

Advent leading to Christmas



The month of December which is generally packed with festivities, the greatest being Christmas, with its warmth and glow alongside the chilly and foggy weather, is here again with all its promises and excitement. For us Catholics December begins with the Advent Season which will lead us to Christmas.

The famous theologian Ron Rolheiser OMI says that the incarnate God called Emmanuel, a name which means God-is-with-us, does not mean immediate festive joy. "Our world remains wounded, and wars, strikes, selfishness, and bitterness linger. Our hearts too remain wounded. Pain lingers. For a Christian, just as for everyone else, there will be incompleteness, illness, death, senseless hurt, broken dreams, cold, hungry, lonely days of bitterness and a lifetime of inconsummation. Reality can be harsh and Christmas does not ask us to make make-believe. The

incarnation does not promise heaven on earth. It promises heaven in heaven. Here, on earth, it promises us something else God's presence in our lives. This presence redeems because knowing that God is with us is what ultimately empowers us to give up bitterness, to forgive, and to move beyond cynicism and bitterness. When God is with us then pain and happiness are not mutually exclusive and the agonies and riddles of life do not exclude deep meaning and deep joy."

With its central theme of 'preparing the way of the Lord', Advent becomes an invitation to understand that everyday events are signs of the attention that God has for us. Advent invites and stimulates us to contemplate the ever present Lord. The certainty of his presence helps us to see the world with different eyes and to consider the whole of our existence as a "visit" of God that comes and stays near us in every situation. The Scripture readings during Advent

Pastor's Corner

are full of hope. They are an



antidote to the cynicism and despair so prevalent in our age. They are worth reading and reflection. If Advent emphasizes the longing, excitement, joy, and yearning for what is to come, then Christmas celebrates the wonder of the Emmanuel in Jesus Christ, the Incarnation, which is the greatest miracle of all the ages. **MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

+Lumen, CSC

Intrusive Thoughts and that Wintry Feeling



The Eucharistic procession in the month of November, held for eleven years in a row, has become a much awaited and important item on the annual Calendar of the Diocese. Although heavy rains this year did not allow the actual procession to take place, it did not dampen the spirit of the faithful even a bit. Rather, it provided heart-touching scenes of people expressing their love and adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, quite oblivious to the downpour that even threatened to pull down the tarpaulin roof put up for the occasion.

The yearly event not only provides wonderful moments of closeness to the Lord but also builds the much-needed sense of a united diocesan faith-community that transcends differences of all sorts. At a time like ours when fissiparous tendencies threaten to destabilize the very basis of communities and tribes, such oneness of intent and purpose is something devoutly to be wished and fostered at any cost.

But the times we live in remind us of the poignant lines penned by the Bard of Avon, "How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea, / Whose action is no stronger than a flower?" Although written with the sad force of mortality

Editorial



in mind, we can well apply them to the 'rage' we see around us today.

We see around us unholy alliances taking root and gaining momentum day by day. Hallowed establishments like educational Institutions and the family itself turning into

Contd.on page 2

Editorial contd. from page 1

grotesque caricatures 'full of sound and fury, signifying nothing'. Our own well-bred young boys and girls falling prey to self-destructing brute ideologies that run amok in broad daylight.

Most alarming, we see the malaise catching up with our very own hostels and schools, parish communities and villages. Students manhandling teachers, sons taking on parents! Nothing seems invulnerable; nothing seems strong enough to resist the destructive assaults of moral decay and principle-less progress.

As a Church and as a Diocese, we desperately need to rein in our own. We need to safeguard sanctity. Not only of spiritual comradeships that we have cultivated among folks under our care, but also of tidbits of humanity that we see strewn around us.

December is come with thoughts of Christmas. And the season of Advent an opportune time indeed. An unmistakable warning to 'flee from the wrath to come!' May this Advent and Christmas help us and the world around us reclaim the simple things that we seem to have lost: humanity, honesty, dignity! Merry Christmas!

J. Pulinthanath, SDB

KHUMULWNG PARISH

Race to Grace



Jeevadhara Diocesan Minor Seminary, Champaknagar, celebrated the family feast on 27th and 28th of October, with the motto 'Race to Grace'. The celebration began with the Holy Eucharist presided over by Fr. Valentine SVD, the Rector of the Seminary and concelebrated by SVD Frs. Antony Stany Pereira. The community was divided into two Teams namely St. John and St. Paul.

