



Pastor's Corner



'Social distancing' is the new buzzword and is of utmost importance. Prime Minister Modi has called the whole country for a total lockdown and to observe social distancing because it is the only way for Prevention and Containment of the deadly virus. When social distancing has become the norm, how might we act with love and concern? Social solidarity is one answer. Even though we have to practice physical distance, we don't have to be socially distant. Social solidarity, or the interdependence between individuals and across groups, is an essential way for combating infectious diseases and other collective threats. Solidarity motivates us to promote public health, not just our own personal security. Above all, social solidarity reminds us that we are not alone.

Somebody said, "The good side-effects brought about by the Corona virus is the love, concern and care shown by the dedicated caregivers - nurses, doctors, medical workers." This is so true. Let us thank them and salute them for their commitment, goodness, and risk-taking. In his letter dated 13th March Pope Francis is asking priests to imitate the care-givers. "In the epidemic of fear that we are all living due to the Coronavirus pandemic, we risk behaving more like wage-earners than as pastors," the Pope said. "We are among the fearful and not among the doctors, nurses, volunteers, workers and fathers of families who are on the front lines." Please don't get me wrong. We must follow civil instructions because social distancing is of utmost importance to combat this pandemic. In fact I myself have urged our people and priests to adhere to civil instructions by closing down churches for communal liturgical celebrations and implementing measures to avoid interpersonal contact. But as Pope Francis tells us priests to "think of all the souls who are fearful and left alone because we pastors follow civil instructions which are right and clearly necessary to avoid contagion." And how about turning to God as well? The Bible tells us that whenever there was an epidemic the prophets invited people to pray, fast, repent, and ask forgiveness for their sins. "Return O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity." (Hos. 14, 1-2) And Yahweh himself



Social Distancing and Social Solidarity!

assures us: "Whenever I hold back the rain or send locusts to eat up the crops or send an epidemic on my people, if they pray to me and repent and turn away from the evil they have been doing, then I will hear them in heaven and forgive their sins..." (2 Chron. 7, 13-14) Let us turn our gaze heavenward and entreat God, as the Prime Minister of Italy Giuseppe Conte, with tears in his eyes said: "We have lost control...Can't understand what more we can do. All solutions are exhausted on the ground. Our only hope remains in the Sky; God rescue your people." **+Lumen, CSC**

Editorial



Unprecedented Times, Unfamiliar Feelings!

All of a sudden, the possibility of death - ours and that of others, stares us in our face. We realize the nightmare we see playing out in the world is not a nightmare, but reality. In a matter of two months the virus has changed the way we live and think. We have become less certain of our invincibility and more aware of our vulnerability.



We are told this version of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) is something the medical world has not encountered before. It has brought about a situation that we have not lived through before either. A great deal of uncertainty surrounds all aspects of this new thing and

numerous questions too. Different countries are at different stages of the pandemic. Some are at the initial stage, some at the peak stage, and some somberly gathering up the pieces that remain. As of now, there isn't a single confirmed case in the little world we call Tripura. (One hopes and prays that it will be the same when you get to read this too).

The necessity to remain indoors without any physical contact with the outside world makes us realize the value of something we perhaps took for granted all the while - the fact that our life has so much to do with others. An eeriness begins to creep up on us as we miss the buzz of everyday life, the noisy streets, honking of cars, the chatter of women, the laughter of children and the good ol' fellow across the road who once in a while, despite being busy finds a few minutes to drop in and say 'hai'. Our churches have gone silent; we instinctively put out our hands for a handshake, and then quickly pull it back, remembering. There is a palpable sense of fear and worry in most faces, a foreboding of things unpleasant coming.

Whenever we are faced with danger, we instinctively come together; we forget our differences, petty quarrels and little grudges. Instead, we take solace in the togetherness that we consciously forge. We feel somehow safe, reassured in the company of a gathering, be it that of the family,

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Church, or community. Instead, here is a situation that is quite opposite, and hence disturbing. We are told safety consists in moving away from one another; in being alone, in being physically cut off from everyone else. Social distancing is the buzzword.

Should social distancing necessarily lead to a sense of loneliness and isolation? Not if we remember the reason behind the distancing. Like the earthen pot which while flowing downstream told its companion pot, 'let's keep a distance from each other lest we touch and both break into pieces.' Surely solidarity or concern for the safety of the other is an integral part of the reason we shut ourselves up, just as it is for one's own safety. If distancing makes us insensitive to others, it's surely no less dangerous than the virus itself.

