



# LINK

News Bulletin of the Diocese of Agartala



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## Pastor's Message



### Peace, Joy, Goodwill - The Gifts of Christmas

As December unfolds, the weeks leading up to Christmas hold a special kind of magic. There's a sense of anticipation in the air, a quiet excitement that seems to build with every passing day. This time before Christmas carries with it a spirit of giving and gratitude. It is a time for reconnecting, whether through old traditions or new memories, where small acts of kindness feel especially poignant. There's an unspoken call to focus on the things that last: love, compassion, and the joy of togetherness.

At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus and the promise that new life brings to the world—both in the form of a baby and in the hopes and dreams that stir within our hearts. It's a season that calls us to renew our commitment to love, to nurture, and to see the sacred in the smallest of things. At the heart of Christmas lies a gift of profound meaning: the gift of a baby. This sacred gift, given over two thousand years ago, holds within it a message of hope, love, and new beginnings.

We are invited to share that same love and care with others, to give generously and live with an open heart. This is the true gift of Christmas: the invitation to be transformed by the love that came in the form of a child.

Jesus' arrival into the world at Christmas brings with it the profound gifts of peace, joy, and goodwill—gifts that resonate deeply not only within the story of His birth but also in the way they touch our lives today. His coming was not just the arrival of a child, but the manifestation of God's love for all humanity, bringing a message that would transcend time and culture. In a world often marred by division, strife, and uncertainty, the gifts of peace, joy, and goodwill become the very essence of what we celebrate at Christmas. These gifts provide a powerful antidote—one that calls us to live with open hearts, to seek reconciliation, to spread kindness, and to find joy in the presence of one another. This is the true spirit of Christmas—the gift of peace, joy, and goodwill that Jesus brought into the world and invites us to share with all.  
MERRY CHRISTMAS.

+ Lumen, CSC



## EDITORIAL



### it's Christmas time again!

As we have just stepped into a new Liturgical Year and the season of Advent, a comment on Christmas is not out of place, perhaps. Especially as it still occupies the top position on the list of festivals celebrated worldwide.

Although still a far cry from places like Mizoram and Nagaland where Christmas is celebrated on an epic scale, the state of Tripura too offers ample evidence of how Christmas has grown in stature over the years.

Obviously, there is much need to focus on the essence of Christmas. If Christmas is made out to be nothing more than an occasion for the rich to flaunt their thing, many would, feeling a disconnect, feel compelled to step aside, if not opt out altogether.

The original Christmas story should help us if we are inclined to look at it. Poverty, rejection, scandal, conspiracy, and fleeing for life are all inseparable elements of the first Christmas story. It is into such darkness the radiance of the 'Light of the world' descended.

Our Christmases promise to be more rewarding if, when Christmas comes round, we desist the temptation to fly-over the chaos of our daily existence on a make-belief sledge of frolic and fun, but delve deeper into the darkness that might surround us and find within it the light of Christ breaking forth. We wish each other Merry Christmas and pray that despite the abject penury of our hearts and hearths, Christ be born in our hearts and homes.

Closely following Christmas, comes another big event for the Diocese of Agartala – the Priestly Ordination of three of our Deacons – Deacons Jojappa Pamisetty, Daleiki Shylla and Sebin Thampy, by our own Bishop Most Rev Lumen Monteiro CSC on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at the Cathedral Church Agartala. While we eagerly await the Day, we wish the Deacons happy preparations.

J. Pullinathan, SDB



## Ambassa Parish

## Sacrament of Confirmation



Holy Spirit Catholic Church prepared the day of Sacrament of Confirmation in the Parish Church. Bishop Lumen confirmed 85 candidates. On the previous day the candidates were given special and final classes along with the sacrament of reconciliation. Catechism classes were given to them early in their own respective substations by the catechists and village Church leaders. Bishop had arrived on 26th October and at 9:30 am Bishop walked to the Altar solemnly along with 85 candidates and God parents from different substations. Even though Bishop was not so completely well after the treatment yet he explained the importance of the Holy Spirit in one's life. The PP Fr. Ivan D'Silva gave the homily on the Sunday readings. In his homily he exhorted the candidates saying, "with the Sacrament of Confirmation you will become the soldiers of Christ; not to take any ammunition to fight but with faith and the Word of God to preach the Gospel". At the end of the Mass Bishop congratulated the newly confirmed and blessed them with a special prayer.

