

Link
Lead Us Onward

DIOCESE OF AGARTALA

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Pastor's Corner

Think Different



Let me begin the first issue of the year with an anecdote. An engineer in a car manufacturing company designs a world class car. While trying to bring out the car from the manufacturing area to the showroom, they realized that the car is a

few inches taller than the entrance. The engineer felt bad that he didn't notice this detail before creating the car. The painter said there was no problem, that they can bring out the car but there would be a few scratches on top of the car which could be touched up later. The engineer said that they can break the entrance, take the car out, and later redo it. But the watchman who was observing them had another idea. He remarked, "The car is only a few inches taller than the entrance. So simply release the air in the tyre and the height of the car will sink and the car could be easily taken out!"



Moral of the story: Don't see problems from only from an expert's point of view. There is always a layman's outlook that gives an alternate solution. Yes dear Readers, life's issues are very much the same. Often another person may seem below our stature by a few inches, making us seem taller. Release some air (ego) and adjust the height!

The New Year 2017 has dawned and a new issue of LINK, the 226th, is in your Inbox. *In the past year each issue of the LINK was published on the first day of the month without a miss!* I could do this with the help of Fr. Pulinthanath the Editorial writer, Fr. Prasad the Designer, and Mr. Sunirmal Deb the Printer, who have been doggedly supporting me in the venture. I thank them sincerely. Yes, we shall try our best this year too! Finally, please know that we are always encouraged with your one-liners of appreciation/critical comments or suggestions to improve. Let me wish you all a Peace filled, Grace filled and Joy filled New Year 2017.

Finally, I cannot but mention about the sorrow and grief that we felt in Agartala on hearing of the demise of our dear Fr. George Kallungal CSC on 24th December. He was an unassuming person who had touched the lives of so many especially at Holy Cross School and St. Joseph Parish in Agartala. A humble, obedient and faithful religious, Fr. George was a deeply spiritual person, cheerful and affectionate. We mourn his loss and thank God for Fr. George's life of 71 years, 43 of which were as a priest of God! +Lumen, CSC

Editorial

"GRACE THAT BROUGHT ME SAFE THUS FAR"



We have stepped into the New Year with a prayer on our lips and hope in our hearts, that all shall be well in the year ahead. At the same time, it's hard to conceal the trepidation with which we step into it. Thanks to an uncanny sense of being hemmed in on all fronts - political, economic, social, and educational, the anxiety we feel is more than what a normal New Year generally warrants.

Perhaps it is this residual anxiety within that makes us long for something we can hold on to, something bigger than the sense of uncertainty that looms large over our affairs. Having known with each passing year the transitory nature of supposedly enduring realities we have come to rely less on those straw-built fortresses. Perhaps, the very uneasiness within us is a God-willed thing to remind us that He alone is our guarantee, our safety and security.

What better attitude can we have at the beginning of a year than one of trusting surrender to the one whose mercy, love and saving presence we have experienced every day of our life hitherto?



I must change track now and devote some space to

someone I knew as a deeply spiritual person, a genuine priest and a good friend who always had a smile for others even in suffering. In the departure of Fr. George Kallungal CSC the Holy Cross Congregation and the Church in Tripura has lost a man of God who always had the spiritual and material welfare of God's people in mind.

The legacy of Fr. George will continue to live on through the many Holy Cross personnel in whose formation he did play a significant role. We express our sympathies to the Society that has lost an illustrious member and pray for the soul of Fr. George. From heaven may he continue to pray for all of us!

Thoughts of death, especially of someone we knew make us more grateful to God for having allowed us to step into this New Year. On many counts, the future seems less than reassuring. But we march into the New Year bravely because we believe we are safe and secure in the loving arms of our Saviour. "Even were I to walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I shall not fear, for you are with me." (Ps 23:4). Happy New Year.

J. Pulinthanath, SDB



The Diocese of Agartala mourns the death of Fr. GEORGE KALLUNGAL, CSC (29-09-1945 to 24-12-2016) and prays God to grant him eternal rest.

Christmas Mela 2016 was organized in different parishes and institutions of the Diocese, but only a few send us reports, of which some highlights are given below:

At Tuikarmaw Parish, the Christmas Mela was organized on the School Grounds on 17th December. The theme for Christ Mela was "Shantir Raja Asechen" (The Prince of Peace is coming). It was organized in collaboration with eight different ecumenical churches of South Tripura named under the banner "South Tripura Christian Forum". The Convener was Fr. C. Abraham, CSC. Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, was the Chief Guest and Shri Jiten Chowdhury, Member of Parliament, was the Guest of Honour. Pastors of various Churches delivered Christmas Messages and sang Christmas carols. A huge crowd attended the program and appreciated being there.



