



### Pastor's Corner

Did you ever think that humanity is in danger of being disrupted by technology? Alvin Toffler in his groundbreaking Book, *Future Shock*, had warned us about the shriveling of this technological advancement. He predicted, in fact, that it was possible that change as an element of life would become so fast in a technological world that people could, in effect, be swamped by the very developments designed to advance the human enterprise. People, Toffler argued, would find unrelenting change depressing, sometimes impossible to keep up with, to manage.

We enter the New Year 2020 which some call the "age of connected disconnectedness". Humanity seems to be in danger of being disrupted by technology. Nobel Peace Prize recipient Dr. Albert Schweitzer had said, "We are so much together, but we are all dying of loneliness." He said it more than 70 years ago. I wonder what more drastic his comment would have been today! Eddy D'Sa, a Marine and Offshore Engineer from Mumbai shares this story. Quietly I scan the restaurant as I wait to be served three sets of couples sitting in front of each other, but both partners totally absorbed with their mobile phones. We are in a paradoxical age of connected disconnection! The dark side of our scientific progress has been a relentless pressure to disaggregate, decouple, dissect, and quantify everything breaking the wholeness of life.

Eddy continues, "Today, chances are that if you are reading this, you're relatively isolated, and know two or fewer of your neighbors. There is a high probability that our highly monetized society has immersed you in the illusion that you do not need your neighbors. It doesn't end there; you're enmeshed in a network of transactional relationships that fall beneath the threshold of even loose ties. All of the essentials you need for your survival, from your food, water, electricity, fuel, transit, and waste disposal, are delivered by nameless, and often faceless people who live far from you, and probably paid for by an electronic payment you make to other people who live even further away, behind more firewalls... The range of mental health and social conditions caused by this sense of isolation and apparent disconnection is staggering..."

Frederick Buechner once said, "There are three things that are important in human life. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. The third is to be kind." In that light a Campaign began in USA on November 3, 2019 known as Golden Rule 2020 with its goal "to remind Christians that our faith has something to say about how we talk to each other, particularly in difficult times." Only when we are all together, gathered in a circle of trust and shared wisdom, can we hope to repair whatever we know must be healed in our work, in our lives, in the world! As St. Mother Teresa said, "Works of love are works of peace."

The New Year 2020 which begins today puts us on the eve of the Silver Jubilee of the Diocese. We cannot forget our beloved Pope John Paul II, who, on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1996 decreed the establishment of the Diocese of Agartala. Soon after my Episcopal Ordination in May 1996, LINK, our humble



### Peace in an age of Connected Disconnection

newsletter was born. Then it was a simple 2-page Newsletter and the Bishop's program on a Xeroxed sheet. This year marks the 24<sup>th</sup> Year of its publication and it has been coming to you on the first day of each month, without a break! As I launch the first issue of 2020 I want to thank all those who help me in this work, but most especially Fr. Pulunthanth SDB for the Editorial and Fr. Prasad Rao for the layout. As we enter the New Year thoughts of the Citizens Amendment Act linger in my mind especially the violent fallout. I join all groups that demand justice because it is our democratic right, albeit without violence; because as Mahatma Gandhi said in a democracy we must express our opinion and demonstrate if needed, but in a *non-violent* way. I pray for justice and peace as I greet you HAPPY

NEW YEAR 2020. **+Lumen, CSC**

### Editorial



#### Those little 'big' things!

With sentiments of gratitude to God we step into another New Year, leaving behind what was certainly an 'eventful' one. At moments such as this, it's quite normal to look back and assess the year we are bidding farewell to. The hindsight advantage

often helps us to see and evaluate things and happenings in a slightly different way than we did when we lived through them the first time.

It seems written in some book that every 20 years Tripura shall see communal clashes. The frightening regularity with which Tripura is prone to slip into communal clashes is a disturbing phenomenon. The recent CAA protests and its violent fallout brought the State dangerously close to the point of no-return, thereby taking forward the 20-year-gap argument: 1980, 2000, 2020...

It is also generally agreed that all issues and problems in Tripura are reducible to Tribal-Bengali conflict. Everything seems either to emanate from it or lead to it. Invisible boundaries crisscross the entire State, violating any of which can disrupt its fragile equilibrium.

One cannot but wonder if there's hidden in such an attitude, an inability to see nuances, some of which might even be intricate and important enough to make a world of difference. Stories that emerge in our present times are considerably different from the ones that were heard about twenty years ago. Back then we heard of distressing tales of attack and arson upon the "enemy" camp. Today, many an indigenous person fears his 'own' people! The tribe has



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**LINK wishes all its Readers and Patrons a Happy New Year 2020**

**CONGRATULATIONS to the newly elected Provincial Superiors:**

- ▣ Fr. Sabu Francis Manasrayil, MSFS, Provincial of Guwahati Province.
- ▣ Fr Emmanuel Mappilaparambil, MSFS is the Provincial of the newly formed Dibrugarh Province
- ▣ Sr. Liza, MSMHC, Provincial of Guwahati

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come a long way, for sure!