*Ivan D' Silva*

## Gandatwisa Parish

## Installation of new PP and Sweet Adieu for outgoing PP



The installation of a new Parish Priest is to remind both priest and faithful of their responsibilities in building the kingdom of God by discharging their duties to promote the mission of Christ in the world. On 3rd November 2024, St. Arnold Parish, Ganda Twisa, witnessed the change of guard as Rev. Fr. Amal Raj was installed as the Parish Priest by His Lordship Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro CSC, D.D., in the presence of fathers, sisters, brothers and lay faithful.

The ceremony took place during the Holy Eucharist which was presided over by the Bishop. Bishop Lumen appreciated the faithful for their faith, encouraged them to be regular to Church, and exhorted them to be united and faithful to God. Bishop Lumen also thanked Rev. Fr. Prasad Rao, the outgoing Parish Priest, for his dedicated service to the Ganda Twisa Mission. Rev. Fr. Prasad Rao who served as the Parish Priest for 5 years was also given a fond farewell. After the Holy Mass a short felicitation program was held. The Parish community expressed their gratitude to the outgoing Parish Priest and warmly welcomed the new Parish Priest with songs and gifts. The parishioners from all mothas were present for this great event. The day's celebrations ended with a fellowship meal.

*Dn. Sebin K. Thampy*

## Bodhjungnagar Parish

## Maria Sango annual gathering



A Parish-level Maria Sango Meeting was a felt need of the Parish Fathers, as they realized that the Women-Unit was becoming inactive. When the felt-need was expressed, they took it as a wakeup call, as the Parish Council fully endorsed the move. At first, they first gathered at Barkathal in Sept.'24, to take note of the status quo and to prepare themselves for an Annual Gathering. More than 50 of them attended the then meeting. The Catechists and the Parish Fathers were behind the curtain extending every required-support. On October 31, 2024, the Parish level Maria Sango Annual Meeting solemnly took place at the Parish Centre. 123, to be exact, Maria Sango Members curiously took part in the day-long meeting. Fr. Joe Paul csc was the Resource Person. The Theme of the Meeting was: Behold, I am the servant of the Lord: let it be to me according to your word - Luke 1:38. The praying of the Rosary, the input Sessions, the Meeting, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist and the commonmeal, greatly enhanced their bond of unity.

*The Chronicler,  
St. Andre Parish*

## Congratulations to Vasai, Bagdogra, Nellore, and Vellore Dioceses

**Pope Francis has made new appointments to four Indian dioceses. The appointments were announced on November 9, 2024.**



**Fr. Thomas D'Souza (54)**  
as the Bishop of Vasai  
in Maharashtra



**Fr. Ambrose Pitchaimuthu (58)**  
as the Bishop of Vellore  
in Tamil Nadu



**Rev. Anthony Das Pilli (51)**  
as the Coadjutor Bishop  
of Nellore  
in Andhra Pradesh



**Bishop Paul Simick (61),**  
previously the Apostolic Vicar of  
Nepal, to serve as the Bishop of  
Bagdogra.

**Congratulations, and may God bless  
them abundantly in their episcopal  
mission!**



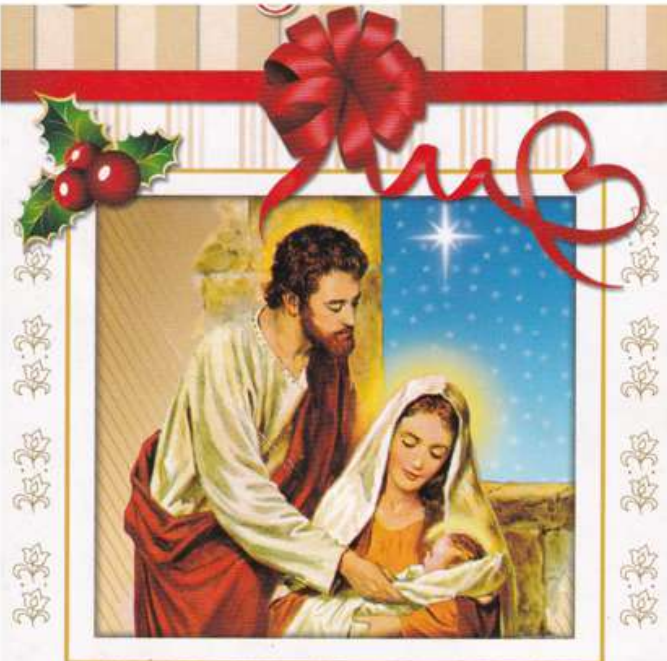
### 14<sup>th</sup> Diocese level Eucharistic Procession 2024



