



Pastor's Corner

New Year Blessings on the 30th Anniversary



The New Year 2026 has just begun. I wish you a year filled with peace, and joy. The words from Sacred Scripture are the best blessing for the New Year: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24–26) We receive this blessing for the year ahead.

Let God's protection surround us, His grace cover us, and His peace guard our hearts and minds. As we step into a new year, we step into the future that we have never walked before. The future may feel uncertain, but uncertainty is not something to fear—it is an invitation to trust God more deeply. The truth is, none of us knows what 2026 will hold, but we do know the One who holds 2026! And that alone is sufficient to calm every fear. So let us lift our eyes, open our hearts, and step boldly into 2026—not because the year is predictable, but because God is faithful. May this year bring healing where there is hurt, joy where there is sorrow, and unity where there is division. Let us walk together in kindness, celebrate each other's victories, and find strength in family and community. I wish you a peace-filled New Year 2026.

Three decades ago, the Holy Spirit breathed life into this Diocese. On the 11th of January 1996 Pope John Paul II erected the Diocese of Agartala and appointed me its first Bishop. During the past three decades, God has been generous with us and taken us through good times and challenging times. We have witnessed an amazing expansion of our mission, steady growth of parish communities, emergence of active lay associations, and well-formed family units. Lay leaders and catechists have been doing splendid work in deepening the faith life in the diocese. New Congregations of men and women have come to enhance the work of the diocesan clergy. The increasing number of local vocations is a sign of joy and hope. Let us give thanks to the Lord for accompanying us all through. I personally thank the Lord for his blessings and guidance to me as the Shepherd of the Diocese from the day it was established in 1996.

With this issue of the LINK, we have entered the 30th year of its inception. This is the 343rd issue of the diocesan newsletter that started with the intention to keep us linked with the work of the Diocese...and it continues to do that! This humble newsletter has been coming to you on the first day of the month, month after month, for the past 29 years. This is no small feat and I feel a sense of pride to have been behind this endeavor for all these years. I extend my gratitude to all who have helped me in various ways. In these last year two people who have helped me with the publication are Fr. J. Pulinthanath SDB who has always been there with a thought-provoking Editorial month after month, while Fr. S. George has taken up the task of designing the Newsletter with appealing graphics and colors. I like to thank you too, dear Readers, for your support and encouragement. THANK YOU and HAPPY NEW YEAR 2026.

+ Lumen, CSC



Editorial



TURNING Thirty – Glancing Down the Memory Lane

As the Diocese of Agartala steps into the New Year, it also enters a moment of deep significance: the completion of thirty years of its existence. By the Papal Bull *Venerabiles Fratres Nostri* dated 11 January 1996, Pope Saint John Paul II decreed the erection of the Diocese of Agartala. Carved out of the erstwhile Diocese of Silchar, the new Diocese comprised the entire State of Tripura. Fr. Lumen Monteiro, CSC, was appointed its first Bishop and was ordained and installed on 26 May 1996 by the Metropolitan Archbishop of Shillong, Most Rev. Tarcisius Resto Phanrang, SDB, at a solemn celebration held at the Holy Cross School Grounds, Agartala.

Even a brief glance at the past three decades reveals how far the Diocese has come. From humble beginnings, it has grown steadily and substantially. The number of parishes has increased from 11 to 25, and many more Religious Congregations and diocesan personnel now serve across the Diocese. There has also been significant growth in infrastructure. This expansion has not only widened the reach of the Diocese's services but has also greatly enhanced their quality. Whether in education, health care, community development, or pastoral ministry, the Diocese has matured—from being fragile and fledgling to becoming strong, experienced, and dependable.

Throughout this journey, the Church has consciously sought to reflect its universality and inclusiveness in all its services. With prudence and compassion, it has endeavoured to become "all things to all." In a multicultural and multilingual context such as Tripura, this remains an ongoing challenge—yet one that the Church cannot and does not ignore.

The wide range of initiatives undertaken by the Diocese of Agartala stands as clear testimony to the Church's maternal concern for the holistic well-being of her people. These include social and development programmes spread across the State, serving people of all religious and cultural backgrounds; numerous schools, many located in remote and rural areas; a college offering high-quality higher education; a hospital and several health-care centres; youth-focused initiatives such as skill training and career counselling; family-oriented services including pre-marriage courses, palliative care, and family visits; and efforts to promote language and culture through publications and talent development. Added to these are the many associations or sanghas for mothers, fathers, youth, children, women, altar servers, retired persons, and Basic Christian Communities. The list is impressively extensive, justifying the claim that scarcely any aspect of people's lives lies outside the Church's care and concern.

