



### PASTOR'S CORNER

The pandemic has created a plethora of feelings among everyone in our country.

The strain of the second wave seems more

dangerous than the first and we have seen this by the toll it has taken on the lives of people both young and old, as the spread of the virus achieves exponential acceleration. Added to the spread of the virus and its mutants comes the challenge of lack of oxygen in many Indian cities. On the one hand people are sad, fearful, angry and desperate; while on the other hand they are learning to accept the situation and sift through what is really important and what is superfluous. In that sense the pandemic has been a rare blessing.

The situation is bleak and we are choked with emotions. However, there is another response namely, to be positive and hopeful in this challenging situation. A positive attitude is infinitely better than a negative one. But is it possible to remain positive in this seemingly depressing



### Happiness is not absence but acceptance of sufferings

situation? I think it is. The story behind this interesting painting on Happiness will illustrate the point. Nazim Hikmat, the great Turkish poet once asked his friend Abidin Dino (the Turkish artist and well-known painter) to draw a picture of happiness. He drew a picture of a whole family -- cramped up on a broken bed -- under a leaky roof in a shabby room -- but still with a smile on each member's face! It goes without saying that the painting (which is given here) became very famous. Just keep looking at it.

Happiness is not absence of sufferings but acceptance of sufferings. See good around you even in trying situations. Stop worrying about things which are beyond your control. "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle" is a beautiful saying, whoever may have said it. It is possible that in these challenging times we may tend to give in to negativity and lose hope. Losing hope only adds to the challenges we already have. But keeping the flame of hope alive in our hearts will result in accepting all the challenges that come our way. Stay happy; stay safe; stay blessed.

*+Lumen, CSC*



### EDITORIAL

Even before we stepped into the month of May, we knew it would be a quiet Pentecost this year. Quite unlike the tumultuous one we had earlier imagined - with electrifying crowds, enchanting programs, and unprecedented fervor. By the first week of May these things lined up for the Silver Jubilee of the Diocese, began to look mildly inappropriate, even slightly indecent.

The State declared lock-down did not add to our disappointment as we had already, in solidarity with the suffering millions of our country, called off the celebrations.

Instead, our hearts switched modes and found a resonance with the pain and anguish that by then had already enveloped an entire nation. In somber silence we shared in the indescribable sorrow that untimely bereavements and unfinished farewells brought to our brothers and sisters.

A jubilee of compassion, of shared vulnerability!



### Somber Stands

Now on to something that with each passing day is growing in urgency and importance; the drug menace among sections of youth in Tripura. Until some years ago Tripura stood out among the states in Northeast as a relatively 'clean' State in this regard. In the recent years, however, the scenario has hugely changed. The speed with which more and more young people, even girls, are falling prey to this addiction is truly alarming. It's no longer an urban problem confined to undisciplined adolescent boys.

The crisis has not failed to evoke appropriate reactions from all quarters. The Administration is alert, elders are alarmed; parents are indignant; and of course, everyone is shocked.

However, it is amusing that there seems to be tacit approval of the rampant cultivation of *cannabis plants* in the State. It is common knowledge that for many households in the rural areas, this illegal activity has

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become the major source of income. The flowers and leaves of these plants are seasoned to make narcotic substances such as ganja or marijuana, also known as weed, pot or dope. The huge money it fetches continues to tempt families to engage in this insidious activity.

One cannot miss the irony of the situation. Even as the society deplores that many of its youth are addicted to substance-abuse, it is actively engaged in the production of narcotics substance.

One might be tempted to look at the rising phenomenon of our young people going the drug way as 'retribution' of sorts. As drug-related accidents, violence and even murders are on the rise in the State there is a need to recognize this malaise for what it is and deal with it comprehensively. The least the community can do in this regard is to refrain from being agents of self-destruction. **J. Pulinthanath, SDB**