In some poignant ways, no doubt, it's a God given opportunity to retreat into the self and to be still. It gives one time to examine his direction, priorities, and to renew links with oneself, one's family members, and above all God, because the possibility of death continues to stare us in the face.

J. Pulinathan, SDB

KAMARANGA PARISH

Media Literacy Program

Agartala, February 21, 2020: The Diocesan Social Communication Coordinator Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD, conducted a Seminar for Girl students of Kamaranga on Media literacy. There were 73 participants from lower and higher classes. Kamaranga is a village situated in Kamalpur sub-division of Dhalai District. The students from the hostel go to the Bangla Medium Government School and they are looked after by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Annecy (SJA). Looking at the dire need of some literacy classes, the Superior of SJA requested for a class for the growing girls who are encircled and influenced by Social Media. The Resource Person gave classes on Mobile, Internet, Advertisement, Media & Fashion. Though most children are aware of the existing media, they are the passive consumers and often fail to critically analyze it. The Class was mainly to make the students to be critical consumers.

News Bureau, Ambassa

Holy Family Sisters Visit Families



Fr. Jomon SVD invited Holy Family Sisters of Delhi for Home Mission Ministry at Kamaranga Parish. Srs. Rekha Maria, Vineetha Jose, Asha Paul and Albina arrived at Kamaranga on 2nd March. They stayed in the families of the people and visited 10 substations of the parish, and left Kamaranga on 12th March.

The Sisters spent the days visiting the families. Breakfast and lunch were arranged in the families. The families took care of the sisters very lovingly. The Sisters emphasized on Family Prayer, Confession, and regular Sunday Mass. The people are extremely hospitable, accommodative, open, sincere and affectionate.

Fr. Jomon, SVD

MOHARPARA PARISH

Lenten Retreat



Immaculate Conception Parish Moharpara organized three days Lent Retreat from 6th-8th March 2020 in two zones namely Twidu zone and Ampu zone respectively. Good number of participants took part in both the zones throughout

the Retreat. The people were given opportunity to experience God's love and mercy through the sacrament of reconciliation and through prayers of healing. Reflection on the word of God based on their personal life helped the people to find more meaning. People fasted and focused more on prayer during the Retreat. The Retreat was successful due to the collaboration and hard work of many leaders and the faithful of different *mondolis*. Thanks to Frs. Abraham VC, Philip VC, Paul CR CSC, Catechists and *mondoli* Leaders for making the programs into a spiritual and faith renewal experience for the people.

Fr. Arbok Lyngdoh, CSC

BAGBASA PARISH

Rosary cum International Women's Day



In the ambience of our simple but beautiful Parish Church, we began the Seminar with the Marian Rosary with hymns.

At the outset, yours truly, the Parish Priest Fr. Harry CSC, gave a brief description of the multi-tasks done by the main proponent of the Rosary, viz., Venerable Fr. Patrick Peyton CSC, who had attracted hundreds and thousands of people in so many

countries years ago. He also welcomed the Resource Person Fr. Anthony SVD of Oisho Bani, Agartala. The series of films that we screened made a real impression on the participants, despite their lack of knowledge of English. Then, our Resource Person gave very lively Talks on the need of Family Prayer in general and praying the Rosary in every family, every day, by marking a slot in their daily routine. The program concluded with a sumptuous meal for all the participants numbering over 80.

Sr. Philomena SCCG & Fr. Harry CSC

DEPACHERRA PARISH

Day of the Elderly People



Depacherra Parish observed the 'Old Peoples' Day on 8th March as part of the preparation for the Silver Jubilee of the Diocese. In honour of these venerated elders, the holy Eucharist was celebrated at the Parish Church. On this day the sacred liturgy was conducted by the Parish Youth. 58 persons had participated in the program. During the homily Fr. Bhuban, the Parish Priest said that "the old people are a blessing for our Parish community and therefore each family should never make them sad or neglect them". They were felicitated after Mass with a gift. The program ended with lunch and a smiling faces of the elderly people of our Parish.