The 14th Diocese-level Eucharistic Procession was held on 10th November 2024 at Khumpui Academy Ground, Khumwlng, with the theme from Mt. 4:4: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." With great jubilation, around 8,000 faithful from different Parishes of our Diocese actively participated despite the scorching heat. The program began with the recitation of the Holy Rosary, during which the priests were available for the sacrament of reconciliation. Bishop Lumen then presided over the Holy Eucharist along with all the clergy of our Diocese, emphasizing the importance of the Holy Eucharist in our lives. Following the Holy Mass, the Blessed Sacrament was carried in procession through the roads of Khumwlng. Fr. Leenus, V.C., then led the praise and worship which was followed by the Benediction. We thank all the organizers of the Eucharistic Procession especially the CLT Members, Khumwlng Parish, ADYC Volunteers, and all the faithful for their unwavering support and collective efforts. The 14th Eucharistic Procession therefore is a public witness of the growing faith of the faithful of the Diocese of Agartala in venerating and revering the Most Blessed Sacrament.

*Fr. Derrick Augustin, Asst. DYD, ADYC*

**"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." (Jn 3:16)**



**LINK Wishes you all**

*Merry Christmas*

### ADYC Delegates at National Youth Conference, Jalandhar



5 Delegates from Agartala Diocese Youth Commission participated in the National Youth Conference at Jalandhar, organized by ICYM from 21st to 25th October 2024. The Conference brought together 653 delegates from different dioceses across India to discuss and reflect on the theme, "Christ is alive! He is our hope". The delegates were divided into 22 study groups, each focusing on various subtopics related to the theme. The study sessions were moderated by several distinguished clergymen and lay leaders. Spirituality was at the heart of the event, with daily Holy Eucharist, Holy Rosary, Eucharistic Adoration, and Confessions, fostering an atmosphere of prayer and reflection. Evenings were marked by vibrant cultural performances, highlighting the diversity of the Church across India. This Conference also provided a platform for young people to connect, foster collaborations and build lasting relationships. The Conference aimed to inspire a spiritual renewal among the youth leaders, by empowering them to carry forward the message of hope and unity within the synodal church.

*Fr. Derrick Augustin, Asst. DYD, ADYC*

### Agartala Diocese YCS Delegates at NSLTP 2024 Kolkata



Attending the National Leadership Training Program of YCS/YSM at Seva Kendra, Calcutta, was a transformative experience for me. Travelling from Agartala on October 27 morning with five students (Sahel Debbarma, Javery Hwringkhaw, Wincy Debbarma, Mili Kaipeng & Udis Darlong) from different institutions of Agartala Diocese along with Miss Sandhya Hrangkhaw, Lady Animator YCS/YSM Agartala Diocese, we arrived the venue on October 29 at around 12:30 am. The program began on 30th of October evening with a meaningful Holy Eucharist, celebrated by Most Rev. Thomas D' Souza, Archbishop of Kolkata, followed by a welcome speech by Rev. Fr. Chetan Machado, the National Chaplain, YCS/YSM India and Mr. Anson Nazareth, the President of YCS/YSM India. The Sessions were interesting and meaningful and were based on the methodology of YCS/YSM – SEE, JUDGE and ACT. A significant highlight was our visit to the slums, where we engaged directly with the residents to understand their struggles. Later during the sessions, we were asked to reflect on possible solutions to help alleviate poverty in such communities. Another impactful moment was our visit to Mother Teresa's tomb, a humbling experience that deepened my commitment to service. Although we had to leave on the night of November 3 due to the travel arrangement, the program teachings and connections with participants from different parts of India will stay on with me. It provided a meaningful framework for leadership and social responsibility and I am inspired to apply these principles in my community. The training not only equipped me with essential leadership skills but also deepened my faith and understanding of my role as a true Christian. I am really thankful to CCBI, and to Fr. Chetan Machado and the National Team YCS/YSM for organizing such a wonderful program.

