

**Pastor's Corner**

**Birthday-A Time to Count Blessings**



A 92-year-old, petite, well-poised and proud man, who is fully dressed each morning by eight o'clock, with his hair fashionably coifed and shaved perfectly, even though he is legally blind, moved to a nursing home today. His wife of 70 years recently passed away, making the move necessary. After many hours of waiting patiently in the lobby of the nursing home, he smiled sweetly when told his room was ready. As he maneuvered his walker to the elevator, the nurse provided a visual description of his tiny room, including the eyelet sheets that had been hung on his window. "I love it," he stated with the enthusiasm of an eight-year-old having just been presented with a new puppy. "Mr. Jones, you haven't seen the room; just wait." "That doesn't have anything to do with it," he replied.



"Happiness is something you decide on ahead of time. Whether I like my room or not doesn't depend on how the furniture is arranged... it's how I arrange my mind. I already decided to love it. It's a decision I make every morning when I wake up. I have a choice; I can spend the day in bed recounting the difficulty I have with the parts of my body that no longer work, or get out of bed and be thankful for the ones that do. Each day is a gift, and as long as my eyes open, I'll focus on the new day and all the happy memories I've stored away." And he went on to add, "Old age is like a bank account. You withdraw from what you've put in. So, my advice to you would be to deposit a lot of happiness in the bank account of memories! Thank you for your part in filling my memory bank."

Today as I celebrate my Birthday, I recall happy memories deposited in my Bank Account of Memory, which allows me 'cashless' withdrawals. I thank God for my precious life, the many blessings, and the numerous wonderful people who have entered my life and enriched me. The 64 years that I complete today include 37 as a priest and 22 as a Bishop! These years have been grace-filled and love-filled, experience-filled and people-filled! And today I say Thank you God. Thank you everyone!

As I begin a new year in my life I think of the support and love of so many that has made a difference in my life. As someone said, Birthdays are filled with yesterday's memories, today's joys, and tomorrow's dreams. Today is a day to thank God. **+Lumen, CSC**



India gets a new Apostolic Nuncio in the person of Archbishop Giambattista Diquattro. The Nuncio who is Italian by birth, was born on March 18, 1954 in Bologna, Italy. The Diocese of Agartala welcomes our new Nuncio.

**Editorial**

**Birthday Thoughts and Beyond**



Ever since the start of the Diocese till date, the first day of the month of February has been a special day for us all it's the Birthday of our dear Bishop. 1<sup>st</sup> of February has come round again and the whole Diocese wishes its Pastor Happy Birthday.

We join Bishop Lumen in thanking God for his precious life, a life that he continues to spend for God's people entrusted to his care.

As the Head of the Diocese since its start, he has not only seen but also been part of huge changes that have happened in Tripura. They continue to happen almost at a breakneck speed even today. Could it be that engrossed in our own world we do not fully grasp the import of things happening around us?

The other day the first train rolled out of Agartala to Udaipur. Two decades ago, that would have sounded like a line from Alice in Wonderland. Two decades ago, many other things that today we take for granted in this city - four-lane roads and flyovers, railways, multiplexes, shopping malls and branded goods, would have also sounded like figment of imagination. There was a time, not too distant in the past, when this city did not have a satisfactory eating-place or even a decent public toilet.

The changes are not about infrastructure and amenities solely. Less perceptibly perhaps, but lifestyles of people have changed too. Perceptions, attitudes and behaviors have changed too.

As Church and as a Diocese we run the risk of losing the story if we look askance at these changes, some of them deceptively casual, and dismiss them as matters secular.

This apparently unsettling scenario, perhaps offers us opportunities. For us, as Church and a Faith-community, may be there are implications here we cannot afford to miss.

It's time perhaps for a new look at the same old things. Not vainly desiring to 'keep up with the Joneses' but in an attempt to become more relevant and immediate.

Once again we thank God for dear Bishop Lumen and wish him a very happy birthday and God's choicest blessings. **J. Pulinthanath, SDB**



**Happy Birthday Dear Bishop!**

**LINK wishes our dear Bishop Lumen a very Happy Birthday. We assure our prayers and support to our dear Bishop on his Birthday.**

## KUMARGHAT PARISH

### Marriage Preparation Course

Marriage Preparation Course was organized for two days on 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> December at Kumarghat Parish. The Resource Persons of this program were Mr. Asaan Halam, Mr.