Ms. Agnes Uchoi

BODHJUNGNAGAR PARISH

HCFM & Church Leaders Training on 1st March

On 1st March, we had organized all the Presidents and Secretaries of the different *mothas* along with the HCFM Leaders for a day of Training and Seminar on how to lead the family as well as the Church. There were 48 persons who participated. Fr. Amal Raj gave a Talk on leadership in the church and insisted on the challenges of servant leadership in the church as compared to the political leadership in the world. It started with the Mass at 9.30am and continued till 4.30pm with a break for lunch. In the discussion different issues and challenges of leadership in the family as well as in the church were brought out.

Family Seminar & Retreat 7th to 8th March at Yacharai

Two days of Seminar cum Retreat was organized to discuss the different issues of Family management and Family relationship. Maria Sango and Joseph Sango members and a few couples were part of the program. On 7th March the program started at 10.00am with one hour adoration after which Sr.



Mary David gave a class on 'Family Management.' In the afternoon, Mr. Ashim Uchoi spoke on "Physical, Psychological and Spiritual relationships among Couples" and "Responsible Parenthood". On 8th March

we commemorated Women's Day. Fr. Bosco helped with Confessions and presided the holy Mass. In the afternoon was a general session with questions and answers. There were around 200 persons present.

SCC Meeting on 9th March at Borkathal:

Saint Andre Parish organized one day SCC Meeting at Borkathal. *Motha* leaders participated in this Meeting. Father Amal Raj was the Animator. The meeting began with the SCC prayer at 10:30 am, followed by Talks and interactive discussion on the subject of SCC. After the lunch break, the leaders were given time to share their views and experiences on the benefits of the SCC. All the participants were enthusiastic and eager to learn and ready to implement the knowledge they gained from this program.

Fr. Binoy John, CSC

AMBASSA PARISH

Mothers Day Celebration

The Women of Ambassa Parish celebrated Mothers Day on 8th of March. They came from all the Mission sub-stations. The celebration began with Holy Mass. The main celebrant was Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD. During the homily he enlightened the women on their responsibility as Mothers in the family and society. After The Holy Mass all the Mothers gathered at the Parish Hall. Sr. Susheela in her Talk highlighted the theme to the Mothers. Mother is the first teacher of the Family and Mothers are to be role models in the family. Mothers are very important in the family and society. Mothers are God's gift; very precious in the world. All the Mothers were very happy and



encouraged by the inspiring Talks and the coming together. The celebration came to an end with the Snacks and Tea.

Sr. Susheela Xess SSpS

Diocese News Tidbits

Lenten Retreat for Priests and Religious of the Diocese



Divine Mercy Retreat Centre Mariamangar, conducted a one day Retreat for Priests and Religious on 9th March 2020. It was a Lenten Recollection day for the consecrated persons. 40 Priests, Sisters and Brothers from different parts of Diocese attended for Retreat. It was a fruitful day for us to meditate and recollect the word of God as the preparation for Lenten season. Fr. Abraham VC and Fr. Philip VC shared the word of God. There was time for individual Confession and all were able to sit before Eucharistic Lord in Adoration, Praise and Worship and prepare themselves for a fruitful Lenten Season. The one day Retreat ended with the Holy Mass by Fr. Praveen Kumar, the new priest of the Diocese of Agartala.

Mariamangar News Service

Diocese level International Women's Day celebration

Theme: "An Equal world is an Enabled world."

The International Women's Day program started with the lighting of the lamp by the dignitaries,



Chairperson of the JUST Bishop Lumen Monteiro, Chief Guest Ms. Kuntal Das TCS OSD SIPARD, Fr. Jeevan SVD JUST Director, Fr. Shaji CSC Convener of Silver Jubilee program, Sr. Maria Superior General of Fatima Sisters from Pune, Sr. Mary David Women Commission Secretary and Mrs. Bobita Debbarma Women Commission leader. Thereafter JUST Director Fr. Jeevan welcomed the Guests with a *risha*. Fr. Shaji explained the Silver Jubilee programs for the Diocese. Sr. Maria FS Superior General highlighted the importance of Women's education. Chief Guest and Resource person Mrs Kuntal Das in her talk highlighted to the women on the women's day celebration history and the importance of Women's Education. Bishop Lumen CSC explained the theme "An Equal world is an Enabled world." Ms. Manju Debbarma said that Women have to be empowered on the political economic and social level. In the afternoon the Women gave a Report from their Parish. Thereafter Action Plan was done for the Jubilee year. Various games were conducted and prizes were distributed to all the Winners. 230 Women participated in the celebration. Sr. Mary David FS, Women Commission Secretary, thanked all the participants for coming in large numbers. **Sr. Susheela Xess SSpS**

