

Sowing Seeds of Peace



Ms. Sanjna Kapoor, a theatre personality and cofounder of Junoon, wrote this column in THE WEEK dated November 29, 2015,

entitled 'Living with Terror'. I was so awed and moved, I thought it was the best reflection for a New Year message wherein we speak of peace. The article is not just about 'living with terror', but 'sowing seeds of peace' in challenging situations. Wish you a Peace filled, Joy filled and Mercy filled New Year 2016. **+Lumen, CSC**

Ms. Kapoor writes: "I am struggling to string words together to make sense of all that is going on across the world. All I can think of is our children, our hope for a more humane tomorrow. Unfortunately, ISIS, too, is looking at children. It wants to recruit children into its evil doctrine. So, our counter 'indoctrination' needs to bear the wisdom of farsighted consequences. I do not believe violence met with more violence can ever create true peace. All we

have to fall back on is our humanity. It is this power of reasoning and empathy that we need to evoke in our children. And, I believe there is another critical ingredient- imagination.

So, in my small way, with Junoon, I contribute to this world by working with children. I am in the midst of weekend workshops in Gurgaon with children aged nine to twelve. In the midst of all this gloom, I get such energy from this work... One of the most amazing moments was when Ajay spoke about his work as a filmmaker with Seeds of Peace, an organization that works at conflict resolution with youth from hostile regions. Ajay shared his experience in Palestine--the birthplace of three major religions of the world, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and yet it had been in a state of conflict for a millennia. He asked the children to do some research on this and try to understand the causes for this state of turmoil. Clearly, this is not a school that shies away from the stark reality of our

times, and values its role as a holistic educator...

A few days later, I was overwhelmed at the warmth and sense of hope I experienced at a reception of the Freedom Theatre School students at the Palestinian Embassy in Delhi. Six students with two teachers from Jenin in Palestine, are working with Jana Natya Manch (JANAM) to create a street theatre piece that will travel across eleven cities later this year. Both these unique theatre organizations have lost their leader to brutal assassinations... today both these groups collaborate to sow seeds of peace and greater understanding across countries..."



Pastor's Corner

The 225th issue of LINK, our humble Newsletter, finds its way into your Inbox as we open the New Year 2016. *I want to remind our Readers that since the first issue in July 1996 then just two sheets of cyclostyled paper containing the Report of the Clergy Meeting and the Bishop's Engagements today's LINK has news items and snippets dotted with pictures and reports. Thanks in particular to Fr. Prasad the designer and Fr. P.J. Joseph who churns out those Editorials month after month. I am proud yet humbled to acknowledge that we have been rigorously regular in bringing out the LINK on the first day of each month. And we shall try our best this year too!*

Wishing you all a Joy filled, Peace filled, and Mercy filled New Year.
+Lumen, CSC

No Longer a 'Young Diocese'!



Editorial

Lying on the floor, his deathbed, Francis of Assisi, told his followers who asked him if he had something to tell them, "Brothers, we have done

nothing; let us begin". While ordinary mortals like us seem rather contented with our puny exploits, those like Francis seem to be afflicted by a hunger 'to begin again' because in their eyes, all they have done is 'nothing.'

It is a doubly poignant consideration for us not only having just stepped into a New Year, but having also completed this January two decades as a Diocese.

Since that exhilarating 11th day of January in 1996, we have come past 19 Januaries. Sheer habit made us refer to ourselves as a 'young Diocese' into a few extra years even, hardly noticing that the Diocese had outgrown its need of the adjective and perhaps thus gave away a bit of ourselves, unwittingly.

Having arrived at the start of another year we cannot but thank Almighty God for all

that has been, for his care and mercy despite our failings. We realize the year ahead is also another opportunity He gives us to 'begin again', to make amends, restore broken relationships, remember forgotten prayers, and rekindle within us dying embers of warmth,



sensitivity and compassion.

As a grown up Diocese twenty years old, we bow our heads in gratitude to God and marvel at the work He is doing in our midst. We thank Him for our Bishop Lumen whom He has kept as the head of the flock for twenty years now and for his many qualities of the heart and head that certainly are an asset for the Diocese.

We want this Diocesan Jubilee to be a 'New Beginning' not because nothing

has happened but because our hunger for miracles has not died. We have seen them - sown seeds yielding harvest - thirty fold, sixty fold, and hundred fold! We have seen the smallest of seeds turning into the mightiest of shrubs.