### SFX CATHEDRAL PARISH

#### Cathedral Parish gets new Pro Vicar

Rev. Fr. Bhuban Sarkar was installed as the new Parish Priest of St. Francis Xavier Cathedral Parish on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2021 by Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro, C.S.C. In the beginning of the Mass Fr. Hormis John, CSC, the outgoing Parochial Administrator welcomed Bishop Lumen Monteiro to preside over the



holy Mass. After the installation of the new Parish Priest Bishop Lumen invited all the faithful of the Parish to cooperate and support the new Parish Priest. The new Parish Priest assumed his responsibility with receiving the key of the tabernacle. After 20 years of administering the Parish the Holy Cross Fathers handed over the Parish to the Diocese and Fr. Bhuban Sarkar is the first Diocesan Priest to take charge of the Parish. After holy Mass the Parish Secretary Mr. Dominic Jamatia, thanked the Holy Cross Fathers for their dedicated service, from the very inception of the Parish in 1999. Though Fr. Robert, CSC, (former Parish Priest for two terms) could not be present due to ill health, his service was highly praised and profusely thanked. During the absence of Fr. Robert, CSC, Fr. Hormis John CSC served the Parish as the Parochial Administrator in the interim. They were both given a fitting farewell with bouquet and a gift. The Parish community welcomed Fr. Bhuban Sarkar as their new Parish Priest.

*Mr. Dominic Jamatia*

### KATHALCHERRA PARISH

#### Sacraments received on Parish Feast Day

On 25<sup>th</sup> April 2021, Good Shepherd Parish of



Kathalcherra celebrated its patronal Feast. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the celebration was on a low key. However, there were 75 first holy communicants and 66 candidates who received the Sacrament of Confirmation. Rev. Fr. Lancy D'Souza, CSC, the Vicar General of the Diocese and the Dean of the North Tripura Deanery, was the main celebrant of the holy Mass. He exhorted the faithful to follow the Good Shepherd, especially in this time of the pandemic, by extending a caring hand to the neighbor. A limited number of faithful from the *mondolis* participated in the Feast day Holy Eucharist due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, but they maintained the required protocol. The celebration ended with a fellowship meal. *Fr. IshwarHappa, CSC*

### MARIAMNAGAR PARISH

#### Fathers' Day Celebrations



To mark the occasion of a 150th year of St. Joseph and in view of the Pope's new Apostolic Letter entitled *Patris Corde* (with a Father's Heart), we the Sisters of St. Joseph of Anney, Agartala Community with Mariamnagar Parish, decided to organize Seminars for the fathers, mothers, family and children of our Parish. The first gathering was for all the fathers of our Parish on 1<sup>st</sup> May, combining with the feast of St. Joseph the Worker. Fr. Abraham VC was the Resource Person highlighting the role of St. Joseph as a beloved Father, a tender and loving Father, an obedient Father, an accepting Father, a Father who is creatively courageous, a caring Father, a working Father, a Father in the shadows. He gently yet firmly stressed on the need to imbibe the example of St. Joseph and walk in his footprints. This ended with the Eucharistic Adoration followed by holy Mass. A beautiful picture of St. Joseph with a Prayer was distributed and refreshments were served to one and all.

*Sr. Swathi, SJA*



### Seminarians spend a week of Reflection & Bonding

The Diocese of Agartala under the guidance and collaboration of Frs. Shaiju CSC, Valentine SVD, and Fredy SVD organized a week-long Orientation



program for the diocesan seminarians at the Pastoral Centre Champaknagar. 15 candidates from different stages of priestly formation were present. Fr. Mariaraj CSC took two days Sessions on priestly

spirituality, based on the Book by Scott Dietrich. Fr. Jaibu SVD gave classes on basic Mathematics and Arithmetic; Br. Kurian SG on Liturgy, Sacraments and Scripture; Br. Devassy SG on mission experiences; Fr. Lawrence on vocation, obedience and perseverance in the priestly vocation through prayers; Fr. Fredy SVD in English grammar, Catechism and GK. Fr. Shaiju CSC did the evaluation session with points for the future.

We Brothers were glad to have a visit from our dear Bishop on Ascension Sunday, wherein Bro. Subrai Jamatia received his cassock from the Bishop in the presence of his parents and parishioners. Bishop spoke to the Brothers about the Diocese and gave some tips to remain faithful to the call of Christ. We also had friendly matches every evening.

