



DIOCESE OF AGARTALA

Lead Us Onward



Agartala Diocesan Newsletter



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Love spelt as Sacrifice!



Soon we will be celebrating the greatest feast in the Catholic Church the Resurrection of Jesus

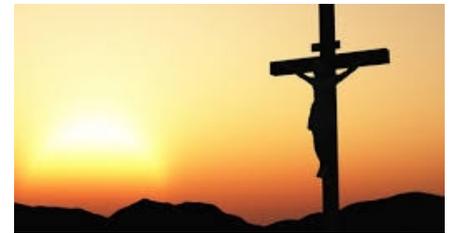
from the dead. Easter is preceded with *Triduum* which begins with Holy Thursday. On that day we commemorate the Last Supper which reminds us of 'servant leadership' "wash each other's feet" (Jn.13,15) and 'agape love'.

Agape is unconditional and everlasting love. It is unconditional love, bigger than ourselves; a boundless compassion, and an infinite empathy. It is the purest form of love that is free from desires and expectations, and love regardless of the flaws and shortcomings of others. Agape is the love that accepts, forgives and believes in the greatest good of the other. Loving one another is the

criterion of mutual love. It means that mutual love is totally selfless and selfgiving: one's love is, as it were, deposited in the other and this is done by both, in total trust and selfgift to the other.

Agape Love is always altruistic, other-centered and not self-centered. It is a self-giving and self-sacrificing love; love, which is not just a feeling, a thought, a sensation or an emotion. Love is expressed not in words but in action for Love is an action, a verb, and not a noun. When one says, 'I love you', s/he keeps the other person in first place. The focus here is not 'I' but 'You'. It means I love you more than I love myself. If you love someone, then do something in action for that person; do something that costs you something. As St. Mother Teresa used to say, "Give till it hurts". Agape love is the love that wills and does the absolute good of the other. This love is

Pastor's Corner



sacrificial love. And so Love is **not** being spelt as LOVE **but** as SACRIFICE.

And finally, General Elections in India will take place on seven dates, from 11 April to 19 May. Using the words of Cardinal Oswald Gracias, President of CBCI that "Voting is a sacred duty; do so wisely" I want to exhort you to please exercise your franchise. And as the Cardinal says "India needs leaders who understand that authority is a service". Let us elect such leaders! **+Lumen, CSC**

In search of our Songs



Kokborok liturgy seldom seems to avail of that 'extra something' which good singing is said to

add to liturgy. And the reasons are not hard to identify. Take a look at *Logesong*, the official hymnal cum prayer book of the Diocese. Most of the hymns it contains are average, with very little to recommend. This is not to decry the presence of some outstanding hymns in *Logesong* that have an enduring appeal and have borne the weight of repeated singing for decades. The majority of Kokborok hymns therein, however, seem to suffer from poor 'form'- the melodic range and contour, harmony, rhythm and tempo and 'substance' the meaning of the lyrics and their relevance. In special times like Lent and Holy

Week, we become more aware of this lacuna. Our hymns seem incapable of capturing and expressing all that we feel within; they are, at best, well-intentioned but ill-conceived machinations that fail to lift us to higher realms. When our hearts want to race, they trudge along, merely.

By stating this, I do not mean to blame those that have in the past, under many constraints, done what they could. However imperfect their contributions, they have left indelible marks on our liturgy and life.

It is time we paid greater attention to hymns. Some input to musicians on what makes liturgical music work, perhaps; some encouragement and support so that they are enthused to employ their gifts for religious music, perhaps. Does 'better hymns, life-changing hymns' merely mean better rhythm, better melody and better lyrics? One is inclined to think they are, rather, the result of an emotional

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engagement with God in the depths of one's heart. Like David did with his harp, it is time our musicians took up their instruments and began to 'sing to the Lord a new song' (Ps 96:1). **J. Pulinthanath, SDB**

Congratulations!

Our sincere CONGRATULATIONS to newly elected Sr. Maria Goretti Amaldas, FS, Superior General of the Sisters of our Lady of Fatima.

Sr. Anitta Jose, FCC, newly elected Provincial Superior of Ernakulam Province.

AMBASSA PARISH**Missionary Childhood Day**

Holy Spirit Ambassa Parish Pastoral Council decided to celebrate the Childhood Day through Medical Camps and distributing clothes to the poor children in the Villages. Hence on February 17th and 24th the Parish Team along with a medical Doctor and Nurses organized two Camps in Shikari Bari and Bodo Bari. Shikari Bari is situated 15 kilometers from Ambassa and is inhabited by Noatia tribal community. This hamlet is easily reachable from the National Highway; yet the poverty and illiteracy prevalent there is dominantly noticed. We could attend to 86 Patients with different diseases. There were cases of Malaria P.F, Malnutrition of children and mothers, Tuberculosis, and so on. People have to walk for almost two kilometers to fetch water. The Government administered Primary School hardly functions.