At Khumulwng Parish, the Christmas Banik/Mela was celebrated at the Parish premises on the 16th and 17th December, before the inauguration of the Parish Church. Bishop Lumen inaugurated the Mela and addressed the gathering with his message of God's infinite love to humanity and his personal involvement in our history through his Son Jesus. Creative and lively performances and inspiring messages from different Resource Persons enthralled the audience and nourished them spiritually as well.



At Kamaranga Parish, the 16th Christ Mela was conducted on 20th December 2016. The theme of the Christmas Mela at Kamaranga Parish was "God's reign in the hearts of the People". The people flocked together at the venue on 20th December and attended the lively program of Christmas Mela. The Presence of other religious communities made the spirit of harmony visible. Bishop graced the occasion with his presence. The night was joyful with the hilarious and entertaining items which reflected the Christmas Joy.



At Baijalbari Parish, on 18th December, a pre-Christmas Mela the first of its kind in the parish of Baijalbari was organized. Fr. Paul Panachickal, S.D.B., Parish Priest, inaugurated the Mela. Singing and dance competitions were interspersed with Talks on the meaning of Christmas given by Priests and by laity. At 9.00 pm Fr. Pulinthanath SDB, Director of the Peace Centre, Nandan Nagar, screened a half-hour film explaining the meaning of Christmas. Around 5,000 people participated in the Mela. It was a good beginning.



At Depacherra, Christ Mela was organized at Karbook on 22nd December for the first time in collaboration with other Christian Denominations. A large Christian community gathered to celebrate joyous event of Christmas. Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro, CSC was the Chief Guest and Mr. Priymoni Debberma, MLA and Mr. Nagesh Kumar, IAS, SDM of Karbook were Guests of honour. Beside Christmas messages and reflections a variety of cultural programs also were staged.



GACHIRAMPARA PARISH
Blessing of the village chapel and
inauguration of new substation

Yet another great and remarkable day for Gachiramites. On December 4th our dear Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, blessed the Chapel at Phaiko Village near Damcherra, North Tripura bordering the State of Mizoram. 17 families consisting 45 members received the Sacraments of Initiation from our dear Bishop. People from all the substations and from other denominations witnessed the event. Priests and religious from neighbouring Parishes joined the celebration. After the Holy Eucharist a short cultural program was presented by the villagers, which as the Bishop said "was very unique". Two new substations and two village chapels in the parish in a year mark the progress in faith in the area. Thanks to God almighty for his enumerable blessings. The day came to an end with the fellowship.



Fr. Prasanna Kumar, OFM, Cap

HOLY CROSS PARISH, BAGBASA
Annual Parish Sabha

Holy Cross Parish Bagbasa conducted the Parish Sabha from 25th to 27th November 2016 at Jarulian *mondoli*, one of the biggest sub-centres in the Parish. It was a wonderful experience for the faithful to come together as one family to witness Christ in their life. About 50 percent of the parishioners attended the Sabha. I would like to thank our Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, for making himself available for two days. His presence and guidance was encouraging to the faithful. Fr. Prasanna spoke on the importance of the Eucharist, Fr. Joachim on being a Eucharist community, and Fr. Lancy spoke of the importance of SCC in the life of the Parish. It was the first time the parish Sabha was conducted without the Parish Priest. I thank God, the Parish Secretary, the Bishop and all Fathers and Sisters who helped.



Fr. Jerome, CSC

GOOD SHEPHERD PARISH,
KATHALCHERRA

Bishop's Visit to Besaiah, Tuichandro,
Bijoymasterpara and
Dhanyarampara

On 28/11/2016 was a great day for the people of these *mondolis*, who like in the time of advent were waiting for the Savior to come, similarly for a long time the people of Tuichandro and Besaiah were waiting the arrival and visit of our beloved Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC. The pastoral commitment of our Bishop was very inspiring. He made it to the place in spite of bad roads and communication problems.



Bishop was given a grand welcome by the Besaiah faithful. The fathers, sisters and catechist and other people who accompanied Bishop were also welcomed. Bishop Lumen celebrated the holy Eucharist which was followed by a short cultural program. On 11/12/2016 the Parish organized a three days of Bible Camp. At seven centers animators were sent to teach the children. The animators were accompanied by a Sister in each center. We are grateful to BS, VSDB and MC Sisters of Kumarghat who came and helped us. More than 270 children from different villages and from seven different centers attended. The liturgy was animated by the children. It was followed by Bible quiz and parable competition.