“Too long a sacrifice can make a stone of the heart,” wrote Irish poet Yeats. Has it happened to our hearts? In times like ours, where every enterprise, initiative and injunction seem to have hidden intents and purposes, it is simplistic, naïve and dangerous to fall back on easy interpretations that ignore the finer points.

We step into the New Year with a prayer on our lips for wisdom to distinguish the good from the bad, beneficiaries from adversaries. May we all have a Happy New Year!

**On January 11<sup>th</sup> exactly 24 years ago, our Diocese came into existence. We thank God who has guided it thus far and pray to Him to continue leading us onward.**

**J. Pulinthanath, SDB**

## AMBASSA PARISH

### Blessing of Renovated Church and Advance Christmas Celebration



Ambassa, December 22, 2019: Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Ambassa had double celebration of Blessing of the renovated Parish Church and advance Christmas celebration. More than 450 parishioners had gathered on the chill Sunday morning to receive Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC to Bless the Parish Church.

Our Bishop travelled early morning from Bagbasa to reach Ambassa for the celebration. At 10:00am Bishop Lumen addressed the faithful before he blessed the Door of the Church. Later he blessed the Crib to celebrate the advance Christmas. All the Concelebrants were led by the entrance dancers to the Altar. In his homily the Bishop spoke on meaning of IMMANUEL and Advent season. He too spoke on the 'CAA' an Act passed in the Parliament which created mayhem among the people and which seems against the Constitution of India. He called on the faithful to pray for Peace during this Season of grace. At the end of the Mass the Parish Priest Fr. Ivan D' Silva, svd, thanked Bishop Lumen, the Priests and Religious for their participation for the celebration. He too thanked all the people who were actively involved in the Renovation of the Church. The advance Christmas program ended with a fellowship meal.

*News Bureau, Ambassa*

## BAGBASA PARISH

### Parish Newsbits Saying it as it was and Is...!

The 4th Bagbasa Parish Annual Sabha was a 'shot in the arm' for our parishioners. The dates were Nov. 29 to Dec.1, 2019. Our resource person was Fr. Anthony SVD, the Director of *Oisho Bani Niketan Agartala*, who made an excellent impact on his listeners-- around 200 in number. At the evaluation, we noted strongly these points: punctuality-lack, poor attendance even on the part

of our Village-leaders, discipline lack, etc. Our good Bishop Lumen who was the main Celebrant at the Sunday Eucharist on 1<sup>st</sup> December inaugurated the Advent Season for the whole Diocese. He insisted on the need to prepare our hearts and our lives for Jesus to be born in our lives.

We had two real big celebrations earlier this year-- Confirmation Ceremony for 76 candidates on 14th September and the Maria Sangho Convention in November which is a 'shot in the arm' for

our Parish. Moreover, the way our Parish Church building is decked and spruced up for the Nativity Feast, not forgetting our Presbytery building that was inaugurated on 21st December along with our School's Annual Parents Day, we are all in good shape alright! Last, but not the least, we are now ranked as a High School, thanks to the yeoman service rendered by Fr. Ajith Philip CSC, the Principal of the School who joined hands with the Secretary of Holy Cross Education Foundation Fr. Joe Paul CSC, for our School's up gradation effort.

**Fr. Harry D'Silva CSC**

## MOHARPARA PARISH

### Parish Feast, Confirmation & 1<sup>st</sup> Communion



On the 8<sup>th</sup> of December the Immaculate Conception Parish, Moharpara, celebrated the Parish Feast with great joy and enthusiasm. The Parish Priest Fr. Arul J, CSC, warmly welcomed the Guests, Priests, and Faithful for the Parish Feast, which he said was the Parish

Family Feast. Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro the Bishop of Agartala celebrated the festive solemnity Mass. Along with our Bishop many Priests from different Parishes concelebrated. Our parishioners witnessed the festive day with more than 500 of them, representatives from all the *mothas* were present. It was also an important day to be remembered as 50 children received Sacrament of Confirmation and 60 children received their first Holy Communion. Different cultural items after the Holy Mass added more color and joy to the celebration. The presence of Caritas India Management Team Frs. Poly, Jolly & Sushil, at our remote Parish was indeed a great privilege. At the end of the celebration Fr. Arbok CSC the thanked the parishioners who actively participated in the Parish Feast. The celebration ended with a fellowship meal. **Fr. Arbok, CSC**

