



Pastor's Corner



The new normal is an American sitcom that aired on NBC from September 2012 to April 2013. But today post Covid-19 is being termed the "new normal". Every person is experiencing the "new normal" differently; but it is a "new normal" says Leo Babuta. And the question is, will we resist it, or can we use it as an opportunity? A litany of woes can be heard from almost everywhere: Will this ever end? Do I need to take precautions forever? Can I continue to stay afloat amidst this gloom?



The "new normal" will adjust, reshape, or reorder the world across multiple dimensions, also in the area of worship. It demands new skills, new perspectives and more flexibility; like this Filipino priest celebrating Mass on a pickup truck! But what will our "new normal" be like? Expert voices from different fields are telling us to prepare for a "new normal"; and even from a psychological point of view it makes perfect sense, says **Mr. Pulkit Sharma**. Of course, we need some time and space to mourn the loss of the normal that was; but if we remain transfixed there, the miasma of despair would confine our being, pushing us towards panic, depression, and suicide. "There is a fork in the road; we can either despise the "new normal", wallow in frustration and sadness, or we can adapt to it, making the necessary changes and adjustments it entails", says Pulkit Sharma. Mr. Nicholas Eberstadt offers insights which explore ways in which the Covid-19 pandemic might impact life hereafter. "It's obvious with even a little reflection that the experience of going through this Covid-19 pandemic would undoubtedly teach us many lessons. Many of us would have realized the importance of self-discipline, inspired by the numerous messages and tips on reconnecting with people, acquiring new skills, exercising, and the rest of it. We would have heard it all, *ad nauseum*. For many, the experience would have brought out the best in human behavior and thought from volunteerism and restraint to tolerance and acceptance. Most importantly it would have brought out a deep sense of gratitude for being alive and healthy. The immense realization, that we can actually get by with so little and those ostentations add no meaning to life, could be the biggest lesson of all."

The "New Normal"

The Indian Catholic Church must also ask what the "new normal" would be like. After having experienced Covid-19 it cannot return to its old ways. "No, it needs to come out of the pandemic, repentant and converted and with a new mind-set *novus habitus mentis*" says Fr. Felix Wilfred, SJ, and adds that it should have learnt some hard lessons. "The virus of injustice, unfortunately, cannot be driven out by banging pots and pans from the housetops. It requires the Church to come down to the dusty soil, to get sullied and dirty as Pope Francis would say for having been on the street, to stand in solidarity with the poor, the powerless, the migrants, the marginalized and the victims." In the present circumstances, we cannot simply sit back and wish that reality changes. We need to modify our responses and be prepared for the "new normal". There is no denying the fact that what we had always taken for granted is now under threat of erosion. Our foundations of normal life are being shaken and we are struggling to keep some sense of control over our existence.

+Lumen, CSC

Editorial



Faith and the Virus

The past few days have seen unprecedented surge in the number of covid-19 positive cases in some parts of our country. In our own State of Tripura too the number has crossed a thousand and each day keeps rising. With offices, markets and transport opening up partially, a semblance of normalcy has come to our little State and its townships, although each evening when the 'corona update' arrives we realize how deceptive and costly that seeming normalcy is. Much has changed in the world in these few months. This 'distancing' thing seems to have robbed the zest out of our social relationships. Compare the warm hearted bear hug and thump on the back that says it all to what we get now - the wry smile given through a mask and standing six feet away. How poor and impoverished a substitute, indeed! Even as we continue to hold the *begoon*, *bindi* and cauliflower by the tip of our fingers, and duck and sway out of each other's ways, we would do well to consider if our insides are intact. What has happened to my faith