There were many interesting games and surprising items and in the evening there were many stage items. All the Seminarians actively participated in all the games and cultural programs and kept up the sporting spirit. The day ended with the prize distributions and community meal. The days of Family Feast were a time of exploring our hidden talents, experiencing the togetherness and the unity of community life.

Word became Flesh on Mission Sunday



Every Christian has to be rooted in the Word of God in order to deepen the love of God in his/her life. The desire of listening and understanding the Word of God was fulfilled at Twisikam village under St. Alphonsa Parish Khumulwng on 20th October. The day began with Praise and Worship which was led by the parish Youth, followed by preaching by Fr. Antony SVD. He stressed on the 'Importance of Mission Sunday and the importance of Prayer and the Word of God'. Special prayers for healing were conducted followed by the Holy Eucharist which was presided over by Fr. Valentine Dungdung SVD. The celebration ended with the fellowship meal which was prepared by the faithful. **Fr. Stany Pereira, SVD**

BODHJUNGNAGAR PARISH

Parish Sabha



Saint Andre Paris Sabha was, organized by the faithful of the Parish held from 4th to 6th October at St. Andre School assembly Hall, Bodhjungnagar. The faithful from all 23 *mothas* attended this great event with enthusiasm and eagerness to learn more about Christ and Teachings of the Catholic Church. Fra. Hormis John, Bosco, Amal Raj and Binoy John CSC, the PP of Bodhjungnagar, were the Resource Persons of this event. The participants were a mixed group of Youth, Maria Sango and Joseph Sango. Beside the Input Sessions, cultural event was also organized in the evening of the second day to refresh and encourage them to stage out their potential gifts and talents. The event concluded with the Holy Eucharist.

Youth Fellowship



The Saint Andre Parish Youth organized the 10th Youth Fellowship for the Catholic Youth of the Parish at St. Joseph Church, Lefunga. The event was taking place at Sachin Debbarma Community Hall, from 11th to 13th October. This annual Youth Convention focused on the theme, "Look at Jesus and Grow in faith". The event began on 11th October with the flag hoisting by Sr. Khumbar Debbarma along with the Parish Youth and Parish Priest. Different Competitions like Bible Quiz, Dance based on Biblical themes, Hymns, etc., were held for two days. Cultural activities and Competitions were also conducted to show the talents of the Youth.

The last day of the youth fellowship was a dynamic spiritual renewal for the faithful led by the charismatic presence of the VC Fathers from Mariamnagar Retreat Centre, followed by the Confession and holy Eucharist, which was presided over by Frs. Amal Raj, Binoy John CSC and Fr. Bosco. The flag was lowered after the Holy Mass and everyone dispersed after a sumptuous meal.

Br. Francis Gayang, CSC

BAGBASA PARISH

Maria Songo Convention

The W. Dolubari/Panisagar was all spruced up for the Catholic women's Guild of our Parish a week ahead of the stipulated dates 15 to 17 October with rain proofing tins and stuff. The incessant rains that poured like cats and dogs were no match for the power packed Alleluia's led by Rev. Fr. Jomon SVD, the Parish Priest of Kamaranga who came here with his 2 praying Women for the Convention's backup. Sr. Philomena SCCG spoke on the Women's role in the society and introduced the Women's patron Saint: St. Agnes in a very touching way. Catechist Jotindra Debbarma organized the Morning Prayer. The Eucharistic cum Marian Procession on a splendidly decorated open vehicle accompanied by singing and rosary reciting was the high point. Our special thanks are due to the parishioners who put up the whole infrastructure for the Convention. Recall here the 76 Confirmations by our Bishop Lumen on the Parish Feast Day, for which the same

villagers put up the needed structure. Enthusiastic women leaving their rest of the family at home braved the three nights away from their home habitat and participated in Competitions. They happily went home with adequate prizes. The whole Convention was flanked by the lilting double Casio keyboards played by Mr. Mosi and Gabriel Halam. Auctioning of their handicrafts was an attractive item towards the end of the Convention which all of us enjoyed to the full.

Sr. Philomena, SCCG

11th Holy Eucharistic Procession at Agartala

The 11th Holy Eucharistic



procession in the Diocese of Agartala was held on 10th November at Auxilium Girls School Grounds, Agartala, under a beautifully decorated stage. The weather forecast had a warning of Cyclone Bulbul for the 10th of November. In spite of that the response from all the Parishes was very good. The Executive Committee of Catholic Laity of Tripura (CLT) had distributed prayer leaflets for the success of the procession as well as the 24 hours Adoration for the success of the holy Eucharistic procession.