## KUMARGHAT PARISH

### Senior Citizens Day



In view of the Golden Jubilee of the Parish, the Parish Pastoral Council organized for the first time the Senior Citizens Day in the Parish on 1<sup>st</sup> December. 46 Senior Citizens took part in the celebration from various *mondolis*. All the

Senior Citizens of the Parish who were the instrumental in bringing faith to the Parish were invited to be present. During the Homily Fr. Lancy, CSC, the Parish Priest expressed his sentiments of gratitude for the exemplary life they lived. After the Holy Eucharist a short felicitation program was organized by Parish Council to honor the Senior Citizens. Fr. Lancy highlighted the role played these senior faithful in building of the Church community. Mr. Paul Renga Lushai who is fondly known as a Paul Master (the former catechist of the Parish) narrated the history of the Parish, how they worked for the development of the Parish in the past. All were presented with a Blanket as a token of love. The Parish Council Secretary Mr. Roitua Darlong thanked all the people for their financial contribution towards this program. The program ended with an agape.

### SCC North Zone Fest--19

In view of the upcoming Silver Jubilee of the Diocese and Golden Jubilee of Kumarghat Parish, the SCC North Zone organized two days SCC Fest 2019 on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6th of October at





St. Paul's Parish Kumarghat. Five Parishes from the Zone participated in the Convention. There were 236 participants. These two days experience made the participants really broaden their mind about the understanding of the Church and their role in making the Church active and dynamic. The participants were divided in to six groups and each group was animated by a trained lay SCC Leader. At noon each Parish presented their SCC activities Report. In the evening we had candle light Rosary and Adoration. On Sunday morning we had Mirror method of Gospel sharing was conducted by the different Animators. Before the Holy Eucharist Fr. Ivan D'Silva SVD, the Zonal Coordinator gave instruction on Faith and Sacraments. The culmination was the Holy Eucharist, which was followed by Evaluation and Action Plan. Every one appreciated the SCC Fest 2019 and wanted to have similar program every year in different Parishes. Fr. Lancy D'Souza CSC the Diocesan Coordinator for SCC thanked everyone for their whole-hearted participation.

*Mr. Roitua Darlong, PC Secretary*

### KHUMULWNG PARISH

#### Christo Banik 2019 SCC

St. Alphonsa Parish Khumulwng celebrated the Christo Mela on



7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> of December on the theme, "God is with us". (Mt 1:23). The celebration began with the Christmas Carol singing and welcoming the guests. Fr. Valentine Dungdung SVD the Parish Priest, declared the Christo Mela 2019 open and the chief guest Fr. Antony SVD, blessed the crib and gave a

Christmas message. The Guest of honour Mr. Manoranjan Debbarma the secretary of CLT also gave a strong Christmas message on the theme of Christo Mela 2019.

The second day of the *mela* began with the carols and Christmas messages from the Chief Guest Fr. Lourdu MaReddy, the Vice Principal of St. Arnolds School Ambassa and from Ms. Geetha Debbarma the Ex-secretary of ADPC. To make the people more spiritual and ready to receive Christ we too had the privilege of having a Christmas preaching from Mr. David Youth from Bishramganj parish and Mr. Sumanta Youth from Khumulwng parish. To end the celebration in a rejoicing mood we had many dances and group singing from different *mothas*. *Fr. Stany Pereira SVD*

### Diocese News Tidbits

#### Symposium in preparation for the Silver Jubilee of the Diocese

The Diocese of Agartala organized a two days Symposium in JUST Hall, on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2019 on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the Diocese. The theme of the Symposium was 'Legacy of the Catholic Church in Tripura: Pathways Ahead.' The Symposium commenced on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November at 9.30am with the lighting of the lamp. The Chief Guest, Mr. Mewar Kr. Jamatia, the Hon'ble Minister for Forest & Tribal Welfare, Govt. of Tripura, inaugurated the Symposium.

In the first session moderated by Fr. Dr. Shaji CSC, Fr. Hormis John, CSC presented a Paper on 'Catholic Church in Tripura: Formation of Diocese



and Contribution of Religious Congregations'. Fr. Walter S.J, spoke on the 'Role of the churches during the Tripura conflict and what it means for the people'. Dr. Vincent Darlong, spoke on the 'The Coming of God's Kingdom.' Sr. Dr. Marina's paper was on 'The Journey of the Catholic Church in Empowering the Deprived in Tripura: A Case Study of JUST.' There were 10 Paper presenters in all. The Symposium ended on the 9<sup>th</sup> November with an Overview and Summary of Papers given by Dr. David Syiemlieh, emeritus Vice Chancellor of Itanagar University and emeritus UPSC Chairman Delhi. The Valedictory Address was given by Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC. Priests and Religious of the Diocese as well as the Catholic Teachers and Students of Holy Cross College participated in the Symposium. Fr. Ivan D' Silva, svd was the Convenor of the Symposium, who proposed the Vote of thanks. It was an enriching and knowledgeable symposium.

