *Risa*. The other Priests also received a token of gratitude for their dedicated service. The event concluded with breakfast served for all. **Fr. Remol Marak SDB**

CHALENGTA PARISH

Silver Jubilee and Green Sunday

We had the twin celebrations at St. Joseph Parish Challengta on 20th June 2020, namely, the Silver Jubilee of Bishop Lumen Monteiro and the launching of Green Sunday in the Diocese.

The Silver Jubilee of the Episcopal Ordination of our beloved Bishop Lumen Monteiro and the Diocese of Agartala was celebrated by our Parish. Bishop Lumen presided at the Holy Eucharist on the occasion and gave a fitting homily. After the Mass



Bishop Lumen was felicitated by the Parishioners and Parish Priest. He also cut the Jubilee cake while everyone sang.

This was followed by Green Sunday celebration. It was a good occasion to create awareness among the Parishioners and people about the need to plant trees, preserve the forest and keep the environment clean and green. The theme was 'LET'S UNITE AND GO GREEN'. Bishop Lumen Monteiro was the Chief Guest on the occasion. The representatives of each *mondoli* planted a sapling around the church campus. This was followed by a community meal.

Sr. Veleena, SRA

KAMARANGA PARISH

More Greenery at St. Raphael Parish

The World Environment Day and Green Sunday celebrations were days of awareness and action. In an attempt to preserve Mother Earth, we organized an awareness campaign not to destroy but to restore the nature and plant more trees.



OishoBani Society & Yuva Vikash Kendra distribute food in Agartala

Agartala, June 01: OishoBani Society (OBS) of the SVD Fathers Agartala and YuvaVikash Kendra (YVK) have come forward once again like last year during the second wave of Covid19 to feed the poor and hungry in Agartala. Rickshaw pullers, daily wage earners, migrant workers as well as care takers of patients in the hospitals are provided with variety of meal items in the evenings.



We distributed and planted over 150 mango and dragon fruit saplings to the families. We too marked the days by planting about 650 rubber, mango and litchi saplings at Kamaranga. **Fr. ArunMinj, SVD**

GANDACHERRA PARISH

Green Sunday



On 21st June 2021, St. Arnold Parish observed Green Sunday. The hymns, prayers, homily and the liturgy was centered on the Creation and our responsibility to enhance its grandeur and beauty.

After the Eucharistic celebration Mr. Sidarth Debberma, SFO, Gondacherra Sub-Division along with many officials from the forest department visited the parish and addressed the faithful about the environmental challenges and the importance of planting trees. In the presence of the faithful Fr. Prasad, Parish Priest and Mr. Sidarth Debberma planted the trees in the campus. About 200 plants were distributed to the people.

Fr. Praveen

Teachers' Seminar

St. Arnold High School, Gandacherra, organized a teacher' seminar on 22nd June 2021, in the School Hall. The seminar was animated by Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro, CSC. The seminar began with a prayer and Fr. Prasad Rao, Principal welcomed the Bishop and felicitated him with shawl and Bouquet. 'Back to the School' was the



theme of the seminar. During the course of the seminar Bishop elaborately dealt on topics like, New Normal, Re-skilling, Up-skilling, Blended learning, Teachers' Role during and post-covid times, Education Policy, Striving to Survive, digital divide. 37 teachers following the Covid protocols have participated in the seminar. At the end of the seminar Miss. Jeny expressed gratitude to Bishop on behalf of the teachers for the wonderful and inspiring seminar.

Sr. Deepika Lakra SSPS

Diocese News Nuggets

Since May 29, OBS and YVK officials Fr. Jeevan Kennady, SVD, Debashis Mujumder, Pinku Das and the volunteers Porenjoy Reang, Anupam Debnath, and Pranab Deb distributed 100 food packets at different locations in the city every day.

