



Pastor's Corner

A date with the EVM

Can we play our part in getting the people to the ballot boxes? General Elections in India have been announced.

Tripura goes to the polls in two stages, on 7th and 12th April. There is a lot of campaigning, mud-slinging, name calling, compliments et al. But come elections and the ballot reveals the bitter truth - only a miniscule percentage of the population ends up having voted - the least being the educated class! The Times of India (TOI) says "the educated working professionals of the country need to be enthusiastic about exercising their constitutional rights, as they are about voicing their opinion on politics and governance."



The Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) has urged the citizens to vote, clearly stating that while the church does "not identify with any political party" the bishops are exercising their responsibility "to urge every eligible citizen to exercise his/her right and duty to vote and do so prudently, carefully and judiciously... We must be convinced that every vote does count. We owe it to ourselves, our children and our country not to let go of this opportunity to get involved in bettering the history, culture and destiny of our nation."

Padmanaban writes in TOI that it is "crucial for educated professionals to exercise their democratic rights because you can't win if you don't play. Voting does not guarantee that one's preferences will prevail, but choosing not to vote denies the person the opportunity of having a say." I have made a date with the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) on 7th April. What about you?

+Lumen, CSC



Editorial

An Indecent Obsession

Now that another Election is round the corner, we the people of Tripura are gonna do it yet again. Pardon us but when we sense an election coming, we seem to come into our elements. This you've got to believe, even if many 'other things' you don't. Other things like the total literacy tag we've given ourselves, or the incredible love we say we have for our language, culture and community. We might permit ourselves some bit of margin in these matters, but when it's about party politics and elections, boy, there's no stopping us. You better know, in both voter turnout and election enthusiasm, we're not just front runners but record holders in the country.



We wish it were that way with everything about us. To be honest, we find ourselves in a great deal of mess on the social and cultural fronts our lands are shrinking, our villages are emptying, our language is dying, our past has been re-written, the present is muddled and the future, uncertain. We earnestly wish, both individually and collectively, we were a wee bit more unrelenting and eager in these matters.

But then, we can't have all of it, perhaps... After all, we've become masters and national leaders in what we consider ultimate: political engagement. What more can one hope for! Although, (and this is between us) at times, however fleetingly, the thought crosses the mind, what have all those meetings and *michils*, memorandums and sloganeering achieved... for my language, my children, and their future...! That's when I wonder if we got it all slightly wrong, perhaps...

But I will think about that later. For now, let me lap it up, this life-changing thing I see approaching the Elections!

You know, at first I hoped this piece will somehow meander its way to the season of Lent that climaxes somewhere mid-April and hopefully will leave us all renewed, freshly hope-filled and truly joyful. It's a pity we got stuck with the circus called politics. How very like everything else in this land! Nevertheless, that's not gonna keep me from wishing you the Peace and Hope of the Risen Lord. Happy Easter!

J. Pulinthanath, sdb



Happy Easter

LINK wishes all its readers a very happy and holy Easter. May the Risen Lord bless you and your family.

ANNOUNCEMENT

A Kokborok Learning Course (Basic) specifically for Priests and Religious will be organized at Don Bosco Peace Centre Agartala, 2-14 June 2014. Those interested may contact, for details and registration: DB Peace Centre Agartala, Tel: 9436126649.

Bishramganj Parish

Seminar on the Family

After two meetings of the Parish pastoral Council, we had decided to have Seminars in each of the five Zones at the beginning of the Year of the Family. The first of these was scheduled for the Maria Zone at Pitra. Accordingly, on 17th March, forty six men and women from the Zone gathered at Don Bosco School, Pitra. Enthusiastic, eager for the Word, and fully attentive, they spent the whole day together. Mr. Thanda Uchoi from Depacherra and Mr. Chandan Debbarma, our catechist took the Sessions which dealt with a variety of topics so essential for the Christian family. The Sacrament of matrimony, the rights and responsibilities of parents and of children, upbringing of children in the Catholic faith, the need to have children and the evil of abortion, family prayer and fellowship, respect for parents and elders were some of the topics. The active participation of the group in the discussion pointed to the relevance in their lives. Fr. Sunny, the Parish priest was present throughout and celebrated the Holy Eucharist. The day was well spent and the participants were extremely glad to have been part of it. The next seminar which is scheduled for 30th March at Shyamnagar for the Phola Kwthar Zone, would have been held by the time this report is read. **Mr. David Molsom**

SCC groups at Kanchancherra

SCC program was initiated at Kanchancherra *mondoli*. 50 Catholic families were divided into five groups. The group members meet on every Wednesday to pray and share the Word of God. The interest shown by the group members has been over whelming. Apart from the prayer meeting the groups engaged themselves in different activities like cleaning the village, school and church. The groups also took initiative to visit the sick and pray for them. We are grateful to Fr. Lancy D'souza who took keen interest to demonstrate and explain in detail the working of SCC. We thank Fr. Arul J. for encouraging and supporting us on this task. We hope and pray that we will be able to grow and spread to other villages also.