As Time's winged chariot continues to hurry past and as we, yielding to inescapable changes recede into horizons yonder, God fulfils His miracle in many ways. We, miracle watchers on the shore of Time sometimes call it 'twenty years', sometimes 'twenty centuries'. Happy New Year!
J. Pulinthanath, SDB

KHUMULWNG PARISH

One of the main purposes of Inter-Religious Christmas Mela at St. Alphonsa Parish is to unite and minimize the ill-talks among different denominations in addition to spreading the message of Christmas. It was miracle that most of the denominations and faiths such as Baptists, Believers, Assembly of God, New Life Baptist Council and Hindus participated in Christmas Mela held on 18th and 19th December. The Christmas Mela began with Christmas Carols and Prayer service followed by formal inauguration by Bishop Lumen Monteiro by switching on the lights in the crib. Different denominational group singing, dancing and drama on Christmas seized the hearts of the audience. Leaders from different faiths delivered Christmas messages. We are happy that the inter-religious Christmas Mela is an instrument bringing different people together on the Catholic platform. *Fr. Arun Minj, SVD*

TUIKARMAW PARISH



St. Mary's Parish Tuikarmaw organized Christo Mela on 21st December in collaboration with seven other Christian denominations from South Tripura District. The theme was 'The Word Became Flesh and Dwelt among Us'. It was a moment of joy and a sign of unity. Shri. Manindra Reang the Honorable Minister for Jail and PGP was the Chief Guest for the occasion. In his address he hailed the services of Christian missionaries in Tripura and assured his support to our work and ministry. Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC, was the Special Guest. In his message he said that just as the shepherds were heralds of Jesus' birth every Christian must witness to Jesus Christ in words and deeds. Each church leader addressed the gathering. There was Carol Competition for inter churches and prizes were distributed. At the end of the formal program there was cultural entrainment including an orchestra that performed for the whole night. *Fr. Alfred, CSC*

Snap shots



**ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI PARISH, GACHIRAMPARA
SCC Zonal Meeting**



On 25th November a Zonal meeting on SCCs was organised at Gachirampara Parish. Fr. Lancy, CSC, the Secretary for SCCs, Fr. Bosco Family Commission Secretary, Fr. Arul, CSC, Zonal Coordinator and Fr. Ishwar were also present for the meeting along with their representatives. The programme started with Bible sharing followed by welcome speech by Fr. Prasanna and sharing by each parish on progress and an Action Plan. The meeting ended at 2.30 with a fellowship meal. *Fr. Prasanna Kumar, OFM Cap*

ST. RAPHAEL PARISH, KAMARANGA

Village Church blessing: Blessed are the poor

A Village Chapel was blessed by Bishop Lumen Monteiro on the 29th of November at Srirampur 20 kms from Kamranga/Kamolpur. The Chapel was entirely designed, funded and constructed by the parishioners. It is an example of faith sharing and mutual help. The Chapel is dedicated to the memory of Blessed Mother Teresa of Kolkatta, the apostle of the poorest of the poor. 13 catechumens were baptized on this occasion. The joy of the occasion was shared in a common meal prepared by the non-Christians of the village. *Fr. Joachim & Cyprian, SVD*

ST. MARY'S PARISH, TUIKARMAW

New Mondoli at Debdar

The season of Advent has been a great joy for the Faithful of St. Mary's Parish Tuikarmaw. During this season the one more new mondoli is added to the parish. The name of the new mondoli is Debdar in Rajnagar Block In the sub Division of Belonia. The new mondoli was inaugurated on 17th December 2015. On this day nine people were baptized and were given Holy Communion. This new mondoli is located 50 kilometers away from the parish church. The desire of this people becoming Catholics and embracing Jesus in their life was made possible by the hard work Fr. Abraham C, CSC the parish Priest and the Catechist and the other few faithful from



Tuikarmaw and Kathliya.

