



Pastor's Corner

Seek the Lord

Reynold D'Cruz shares this simple, yet interesting and thought provoking story about a sea captain who in his retirement skippered a boat taking day-trippers to Shetland Islands. On one trip, the boat was full of young people. They laughed at the old captain when they saw him say a prayer before sailing out, because the day was fine and the sea was calm.



However they weren't long at sea when a storm suddenly blew up and the boat began to pitch violently. The terrified passengers came to the captain and asked him to join them in prayer. But he replied, "I say my prayers when it's calm.

When it's rough I attend to my ship!"

The lesson for us is: If we cannot seek God in quiet moments of our lives, we are not likely to find Him when trouble strikes; we are more likely to panic. But if we have learnt to seek Him and trust Him in quiet moments, then most certainly we will find Him in tempestuous moments, when the going gets rough.

Life is a mystery to be lived, not a problem to be solved.
Fr. Jack McArdle's advice to us: "Relax those muscles, ungrit those teeth, and unclench those fists. Life is for living, and it is also for giving. Brighten up someone else's life, someone else's home. There's so much good to be done that we haven't time for moaning. If heaven begins now, then let's begin the celebrations now. Our vocation is not about getting to heaven. Jesus has taken care of that. Our vocation has everything to do with getting heaven down here." Where there is despair, let me bring your hope; where there is sadness, let me bring your joy. It's much more difficult to get heaven into people than it is to get people into heaven! Go for it and enjoy it.

+Lumen, CSC



Editorial

A Time to 'give something up'

One of the achievements of Tripura's predominant political party's many years of rule is the strong notion of 'manthai' (what one is entitled to get) and 'rwthai' (what one ought to give) that it has inculcated in the people. It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that manthai-rwthai politics oozes through every pore of most of Tripura's populace. There is a deep-rooted conviction that every giving is in order to get, just as every getting is because of what was given.



Concepts like 'volunteerism' and 'sacrifice for a cause' sound totally alien to proponents of such flawless arrangements who presuppose that the Good Samaritan was indeed a bad economist. They believe that investing in enterprises which do not yield measurable and tangible returns is the height of folly. That perhaps explains why when recently, a Delhi-based music troupe consisting of young musicians from the Northeast, performed in Tripura for free, and waived all fee, it became a talking point among sections of people who failed to make sense of such behaviour.

The great Season of Lent we are beginning this month is often referred to as a 'time to give something up'. We're fortunate to have many beautiful and deeply moving prayer practices during Lent: Ash-smearing on Ash Wednesday, Stations of the Cross on Fridays; and the foot-washing and Veneration of the Cross ceremonies during the Triduum. Although these are powerful and remarkable enough to draw even the cynical of our flock to their annual duties, the season of Lent, with a little goodwill on our side, could become for all the faithful of our Diocese the time we've been waiting for. Having hitherto engaged in an easily intelligible modus operandi of 'give and get', it is our one chance to usher in a revolution in our personal lives - sans slogans and michils, flags and festoons.

This extraordinary period of forty days invites us to 'give something up' after the manner of the one who gave everything up with no guarantee of any returns. It is an opportunity we get to change our lives, to alter the very philosophy of our little lives and align it a little more to that of the protagonist of Lent Lord Jesus Christ.

J. Pulinthanath, sdb

International Women's Day On 8th March

We in the Diocese of Agartala salute the woman who is God's Gift to Man as a mother, a sister, a friend, a wife, a daughter...



Tuikarmaw Parish Feast of St. John de Britto celebrated

Holeket is one of the villages



under St. Mary's Parish, Tuikarmaw and it has been the mother *mondoli* of the Parish too. Holeket's Chapel is dedicated to St. John de Britto. It is been the first time the village Chapel's feast is celebrated as its *mondoli* feast. The community consists of 85 families. The *mondoli* feast celebration took place for 4 days 6th to 9th February, three days of Novena and Eucharist and the feast day on 9th February 2014. Each Novena day there were prayers followed by Holy Mass. On the first day Sr. Punita, Secretary for Women Commission, Diocese of Agartala, conducted a Seminar on "Christian family". It was well appreciated by the people. There were Dance, Bible skit and Bible quiz competitions conducted and at the end of the feast day and the winners were awarded with prizes. All the Novena days faithful came in a large numbers with lot of devotion and faith in spite of the state level Wangla Mela held just a kilometer from the village. On the feast day there was Holy Eucharist followed by felicitation of the guests. The feast ended with a fellowship meal for whole village. *Fr. C. Abraham, csc*