Abraham Reang, Mr. Lala Darlong, Sr. Mary David (FS), Sr. Pushpa (MC) and Mr. Sankun

Darlong. The main topics that had been discussed during the program were Marriage as a Sacrament, how to form a model Christian family, how to manage the family financially, children are God gifts, parenting, challenges of family life. Movie on family life and its challenges was also projected. The Couples were also given time to share their experiences of family life among themselves. They benefited a lot from what they had shared and heard from others. This program was attended by 12 Couples from different villages. It was conducted for the Couples in such a way that they are able to understand their family and relationship better.

### New *mondoli* named after St. Andre in Kumarghat Parish

A new *mondoli* was inaugurated and a new chapel was blessed by Fr. Arul CSC on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2017. The *mondoli* was dedicated to St. Andre CSC. Fr. Arul baptized 16 Catechumens during the



Eucharistic celebration. The Burshi *mondoli* put up a chapel by their own effort and the support of the Sonaimuri *mondoli*, Evangelization Team, Maria Sangho, other *mondolis* of the parish, and the Fathers and Sisters, assisted the people of Burshi village to receive the faith. Sumptuous meal was provided and everyone enjoyed the celebration.

*Regent Stephen, CSC*

## AMBASSA PARISH

### Mass Media Education to Molsom Sabha Parish

Ambassa: 22 December, 2016. One day class was arranged for the Molsom community who gathered for their 3-day long Sabha. Every year just before the Christmas Molsom community leaders organize 3 days gathering for all Tripura Molsom Community. This time one hundred plus delegates gathered in Village Dhonchera, near Ambassa. Many of them were Youth because the Schools were

closed for Christmas vacation. Fr. Ivan D'



Silva, SVD, Diocesan Coordinator for Social Communications gave a session on Media Education. A few Youth who were trained in Media class were also the resource persons. He spoke elaborately on the negative influence of Mass Media on youngsters. He said, "The youth fall prey to this silent virus that creeps in the minds of the youth". The other Resource Persons requested the participants to exchange their views on Media. There was spontaneous analysis on the topic. Some women spoke on the negative influence of Mobile, Social Media, Internet, Cartoon network and Advertisements.

*News Bureau, Ambassa*

## TUIKARMAW PARISH

### Parish Level Youth Convention cum Parish Sabha 2016

As the most vital local unit of the church is the Parish, St. Mary's Parish Tuikarmaw organized its Parish level Youth Convention cum Parish Sabha on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> for the Year 2016. The two days program was held at the Village Ichamara. The first day was dedicated to the Parish Youth and on the second day was meant for the Parishioners. The Resource Person was Bro. John from Kolkata; together with Fr. Abraham, CSC the Parish Priest, he animated the two days event.

Fr. Abraham enlightened the Sessions on



Challenge s of Youth. 100 Youth from all the sub-centers of Tuikarmaw Parish took active part in the Session and in the cultural competitions on biblical themes.

The Youth enjoyed the sessions on Faith formation and the Challenges of the youth in present day. It was a day of fun and faith-sharing for the Youth which provided opportunity for faith development of the Youth.

On the following day, the representatives from different villages gathered at Ichamara for the Parish Sabha. The Sabha began with prayer song, followed by several Input Sessions. During the Sabha the Annual Report of the Parish and the different *mondolis* was presented. Then

there were discussions and evaluation on the presentation of the report which helped the participation to become aware of the progress of the Parish.

In the evening cultural competitions were held with variety entertainment programme. The Sabha was solemnly concluded with a Thanksgiving Holy Eucharist presided by Fr. Abraham, CSC. Prizes were distributed for the winners of various competitions conducted during the year 2016.

*Bro. George. S*

## KHUMULWNG PARISH

### Charity to the Poor by MC Sisters

Sisters of Charity expressed their desire to do charity to the poor in our Parish. It was an occasion to preach and evangelize to the new villages. We gathered poor people of 5 villages at a non-Catholic village



Kashidaspara on 10<sup>th</sup> January. We began the charitable work with prayer service and preaching the Word of God.