Youth Convention

St. Mary's parish Tuikarmaw organized three days youth convention on the following days 19th 20th and 21st December 2015. The Theme of the youth convention was COME TO ME. The theme was chosen keeping in mind the year of Mercy. Fr. Pradeep from Kolkata animated the sessions for the youth. There were sessions on importance of youth leadership in the church, importance of the sacrament of marriage, how youth can bring difference in the society. Every evening competitions like bible skit, bible quiz, dance, and singing were conducted and winners were given prizes at the end of the convention. There was special time set for the youth to experience mercy and compassion of God through the sacrament of reconciliation. There were 100 youth participated in this youth convention. *Fr. Alfred, CSC*

HOLY SPIRIT PARISH, AMBASSA

St. Arnold Kachucherra

Christ the King Procession was trod and Holy Mass was offered by more than 400 people in St. Arnold Kachucherra, Ambassa Parish. The faithful gathered in Boloram Market, 4 kilometers away from the Parish Centre to begin their



procession with a hymn to the Holy Spirit. As they began some were hesitant, few were cautious and others were excited to cover the 4 kilometers to reach the destination. Politically engrossed onlookers thought it could certainly be an election march by a tribal party. As the procession was moving in lines on the sub-way of Kachucherra all were enthused to sing and pray. Just having finished the Diocesan level Mega Procession at Nandanagar in Agartala, the faithful were inspired to join in this procession to praise Christ the King. Thanks to Kachucherra village leaders who worked tirelessly to make this occasion more meaningful. *News Desk, Ambassa*

GOOD SHEPHERD PARISH, KATHALCHERRA

SCC Parish Unit Leaders' Seminar

On 22nd of November a parish level SCC unit leaders' Seminar was conducted by Fr. Lancy D'Souza, CSC. The leaders of the SCC's came from different villages within the parish to attend the Seminar. By looking at the need of the hour to strengthen the faith



of the people, the importance and necessities of the word of God in life, the role and responsibility of the SCC leaders were taught in the Seminar. It was an enriching experience for the leaders to work effectively at their respective villages.

Priestly Ordination

On 12th December we had the long awaited mega event, the Priestly Ordination of Fr. Gabriel Darlong, CSC, son of Late Thlangkhama Darlong and Mrs. Rualmawii Darlong from Puranbari Village. He is the second tribal priest from Tripura in Holy Cross Congregation. He was ordained priest by our Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, DD, the Bishop of Agartala. Many priests, religious and laity from different parishes and villages attended the program. This Ordination has strengthened the faith of the people and inspired many young people. THANKS to Fr. Lancy, CSC, the parish priest, Bethany and Visitation Sisters and the parishioners.

Fr. Ishwar, CSC

ST. ALPHONSA PARISH, KHUMULWNG Bishop opens the Door of Faith as Pope Francis opens the Door of Mercy

At least 15 families entered the Catholic faith and about 22 received Confirmation as Bishop Lumen Monteiro blessed and dedicated a village chapel at Champabari village under St. Alphonsa Parish Khumulwng. The village chapel was constructed by local contribution from the parishioners. The old village was situated in an isolated and interior location. The only way to the isolated village was river outlet. The village was shifted closer to the human habitation by providing a house, water supply and road by the Government. The villagers were hungry and thirsty for the Word of God, and their faith prompted them to construct a village chapel. It is truly the symbol of peoples' Church. *Fr. Arun Minj SVD*

ST. PAUL PARISH, KUMARGHAT Two Day Annual Retreat

The faithful of Kumarghat Parish gathered at the parish Church for a two-day Annual Retreat on November 28-29 in preparation for Christmas. Fr. Bennet and Fr. Satish were the preachers. There were about two hundred of them who gathered for the Retreat in spite of the harvest season. The Retreat was well blend with the powerful preaching of Fr. Satish and Spirit-filled Charismatic praise and worship of Fr. Bennet. It was a time of renewal for the faithful, especially after the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Retreat came to an end with Adoration and healing prayer followed by agape. *Regent Lawrence CSC*

AGARTALA DIOCESE COMMENCES 'YEAR OF MERCY' CELEBRATIONS



The central door of Don Bosco Church at Nandan Nagar became the 'Holy Door of Mercy' for the Diocese of Agartala when Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC, DD, opened it to the faithful in a specially held ceremony on 13th December 2015 in the presence of a large number of priests, religious and parishioners. The symbolic ceremony and the Holy Eucharist that followed signaled Agartala Diocese joining Catholic Dioceses and Bishops all over the world who on that same day, at the behest of Pope Francis, opened 'Doors of Mercy' in their respective Dioceses.

The Holy Door is a help devised in order to enable people to encounter Jesus during this year. Those who, as part of a pilgrimage, pass through a designated Holy Door can obtain a Plenary Indulgence if they are properly disposed, have gone to confession, receive the Eucharist, and pray for the intentions of the Pope.