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in these months of inertness? Three months have gone by since we gathered in the Church, received the Sacraments, took part in the Eucharist, attended catechism class or even chatted with fellow parishioners in the church courtyard. Has my faith become weaker or stronger, or simply remained the same? Despite permission being granted by the Government, most of our churches still remain closed to the faithful, either because they have found it hard to follow the stringent SOP laid down by the authorities or because on their own each parish has decided to wait for the situation to become 'more normal'. Assuming that life is not going to revert to former ways in a hurry, or in the pace we like it to, enterprises and establishments have put in place some 'let's keep going' mechanisms meant to inject vigor and hope to its members and to keep things from breaking up. In fact, we have seen a great deal of innovation and creativity in this time of pandemic. We in the Church have the SOP for these times, but SOPs, however stringently adhered to, won't help much the faith of the people or anyone else. That being so and given the fact that the virus is not going away in a hurry, proposing some faith-fostering steps that can be implemented by the faithful in the privacy of their homes might be a good idea. To begin with, we ought to intensify our prayers and ask God to protect us and rid the world of this pandemic. *J. Pulinthanath, SDB*

by planting 25,000 saplings across the Diocese. Fr. Shaji, CSC, informed that the Jubilee year was inaugurated on 26th May 2020 on the 24th Anniversary of the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Lumen at Bishop's House with the Holy Eucharist and blessing the Jubilee Candle. Later a Fruit Tree was planted by Bishop Lumen in the Bishop's House courtyard to mark the proximate preparation of the Jubilee. *Fr. P. Amalraj*

Don Bosco Parish Nandannagar New Pastor Installed

Most Rev. Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, installed Rev. Fr. Christopher Warlarpih, SDB, as new Parish Priest of Don Bosco, Nandannagar, Agartala, on the 20th June, 2020, during the Parish Mass at 06:30am in the presence of a small community of Religious and Lay faithful, observing the protocol of Unlock 1.0. Fr. Joseph Pulinthanath, SDB, welcomed Bishop Lumen and introduced Fr. Warlarpih to the small group of Religious Sisters and Parish Council Members who were present to welcome their new Parish Priest. After the homily the Appointment Letter by the Bishop was read and then our Lordship conducted the Installation ceremony. At the end of the Holy Eucharist the new Parish Priest was felicitated with flowers and words of welcome and support. Fr. Warlarpih thanked his Provincial Superior for his trust in him and to Bishop Lumen for installing him as Parish Priest, in spite of the difficulty to gather in this time of pandemic. *Mr. Rajulal Deb Burma*



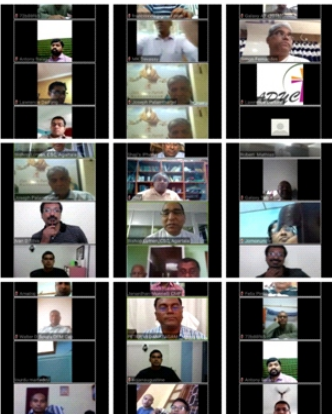
Bishop Lumen Visits Parishes & Centers in N. Tripura during difficult times

The Shepherd at Kanchanpur
On 20th of May 2020 Most Rev. Bishop Lumen Monteiro paid a short visit to our community. It was indeed a great pleasure to welcome this 'surprise visitor' as he called himself, wherein we could strengthen the bonds of friendship and love with him. He thanked us for all the good works that are done to those who are affected especially in this time of painful disease in our mission here in Kanchanpur. We shared about our Outreach program and the on-line Quiz Competition. He shared with us about the sad demise of Dr. Simon Hercules and the painful experience of his family and friends to give him a decent burial. We had also a short discussion on our life in the post- Covid-19 times. Later in the evening he proceeded to our mission Gachirampara for a visit there. We also learnt about his visit to other mission stations covering the whole of North Tripura and know how happy the Fathers, Brothers and Sisters were with his visit. We are indeed grateful for the Bishop's surprise visit to our little community and keep the doors of our



Virtual Clergy Meeting via Zoom

Digital technologies are constantly improving and providing easier ways of meeting and communication. The Diocese of Agartala reading the need of the hour chooses to make use of the technology that is easily available in order to keep in touch with the whole group of stakeholders (the Clergy). On 2nd June we had virtual Clergy Meeting. As usual, with the keen eye of our Bishop for details the Meeting was well planned and executed. There was a lot of excitement from our Priests, some of whom were not very familiar with techniques of a virtual meeting; but our Bishop had made sure that the ever willing Secretary would help out. The Meeting was essential from the



pastoral point of view and many practical questions were discussed and clarified. Fr. Bosco Lathees mentioned that World Environment Day was on 5th June but in our Diocese **Green Sunday** with the theme **"Time for Nature"** will be observed on 28th June

heart and mission open for further visits in future, and wish our dear Bishop good health and cheer.