Two of the lay leaders highlighted the various charitable and noble tasks of the Catholic Church to improve quality of living. People listened to the Word of God with keen interest and enthusiasm even from their homes, shops and the fields. The MC Sisters from Agartala Convent distributed rice, and floor mats to the poor after the Prayer service. People were very happy to receive the Word of God as well as a little help for their needs from the Parish.

*Fr. Arun Minj SVD*

## GANDACHERRA PARISH

### Children's Program Parish

There was a children's program at St. Arnold Parish, Gandacherra. It was arranged exclusively for the children's in the Parish from 26 to 28 December 2016.



This program is held since the last three consecutive years. It is to bring mainly the non-English medium students in the Parish to give them an opportunity to

experience the life in the parish community. Different programs were conducted for them. The entire program was animated by the Parish Youth. The children were very happy and expressed their joy to have it regularly. 85 students attended the program from different *mondolis*. The number of participants keeps increasing steadily year after year.

*Fr. Bennet Joseph*



**Bethany Sisters 'Home Mission' at Kathalcherra**

It was indeed an amazing experience for 25 Bethany Sisters of North East Province to be a part of the Home Mission at Kathalcherra. And it was made possible by the ready 'YES' of our Parish Priest Fr Lancy CSC who offered whole-hearted cooperation when the proposal was made by our Provincial Superior Sr. Joy BS. On 8<sup>th</sup> January Bethany Sisters were warmly welcomed during the Mass by the Parish Priest and the Parishioners. Sisters stayed in 7 villages namely Joseph Nagar, Garo II, Garo III, Koratichera, Gurudayal, Jamircherha and Dangacherha for 4 days. It was a time of revival for the people as well, as we visited the houses, prayed with the families and the community, listening to their problems, instructing and catechizing them. In addition we too visited Nepaltila, Nutunbari, and few houses at Puranbari *mondoli*. Our stay has brought joy, happiness and God's love into their lives. We are grateful to the people in the villages whose kindness and warmth of love we have experienced. Our special thanks to Fr Lancy for animating the Sisters and for his support. A special mention of Provincial Sr. Joy BS and Asst. Provincial Sr. Sandhya



BS, who acted as per the guidance of the Holy Spirit to make this venture a fruitful one. *Sr. Prema, BS*

**South Zone Youth Convention, Tuikarmaw**

For a first time, the South Zone Parishes in the Diocese namely Gandacherha, Depacherha, Tuikarmaw, Amarpur and Sindukpatar have decided to host their zonal level Youth Convention. The planning was done by the PYAs of the each parish in the zone under Fr. Bennet. The Convention was held from January 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> 2017. It was a wonderful way to bring the Youth



under one umbrella. It was sad that two of our parishes did not participate. Different programs like, cultural completion, Bible quiz and Bible passage Skit competition were conducted and the winners are awarded with prizes. We also took the opportunity to inform our Youth about Church Teachings. There was a Motivational Talk given by Fr. Lawrence Darlong, the Diocesan Youth Director, a Talk on Marriage by Mr. Osim Uchai and a session on Career Guidance. The program was lively, full of excitement and learning oriented. *Fr. Bennet Joseph*

**JUST News Roundup**

**Eroding Traditional Farming Practices**

JUST conducted series of "Awareness program on Eroding Traditional Farming Practices" under FARM



North East Project Phase-II among farmers club members. The programs were conducted at 21 villages under Hezamara R.D Block West Tripura. The programs were facilitated by Mr.

Vincent Debbarma (Coordinator), Mr. Amit Debbarma, Mr. Sunil Debbarma and Mr. Mantu Debbarma (Animators) of FARM Project. 416 farmers (172 Male and 244 Female) took part in the programs. The facilitators during the program shared about the purpose and meaning of the program. They then spoke about various types of traditional farming practices and also traditional seeds that have been lost. The awareness program was to device ways and means to revive the lost traditional good farming practices and seeds. The

Farmers are interested in reviving the traditional farming practices.

**JUST making the Difference**

The free coaching centre run by JUST under Ganganagar R.D Block to provide proper guidance and quality education to the children has brought tremendous changes in the life of the children. At the time of enrollment most of the children were not able



to read or write. Moreover the level of health and hygiene was low but now they are able to read, write and perform well in their studies and also maintaining good hygiene.