*Jeremy Darlong, YCS Animator & President, ADYC*



## Enlightening experience for pilgrims from Tripura

### Group of 58 visits Old Goa for veneration of St Francis Xavier's sacred relics

Diana Fernandes

Old Goa: A pilgrimage group from the archdiocese of Agartala in Tripura was a part of the thousands of devotees who visited Old Goa on Thursday to witness the decennial Exposition of the sacred relics of St Francis Xavier.

Most of these devotees from the Northeast, attending the event for the first time, were left with a wholesome experience, some even kneeling down with tears in their eyes as the carriage carrying the relics was moved from the Basilica of Bom Jesus to the Se Cathedral.

The pilgrimage group comprises 58 devotees, including a priest, two nuns and people from the diocese, including a lecturer, an engineer and a doctor.

Having planned the trip six months ago, the group arrived in the state on Wednesday after travelling on a train for four days. The group will leave for Tripura on November 24.

Leading the group, Daniel Debbarma said though they were not much aware of the life and works of St Francis Xavier, they were curious, and on Thursday experienced a wholesome experience of faith.

"We did not know much of the life of St Francis Xavier and his miracles. We only know him as a holy person because of his relics, and being Catholics, we had the privilege of knowing a little about him. People were curious to know about him. This trip has turned out to be a kind of tour in honour of God," he said.

Though there were other saints like St Thomas and St Augustine, the Exposition, which is a once-in-ten-year event, was an exciting experience, he said. "People were touched; many were kneeling and had tears in their eyes when they saw the sacred relics. The moment touched their hearts and it was worth spending all the time to be here. It speaks volumes when devotees experience this sort of feeling; it brings them closer to their faith," said Debbarma, who has been to Goa in the past.

The group also expressed gratitude to organisers of the Exposition saying it was not easy to hold an event of this scale amidst many challenges. "There are many issues involved like commercialisation and other hurdles. It is not easy to sustain and promote the feeling of faith in serenity and sanctity of the saint. We can sense the struggle the organisers may have faced. Today's Goa is not the same as it used to be earlier. Modern Goa has many challenges. We want to extend our gratitude for welcoming us," said Debbarma.

He said it was necessary to encourage youth and the younger generation to carry on the legacy of the saint.

The archdiocese of Agartala comprises 25 parishes and is headed by Rev Bishop Lumen Monteiro, who hails from Goa and is the first bishop of Agartala. He was ordained as a bishop in 1996.



## News Bytes from All Over

The Indian Railways network is one of the largest in the world, with lakhs of people using it for their travel. Indian Railways is also upgrading its trains and coaches and introducing new trains for the convenience of passengers. Vande Bharat Express trains are a perfect example of this. Adding to it, India Railways is now planning to introduce a groundbreaking train that requires neither diesel nor electricity to operate.

This "water-powered" train is all set to run on tracks soon. If we talk about the evolution of the Indian Railways, like other countries it all began with steam engines and then shifted to coal. Then the train engines shifted to fossil fuel power – diesel – that gives power but emulates pollution also. Modern trains run on electricity which is also generated by burning coal. Amid these advancements, a new era began with the launch of a train powered by water, marking a significant milestone for India.

For the first time in the country, the train will run on water. This will be achieved through advanced hydrogen fuel technology. This train will require about 40,000 liters of water per hour, and special water storage facilities will be built to support this operation. According to railway spokesperson Dilip Kumar, the cost for a single hydrogen train is approximately Rs 80 crore.

The hydrogen train generates electricity by converting hydrogen and oxygen through fuel cells, emitting only steam and water as byproducts, unlike diesel engines. Not only that, the high-tech train will be 60 percent quieter than diesel trains, offering same speed and passenger capacity. The train is anticipated to reach speeds of 140 km/h and cover up to 1,000 kilometers on a single run.