The Parish Priest of the Church designate, Fr. Sunny SDB, said that all possible arrangements would be made so that pilgrims who come will have an 'experience of meeting the merciful Lord'. The Coordination Committee of the Year of Mercy formed with Fr. Sunny as the Coordinator has already chalked out a number of steps to ensure that everyone spends a spiritually enriching year ahead. Other programs planned include group wise retreats and pilgrimages. *YoM Desk*

INTER RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE On the occasion of Baha'i temple foundation

stone laying at Borjola, on 14th November different religious heads of Agartala namely, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu and Islam participated in a short function in which we shared our deep religious convictions in One God, the Creator and the Father of all. We acknowledged our common origin and destiny. Religion may divide us but spirituality unites us. The need of the hour is to promote peace and harmony among all religions and work for the integral development of all people without any discrimination. All speakers laid emphasis on taking care of the creation and promoting shared core values of all religions. Catholic Church was

represented by Fr. Cyprian and Fr. Harry. **Another inter-faith dialogue Meeting** with the theme "One God: the Creator and the Father of all" was organized by the Commission for Ecumenism and Dialogue at Ambassa St. Arnold Higher Secondary School on the 25th November. A group of people representing different religions from Agartala Town took part in this Meeting. Swami Hitakarananda Maharaj the Secretary of Ramakrishna Mission, Agartala, was the Chief Guest. Leaders from Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Baha'i and Christianity shared their views on the topic. The conclusion was, though we belong to different religions we are united in "one God: the creator and the father of all." The speakers emphasized action for common good, peace and harmony in our neighborhood. Over hundred people attended the Meeting. *Fr. Cyprian, SVD*

PARENTS' DAY AT HOLY SPIRIT SCHOOL, BELONIA

Holy Spirit School was established in Belonia in 2010, by the Missionary Sisters Servant of the Holy



Spirit (SSpS). Soon the school picked up 90 students and started. Through the hard work and dedication of the pioneers, today it has reached class up to Class VI with 400 students.

The school Motto "Learn and Light" became a reality this Parents Day with everyone doing their best for the programs. Hurrah! There was a perfection, joy and co-operation. From the tiny tots to the older ones the harmony, peace and joy was experienced by all. The Parents' Day celebrated on 20th November at Town Hall in Belonia became a reality. Our distinguished guests were the Additional District Magistrate Sri Ravel Kumar, Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro Bishop of Agartala, MLA Sri Basudev Majumder, Sr. Prabha the Provincial and other dignitaries. It was an opportunity for the parents to know that when students are led to be creative, contemplative and imaginative, they excel in all round development and the result will be colorful as it was on Parents' Day 2015.

Sr. Preethi, SSpS

"BRINGING SMILES AT CHRISTMAS" has been a special project undertaken by the **Auxilium School Nandanagar**, which was a great motivating force to all our students, teachers, parents and guardians, to reach out to many people who are poor and suffering, aged and

orphans, etc. The School collected Rs 70,000/- for the flood affected people of Chennai. Class XII students along with sisters and teachers visited

Abalamban, a home for the aged and spent a day with about 50 old people bringing smiles to them. Hostel students, together with sisters and teachers visited Athukiri and Tomakari Villages, interacted with poor people, distributed second hand clothes and food items. Naba Prantik, a home for the orphans, street children and destitute women caters to the needs of these people. Each of the inmates of Nabaprantik received a special gift beautifully wrapped and specially prepared. They also got second hand clothes and stationeries like books, pens, pencils, erasers. The school also donated 150 kg rice, 12 kg pulses, 40 packets of biscuits, 10 kg puffed rice and 12 kg detergent.

Sr. Rihun, FMA

National News Roundup

Christianity, India share same culture, tradition

India will not allow any injustice to happen to Christians, federal Home Minister Rajnath Singh said amid allegations that the government condones increasing attacks on churches and church workers in various parts of the country. "I want to assure all bishops and cardinals that if you face any problem, contact me directly. I will not allow any injustice to happen to you," Singh, who is the second in command in the federal cabinet, told a Christmas gathering in New Delhi. He