Again on 24th February the Parish Team organized a Camp in Bodo Bari. It is a Molsom dominated tribal village around 6 Kms from Ambassa. We could attend to more than 100 Patients, mostly children and women. Though the village is not far away from the District Offices, yet development has not taken place. Poor road communication, no water supply, no electricity, etc, are their woes. Thanks to the Parish Council Members for their decision and commitment. *Ivan D'Silva, SVD*

MANDWI PARISH**A good shepherd visits his flock**

3rd March 2019 was a memorable day for the Mary Help of Christians Parish Mandwi, especially for the Sridam Kabra Motha. Our dear Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, as the shepherd of the Diocese came on a pastoral visit to Mandwi Parish. On reaching Mandwi Parish our Lordship was welcomed by the Parish Priest Fr. Hubert Thyрниang, SDB, along with the Boarders and some of the faithful. Then Bishop went around to visit the mission centre. He also visited the Convent and met with the FMA Sisters and boarding girls. Without delay we left for Sridam Kabra Village where the local people welcomed him in a grand manner and they were very happy to receive him in their little village. Bishop Lumen presided over the Holy Eucharist and gave a very meaningful homily. During the Holy Mass thirty adults received the Sacrament of

Confirmation. The people were so happy and joyous that they prepared a short cultural program with several speeches to express their contentment. Many were seen talking and sharing with Bishop about their personal life and situation. The visit of our Shepherd gave encouragement and brought abundant blessings to us all. Our joy knew no bounds and we thank our dear Lordship for his concern for us and our people.

Fr. Hubert Thyрниang, SDB

MOHARPARA PARISH**A new church at Sonkhola**

St. Teresa Church Sonkhola, one of the substations of Moharpara Parish, was inaugurated and blessed by Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC on 10th March 2019. It was a great blessing for the faithful and villagers because it was for the first time that Bishop Lumen was going to this *motha*. The people were overjoyed as they received their shepherd into their village and were excited to see their long awaited new Chapel being blessed. It is noteworthy that the Chapel construction and completion was with the financial support of all the *mothas* of the Parish. Our dear Bishop blessed the Chapel and presided over the Holy Eucharist. After the Mass a short cultural program was held to felicitate the Bishop and to express their love and gratitude to God and to the people who have assisted them in making their dreams come to reality. The program came to an end with agape meal.

Parish Chronicler

BODHJUNGNAGAR PARISH**Youth Picnic**

St. Andre Parish Youth were taken for a Picnic to Podobil Park at Khowai on 14th February. The Youth were mostly those who helped during the Carol and Advent Season activities in different Villages of our Parish. They were thirty eight and were led under the guidance of Mr. Anando, the PYA and Fr. Binoy John CSC, the Parish Priest. They also visited Baijalbari Mission run by the Don Bosco Fathers. It was a day to rejuvenate the unity among the Youth

and to appreciate their contribution to the Parish. The Youth in turn expressed their gratitude to the organizing Committee and committed themselves to work for the Parish activities.

Family Renewal Youth

On 16th and 17th February we had Family Renewal Program at Yacharai Motha, a substation under Bodhjungnagar Parish. More than 50 Couples participated in that program. We had different Sessions on Parenting and Family Values, Adoration, Confession and Holy Eucharist. The Resource Persons were Sr. Mary David, Fr. Binoy, Fr. Amalraj and Mr. Anando along with other Catechists. Most of the participants were Members of Maria Sangho and Joseph Sangho and were happy with the lessons that were taught to them. They had a sumptuous meal on both days. On 17th afternoon Joseph Sangho and Maria Sangho had their Meetings and Action Plan for the Year.

Confirmations

22nd February was a joy filled day for the people of Bodhjungnagar Parish and the Students of the School, for 107 of them received the Sacrament of Confirmation which was administered by our shepherd Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC. All of them are studying in St. Andre School and it was a witnessing moment of Faith to the other students in the School. During the holy Mass, Bishop Lumen emphasized on the need to be rooted in faith and prayer which purely is a gift from the Holy Spirit. All the parents of the students were present on this auspicious occasion. The Parish Priest Fr. Binoy John, CSC welcomed Bishop Lumen and expressed his joy in presenting the children to witness Christ more authentically in their lives through the Sacrament of Confirmation. As a token of remaining faithful a lighted candle was given to the Bishop showing that they will always radiate the spirit of light and love to others. *Fr. Amalraj*

KAMARANGA PARISH**Sanaya motha gets a new Church**

The people of Sanaya Reang Para got 'new life' with a new and beautiful church, named St. Arnold's Church. Sanaya Reang Para is the only Reang community under Kamaranga Parish.