Teachers Training Program 2020 at Kanchanpur

The two day's Intensive Teachers Training Programme-2020 was held on 28th and 29th of February at St. Francis of Assisi English Medium School, Kanchanpur. Rev.Fr. [Dr.] Paul Pudusserry CSC, Director of ASHA, was the Resource Person. Participants from different Schools actively participated and benefited from this training program.



Through his inter-active sessions, Fr. [Dr.] Paul Pudusserry, exhorted the Teachers to

shift from a Learned-Teacher paradigm to a LearningTeacher paradigm. Several other useful techniques were also imparted to our Teachers. We

are grateful to our Resource Person and thank all those who participated and profited much.

Fr. Kiran, OFM Cap.

Diocese level Couples Retreat

In preparation for the Silver Jubilee celebration of our Diocese, the Family Commission of our Diocese organized Couples Retreat for three days from 21st till 23rd February 2020. The Retreat was conducted by a Team from Kolkata called 'Missionary Families for Christ' under the leadership of Mr. Lawrence Ekka. It was held in Puranbari Village under Kathalcherra Parish. 23 couples and 12 singles attended the Retreat. On the last



day we had the Holy Eucharist which was presided over by Fr. Thomas Pereira CSC, the Principal of Holy Cross School, Chailengta and concelebrated by Frs. Abraham CSC, C.V. Jose CSC, Ishwar CSC and Bosco Lathees. *Secretary of Family Commission*

JUST News Tidbits

Need based Capacity Building for School Animators and Peace Club Members

Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura (JUST) organized training on Counseling Skills and Communication Skills for the Schools Peace Club Animators at JUST training Hall Agartala on 10th February 2020.



There were 19 Teachers and 51 Students from different Schools who participated in the Training. The Resource Persons for the Training were Fr. Valan CSC and Miss Anima Debbarma. The Resource Persons gave Input Sessions with lots of group activities conducted in the training which helped the participants to understand and equip themselves to be effective Peace Workers.

Launching of FARM NORTHEAST Phase III Project

Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura launched the FARM NORTHEAST Project phase III on 25th February 2020 at JUST Hall Agartala. The Chief Guest was



Magsaysay awardee Mr. Kulandai Francis, the founder Director of Integrated Village Development Project (IVDP) in Tamil Nadu.

Around 130 Farmers participated in the launching program and showcased their farm products and cultural attire in the program. Mr. Kulandai Francis assured his support for the development of the Farmers for the next three years. The Project will be implemented under Hezamara R.D Block under West District and Padmabil R.D Block in Khowai District.

Mr. Cyril Darlong

Our Distinguished Visitors

- Mr. K. Francis, Founder of Integrated Village Development Project (IVDP)
- Mr. Vincent, Director of Child Welfare from Krishnagiri
- Sr. Alice, Sister General of SKD & Sr. Tina, Asst. General of SKD from Kerala
- Fr. Sabu Francis, Provincial of MSFS, Northeast Province
- Fatima Sisters from Guwahati: Basilla, Monica, Jacinta Mahimraj and Srs. Archangela, Sheeba, Annie, Merida, & Angela
- Fr. Mathew Elanjipuram SJ Provincial of Jesuit, Kerala
- Sisters from Holy Family (CHF) Delhi: Asha Paul, Rekha Maria, Vineetha & Albina
- Sr. Catherine, Provincial Superior of SABS from Dimapur
- Sr. Mercitta, Vicar Provincial of SABS from Dimapur
- Sr. Rose Mary, Treasurer of SABS from Corpus Christi Province, Dimapur
- Fr. Vincent, SSP Secretary of N.E Media Commission from Guwahati
- Sr. Maria, Superior General of Fatima Sisters from Pune

Bishop's Program for April 2020

Due to Covid-19 a total lockdown has been announced for 21 days for the whole of India. Citizens are asked not to go out of their homes unnecessarily and must practice social distancing. Adhering to the Guidelines by the Govt. of India I have cancelled all my programs for the month of April.