Over the course of these thirty years, the Church has made meaningful inroads into the lives of people throughout Tripura. At the same time, it has become increasingly aware that what remains to be done is far greater than what has already been accomplished. The mission of the Church continues to be urgent, as there are still places and communities that have yet to experience the liberating power of the Gospel. In such contexts, true peace often remains elusive, while superstition and narrow, clannish mindsets continue to cloud vision and hope.

The year 2026, marking this 30-year milestone, invites fresh reflection and renewed commitment. It opens new possibilities—for deepening dedication, for venturing into uncharted territories, and for exploring new horizons of service and mission.

The Link takes this occasion to congratulate Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, who has guided the Diocese from its very inception and continues to shepherd it with dedication and faith. Together with him, the faithful of the Diocese give thanks to God for the many wonders He has accomplished through the steadfast leadership of Bishop Lumen.

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ONE AND ALL!

J. Pulinthanath, SDB

**LINK wishes you
a very HAPPY NEW YEAR 2026**



Kamaranga Parish

Christo Mela:

Where Faith Dances into Christmas Bliss



On 14 December 2025, St. Raphael Parish joyfully celebrated its annual Christmas fair, Christo Mela, at Kamranga Parish. The day began with Sunday Mass presided over Bishop Lumen Monteiro, who administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to 41 parishioners. In his homily, the Bishop highlighted the values of peace, love, and charity. After the Mass, the Bishop inaugurated the Kisan Mela, a farmers' exhibition showcasing local produce, and encouraged the faithful to embrace organic farming. In the evening, Christo Mela commenced with the Bishop blessing the Christmas Crib and carrying the Child Jesus to the stage, followed by carol singing, a Christmas message by Parish Priest Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD, and adoration of the Child Jesus. The cultural evening featured vibrant performances, including a Reang dance from Sanaya Village, a dance-drama on the Nativity by Kanailal Village, and a one-act play on the Parable of the Sower by hostel boys. Youth from Baptist Church, Bamanchara, presented a beautiful Kokborok dance, followed by a Christmas message from their pastor. Leaders from different denominations appreciated the inclusive spirit of the event. The Christo Mela concluded around midnight, with stalls selling food, clothes, toys, and crafts, fostering unity and joyful preparation for Christmas.

Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD

Warmth for Ramdulakpur: Blanket Distribution brings Relief to Village Families



24 December 2025: Three months ago, at the St. Raphael Parish Kamranga Pastoral Council meeting, members approved a heartfelt plan to distribute blankets and clothes to 25 needy families in Ramdular

Village, Kamalpur Sub-Division, Dhalai District, Tripura. The Marian Association stepped up to collect and bundle the items. They also coordinated a Christmas Peace Rally, complete with vehicles, to reach the village for distribution on 21st December. Blankets came from generous donors, while clothes—many shipped from benefactors in Goa via courier—were donated by parish families. Local leader Mr. Daud Munda carefully selected the beneficiaries. Parishioners of all ages joined the joyful trip, singing carols along the way before personally handing out the warm clothing. We thank the Infant Jesus for blessing the event exactly as planned and the donors for their unwavering support.

Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD

Cathedral Parish

Feast of St. Francis Xavier, Patron of the Diocese being celebrated



St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, joyfully celebrated the Feast of St. Francis Xavier, Patron of the Cathedral Parish and the Diocese of Agartala, from 3rd to 7th December with a three-day Triduum and solemn feast celebrations, witnessing active participation of priests, religious, parishioners, youth, and children. The Triduum began on 3rd December with the theme "St. Francis Xavier: Man of Prayer and Faith," marked by Flag Hoisting and Solemn Holy Mass presided over by Rev. Fr. KJ Abraham, CSC, Provincial of Holy Cross North East India. On 4th December, focusing on "Missionary of the Gospel," the Holy Mass was celebrated by Fr. Nabin Lakra, SVD, Director of Oishobani. The third day, 5th December, highlighted "Patron and Protector of Our Parish," with Eucharistic Adoration and Holy Mass celebrated by Fr. Bosco, Director of JUST and Assistant Parish Priest. The Solemn Feast Day Holy Mass on 6th December, themed "Faith in Action and Mission," was presided over by Fr. PJ, SDB, Director of PEACE Centre, Nandanagar. The celebrations concluded on 7th December with a Thanksgiving Holy Mass, Flag lowering Ceremony, cultural program by youth and children, prize distribution, and a fellowship meal.