Though there was a slight drizzle in the morning hours on 10th November, the program started off well. The Holy Eucharist was presided by Most Rev. Bishop Lumen Monteiro along with the

Clergy of the Diocese. Rev. Bishop in his homily exhorted the people to bear witness to Christ and be rooted in faith, even when there are adverse situations in our lives. The mild shower at the beginning of holy Mass gained momentum at the time of Holy Communion. It was so bad that we had to cancel the Eucharistic procession. Yet there was Praise and Worship before the Blessed Sacrament led Fr. Jeevan SVD, while by now the rains poured down and the people used umbrellas. At the culmination of the Praise & Worship with Benediction, the heavy shower and wind stimulated the collapse of the *pandal* and *shamiana*. But we are grateful that it happened at the very end as the people began to disperse...a miracle indeed!

It was very nice to see a huge crowd of more than 4,000 people who came to participate and devotionally attend the Eucharistic celebration and worship, despite the rain and inclement weather. Many of the faithful were so immersed in prayer and their faith in the Lord was so strong that not even the bad weather could deter them to see God's presence in all things. It was noticed that the faith of the Executive Committee of CLT headed by Dominic Jamatia and Manoranjan D/B was raised to keep the flock in prayer, collaboration and sharing, to bear witness to Christ. Thus the 11th Eucharistic procession was a proof of growing faith of the laity of Tripura. The function ended with a meal that is the package of the cultural milieu of the place.

Mr. Manoranjan Debbarma

St. Francis of Assisi English Medium School, Kanchanpur Annual Day Celebration

The Annual Day in any School has



traditionally been signified as the day when co-scholastic activities take precedence over academics. It is also a day when we take stock of the year gone by and review the achievements and the innovations. Praising the journey of St. Francis of Assisi School from the year of its inception which had very modest and humble beginnings to a path of a full-fledged School today, with these thoughts, our School celebrated its Annual Day on 15th of November 2019. Sri. Prem Kumar Reang, Hon'ble Member, Tripura Legislative Assembly was the Chief Guest along with the Guests of Honour Sri. Abhedananda Baidya TCS, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Kanchanpur and Sri. Bikramijit Sukla Das TPS, Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Kanchanpur. The function was presided over by Fr. Stany Roshan D'Souza, OFM Cap Provincial Delegate. We thank all the Fathers and Sisters who attended this event as our special Guests. The variety of cultural programs like dances, drama, and mime, along with speeches from the Guests added glory to the celebration. The students with full attendance and academic excellence were awarded. This grandeur at Kanchanpur vicinity was highly appreciated by the electronic and print media.

Fr. Kiran Monis, OFM Cap.

JUST News Nuggets

Kisan Mela by JUST

Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura (JUST) organized *Kisan Mela* on 25th October with the Farmer's Clubs at Borkathal Boys Hostel ground under Hezamara R.D Block. Fr. Jeevan Kennady SVD, Director of JUST and Fr. Shaiju CSC, Financial Administrator of the Diocese



inaugurated the *Kisan Mela* by

lighting the lamp with the Farmers. There were 120 Farmers who participated in the *Mela* and around 260 local people were present in the *Mela*. The Farmers showcased their organic products and large number of people attended the *Mela* and also brought different

products for sale. The *Mela* was totally plastic free. Foam bags and cloth bazaar bags were distributed to all the Farmers and also to the people who came to purchase the organic products in the *Mela*.

Annual Sports Day



Annual Sports Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm in all the 10 JUST Coaching Centers under Ganganagar R.D Block in Dhalai district from 14th to 19th October, 2019. The students displayed varieties of sports ranging from Running race, Skipping race, Handball, Football, High jump and long jump. The parents also could be seen filled with happiness to see their child performing in various events. The village elders and the project coordinator awarded the prizes to the winners of various sports events and the Coordinator address the gathering and emphasized the importance of sports in child's life. Finally the Sports day ended with the National Anthem. *Mr. Cyril Darlong*

Children can become cannibals by eating chicken eggs

Gopal Bhargava, a senior politician of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Madhya Pradesh, made the claim last week as he opposed a Government plan to include eggs in school midday meals to fight malnutrition. "If children are given non-vegetarian food, they may turn into cannibals," Bhargava reportedly said. The Hindu culture prohibits eating non-vegetarian food, said Bhargava, the leader of the opposition in the State legislature. If children are fed eggs and other non-vegetarian food from childhood, "they will eat meat and may grow up to become *narbhakshi* (cannibals)," Bhargava added.