Due to the imposition of lockdown in all Districts the program concluded one day ahead of time. I thank Fr. Valentine, Fr. Fredy and the minor Seminarians for making our stay comfortable and for the great hospitality. Overall it was a pleasant experience for a week as it strengthens a young vocation with gusto and serve. *Bro. SubraiJamatia*

### JUST NEWS BRIEFS

### Distribution of stationery materials to needy children



On April 15<sup>th</sup> some stationery materials such as notebooks, pen, pencil, eraser and sharpener were distributed to more than 350 deserving children studying at JUST Coaching Centers under Ganganagar R.D Block in Dhalai District of Tripura. The Project Coordinators distributed the free educational kits to the children and advised them to make good use of the opportunities provided by JUST. He also told them to work hard and study well if they wanted to achieve great success in life. The educational kits which were distributed are not only useful for the children in their learning process, but also helps them to boost their self-esteem and keeps them motivated to go to School throughout the year.

### Knowledge enhances one's capacity Distribution

Mindset plays an important role to trigger positive changes or to bring negative impacts. However knowledge is also largely responsible to change

mindsets. Earlier the PwDs of CBR project area were suffering from lack of self-confidence. The community was less interested to involve them in social programs and kept them aside. Their parents lost all hopes and thought that it would be better to keep them at home. PwD Ratan Mala Debbarma one of the members of Khasiamangal DPO said "...We even did not know about our rights, pension schemes and other facilities that we were eligible... ignorance also, to some extent, made us vulnerable and weak..."

In 2014, JUST, Agartala initiated the CBR Project and identified Ratan Mala during the initial period of CBR baseline survey. Then CBR worker Mina Kumari



Hrankhawl motivated all identified PwDs (Parents of CwDs) to form a DPO and explained about the rights and entitlements of PwDs, and through DPO to get the issues addressed. CBR Team imparted training on

DPO modules with regular follow up. This brought a ray of hope among the hopeless faces of PwD members. They became united and as a result CBR provided them with livelihood support. DPO members started Income Generation activities such as livestock, betel-nut garden. This continuous DPO meeting further enhanced their knowledge on several schemes, rights etc., which in turn developed their leadership skills. Now they are guiding other DPOs of the project area.

From Livelihood Support Farm that Ratan Mala Debbarma received she has made a profit Rs. 10,000 from livestock farming and even started a betel-nut farming to expand her business which in turn is gradually leading her to self-sufficiency. Under her leadership DPO members are taking part in decision making process by attending Gram Sabha and other village committee meetings and also participating in Interface meeting. As a result, 2 PwDs out of 5 received PMAY scheme from Panchayat. Now the community is giving her equal value and respect. *Mr. Cyril Darlong*

### Catholic University in India opens COVID-19 Care Centers



St. Xavier's University has opened Care Centres in Kolkata to treat people with COVID-19 who have no place to isolate at home. Fr. Felix Raj, S.J., the Vice-chancellor of the Catholic University, said that many poor villagers in the region live in households in which people are in close proximity to each other and that "it would not be prudent to expect that they can maintain physical distancing in such setups." "We cannot sit idle and be mute spectators to what is unfolding in our neighborhood amid a raging pandemic. St. Xavier's University has always reached out to people in their hours of distress," the Jesuit priest told The Telegraph in Kolkata on May 14. The

University is helping to start three isolation facilities with 90 beds in partnership with the Catholic Diocese of Asansol, in addition to a pre-hospitalization center on its campus. The facilities will have beds, oxygen, nebulizers, trained nurses, and a doctor on call. (CNA)

### 168 Priests and 116 Religious Nuns die due to Covid 19



Thanks galore for your cooperation in preparing the lists of priests and religious who died due to Covid in India. I have tried to rectify the errors and added all the names I received.

This present list consists of 168 Catholic priests who were called to the Lord. Once again, request you to revert with the missing names / or errata if any. I have also prepared a list of 116 religious nuns who died due to Covid during the second wave. The list is not complete. Kindly send the details of religious brothers who lost their lives to Covid. May the departed souls of our priests and religious rest in peace.