Fr. Kiran Monis, OFM Cap.

Congregational Feast Day at Karbook

Missionary Sisters Queen of the Apostles (SRA) at Karbook celebrated their Congregation Feast of Mary Queen of the Apostles on 30th May 2020 with the Holy Eucharist which was presided by Most Rev. Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC. The concelebrants

were Frs. Allwin, Bhuban, Lawrence and Balan. It was wonderful to have our beloved Bishop for the Feast, especially in this time of lockdown, risking his safety to be with us. In his homily Bishop Lumen emphasized Mary's role with the Apostles in the Upper Room (Act 1: 13) praying for Holy Spirit. Bishop Lumen offered prayers for entire Congregation, especially for the Superior General Sr. Nanditha Pereira and Province Animator Sr. Berchmans. Bishop Lumen took time to appreciate our service in the Diocese and entrusted all to the maternal care of Mother Mary. Thereafter we had a festive meal. The presence of Bethany Sisters from Depacherra added joy to our celebration. Sister thanked each one for their presence and for praying for the congregational Feast. *Sr. Vanita, SRA*

Congregational Feast Day at Belonia

Pentecost is the Titular feast for The Missionary Sisters, Servants of the Holy Spirit, commonly known as Holy Spirit Sisters. Our beloved Founder St. Arnold Janssen had a special veneration to the third person of the Blessed Trinity, namely, the Holy

Spirit. Therefore he started a Sisters' Congregation in the name of the Holy Spirit. During this Lockdown, the Holy Spirit Sisters in Belonia were indeed blessed by the presence of His Lordship Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro CSC, who showed keen interest and was with us to celebrate the Feast Day Holy Mass along with Fr. Sojan CSC, the Parish Priest, and Fr. Renju CSC, the Principal of Holy Cross School Tuikarmaw. We also invited Ursuline Franciscan Sisters from Lokicherra and Sisters of the Adoration of Blessed Sacrament from Twikarmaw. The Chapel was beautifully decorated reminding us of the seven gifts and twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit. After the Holy Mass the celebration continued with the guest Sisters wishing us with



their melodious song. The Holy Spirit Sisters also wished our dear Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC on his 24th Episcopal Ordination anniversary. The delicious food items added color to the feast as we enjoyed the day. *Sr. Sabina Daniel SSPs*

Ferrando Rehabilitation Centre Nandannagar Leaving no one behind during the pandemic

Even in the absence of a global threat, children living with disabilities and Domestic workers are among the most vulnerable, marginalized and stigmatized populations. The current COVID-19 pandemic has



disrupted life in every corner of the world and has disproportionately affected those children living with disabilities and Domestic workers in a very significant way. Due to lockdown and the fear of the spread of the

Virus the Domestic workers lost their daily income that they needed to survive. Responding to the urgent and unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, Ferrando Rehabilitation Centre Nandannagar, in collaboration with the Centre for Developmental Initiatives Guwahati, the social work wing of MSMHC, Jan Vikas Samiti Varanasi, and National Children's Parliament Delhi, reached out to 200 Children with disabilities, 700 Domestic Workers and their families in various localities of Agartala, and in various Districts of Tripura, by distributing food kits. (5kgs rice, 5kgs wheat flour, 2kgs potato, 1kg onion, 1.5kg Chana dal, ½ litter of cooking oil, 1kg salt, 2 bathing soaps, 2 packets of biscuits, 5 pieces of washable masks, and Leaflets on Covid-19 awareness). *Sisters at FRC*

The first Jesuit House is Blessed at Jampuijala

The first Jesuit residence of the Tripura Jesuit Mission was solemnly blessed and inaugurated by Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC on 23, June 2020. This simple but comfortable house is built in the campus of St. Mary's School, Christ Hill, Jampuijala. After a brief Welcome programme by Fr. Babu Paul, Bishop Lumen officiated the blessing ceremony of the Jesuit House, the Chapel and the quarters of the Rev. Sisters. The festive Holy Mass that followed was attended by



the Vincentian Sisters of Baijalbari, whose dynamic presence also added to the solemnity and festivity of the day. Earlier, two Vincentian Sisters had already joined our mission at Jampuijala. The celebrations of the day were concluded with a delicious and cordial open air Agape prepared by the Rev. Sisters.