The feast strengthened the spirit of faith, unity, and missionary zeal, inspiring the faithful to follow the life and mission of St. Francis Xavier.

**Mrs. Jaba Debbarma,
Parish Secretary SFXC**

Moharpara Parish

Ruby Jubilee of the Parish



Moharpara Parish joyfully celebrated its Ruby Jubilee from 6–7 December 2025, marking forty years of faith, service, and growth. The celebrations began on 6 December evening with colourful cultural performances, as various tribes presented their traditional dances. The Parish Priest presented the parish report, followed by a jubilee message from Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, Bishop of Agartala.

On 7 December, the jubilee continued with a solemn Holy Eucharist presided over by Bishop Lumen Monteiro, who also administered the Sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation. Rev. Fr. K.J. Abraham, CSC, Provincial, highlighted the importance of the jubilee year and encouraged the faithful to renew their Christian commitment. The celebration was graced by 40 religious and nearly 900 faithful. The program concluded with adoration, felicitation of guests, and a fellowship meal.

Fr. Arbok, CSC

Gandatwisa Parish

Annual Day at St. Arnold H.S. School



The School Annual Day and Parents Day was celebrated joyfully on 17 December 2025, reflecting the vibrant spirit of the institution. The programme, guided by the theme "Education is the movement from darkness to light," provided students a platform to showcase their talents.

The event was graced by Chief Guest Smt. Nandita Debbarma Reang, Honorable MLA of Raima Valley, and Guest of Honour Shri Chandrajoy Reang, SDM, Gonda Twisa, along with Fathers, Sisters, parents, and well-wishers. The dignitaries encouraged students to value education as a guiding light. Academic achievers were felicitated, followed by colourful cultural performances. The programme concluded with the National Anthem.

— Fr. Sebin Kunnappallil

TCSACGASM 2025-26: A resounding success in Tripura



Champaknagar, brought together 16 schools, 680 students, and 170 Teachers, Fathers, Sisters, and Brothers from across Tripura.

The Inaugural ceremony was a grand affair with Lt. Col. G. R. Sharma, 71 Tripura Girls Battalion, as the Chief Guest, and Rev. Bro. K. J. Jose, Principal of the host School, as the Guest of Honour. The event kicked off with a colourful march past, torch lighting, and inspiring messages from the dignitaries.

The cultural evening and Holy Eucharist, graced by Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC, motivated students to strive for excellence. Two full days of sports and games showcased the students' enthusiasm, discipline, and teamwork. The Closing and Prize Distribution Ceremony, attended by Prof. Pradeep Debbarma and Rev. Fr. Prasad Rao, celebrated the winners. Montfort Higher Secondary School, Champaknagar, emerged as Champions, followed by Holy Cross Higher Secondary School, Depacherra, and Auxilium Girls' School, Agartala. The event's success was attributed to the tireless efforts of Fr. Antony Balan, Rev. Bro. K. J. Jose, and the organizing committee, including Bro. David SG, who ensured the well-being of all participants. The TCSACGASM 2025-26 concluded with joyful memories and enriching experiences for all involved.

Fr. Antony Balan, Secretary DECA

The Diocesan Education Commission of Agartala, under the guidance of Fr. Antony Balan, Secretary, successfully organized the TCSACGASM 2025-26 mega event from December 18th to 21st, 2025.

The four-day extravaganza, hosted by Montfort Higher Secondary School,

Catechists Ongoing Training Program



On 27th October 27 of the full time Catechists of the Diocese gathered together for a three day long ongoing animation program at the Pastoral Centre, Champaknagar. The second day began with the inaugural Eucharist by Bishop Lumen Monteiro on his Sacerdotal Ordination Day. He also addressed the Catechists on the World Mission Sunday which was followed by a short felicitation on his Ordination Day.

During the day we had input on the Eucharist and Canonical aspects of Marriage Sacrament by Fr. Arun Fernandes OFM Cap, the Judicial Vicar of the Diocese.