Archbishop Leo Cornelio of Bhopal, based in the State capital, said such attitudes of politicians linking food with religion and culture "do not augur well for democracy... This is a sorry state when politicians give religious color to food," Archbishop Cornelio told ucanews.

Government statistics show that some 44 percent of Indian children under the age of five are malnourished, and Madhya Pradesh has the highest level at 70 percent. At least 56 percent of children in all age groups are also anemic, published records show.

"We will oppose any such proposal. I think this is an attempt to interfere with the religious beliefs and faith of the people," said Kailash Vijayvargiya, a former Minister. But Minister Devi told media that she and her Government would proceed. "I don't care if the BJP is protesting," she said, adding that "egg remains a simple and easy way to help children grow healthy."

Archbishop Cornelio said "thoughtless statements of responsible politicians make the entire country a laughing stock before the entire world."

Courtesy UCANews

Our Readers Write

Thank you for the November Issue of the Link, reaching on the very first day of the month, like in the past. Congratulations!! *Bro. Varghese Mandapathil, SG, Guwahati* November first and as usual LINK is with us. Thank you very much. It keeps me in touch with the Church of the North East. And it is really about people.

Congratulations! *Fr. J. Charles Descary, CSC, Montreal Canada*

Your LINK is always so neat to read!!!! Autumn has arrived here and it is so beautiful with sunshine and cool crisp air. *Peggy, VA, USA*

Though you were out of India, you saw to it that the Link for November should reach us on time, as usual. Kudos. *Mariaraj, CSC, Agartala*

Bishop's Program for December 2019

- 01: Parish Sabah, Bagbasa
- 03: Consulters Meet, Agartala
Clergy Meet, Agartala
- 04: FRC Gratitude Day, Nandanagar
- 07: CI Team from Delhi
- 08: Parish Feast, Moharpara
- 12: Jubilee Mass, MC Kumarghat
- 13-14: Climate Ecumenical Seminar, Kolkata
- 15: Advent Retreat, Mariamnagar Parish
Christo Mela, Tuikarmaw
- 16: Christo Mela, Gandacherra
- 17-18: Health Commission Meet, Guwahati
- 19: Christo Mela, Kamaranga
- 20: JUST GB & AGBM, Agartala
- 22: Renovated Church Blessing, Ambassa
- 24: Christmas midnight Mass, Cathedral Parish
- 25: Christmas day Mass, Mandwi Parish
- 29: Family Day, Bodhjungnagar Parish
- 30: Youth Program, Bishramganj Parish
- 31: New Year's Eve, Agartala

Our Distinguished Visitors

- ♦Sr. Vilma Noronha SSpS, Provincial Superior of Odisha
- ♦Sr. Manju Lakra SSpS, Provincial Superior of Indore
- ♦Sr. Preethi Thomas SSpS, Formation Coordinator from Khandwa, MP
- ♦Sr. Lucy Rose, FMA General Assistant from Rome
- ♦Sr. Veronica, FMA from Rome
- ♦SCV Srs. Ancita and Philo from Mananthavady
- ♦KDS Srs. Alice and Anita from Calicut
- ♦Fr. Walter Fernandes, SJ from Guwahati
- ♦Dr. David Symlieh, UPSC Chairman (Rtd.) from Shillong
- ♦Dr. Vincent Darlong, Vice Chancellor of MLKU, Shillong
- ♦Dr. Sr. Marina, BS, from Siliguri
- ♦Sr. Josephina, SAC General Councilor from Rome
- ♦Sr. Leberata, SAC General Councilor from Rome
- ♦Hmeichhe Pawl & Fr. Clement, CSC, from Mizoram
- ♦Fr. G.P. Amalraj, Deputy Sec. General from Guwahati
- ♦Fr. K. J. Abraham, CSC, General Councilor from Rome
- ♦Sr. Mary Ponthempally, SCCG, Provincial Superior from Guwahati
- ♦Frs. Emmanuel & Roy, MSFS, from Nogaon, Assam
- ♦Fr. M. C. Abraham, CSC, MIIT Director from Shillong