Kathalcherra Parish Annual Parish Sabah

The 23rd Annual Parish *Sabha* was organized at Kukicherra Village from 31 Jan to 2 Feb



2014. The theme of the Parish *Sabha* was 'Family'. Fr. Buban Sarkar the Resource Person dwelt on the importance of Family Prayer in keeping the family united. Mr. Uttam Debbarma (SDO) insisted on the Word of God in moulding the Christian family life. On the second day the election of the Parish Secretary was held and Mr. Piangloma Darlong was elected as the Parish Secretary for another term. On the final day the holy Eucharist was presided over by Bishop Lumen Monteiro wherein one hundred and twenty eight faithful received the Sacrament of Confirmation. The *Sabha* ended with the Annual Report presented by the Parish Priest Fr. Lancy D'Souza, csc. The final day of the *Sabha* was attended by more than six hundred faithful from 22 *mondolis* under our Parish.

Fr. Valerian Castelino, csc

Kumarghat Parish Annual Parish Sabah

17th Parish Annual *Sabha* of Kumarghat Parish took place from 24th to 26th



January 2014. The theme selected for the Parish *Sabha* was "The Family that Prays Together Stays Together". The Parish *Sabha* aimed at building strong foundation for the catholic families. People from different villages gathered at Kanchancherra, the host village. The villagers were well prepared to welcome the guests to their village. The Parish *Sabha* began with a welcome address of the Parish Priest followed by classes on SCC by Fr. Lancy D'Souza, CSC. The aim of the parish this year is to begin SCC groups in all the *mondolis* of the parish. Bishop Lumen was solemnly welcomed into the village in the afternoon. The Reports of different villages were presented. Bishop Lumen concluded the reporting with his speech. Parish Priest Fr. Arul, CSC also published yearly program for the parish and copies were given to all the villagers. The day came to an end with a Holy Adoration and Confession. On the final day we had

solemn Mass celebrated by Bishop Lumen. Many children received first Holy Communion and the Sacrament of Confirmation. There were about 600 people present for the Mass on this occasion seeking God's blessings. After Mass Parish Priest Fr. Arul, CSC presented his Report to mark the conclusion of the 17th Parish *Sabha*. *Fr. Agi Paul, csc*

Depacherra Parish Evangelization Team at work

The Parish Council Meeting held on February 9 at Depacherra Parish Hall had 62 members from different



commissions and *mondolis* along with the parish priest, Fr. Prasad. Fr. Bhuban gave the Input session

on the "Year of Family", insisting on the 'sanctity and holiness' of the family to be maintained in our own families. He reminded them that the Christian family is a domestic Church.

Mondoli leaders have decided to encourage family prayers and participation in the Sunday Liturgy. Fr. Prasad also announced that next year (2015) Depacherra Parish will be celebrating its Silver Jubilee and he invited all the *mondolis* and families for the preparation of this great event.

Go and Proclaim the Good News ... (Mk 16:15, Mt 28: 18-20)

In this 'Year of Family' the Parish Evangelization Team along with the Parish Council Members have made a firm decision for pastoral priority to be given to proclaim the Good News to all the areas of the parish. The Parish Evangelization Team made a visit in different villages to spread the Good News. Many people are positive to hear about Jesus and follow him. The Team is regular to visit and catechize the people of Kicharipara, Kedarnal and Nobinpara. The parish priest reiterated the mission that we have received from Jesus to proclaim the Good News to all the nations.

Fr. Bhuban Sarkar

Agartala Parish Holy Childhood Day celebrated

9th February was a memorable day for the children of our Parish as they observed 'Holy Childhood Sunday' and celebrated it with much vigour and enthusiasm. More than eighty children gathered around the altar to celebrate the liturgy under the theme, 'Children to evangelize Children'. The Holy Eucharist began with a candlelit procession by the children. The day's liturgy was entirely organised by the children and their whole hearted participation in the choir and at Mass were in fact, a feast to the eyes. Fr. Kanikkai Jayaraj, CSC, the main celebrant, highlighted the important role children could play in evangelization. He inspired them to be salt of the earth and light of the world.