**Roitua Darlong, Secretary
Kanchancherra**

Kumarghat Parish

SCC Regional Training Program



St. Paul's Parish Kumarghat hosted three days of training program for SCC animators from Kumarghat Zone. The SCC animators from 6 parishes participated in this program. The program was organized by Fr. Lancy D'souza the SCC animator of the diocese. The resource persons were Sr. Martina and Fr. N.V Joseph. The program began on 5th March evening and came to an end on 7th March 2014. Participants from different parishes took part in this training program. The zonal level SCC committee was formed and Fr. Arul J. was selected as the in-charge of this zone for SCC animation. The participants from different parishes expressed their willingness to start SCC in their parishes. People thanked Fr. Lancy for taking initiative to organize such a program. **Mr. Lala Darlong, Parish Secretary**

Khumlwng Parish



On February 18, 2014 an unmanageable fire devastated Uttam Debbarma's house in Belbari just 200 meters away from Montfort School. At four in evening when the family members were away for their work in the rubber garden Uttam Debbarma's house was blazing. When the neighbors raised an alarm it was too late and just a few dishes and half burnt school books could be recovered. When the fire brigade reached the spot from Jirania the house was completely destroyed. The cause of fire is not yet known.

Not long ago Uttam Debbarma's family members became Catholic. The Belbari Catholic community leaders took stock of whole situation the same evening and helped the family with money and essentials and the family was given shelter in an unfinished semi-RCC house. **Ivan D'Silva, SVD**

Mandwi Parish

“Mandwi Parish and all its Catholics bless the Lord”



9th March was the day of a great joy and consolation for the Catholics of Murabari *motha* under Mandwi Parish. It was like a healing rai; it was consoling because the drooping spirit of an already divided area with many wounds has been restored and healed. Our Bishop Lumen Monteiro and Fr. Roby, CSC the Administrator arrived here in the parish at 9.00 a.m., went around the vicinity assessing the present situation and the future prospects of the parish. After tea we moved to Murabari *motha*. The faithful from Murabari and the representatives from other neighboring mothas gathered together in the village chapel complex in rows and welcomed Bishop and Fr. Roby with bouquet of flowers and led them to the chapel by sprinkling with petals of flowers symbolizing their love for the shepherd. Then the holy Eucharist began which was presided over and solemnized by Bishop Lumen followed by fellowship meal. Interaction between Bishop and the faithful after Mass brought joy and a sense of belonging to the larger community, the Diocese. Presence of the shepherd brought the faithful closer to the Lord and to one another. **Fr. Remol, SDB**

Agartala Parish



The Parish of Agartala celebrated the feast of St. Joseph, its patron on 19th March. The three days of *triduum*, organised as a preparation for the feast day brought the people together in a realm of prayerful celebration. The *triduum* services were centered on the theme of family, this year being the Year of the Family in our Diocese. Fr. K.J Abraham csc, on the first day, helped the community to reflect on the personal virtues of St. Joseph to be imitated in the families. On the second day the parish community reflected on family prayer and St. Joseph with the help of Fr. Thomas Pereira csc. In the light of the teachings of Vatican II, Fr. Hormis John csc enlightened the community on St. Joseph in our family lives on the last day of *triduum*. The solemn Holy Eucharist on the Feast Day was solemnized by Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro, Bishop of Agartala, was attended by a large number of parishioners, priests and religious. Bishop reminded us that St. Joseph, the Spouse of Blessed Mother, was to be admired and imitated in our daily lives. “Though very little is mentioned about St. Joseph in the gospels, his life as the foster father of the Son of God speaks volumes”, Bishop added. The festivities ended with a family meal organized by the parish. **Fr. Arun D csc**

FARM Northeast -Training Program

5th February 2014, a training program on different government schemes related to agriculture and irrigation facilities was conducted at Tamakari village under FARM Northeast Project. The objective of the training was to capacitate and let the farmers know regarding different government schemes related to agriculture and irrigation facilities. 30 farmers were present for the training program and the methods used during the training were lecture, interaction and power point presentation. The Resource Person was Mr. Shyamol Saha, Lecturer of Agricultural Training Institute, Lembucherra. The Resource Person spoke on drift irrigation system and said that 90% subsidy provided by the government to the farmers is for this system of irrigation. The Resource Person explained the usefulness of drift irrigation system. The Training program ended by a thanksgiving word from the Animator Mr. Mantu Debbarma.