*Mr. Vincent Debbarma*

**From the photo library**



### St. Xavier's University Kolkata

The St. Xavier's University, Kolkata Bill 2016 was passed unanimously on December 15 in the West Bengal Assembly, paving the way for a new university at New Town, Rajarhat, to meet the growing need for quality facilities and to encourage private investment in the state's Higher Education. The SXUK will be a private, minority and constituent university. The bill provides that the SXUK may have as many constituent colleges situated within Bengal that are established and administered by the Jesuits. "This is a historic moment for all Jesuits in Bengal and St. Xavier's College in particular," said Father Felix Raj, principal of St Xavier's College Kolkata, who has been at the forefront of the initiative to set up the university. "I thank the chief minister, the Bengal Government and all the legislators for being supportive to our cause. Now, we will be able to serve more students and set up another centre. *CNUA*

### Biggest Solar Plant

The largest power plant unveiled in Tamilnadu has been built within eight months. A robotic system is used to clean it everyday and is capable of producing electricity for 1,50,000 homes. The Project was funded by the Adani Group and cost Rs 46,535,570,550 (\$679 million). This Project which comprises of 2.5 million individual solar modules has helped India join the league of countries which have installed total solar capacity across the 10 GW mark. *GEME-NEWSLETTER -7/15*

### Our Readers Write

Best wishes to you and your Diocese for a wonderful year. The new look of LINK is great and I appreciate your first of the month faithfulness. *Tony Krisak, USA*

Every month your LINK with a message comes first. It's always a message of hope, of humor. Thank you for sharing it with us all these years. *Lieve Hoogewys, Holland*

Thanks for sending me a copy of the LINK for Jan 2017. I quickly read through its contents and liked especially the anecdote you wrote about the car! *Fr. Jolly, Caritas India, Delhi*

It is always a joy to receive LINK and tell us that a new month is born... and see all the achievements in the Diocese. *Conrad, CSC, Montreal*

### Bishop's Program for February 2017

01-09: CCBI Plenary Assembly, Bhopal  
 11-12: Parish Sabah, Kathalcherra  
 18-19: Confirmations, Ambassa Parish  
 20-24: Caritas India Meetings, Delhi  
 25-26: Confirmations, Depacherra Parish  
 27: Consulters Meet  
 Clergy Meet & Recollection  
 01: Ash Wednesday

### Obituary - Towering Moral Theologian Capuchin Podimattam dies

Capuchin Father Felix Podimattam, who authored the most number of books on Moral Theology in the world, died on December 17 at Kottayam, Kerala. The 82-year-old priest had been ailing for some months. Fr Podimattam created history in 2013 when Limca Book of Records accepted him as the person who wrote 135 books on Catholic Moral Theology, a world record. A year later, Bishop Raphael Thattil, the then Apostolic Visitor to the Syro-Malabar Church, described Father Podimattam as a towering scholar and the last word in Moral Theology in India. His works are unparalleled, and each of his Books is unique and scientific, the Prelate told a Seminar on April 8, 2014, to honor the theologian in Trichur, Kerala's cultural capital. His masterpiece was "The Ten Commandments in the Law of Christ," a 20-volume work on the Decalogue. The volume is "a true encyclopedia in the field of Christian ethics and morality," said Paikada, who wrote an introductory note to the author. *Matters India via CNUA*

### News Clips

**During 2016, nearly 4 million people** came to see the Pope at the Vatican. The Prefecture of the Papal Household has published its annual summary of the numbers of participants at meetings and audiences with the Pope in the Vatican. The statistics include general and special audiences, jubilee audiences, liturgical celebrations, and the



Angelus and Regina Coeli addresses. The Easter celebrations of March and the celebrations surrounding the canonization of Mother Teresa in September brought the highest numbers. The Pope's visits around Rome, to other places in Italy and his international trips are not included in the numbers.

*Zenit News*

### Our Distinguished Visitors

- Fr. Justin, CSC, Vicariate Superior from Tiruchi
- Fr. Pathanmakal, MSFS, Provincial from Guwahati
- CSC Srs. Pushpa & Parbati from Dhaka
- Sr. Biolinda VSDB, Superior General from Shillong
- VSDB Srs. Bibiana, Martha, Ridalin & Alphonsa from Shillong
- Bro. Sesuraj, CSC, Vicariate Superior from Bengaluru
- Fr. Telesphore, CSC from Tiruchi
- Fr. Diago Pereira from Mumbai