Each day different meals are distributed like, chicken meal, egg rice, fried rice and veg palau, etc. The food distribution will continue for some more days. The officials of the

Organization said that they have a plan to distribute dry

ration at different places in the State as well as it will create awareness on Covid appropriate behaviors and importance of vaccine. The program is supported by Missions prokur St. Gabriel International, Austria. *Tripura Times*



Holy Cross School Agartala distributed 125 food packets to quarantine

d Covid-19 Health Care Workers of BRAM Medical College Hospital, Hapania

JUST distributed Dry Rations and observed Environment Day

Tripura Times

Agartala, June 07: In the wake of Covid-19 2nd wave Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura (JUST) in collaboration with Smile Foundation distributed dry rations to 140 families at Dmdamia, Adharni Tea Garden and Nepali Basti under West Tripura on 4th and 7th June 2121. JUST also celebrated World Environment Day and planted 110 saplings. Some these saplings were planted using 'Root Zone Fertigation' at JUST form Agro.



Fr.Lathees the Director of JUST, spoke on Environment awareness and some of the safety measures of preventing Covid-19 such as maintaining social distance and wearing face mask while going outside for any purpose.

Mr. Cyril Darlong

JUST celebrates GREEN SUNDAY across the Diocese

The Chairman of Jana UnnayanSamiti Tripura

6th All India Educators Meet

Along with six other educationalHeads from Tripura, I had the privilege of participating in the Virtual 6th All India Educators Meet withthe theme "Upskilling and Reskilling - Redefining the Future of School Education organized by KristuJayanti College, Bengaluru. The Webinar was inaugurated on 9 June, 2021. The Inaugural Session



Covid Relief Kit and Dry Rations were distributed to 500 households in the Panisagar area, on different days in June 2021, by Holy Cross School Panisagar.



JUST News Briefs

(JUST), Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, launched GREEN SUNDAY at Chailengta Parish in Dhalai District in the presence of a large number of Catholics and other citizens of the area. Fr. Thomas Pereira, CSC, spoke about the importance of planting trees and caring for them as they grow to maturity. Mr. MoshiramReang, a local Leader, advised his community people on how to protect and nurture the trees that are planted so that they can grow to full maturity.



Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, spoke on the theme of Planting Trees and Restoring Hope. He then planted a sapling in the Parish campus along with several other Priests, Religious and Lay faithful, who joined in the planting campaign. Those gathered were then given saplings to be planted in their respective homes. Altogether over 9,000 saplings of different species were planted and distributed across the State of Tripura, marking the 4th Green Sunday by the Diocese. Bishop Lumen said that this was a small initiative undertaken by the Diocese of Agartala to raise awareness on environmental issues in the State of Tripura. *Mr. Cyril Darlong*

News Briefs from all over

commenced with an invocation song andtheWelcome Address to the Conference. The Presidential Address was delivered by Rev. Dr. Augustine George, Principal, Kristu Jayanti College, Bengaluru. Several National Speakers presented scholarly Inputs during the daily technical Sessions which went on for four days. The 4-day All India Educators Meet with 1,090 participants from 850 plus Institutions came to an end on 12 June, 2021with theValedictory Address by Fr. Martin Mallathu, General Councilor for Education, CMI Congregation.

+Lumen, CSC

A PEOPLES' BISHOP



I was a student in a primary school at Depacherra when I first met with His Lordship, Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro. As a child, I still reminisce praying for a new Bishop for a new diocese that today became the 'Diocese of

Agartala'. Even though then I could not comprehend the position of a Bishop for a Diocese but as a child, I was keen that he must be compassionate, god-fearing, and friendly. According to my wish, I later heard 'Fr. Lumen Monteiro, CSC' as the new Bishop for our Diocese whom I found to be compassionate and friendly. We (children in the hostel) always used to feel enthralled whenever he visited our parish, Depacherra, and were quite excited to receive 'sweets' from him. As hostel representative, I always took an active part in organizing programs to welcome him with folk dances and bouquets. We often called him 'Apa Kotor' to denote him as our 'big father'. He continues to recognize me even after I passed out class X from Holy Cross School, Depacherra. One evening when he saw me in Holy Cross School, Agartala campus, he suddenly calls out to me with surprise, 'Oh! you hero of Depacherra, you are here'. Another priest however said, how come you still remember him, and he replied, 'I remember him as the most active student in Depacherra'.