FARM Northeast - mobilizing Resources

11th February-2014, the coordinator and animators of FARM Northeast Project under JUST assisted by Caritas India has been able to mobilize resources after regular visits to Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) for the Farmers under Hezamara Block. Mr. Gulap Singh Yadav, Agricultural Scientist gave Ausgrains of 60kg to the staff of FARM project for distribution among farmers in the villages under Hezamara Block. The Staff of FARM project were also asked about the submission of 50 beneficiaries for pond repairing and distribution of fingerlings. *Vincent Deburma*



Women's Day celebrated

International Women's Day was celebrated in the Diocese with over 120 Women from the whole Diocese who gathered at JUST for the Annual Day celebrations. Inaugurating the event with the lighting of a candle in the presence of the Diocesan Women Commission Sr. Punita, SJA, and Fr. Jeevan, SVD, Director of JUST, Bishop Lumen Monteiro said he was happy to be associated with the celebrations. He spoke on the theme 'Inspiring Changes' proposing that we "encourage advocacy for women's advancement, inspire positive change, and help change the mindset." Quoting a national survey he said, "Women's equality has made positive gains, but the world is still unequal. Up to 50% of sexual assaults are against girls; 603 million women are victims of domestic violence. He appreciated the efforts of the Women's Commission.



Holy Cross School Agartala , Annual Sports Day



Holy Cross School at Durjoynagar celebrated its Annual Sports Day with a glittering function. Shri. Sahid Choudhuri, Honorable Minister of Education (Youth Affairs & Sports), Welfare of Minorities, and Labour, hoisted the school flag and inaugurated this Sports Meet. He appreciated the event organized by the school and emphasized the importance of sports activities in the school.

The Principal highlighted the importance of Sports which can "teach us much about life and it is full of life lessons. It can teach us about failure, joy, disappointment, excitement, winning and losing." Competitions were organized between the teaching and non-teaching members of the faculties as the students applauded their staff members. *Press Report*

Grand Parents Day

The School honored grandparents who are special to every child. Their bedtime stories are integral part of everyone's growing up years. They are also the wise and experienced ones we turn to in times of trouble. Their knowledge is invaluable and their love unconditional. In keeping with this, the students of Nursery to Class III, gave a phenomenal program as the world celebrated International Women's Day. The President of function, Mme. Pournima Roy, Chairperson of the Women's Commission of Tripura, along with Mr. Balasubramanian DGP, Mr. Abishek Singh, DM & Collector, Secretary of Holy Cross Educational Foundation, Fr. CV Jose, grandparents and parents of the students, were welcomed by the Principal. Fr. Kanikkai who highlighted the importance of women and grandparents in our society: "Women are the incarnation of God's power in our midst. The beauty of a woman is not in the clothes she wears, the figure that she carries, but is seen in her eyes, because that is the doorway to her heart - the place where love resides; and wherever love resides there God dwells always". *Press Report*

National Program attended

CDPI National Meet

The XII National Council of CDPI was held at St. Vincent's Retreat House, Gopalpur-on-the-Sea, Odisha from 25-28 February 2014. More than 60 delegates from all over India had participated in it. The theme of the animation was: Media and Mission Prospects from positive use of the Media in the life and ministry of priests. Most Rev. Thomas Vazhappilly, Patron of CDPI in his key note address spoke about Mission and Media. Fr. A. P. Benedict was the main Resource Person for the animation programme. After two days of intense animation on the theme a day was kept for exposure in Kandhamal District of Odisha where Christians were persecuted and many of them were killed for the sake of Jesus in 2007-08. The entire programme was well organized by the EXCO members headed by Fr. John Kulandai. Fr. Bhuban Sarkar represented the Diocese of Agartala for this program. *Bhuban Sarkar*



Our Readers Write

Thanks bishop for the LINK. Sr. Clara, BS, Silchar

I received your kind email and the LINK. Thank you very much. +*Andrew Marak, Tura*

Thank you very much for the Link. Thanks for being in touch. Appachan, Dubai

Kudos !!! I really enjoy your corner in the LINK. It engages and stimulates m. Though I am a little away from you physically the heart beats in the Diocese of Agartala are always a joy to me for I gave my best years of priesthood there joyfully.

Almost 20 years....! Davis Konuran, CSC, *Jongksha*

Thank you for the LINK. Alan, CSC, Nairobi I am here at the family theatre reading the LINK one day ahead of time. Arulraj, CSC, Los Angeles

Thanks a million for the Copy of the Link. In fact, Pope Francis also picked up both the children of one of my cousins, who stays in Dubai, when she went to Visit Rome. Jilson, CSC, Bodhjungnagar



Pope Francis One Year On

Twelve months ago today, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, a low profile archbishop of Buenos Aires, stepped out onto the Loggia of Saint Peter's Basilica to greet the thousands gathered in the square as the newly elected Bishop of Rome.