Upon the request of the local Catholics for a new church, the Parish Priest made an appeal to his family members, relatives and friends in Kerala who gave their generous support. The Foundation was blessed on 29th October 2018 by the PP Fr. Jomon svd, in the presence of local leaders and villagers. The construction was completed by 1st March 2019. It was inaugurated on 3rd March by Rev. Fr. Maxim Rodrigues SVD, the Regional Superior of SVD. Bishop James Thoppil of Kohima Diocese blessed the newly built St. Arnold's Church in the presence 12 Priests, many Religious and about 250 people. They accorded a

traditional welcome to Bishop James with Reang dance. Holy Mass was offered by Fr. Maxim SVD. In his homily Bishop James emphasized that the church is not just the building but the people of God. After a sumptuous meal the people bid goodbye to Bishop and the Fathers. **Fr. Jomon, SVD**

KHUMULWNG PARISH

Repent and Return

St. Alphonsa Parish Khumulwng organized



one day Retreat and Healing program on 17th March at Twidai Village. It is one of the

remote villages of the Parish. The Parish Priest Fr. Valentine Dungdung SVD along with the Parish Council Members had planned this one day Retreat. The main Preachers were Fr. Binoy CSC the Parish Priest of St. Andre Parish Bodhjungnagar and Fr. Paul C. R. CSC. The Lenten Retreat began with the praise and worship, followed by preaching about confession and the holy life. The Confessions, holy Eucharist, Adoration and Healing Session helped the faithful to strengthen their faith and live a holy life. The faith and the healing sharing by the people were very touching and encouraged them to be closer to God. The melodious singing by the Parish Youth helped everyone to experience the presence of God. There were more than eighty participants from different denominations. Finally the day ended with the community meal.

Fr. Stany Pereira, SVD

Diocese News Nuggets

Twithampwi School Inauguration and Blessing



On 9th March the newly constructed School building at Twithampwi was Inaugurated by Shri Mevar Kumar Jamatia, Minister of Tribal Welfare and Forest, Government of Tripura, and blessed by Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro CSC, Bishop of Agartala, in the presence of Sr. Annie Varghese SCC, the Provincial Superior of Guwahati Province, and many other dignitaries and invited guests. It was a long awaited dream come true for the people of Twithampui on that auspicious morning. Sr. Silche Marak SCC welcomed the gathering and then the Honorable Minister inaugurated the building. The School building was then blessed by our dear Bishop. This was followed by a Cultural Program. Sr. Sheela Turkey SCC felicitated the dignitaries and guests. Later the Honorable Minister urged the people of Twithampui to join hands in helping the Sisters in all ways possible. In his Message Rev. Bishop appreciated the work of the Sisters in Twithampui and thanked them. Sr. Annie Varghese, SCC, said that the School will strive to give better

education to the children and asked the parents to work hand in hand with the Sisters. Special thanks were offered to Fr. Hormis John, CSC, for helping to settle all legal issues. Thanks also to Bro. Varghese SG Provincial-elect, Fr. Arul CSC, Fr. Arbok CSC, Fr. Jaibu SVD, Fr. Babu SJ, AC Sisters from Gokulnagar, Palatine Sisters from Twichakma and Holy Spirit Sisters from Moharpara for their encouraging presence. **Sr. Flora Celine, SCC**

International Women's Day and Annual Gathering

International Women's Day was organized by the Diocesan Women's Commission in



collaboration with JUST on March 8 with the Theme: "Balance for Better." The Program began by lightning of the Lamp by Bishop Lumen Monteiro, Mrs. Barnali Goswami Chairperson of Tripura Commission for Women and other Dignitaries. Sr. Mary David, Secretary of the Commission welcomed all the Guests and Participants. Mrs. Goswami in her Talk said Women have to bring peace and unity among the people; then only we can make a better world. She also insisted on the importance of education and knowing their rights.

The launching of the Campaign for Hunger and Disease was also held on that day and our dear Bishop who is also the Chairperson of Caritas India explained the details and



launched the Campaign to the applause of the 203 Women were present from 16 Parishes. An Action Plan for the coming year was prepared. Games were conducted for which prizes were given. It was enjoyable, inspiring and enriching. **Sr. Susheela Xess, SSpS**

A new School Building at Laxmicherra

11th March 2019 was a special day for



the UFC Sisters, Staff, Students and the people of Laxmicherra. A long cherished dream had been realized with the Blessing and Inauguration of Holy Cross School Luku. The presence of Sr. Mary CJ our Provincial and Sr. Benny our Asst Provincial doubled our joy. UFS Sisters took over the School in July 2015 and since then have continued to run the School in the existing house without any facilities.