The last time I met His Lordship was in January 2020, during my doctorate fieldwork at Gandatwisa in St. Arnold Parish. I was surprised to see him visiting me in the guest house. He was indeed ecstatic to know that I was offered a scholarship to pursue a doctorate in Germany. He told to Fr. Prasad, PP, 'In my eyes, he is still a child even though he has now become a faculty member of a University'. In this way, His Lordship has seen me grow from being a child in a school to now in a University. This shows his children's friendly nature and always with a willingness to empower them, particularly those who belong to the marginalized section of society. Moreover, during one of his visits to Bagabantilla village church, I remember him to be people-friendly and is always grounded to the needs of the local people. For this reason, I always consider him as "the Peoples' Bishop" and he continues to be so. I am delighted to know that he has completed 25 years of service to the people of Tripura as a its Shepherd. I wish him good health of mind and body and for more renewed strength to serve the marginalized, the exploited, women, children, and particularly the Indigenous tribal people of Tripura.

Prof. Biswarajan Tripura

PHD, Candidate

Rhur University Boschum, Germany

Bishop Lumen, A Blessing to the People of Tripura...



The BULL OF HIS HOLINESS, POPE JOHN PAUL-II confirmed the erection of new Diocese of Agartala on 7th February 1996, bifurcating it from Silchar Diocese. The new Diocese comprises the whole tiny State of Tripura. It was May 26, 1996, Pentecost Sunday Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro, CSC, DD of the Holy Cross Fathers of North East Region was ordained and installed as its first Bishop of Agartala Diocese by Most Rev. Tarcisius Resto Phanrang, SDB, Archbishop of Shillong at a colorful ceremony in the Holy Cross School Ground, Agartala, West Tripura.

The task ahead of the new Diocese was very challenging for Bishop Lumen with its varied tribes, sub-tribes, cultures, languages and that time there was communal tension between the tribal and non-tribal in the State. At that time out of 30 lakhs population in the state there were about 12,000 Catholics with 9 Parishes and 160 Catholic village centers only. With few Priests, Religious, Catechists and handful of Catholic Laity Leaders Bishop Lumen took over as the Shepherd of the new Diocese with the motto "LEAD US ONWARD" which was a very fitting to the context.



Since I had an opportunity to be closely associated with him since my Collage days (1986-89) in Bangalore, I was very excited that he became our first Bishop of Agartala Diocese. Despite of my limitations he somehow trusted me a lot and therefore, I have been always opened to his invitation or request for the mission work in the Diocese.

I worked with him as a Secretary of the ADPC (Agartala Diocesan Pastoral Council) for two terms, as the Secretary of the Catholic Laity of Tripura (AICU-Tripura Unit), one term as Joint Secretary of NERCC (North East Regional Catholic Council) and he made me one of the Members of the Silver Jubilee Committee of the Diocese.

He is a man of faith and very particular in teaching of Doctrine of the Church. He spends lots of time in meditation and prayers which many of us may not know. He allows the Holy Spirit to speak to him and that is how he surrenders to God to lead the Diocese onward. In the field of faith formation Bishop Lumen is keen adhering to the tenets of Catholic Tradition. As per the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, Bishop is strict in teaching observing the celebration of Holy Eucharist. He often reminds the Parish in charges to announce or felicitate before or after the Holy Mass not during the mass.

There was time when I used to wonder how he manages to run the Diocese with the skeleton staff at the Bishop's house I realized that he has been working hard burning the midnight oil. He has been trusting his brother Priests and Religious (men & women) and visiting them regularly and reaching out to the most interior catholic village centers with them. He is a man who values punctuality, wants perfection in anything he does and is systematic in maintaining records. Regularly bringing out the Diocese Newsletter "LINK" always on the first day of the month for the last many years is an example of his self-discipline and commitment.

Learning a local language is one of the best weapons to do evangelization work which our Bishop has done painstakingly. He has learned Bengala and Kokborok which are the most spoken dialects of the Catholic faithful of the State. Because of his missionary zeal and interest in the people faithful in the Diocese have increased from nine thousand to fifty thousand.

The State level Holy Eucharistic Procession which started since 2009 is a great example of his support and encouragement together to the Laity Church Leaders for the glory of God which has now become the annual festival of Faith for the Diocese. I thank the Lord for giving us a God fearing Bishop and as we complete 25 years of the Diocese I ask the Lord to continue to bless our dear Bishop that he may lead us onward.

Mr. Paul S. Darlong

District Statistical Officer, Government of Tripura