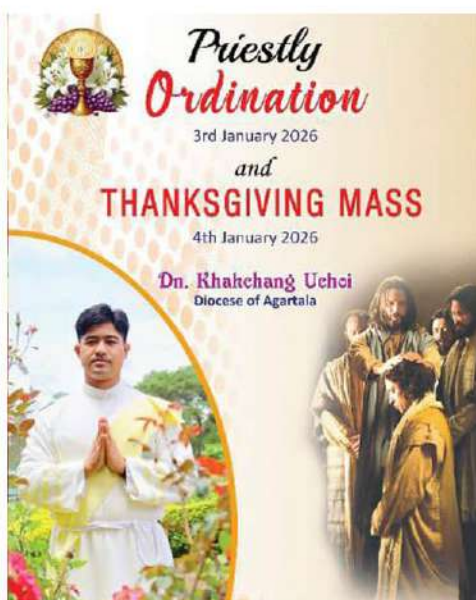
Other inputs were on the Eucharist & Eucharistic Adoration, Eucharistic miracles and the loving devotion towards Eucharist by St. Carlo. Frs. Valentine Dungdung, Clement Quadras and Maxim Rodrigues gave the inputs. The culmination of the Training was with the Eucharistic adoration. On the 30th morning they departed for their respective places with renewed spirits of being enriched of their coming together and inputs.

Fr. Maxim Rodrigues, SVD

Congratulations

to our 3 new Priests to be ordained on the 3rd of January 2026
each of them being the first from their respective tribes:

Fr. James Kaipeng, Fr. Khakchang Uchoi, & Fr. Sagar Bandhu Molsom, SDB



*May your life
be a blessing to God's people*

**Training-cum-Exposure program
Empowers SHG Women**



A training-cum-exposure program for women members of Self-Help Groups was successfully organized on 28 November 2025 with the aim of improving skills, knowledge, and income opportunities for rural Women. The program started with a visit to the College of Fisheries, where the participants were introduced to value addition in fish products. They learned simple methods of fish pickling and drying, which can help increase the shelf life and market value of fish. The trainers also explained the importance of using the entire fish without waste. Women were shown how fish waste, especially fish bones, can be used in useful ways so that no part is thrown away and full benefit is gained from the produce. This session helped the SHG members understand how small changes can increase income and reduce loss.

After this, the group visited the ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region at Lembucherra. A short and practical demonstration was conducted on mushroom spawn preparation and mushroom cultivation, showing how mushroom farming can be done with low investment. The participants also walked around the beautiful and well-maintained ICAR campus, where they learned about exotic plants and scientific farming methods developed to support farmers. The program was informative and motivating, encouraging Women to adopt new livelihood options.

**Seminar on Assessment of Human Development
& Education Sectors in Tripura**



A Seminar on “Assessment of Human Development in Tripura with Special Reference to Health and Education Sectors” was organised on 6 December at JUST bringing together students and educators for an informed discussion on the State’s development challenges and progress. The Session was attended by 38 students and began with a welcome and introduction by Mr. Anik Das. The key presentation was delivered by Dr. Vanlalmuana Darlong, Professor at Tripura University, who explained that development goes beyond economic growth and must focus on health, education, and income. Referring to the United Nations Development Programme & Human Development Report, he highlighted the concept of the Human Development Index (HDI) and its three pillars—health, education, and income. Dr. Darlong discussed key challenges such as inequality, rural–urban gaps, weak health infrastructure, and quality of education, while also noting Tripura’s progress in literacy and healthcare. An interactive group activity followed, where students suggested improvements like better rural health services, adequate doctors, improved school infrastructure, and smart classrooms. The Seminar concluded by stressing the need for continued investment, community participation, and inclusive planning to ensure balanced human development in Tripura.

Robert Lushai

Our Distinguished Guests



- Mar Prince Anthony Panengaden, Archbishop of Shamshabad
- Mar Pauly Kannookadan, Bishop of Irijanalakuda
- CSC Bros. Sese and Nelson from Salem
- Sr. Clara, BS, Provincial of Bethany Sisters from Silchar
- Sr. Mary Diki, BS, Provincial Councilor from Silchar

Bishop's Program for January 2026

- 01: New Year & Garo III Chapel blessing under Kumarghat Parish
- 03: Ordination of 3 Deacons @ Christ King Church, Depacherra
- 04: Silver Jubilee of Teengoria Motha under Amarpur Parish
- 06-07: CSC Province Assembly, Agartala
- 09: Catechists Renewal Program, Champaknagar
- 11: Tripura Achik Catholic Assembly @ Nanadanagar Village
- 14: Blessing of new Parish Church @ Baijalbari
- 15-28: Home visit
- 29: Clergy Meeting @ Agartala
- 30: Annual Day, St. Joseph School Gokulnagar
- 31-01: Parish Sabha, Kathalcherra
- 01: To Bangalore for CCBI & CBCI Meetings