On 13/12/2016 we had Parish core committee SCC service. All the SCC units' leaders were present for the SCC. The leaders are taking care of their own units. They expressed their active participation the SCC. The SCC has brought changes in the lives of the people. *Fr. Iswar Happa, CSC*

KHUMULWNG PARISH

Bell Rings at the new Parish Church Building

18th of December 2016 was a red letter day for St. Alphonsa Parish Khumulwng. The Parish Church construction which began in 2014 was completed in December 2016. Along with the parishioners I am extremely grateful to the Bishop Lumen Monteiro, Church in Need Germany, and Propaganda Fide Rome, for their generous financial



support. Our parishioners generously contributed to buy the church Bell, Tabernacle, Altar, Ambo, Crucifix, Stations of the Cross, entrance door, and Statues, as well as the sound and lighting system. The Church construction was well planned and executed. Bishop had the privilege of blessing and ringing the new Church Bell, anointing and blessing the altar, ambo and tabernacle. The two day Christmas Mela and Youth Seminar culminated with the Church blessing. Women dressed in traditional outfits led the celebrants and the congregation with song and dance to the Church building. We pray that the parish Church brings in unity and strengthens the faith of our people. *Fr. Arun Minj, SVD*

DIVINE RETREAT CENTER, MARIAMNAGAR

New Beginnings New Life

This new Centre has already experienced many activities since our arrival in July 2016. On the first Saturday in December we had one day Bible Convention, Healing Adoration and Holy Mass led by the priests in Divine Retreat Centre. About 80 faithful participated in the prayer and received the blessings of our Lord. Fr. Kanikai CSC, offered the Holy Mass on the theme of healing and proclaimed the Word of the



Lord. Program for the 2017: This coming year we have planned to increase the one day program in English for the working members of our church. It will be every second Saturday of every month and it will be for different groups every month like couples, teachers, youth, etc. We invite all pastors to encourage the faithful in the parish and villages to attend the prayers and receive God's blessings and healing. *Fr. Xavier, VC*

Community Health Association of Tripura

NECHA organized SPP (Strategic Planning Process) for Agartala



Unit on 14th of November. We discussed how we can be involved in the healing ministry of the Lord as Sister nurses. There was some enlightenment on Clinical Establishment Act (2010) which says that a Dispensary needs to be registered with all

the requirements of a hospital and a Doctor must be there. So the Centers functioning without a doctor could be called as Health Centres rather than dispensary. Fr Paul Thettyal NECHA Director was the Resource Person. The work of reaching out to the poor at Ambassa, Kathalcherra, Kamaranga, and Ferrando Rehabilitation Centre continues and a number of patients benefitted from this.

Dr. Sr. Prema BS, Health Commission of the Diocese of Agartala

Education Commission: Seminar by Fr. Sunny Jacob, SJ

On the 3rd of December the Education Commission under the initiative of Fr. Benny SDB,

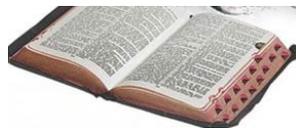


organized a day long Seminar with the theme "The Challenges arising from the New Education Policy" at Don Bosco School Nandanagar. The Resource Person was Fr. Sunny Jacob SJ of the JEA South Asia. Religious, Priests, Teachers and others attended the Seminar. Bishop Lumen gave addressed the participants emphasizing the

importance of keeping ourselves updated with the latest rules and regulations in Education. The Seminar was an eye opener for many of those who attended. The Resource Person pointed out several features of the Policy which are biased and unfair. The Seminar was well appreciated. *Education Commission Report*

Production SCC Regional Documentary film

The Regional Secretary along with film production team from Hyderabad visited all the Dioceses in the NE Region. On November 25th and 26th they visited Agartala Diocese for filming the SCCs



success stories here. 12 representatives from each of the three SCC Zones were present. The Diocesan Coordinator welcomed the Regional Secretary Sr. Martina MSMHC as well as the film production team from Hyderabad with traditional tribal risha and flowers. The

film director Mr. Miachael Periasamy got the group to share their success stories some of which were filmed under these three groupings: 1. Cordiality between Bishop, Priests, Religious and the Laity in the Diocese. 2. Village hospital visit by SCC unit members. 3. SCC gospel sharing. 4. Distribution of Bible.s 5. Bible enthronement in the family, and 6. Family Prayers. *Fr. Lancy CSC, SCC Coordinator for the Diocese*

Deaf Child Esme attends National Childrens Parliament in Delhi

I am Esme Hrangkhawl studying in Class VII from Tripura are the words in sign language that she uses to introduce herself at the National Children's Parliament held in Delhi. Explaining her early childhood she says, "initially there was not enough care provided



to me as my parents were poor” and hence she was put into a special home meant for children with varied disabilities, but the care there was not good.