*Sr. Dr. Marina BS, Siliguri*

### JUST News Tidbits

#### SHG Exposure Visit

As part of the livelihood intervention JUST organized an exposure visit for the SHG's of Ganganagar R.D Block to Belbari on 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2019. The purpose was to encourage the Women to undertake Income Generation activities as alternative opportunities. 35 SHG Women accompanied by three Staff and the Project Coordinator made the group of visit. The Director



of JUST Fr. Jeevan Kennady first briefed the group about the functioning and activities of Luku Hamkrai Resource Center. Then the Group visited the mushroom cultivation center of the Resource Center. The visiting group also went for the field visit to have a firsthand experience of the income generation activities of these SHGs. They visited some SHG members who are engaged in mushroom cultivation individually.

The Group made use of every chance to interact with the members of these income generating SHGs and even tried a hand at testing the quality of the products by themselves. They were also very much amused to see the shop set up in the street of Belbari to sell their own made weaving products. They also visited Ujjayanta Palace and Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Airport. The SHG members were motivated and shared that they specifically found the knowledge sharing on income generation activities very interesting and added that they will try to adopt the same practice within their groups as well.

### Interface Programs between JUST SHG Federations and Banks

On 28th November 2019 JUST organized an Interface meeting between SHG Federations and Banks for financial linkages in line with Government department at JUST Training Hall. Mr. Avinash Kumar, Chief Manager of Canara Bank

Agartala and Mr Sayantan Das, Marketing Officer of Canara Bank were the representatives from the Bank. There were about 35 SHG Members



who attended the Meeting. During the Meeting Mr. Avinash Kumar explained about Financial Literacy and taught different ways for investment through Banks, through which SHGs were introduced about Recurring deposits and SIPS (Systematic Investment Plan) and also explained about different schemes that come through Banks and how to avail them. During the Meeting it was also discussed about cyber crime and fraudulent scam cases and the SHGs were given different strategies deal with such types of problems and overcome it.

*Mr. Cyril Darlong*

### Our Readers Write

Thank you for sharing with us the December Link which is inspiring and enriching.

*Sr. Biolinda Jyrwa VSDB*

Nice to receive your newsletter. I liked your observations about body parts as verbs. That deserves a Facebook post along with the coming of Christ that you posted. I was also glad that your post addressed the "three" comings.

*Tony Krisak, USA*

Thank you Bishop for keeping me in touch through the Link with the enormous pastoral activity take place in your Diocese.

*Sr. Marina, BS, Siliguri WB*

LINK reminds us that December... and Advent are in. *Conrad, Montreal, Canada*

Thank you very much for the 'Link' and also for the body parts that can be used as verbs in English. It's amazing as you said.

*Hormis John, CSC, Agartala*

Thank you so much for the Link. May you be blessed throughout the month of December.

*Bishop Victor Lyngdoh, Jowai*

Thank you for the LINK. I shall not use any 'body' language for the sake of safety.

*Thomas Manjaly, Shillong*

Thank you very much for linking me with the "Link". It evokes nostalgic feelings in me!

*Cyprian Pinto, SVD, Bangladesh*

I like your posting in The Link about Body Parts and Verbs. Very interesting! *Peggy Gott, USA*

As always, thank you for the LINK. I am looking forward to being in your part of the world again in January. *Joel Gillanza, CSC, USA*

Life gets more and more interesting when I get your LINK. And this time in your intro itself you had something about our favorite Eng. language and my life, especially got to be "more interesting than ever before" ---for I too like to play with words.

*Harry D'Silva, CSC, Tripura*

### Our Distinguished Visitors

- ▲ Fr. K. J. Abraham CSC, Asst. General from Rome
- ▲ Fr. Poly Moonjely, Caritas ED from Delhi
- ▲ Fr. Jolly Puthenpura, Caritas AED from Delhi
- ▲ Fr. Sushil Modi, Caritas Administrator from Delhi
- ▲ Mar Pauly, Bishop of Irinjalakuda
- ▲ Fr. Varghese, Administrator from Irijanalduka
- ▲ CMF Frs. John & Jaison from Shillong
- ▲ Fr. Jim Doherty, CSC, from USA
- ▲ Fr. Paul Olphindro, SDB, Provincial from Shillong
- ▲ Fr. James Thirniyang, SDB, Economer from Shillong

### Bishop's Program for January 2020

- 13-15: Caritas Forum Directors Meet, Ooty
- 16: Priestly Ordination at Timmaraopet, T.S.
- 22-26: Caritas International Conference, Yangon
- 31: Parish Feast, Don Bosco Nandanagar