Elected just two weeks after the historic resignation of Benedict the XVI, the Argentinian Cardinal taking the name of Francis became the first Pope to hail from the Americas. Yet Cardinal Bergoglio was not considered "papabile"; 76 years old at the time of his election, the Jesuit prelate was thought to be too old to be elected pope. "This was where the brave decision of Pope Benedict to resign was very important because it meant that age didn't come into it," said Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor in an interview with ZENIT. "For instance, if Pope Francis at some time, in years to come, felt his health wouldn't do the job as it were, then he, too, could retire from the job." Despite being largely unknown at the time of his election, Pope Francis has received a warm welcome from Catholics and non-Catholics alike in what many have described as the "Pope Francis effect". The benefits of this "Pope Francis Effect," Cardinal O'Connor explained, is that "it will help bishops to feel 'freer' in being evangelical, freer in the public forum to pronounce the values and the truths of the Gospel. And [they] won't be afraid to take risks, if they are genuinely for the good of the Gospel." "Pope Francis is setting up structures which, I think, if he were to go and die, the actual collegial character which he's trying to encourage in the Church here in Rome, but especially in the worldwide Church, will continue." In the twelve months since his election to the papacy, one of the predominant themes of Francis is that of renewal.

"He now has a very clear profile," said newly-elected Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster. "He is a Pope of radical renewal. So he wants at every step to take us back to the roots of our life of faith which is essentially the gift of God, essentially the call to discipleship, to be with Christ, to be in his company day by day, and the call to be missionary." *Zenitnews.org*

Junior Bachchan does a Pope Francis

Abhishek Bachchan, a heartthrob of millions of youngsters in India, took a break from his acting to bring solace to the neglected and despised.

The Bollywood actor, who turned 38 on February 4, spent some time this weekend ministering to the victims of neglected tropical disease (NTD) at a Church center in Odisha, eastern



India. He poured water over the feet of an elderly man suffering from lymphatic filariasis (elephantiasis), a debilitating and disfiguring disease at the Banamalipur Resource Centre run by the Church's

Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA), the social action wing of Protestant Churches in India. The center is just outside the Odisha capital of Bhubaneswar.

Bachchan's gesture reminded onlookers what Pope Francis had done in November 2013. The Pontiff caught the world's attention when he embraced a man with neurofibromatosis, a non-infectious genetic disease that left him completely covered from head to toe with growths, swellings and itchy sores.

Fortune Magazine Names Pope "Greatest World Leader"

Francis heads list of 50 persons chosen for "Energizing Their Followers and Making World Better"

NEW YORK, March 20, 2014 - The global business magazine has named Pope Francis the world's greatest leader in a world "starved for leadership," it says. The list of 50 men and women "some famous, others little known" have been chosen for "energizing their followers and making the world better," the magazine continues. Since his election, "Francis has electrified the Church and attracted legions of non-Catholic admirers by energetically setting a new direction," the magazine says. *Fortune* notes that Francis "recently asked the world to stop the rock-star treatment" but adds: "He knows that while revolutionary, his actions so far have mostly reflected a new tone and intentions. His hardest work lies ahead." *Zenit.org*

India goes to polls April-May, vote count May 16

India will elect a new Lok Sabha over a nine-day period from April 7 to May 12, and the results will be announced May 16, the Election Commission announced. The world's largest democratic exercise will involve a staggering 814 million voters, an increase of some 100 million from 2009 and a sharp rise from the 176 million in the first parliamentary polls of 1952. There will be about 930,000 polling stations across the country -- a 12 percent rise from the 2009 election.

BISHOP'S PROGRAMME FOR APRIL 2014

- 06: Pastoral visit Urwa, Bodhjungnagar Parish
- 07: National Elections
- 08: New Poor Homes inauguration, Gandacherra
- 12-13: Palm Sunday Program, Moharpara Parish
- 15: Pastoral Meeting & Chrism Mass
- 17-20: Holy Week, Tuikarmaw Parish
- 22: Priestly Ordination, Kathalcherra Parish
- 24: Foundation for Khumulwng Church
- 26: Sr. Sumona AC, Silver Jubilee
- 27: New Parish erection at Baijalbari
- 28-29: Caritas GB Meet, Bangalore
- 30-01: Standing Committee Meet, Bangalore

Visitors at Bishop's House

- * Fr. Varghese Velikkakam, Director of Social Forum from Guwahati
- * Sr. Philo, MSMHC, Superior General from Guwahati
- * Fr. George Panthanmackal, MSFS Provincial from Guwahati
- * Poonamalee Seminary Chennai Staff:
- * Frs. Prasad, Tony, Felix, Edwin, Alwin, Bernard Shaw, Joe Andrew, Amirdham, Shekar, Arulappa & Dasan