Bishop's Program for January 2016

- 01: Parish Mass, Agartala
- 02: YCL Concluding Mass, Nandanagar
- 03: Parish Mass, Mariamnagar
- 04-08: Nagar Havelli Mission trip
- 08-18: Home Visit
- 20-22: With Fr. Willy
- 23: SCV Convent & Hostel Blessing, Baijalbari
- 24: SDB Pre-Novitiate Blessing, Herma
- 26: Bortolli Chapel Blessing, Tuikarmaw Parish
- 27: Bodokasia Chapel Blessing, Bodhjungnagar Parish
- 30-31: Annual Sabah, Kumarghat Parish

JUST distributes 70 Solar lights to Hostel Students

On 8th October 2015, Magsaysay Award Winner Mr. Francis Kulandai the founder and Director of IVDP visited St. John's Hostel at Belbari along with Fr. Jeevan Kennady the Director of JUST and the Coordinator which is run by one of the SHG members. Mr. Francis seeing the children studying with candle lights, decided to give 70 solar lights to the Hostel students of **St. John's Hostel** so that they can study well with the help of solar lights. As he promised Mr. Francis donated 70 solar lights to St. John's Hostel students, then it was distributed by Sr. Amali the Chief Coordinator of JUST and the Coordinator of IHDP Mr. Robert Lushai on 17th November 2015 to all the students at St. John's Hostel, Belbari. Sr. Amali told the students to make best use of the solar lights so that they could reach to the heights of success in their exams. The Hostel Director Mr. Shubani Debbarma and the students expressed their heartfelt thanks to IVDP and JUST for rendering their help and support to St. John's Hostel.



Medical Camp at 4 IDP Relief Camps

JUST assisted by KFB, Austria conducted 4 Health Camps at 4 Bru IDP relief camps namely Ashapara, Naisingpara, Hazacherra and Naisaupara under North District, Tripura on 28th and 30th November, 2015. Dr. Laljoy Reang, MBBS from Vangmun PHC along with his medical staff treated the patients. Around 629 patients were treated and distributed free medicines out of which 285 were male and 344 were female. Most of the patients who attended the medical camps were suffering from Fever, Stomach ache, Dhiarhoae, Headache, and Scabies, etc. **Mr. Vincent Debbarma**



was the chief guest at the gathering organized by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) at its headquarters in the national capital on December 17. Leaders from various Christian denominations, members of parliament, diplomats, and media persons attended the gathering. **mattersindia.com**

Archbishop Leo Cornelio SVD, of Bhopal

received the prestigious International Human Rights Award for the year 2015 at the India Islamic Centre, New Delhi, on 12-12-2015, in a glittering ceremony organized by All India Council of Human Rights, Liberties and Social Justice.



The Archbishop was nominated for the award by the council for his outstanding contribution for peace, harmony, protecting human rights and service to humanity. The Award titled "Ambassador of Peace" was presented in the presence of various state dignitaries, legislators, bureaucrats, members of the Human Rights Commission, Social Activists, Religious Leaders and Social NGOs. **Vatican Radio**

Charlemagne Prize awarded to Pope Francis

Pope Francis has been awarded the

Our Distinguished Visitors

- Fr. Francis Fernandes, SVD, from Vasai
- Fr. Thomas Pampady, SDB, from Shillong

International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen, the oldest and best-known prize awarded for work done in the service of European unification. The announcement was made in the city of Aachen; the Pope will physically receive the award at a date still to be set, in Rome.

A communiqué by the Prize Committee said that Pope Francis has sent "a message of hope and encouragement" at a time in which "many citizens in Europe are seeking orientation." It says "The Pope is a witness for a community based on values which include a sense of humanity, the protection of resources and dialogue between cultures and religions at a European level."

Vatican Radio

Tent Confessions draw Youth to Sacrament in South Korea

On December 17 a line of 30 tents outside Myeongdong Cathedral caught the attention of tourists and intrigued passerby. As one of the celebrations for the Jubilee of Mercy and Advent, the "Sacrament of Reconciliation for Young People" aimed to provide young Catholics the opportunity of confession not in a traditional confessional, but outdoor confessional tents. The event began at 7:30pm, with the "Time of Reflection" inside Myeongdong Cathedral. At the same time, Bible readings and Taizé hymns were played throughout the 30-minute ceremony. Then young people were led by volunteers one by one for confession. 30 priest, 50 volunteers, and 450 young people participated in the event. Cardinal Andrew Yeom Soo-Jung and Bishop Peter Chung Soon-Taek took part in hearing the confession. **Zenit.org**