With a stroke of good luck “I was sent to Ferrando School for Speech and Hearing with the specialized

education and professional care, because of which I can now speak few words and phrases.” So I appeal for an environment where everyone learns sign language because i believe that it is one language that can unify the

“Presently I am the Reduce Inequalities Minister of Nine is Mine. As part of the campaign i join a movement in the North East called RAISE North East where children with disability are pressing for the complete implementation of inclusion of children into Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. My friend Eva from Meghalaya is the Deputy Child Minister for Education and she has coined the phrase 'inclusive children's parliament'. I thank all of you for listening to what I have to share. I know that your struggle and commitment to inclusion for all will not be an easy task. But start we must!

Our Readers Write

Thanks a lot for the LINK on every first day of the month with a brief reflection and lot of news about the Diocese. I enjoy reading them. Hearty Congratulations! **Fr. Zachary V, SDB, Guwahati**

Thank you for sending the LINK regularly, and for the added inspiring thoughts. I am sure that many are befitting from those thoughts, not just the news! I use them occasionally **Thomas Manjaly, Shillong**

Thank you Bishop Lumen for your talent of sharing the joy with those around you - in your case it looks like the whole world! It has kept me in touch with one of my most cherished "transfers" in my life. Yes, Tuikarmaw is close to my heart. **Chacko and Marilynne, Kuujuarapik, QC, Canada**

Thank you Bishop for the LINK.... on the dot as usual as we start the last of the month of the year! You are so punctual that you deserve an award...! **Celine, fma, Agartala**

Thank you, Bishop Lumen. It is always a joy to read news about your Diocese.

Sr. Wiedower, CSC, USA

Bishop's Program for January 2017

- 01: Installation of new PP, Moharpara
- 03-13: Home Visit
- 14-15: Mumbai Nuptials
- 16-17: Caritas Regional Assembly, Kochi
- 19: Silver Jubilee of Sr. Simira, Chailengtha
- 21-22: Silver Jubilee of Archdiocese of Guwahati
- 27: Tuichakma School Blessing, Moharpara Parish
- 28-29: Kumarghat Parish Sabah at Masli Reang
- 30-09: CCBI Meet, Bhopal

World Disabled Day

On 3rd December JUST observed World Disabled Day at Teliamura Town Hall.



Sr. Amali the Chief Coordinator of JUST inaugurated the program. The special invitees were Mr. Gouri Das (MLA), Mr. Sajal Kumar Chairman of Teliamura Municipal Council and Mr. Amaresh Choudhury, Chairman of Teliamura Panchayat

Samiti. Mr. Prasanta Choudhury the program Coordinator of JUST gave a welcome speech in which he took the opportunity to also introduce the invitees in the program. The program was followed by songs and recitation of poems by the PwDs and CwDs. All the invitees delivered short speeches on the importance of the day and the wonderful initiatives taken by JUST for development of the PwDs and CwDs.

Training on Conflict Resolution

On 8th November JUST organized a training program on Conflict Resolution for the college students at Holy



Cross College Jubatara Campus. 70 students took part in the program. The Facilitator of the program was Mr. Cyril Darlong Coordinator of JUST. The objective of the training was to

capacitate the youths to address local issues related to peace and social justice. The Facilitator explained conflict, possible reasons for conflict and how and with whom it can occur. The Facilitator also shared on six Principles of responding to Conflicts. There were group activities and discussions during the sessions which helped the students to critically think and understand on resolving conflicts. The training was a fruitful one with many positive feedbacks from the students. Mr. Vincent Debbarma

Our Distinguished Visitors

- . Bishop Jacob Mar Barnabas from Gurgaon
- CNEWA Director Msgr. John Korzar & Fr. Jigmy
- Sr. De Sales BS, Mr. Reji, Jose Kutty &
- . Jose Thengumpally, relatives of Fr. Thengumpally from Kerala
- SVD Frs. Manoj, Joby and Br Binit Barla from Lumshnong
- . SVD Frs. Augustine & Joy from Guwahati
- Fr. Pinto Paul CSC, & Ms. Beverly Howard from USA
- SD Sisters Rancy, Deni & Franciline from Delhi
- Sr. Desiree AC from Kolkata
- Sr. Shalini, Professor from Delhi
- Sr. Alphonse Mary, SSpS Provincial from Guwahati
- Sr. Bernadette, SSpS from Halflong