Fr. Arun D., CSC

Cardinal Cleemis appointed a Member of the National Integration Council-NIC

Baselios Cardinal Cleemis Catholicos has been nominated as a Member of the National Integration Council under category IX (Eminent Public Figures). The National Integration Council under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister was reconstituted on October 28, 2013. The NIC was constituted to combat the evils of communalism, casteism, regionalism, linguism and narrow-mindedness as a follow up of National Integration Conference under the then Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru in September- October, 1961. First meeting of NIC was held in 1962. The last meeting of the NIC with 148 members was held on September 10, 2011.

PIB via CNUA

FARM Northeast

9th January 2014, the Coordinator and Animators of FARM Northeast Project under JUST assisted by Caritas India conducted a training program on farmers Club at Uruwa Kami, under Hezamara Block, Tripura West. 16 farmers were present for the program. At the end of the program moong and maize seeds were distributed to the farmers who were interested in cultivating these items. Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura (JUST) after regular visit of two months to Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) could mobilize these resources for the benefit of the farmers under Hezamara Block. Mr. Gulap Singh Yadav (Agriculture Scientist) gave moong seeds and maize seeds to the Staff of FARM Project in order to distribute them to the farmers in the villages under Hezamara Block.

Street Play, Peace Project

ASHA in collaboration with JUST had organized three street plays in Manu, Birchandra Manu and Mohanpur on 10th, 11th and 26th January 2014. The themes were Peaceful and happy living, health awareness and love for the country. Awareness on the above mentioned themes were promoted through a skit, drama and a song in the local dialect 'Kokborok'. Around 860 participants had witnessed the awareness programs. At the end of the program 25 women in Birchandra Manu had testified that they were deeply touched by the program as it carried a very significant message to the family for happy and healthy living. They said that they were empowered to convince their sons and husbands to quit drug addiction. Mr. Subrata Majumdar, SDM of Mohanpur Sub Division appreciated the Team for their meaningful performance and beautiful message "LOVE FOR THE COUNTRY" on the eve of 65th Republic day at Mohanpur. *Vincent Deburma*



Our Readers Write

Enjoyed reading your reflections in the latest LINK about apps. If you were starting your studies today at CUA you would probably be assigned to a "Smart Classroom" where my lectures would all be on

Power Point. Class discussions done via a *chat room* and you would have an *app* for pastoral supervision. Our face to face contact would have been reduced to a minimum and our friendship possibilities greatly reduced. I am so glad we met in 1988 and not 2014! *Gravenstine, USA*

Thanks for LINK... always so wonderful! *Conrad, CSC, Canada*

I received your kind email in which you attached the LINK. Thank you very much.

+*Andrew, Meghalaya*

I rejoice that in your ministry and brokenness, you bring such life to the people of Agartala. *Tony, USA*

Thank you very much for the copy of the Link. It is really nice, gave me a lot of information about the Diocese. *Noronha, CSC, Canada*

News from the CBCI

31st Plenary Assembly

The 31st Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) opened at Palai, Kerala, on February 4, with a concelebrated Eucharist presided over by Archbishop Salvatore Pennachio, Apostolic Nuncio to India, and concelebrated by CBCI President Cardinal Oswald Gracias, and 187 bishops and secretaries of CBCI Offices and Directors of National Centres. With 187 bishops in attendance, Cardinal Oswald Gracias called the Palai Plenary the biggest so far in the history of the CBCI. India, which is the fourth largest bishops' conference in the world has 167 dioceses.

A civic reception, a pilgrimage to St. Alphonsa's tomb, a visit to the historical churches and a dinner with the poor of Palai were other highlights of the Assembly.

New Office Bearers were also elected: Cardinal Cleemis of Thiruvananthapuram is the President of CBCI, Archbishop Andrews Thazath of Trissur is Vice President I, Archbishop Filipe Neri Ferrao of Goa is Vice President II, and Archbishop Albert D'Souza of Agra continues as Secretary General.

The Assembly also put out a Message to all the people of India focusing on several key areas.