*Fr. Suresh Mathew OFM Cap. Editor, Indian Currents*

### Central Vista: Colossal Waste



The Central Vista Project (A new parliament house) is a pet project of PM Modi who wants to usher it in as one of his signature moves to celebrate India's 75th anniversary of Independence. India today is one of the worst affected countries with a total of over 2.4 crore cases. Covid has claimed over 2.6 lakh lives and threatens to claim many more. It is certainly the wrong time to pour much-needed money into a vanity Project. Read our cover story, Central Vista: Colossal Waste

(IC 21)



## Silver Steps in Sands of time

A few words that I pen down will speak about a person who has lived beautiful 25 years as a Shepherd of the Diocese and has made great difference in forming the Church in Tripura. This great personality is none other than our beloved Bishop His Lordship Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC DD Bishop of Agartala Diocese. My heart wells up with gratitude to God for such a great Shepherd God has gifted our Diocese with. Congratulations and prayerful greetings we shower on him for the glorious 25 years in the service of the Lord as its Chief Shepherd.

No doubt he took the road that was less travelled when he assumed responsibility as the first Bishop of the infant Diocese on My 26<sup>th</sup> 1996. The Diocese then had only 9 Parishes. But after 25 years it is blessed with 23 and more parishes, and over 49,000 faithful. This is the hundred fold that Jesus promised for the faithfulness of our Bishop. Bishop Lumen certainly knows the people of his diocese, the lay faithful, the religious and the priests. He has acquired that knowledge through years of patient parish visitation, hospital visitation and school visitation. That intimate knowledge of the diocese, of its people and of its history and its traditions is a great driving force in his life of loving dedication and commitment to their well-being and progress.

As I browse through the memory lane it goes back to the year 2003 when for the first time I landed up at Depacherra mission to serve the Lord. It was there I met dear Bishop for the first time. A remarkable sense of commitment and dedication I saw in him. I received his timely guidance in running the institution and he always bestowed me with a word of appreciation to boost my spirit. With the strength of his blessings the Institution made positive changes. No doubt he is a vibrant pastor, a compassionate Shepherd, an ardent seeker of God, good friend to one and all with a vast knowledge in administration and a gifted person.

On the many road trips to parish and school events, in deliberations on administrative matters, discussion of theological issues or in worship Bishop Lumen is a thoughtful and kind person. He has been insightful and witty, decisive yet always considerate. While always organized and



hardworking, he knew how to enjoy people. To highlight about his pastoral care the touching moment was when he took the journey to visit all the centers of the Diocese exactly a year ago during lock down to know the wellbeing of everyone. This is the Shepherds' love for the sheep shown in action. His heart goes out to the young and old alike. I personally bear witness to his love for the youth when I was involved in the youth ministry of the Diocese as the DYLA. He becomes one with the youth. With his guidance and inspiration youth ministry made remarkable success. Jesus went about doing good so too our Bishop reaches out to the people through his conversation or exhortation bringing solace and comfort to the needy. As a dynamic person he keeps

the Diocese vibrant and the ministries ever growing.

My personal testimony about our Bishop as a person of prayer is when we the Bethany Community at Dharmanagar had the privilege of having the Bishop with us on 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> of September 2020. Joining us for the community spiritual exercise and spent long hours to listen to our mission experience and appreciated and encouraged us. Celebrating the Holy Mass on the occasion of the feast of Nativity with the community and praying for our wellbeing. One could see in him the care and concern for the flock.

Today we thank God for the work of Bishop Lumen over the last twenty-five years. We thank God for his strong faith, a faith nurtured on the word of God, nourished by prayer and the sacraments and enriched by a tender devotion to Mary the mother of God. We thank God for his wisdom and understanding, wisdom developed through study and reflection. We thank God for his courage and vision manifested in his leadership and decision-making. We thank God for his piety and his reverence which have inspired and edified many.

Congratulations on your **silver jubilee** beloved Bishop. You have created wonderful memories through your **service** to God and the things of the Lord and my wish for you is that you have more years to enjoy the love of God as you continue your **service** as a Chief Shepherd of the Diocese. Happy 25th Episcopal Ordination Anniversary.

**Sr. Pushpa B.S**

Principal, Holy Cross Convent School, Dharmanagar