(Courtesy, The Times of India)





## JUST organizes Leadership Training for Community at Twidu



On 18th November 2024 as part of the Social Outreach Program under Peace Project, JUST organized a Leadership Training Program at Sontang Village, Twidu under Ompi Block. The Training touched upon several important social topics effecting communities across Tripura like rampant Drug abuse affecting the youths, the importance of peace in development, rights and entitlements, Capacity Building and Skill development. The training saw active participation from the community members as well as their local club youths and teachers from their community run School who showed great interest in the initiative of JUST. The JUST Staff through its positive dialogue engaged specially the youths in trying to learn the matters of importance to them and what they hoped for their community and the role of JUST in helping them develop the necessary skills. The training was an overall success and the community leaders and the youths shared that they were looking to more such engagements in the future.

## Training on Local Resource Mobilization for Youth



JUST organized youth training on local resource mobilization for a sustainable peace-building process, held at JUST Hall Damdamia on 26th October. The training session began with a minute of silence for self-reflection and prayer. Mr. G. VanneilianaDarlong, State Consultant, delivered the welcome address on behalf of JUST. He thanked the participants for their presence and highlighted the organization's commitment to skill development and resource mobilization for sustainable peacebuilding process.

The session highlighted by Mr. Robert Lushai, the facilitator, provided an overview of JUST and the Peace Project before introducing the concept of local resource mobilization. Participants were then divided into four groups to identify and present local resources for potential income generation. The practical Session was followed by Surf and Phenyl making included a hands-on demonstration of surf-making, led by the JUST Team. Participants learned about the required ingredients and the process, equipping them with practical skills for income generation.

*Robert Lushai*

## Our Distinguished Guests

- Sr. Rita, FSM Superior General from France
- Sr. Angela, FSM Provincial Superior from Bengaluru
- Sr. Shiji, FSM Provincial Bursar from Bengaluru
- Sr. Tressa Sebastian, SSpS General Councillor from Rome
- Sr. Sunita Kujur, SSpS Provincial Leader from Guwahati
- Fr. Pushparaj, Provincial Superior of Schoenstatt Fathers from Chennai
- Bro. Dhanaraj, SG General Councillor from Rome
- Bro. Thomas Thanikal, SG Provincial Economer from Guwahati
- Fr. John Zosiama, SDB Provincial Superior from Shillong
- Sr. Clara, BS Provincial Superior from Silchar
- Sr. Harsha, Asst. Provincial Superior from Silchar
- Bro. Joy Thadhatil, CST Novice Master from Dibrugarh
- Fr. Binoy John, CSC, from Sumer, Meghalaya
- Fr. Emmanuel, CSC, Vicar General of Holy Cross from Rome
- Fr. Roy, CSC, Family Ministry NE Director from

## Bishop's Program for December 2024

- 01: Ichachari Chapel Blessing, under KarbookParish
- 02: Meet CLT Leaders
- 03: Feast Day Mass, SFX Cathedral, Clergy Meet, Bishop's House, Agartala
- 08: Ruby Jubilee, Moharpara Parish
- 10-11: Board Meeting, St. John's Bengaluru
- 12: Medical follow up St. John's
- 13-14: CCBI Symposium Bengaluru
- 14: Meet AC Superior General, Agartala
- 15: First Communion & Confirmations, Mandwi Parish
- 17: Meet with new Catechist Trainees, Pastoral Centre
- 18: JUST GB Meeting & Xmas program, Damdamia
- 20: Christo Mela, Kamaranga Parish
- 21: Confirmations, Bagbasa Parish
- 22: Chapel Blessing, Ambassa Parish
- 24: Christmas Midnight Mass, Mariamnagar Parish
- 25: Christmas Day Mass, Nandanagar Parish
- 28: Priestly Ordination, SFX Cathedral Parish
- 29: Opening of the Jubilee Year of Hope, SFX Cathedral
- 31: New Year's Eve Mass, Nandanagar Parish
- 01: New Year Day Mass, SFX Cathedral