CBCI requests Government of India to invite Pope



The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, in a letter addressed to Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of

India, requested the Government of India to invite Pope Francis to visit India at an appropriate time, suitable to all concerned. Fr. Joseph Chinnayyan, Deputy Secretary General & Spokesperson of CBCI, and Shri Oscar Fernandes, Union Minister for Surface Transport and Highways, met the Prime Minister at his Office on February 21 and handed over the formal letter of request from the President of CBCI. The Prime Minister told the delegation that his Government will do whatever needed to invite the Pope to visit India. Dr. Singh also said that Pope Francis is an outstanding personality of our times and India will be honoured by the visit of such a great person. (CBCI News via CNUA)

Pope Francis greets oldest Nun

Camillian Sister Candida Bellotti celebrated her 107th birthday on February 20, making her the

oldest nun in the world. It was a very special birthday, as she celebrated with Pope Francis. Immediately after the morning Mass which the Pope celebrates at his residence Santa Martha, he greeted the



Italian religious. "I couldn't have a greater joy than that of celebrating my birthday with Pope Francis," said Sister Candida. She who belongs to the

Congregation of the Ministers of the Sick of Saint Camillus, added: "In my 80 years as a religious I have never regretted having chosen this vocation." "Only one who feels the happiness of being close to the Lord can understand how abundant his love is for us and how much peace he gives our heart," she added. Sister Candida was born in northern Italy, in the city of Quinzano in Verona, on February 20, 1907. Her name before entering the convent was Alma Bellotti. She was the third of 10 siblings. Her father was a shoemaker and her mother a homemaker. zenit.org

'The Church needs your courage,' Pope tells new cardinals

Pope Francis created 19 new cardinals in a moving ceremony that saw the participation of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. The ceremony was the culmination of an intense week which began with the third meeting of the Council of Cardinals and ended with the Consistory, where Cardinals from around the world spoke on the theme of the family.

During the 22nd February Consistory at which Pope Francis created 19 new



Cardinals, he urged the prelates gathered in St. Peter's Basilica to serve the Church fearlessly. "The Church

needs your courage, to proclaim the Gospel at all times, both in season and out of season, and to bear witness to the truth," emphasized the Pope. St. Peter's Basilica was filled with nearly 200 members of the College of Cardinals and those who had gathered to witness the event. Francis' predecessor Benedict XVI joined the other bishops, wearing his customary white garments rather than the red vestments of a cardinal. With the new cardinals, there are now 218 total living cardinals of whom 122 are under 80 years of age and thus eligible to vote in a conclave. Cardinal Sean O'Malley OFM Cap, Archbishop of Boston and member of the Council of Cardinals said, "The Holy Father has obviously chosen extraordinary individuals from different parts of the globe, many of them being the very first from their regions, which is a wonderful way of recognizing the universality of our church." zenit.org

BISHOPS PROGRAMME FOR MARCH 2014

- 01-02: Parish Pastoral Program, Khumulwng
- 03: CDC Meet, JDC Agartala
Clergy Meeting, JDC Agartala
Recollection & Adoration JDC Agartala
- 04: Meeting with IGSSS Executives
- 05: Ash Wednesday, St. Joseph Agartala
- 07-08: Women's Day Celebrations, JUST
- 09: Parish Mass, Mandwi
- 10-14: Cross Border Peace Initiative, Kathmandu
- 15-16: Parish Pastoral Program, Moharpara
- 19: St. Joseph Feast, Agartala
- 23: Parish Mass, Mariamnagar
- 24: Forum Directors Meet, Delhi
- 25-26: Pan Asia Farmers Meet, Delhi
- 27: Caritas India International Partners, Delhi
- 29-30: Parish Pastoral Program, Bishramganj

Visitors at Bishop's House

- Fr. Bill Lies, CSC, from Notre Dame, USA
- Sr. Leela Thomas, AC from Kolkata
- Fr. Oscar Pereira, SJ, from Amravati, MS
- Fr. Avirah from the Diocese of Ambikapur, CG
- Fr. Dominic, OSB, from Teok, Assam
- Sr. Taurina Vaz, FMM Provincial from Delhi
- Sr. Pushpa Jospeh, FMM Provincial from Bangalore
- Bro. Devasy, SG, Provincial Superior from Guwahati
- Bro. Michael, SG, Provincial Bursar from Guwahati
- Sr. Joshma, MC Regional from Shillong