The inauguration was done by Honorable Minister Mr. Mevar Kumar Jamatia and the Blessing was done by Rev. Bishop Lumen Monteiro, in the presence of Provincial Fr. Simon CSC, General Assistant Fr. K.J Abraham CSC, local MLA Mr. Pramod Reang, Fr. Sojan CSC, and a number of Priests and Religious, invited Guests and Parents. There was a short cultural program and lunch that followed. **Sr. Jessy, UFS**

Being outside the Diocese, Link always keeps me united with the Diocese and its growth. *Fr. Robert, CSC, Philippines*

May the LINK keep on linking minds, hearts and persons and lead to collaboration, not competition, to collaborative excellence, not competitive superiority! *Fr. Manjaly, Shillong*
Thank you for "linking" so many of us around the world and in the Diocese by means of your monthly Link and the leadership you provide for the People of God and your family of friends. I enjoyed the article on leadership with its informative, performative and transformative dimensions. *Willy, CSC, USA*

I extend gratitude to you for the issue of LINK. I do appreciate the celebration of faith after a century in the 100% Catholic village. It is wonderful. I too requested the Seminarians to join you all to thank God for them. *Fr. Sunny, Rector GSS, Dimapur*
Thanks a lot for the Link. Most of the time I go through it on the day it is delivered, if not within the same week. Thank you for linking me to the Diocese of Agartala even after being transferred out 19 years ago. *Bro. P.K. James, SG, Mizoram*

Thank you for the last Link which I just read. It keeps me in touch with the Church of the North East.

Jean-Charles D, CSC, Canada

Training for School Peace Club Leaders Women's



JUST organized a training for School Peace Club leaders on "Drugs Abuse and Human Trafficking" at JUST Hall Agartala on 18th February. There were 44 Peace Club leaders from 8 Schools who participated in the training. The Resource Person was Mr. Sushant Chopra from Mumbai, Youth with a Mission (YWAM) Organization. The Resource Person shared the differences of Drugs Misuse and Abuse. He also shared a note on Alcohol Abuse, its causes, and measures to overcome it. Later he showed a short video clip and spoke of three most common types of human trafficking-- sex trafficking, forced labour, and debt bondage. He explained the 13 SIGNS of human trafficking through a short video clip and another clip on "good touch and bad touch" making the participants aware and raise their voice when they come across such type of harassment. The participants were then divided into and were asked to write down what they have learned from the training and to make an Action Plan.

Women's Day Celebrations

Women's Day was celebrated at



Ganganagar Community Hall on 22nd February. The program was organized by JUST in



collaboration with the Diocese of Rottenburg. The objective of the program was to make available an opportunity for SHG Women to come together and share their experiences and success stories by which they are an inspiration for others. The program was also aimed to disseminate information on different Government Schemes from the Block and other Institution.

The Chief Guest for the program was Mr. Rajib Debbarma BDO of Ganganagar R.D. Block. Other Guests were Mr. Agor Reang (SMC Chairman), Mr. Parimal Debbarma (Asst. IS) and Mr. P.G Majumdar (ASI). The Director of JUST Fr. Jeevan SVD gave a short message to the Women. He then thanked all the Guests and participants for their active participation.

Mr. Cyril Darlong

Bishop's Program for April 2019

- 04: Meet SJA Provincial
- 05-12: Caritas India Field Visit, MP Region
- 13-14: Palm Sunday, Kamaranga Parish
- 16: Pastoral Meet, JDC Agartala
Chrism Mass, SFX Cathedral
- 18-21: Easter *Triduum*, Gandacherra Parish
- 24: Confirmations at Don Bosco, Herma
- 27: Sr. Theodora FMM, Golden Jubilee,
Bishramganj
- 28: Lungkham Chapel blessing under
Khumwllwng Parish

Our Distinguished Visitors

- Bishop James Thoppil from Kohima
- Fr. Abraham Kannampala, CMI, from Jagdalpur
- Fr. Johny Puramidam from Raipur
- Fr. Joy Thomas, SVD, from Nagaland
- Mr. Edgar Afonso from Goa
- Fr. Maxim Rodrigues, SVD, Regional Superior from Guwahati
- Fr. John, OSFS, from Kerala
- Sr. Berchmans, SRA Provincial Superior from MS
- Sr. Avita D'Mello, SRA, V. Provincial from MS

- Fr. K.J. Abraham, CSC, Asst. General from Rome
- Sr. Anupa, CMC Provincial Superior from Bhopal
- Sr. Soona & Sr. Shalini, CMC from MP
- Sr. Yvonne SSpS from Guwahati
- Fr. Ravindra MC from Delhi
- Sr. Mary Clare, FCC from Calicut, Kerala
- Fr. George Arackal, VC from West Bengal
- Sr. Helen, SAC Provincial Superior from Bengaluru