Fr. Syriac Panjikaran, SJ

JUST News Briefs

JUST Distributes Dry Rations

With the assistance of SMILE Foundation, Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura (JUST), distributed Dry Rations on 15th and 16th May 2020 to the people



affected by Covid-19 lockdown. Altogether 125 families from Damdamia, Adharani Tea Garden and Nepali Basti under West Tripura District, received the dry rations such as Rice, Potatoes, Dal, Onion, Dalia, Mustard Oil, Soap, Masks, Sugar, Peas, Atta,

Salt and Spices. Most of the beneficiaries were daily laborers, tea garden workers, rickshaw pullers and construction workers. During the distribution program the Director of JUST Fr. Lathees and the former Director Fr. Jeevan Kennedy were present. Addressing the beneficiaries Fr. Jeevan said that "It is very difficult time now due to Covid-19 pandemic. All of you have to be more alert and abide by all kinds of precautionary measures imposed by the administration to break the infection chain of Coronavirus. Maintaining physical distance and wearing mask are essential when you go outside for any kind of family work. He also advised them to stay clean by washing hands and feet frequently everyday". The beneficiaries expressed their gratitude to JUST and Smile Foundation for their philanthropic work.

JUST Celebrates World Environment Day

On 5th June 2020, World Environment Day was organized by JUST with the theme "Time for Nature" at Khumtiya Bengali School Uruwabari under Hezamara R.D. Block West Tripura and Dolajoy Basti under Padmabil R.D. Block Khowai Tripura. The program began by sharing the purpose and the theme of the day by the Director of JUST Fr. Lathees. He also announced that Farmers will be taking part in the "Green Sunday" event which will be conducted on 28th June 2020 in the



whole Diocese in all the Parishes. Then, the Coordinator made an announcement for making community and individual forest in the waste land through plantations. The Coordinator further announced that every month one day will be dedicated for plantation in the target Project areas throughout the year. After sharing the Plans the plantation was done in the School compound. 90 Saplings were planted in two areas.

Mr. Cyril Darlong

A Grim Reminder of Forty Years Ago: Tripura Violence



Despite the declaration of two-thirds of the State as a disturbed area, induction of the Army and the imposition of curfew, the State suffered mass killing, looting, arson and assault. The magnitude of the frenzy can be gauged from the fact

that the riots among tribals and non-tribals claimed 308 human lives and resulted in injuries to 268 others during the last 24 hours. (Excerpts from Indian Express Kolkata, June 11, 1980)

Our Readers Write

Thanks Bishopjee for linking the old, rusted, distant corner in Chittagong, Bangladesh, to the fresh "June 2020 LINK" of Agartalachain! **Cyprian SVD, Chittagong**

Thank you very much for the inspiring LINK for June. We appreciate the reach-out made by you and the Diocese in this time of the pandemic. God bless the mission of Tripura.

FMA Provincial Secretary, Shillong

Thank you for the LINK. You have truly inspired us. In fact COVID-19 is an opportunity. **Fr. Sunny Joseph, GSS Dimapur**

Thank you Bishop. Corona or no Corona, offline or online, lockdown or unlock - LINK is always punctual and regular... dot on the 1st of

First speech and hearing impaired professed Vows in Holy Cross Congregation

Kochi: For the first time in India, a speech and hearing impaired youth is going to be a priest. The primary vows took place in Yercaud, TN, in the last week of May. Joseph Thermadoma native of Thrissur joined Holy Cross Congregation (CSC) by professing first vows. Although he had this dream when he was a student, he was apprehensive if this would ever become a reality. He was inspired by a blind man who became a priest. His brother Stalin Thermadom, a Bank official, is also hearing and speech impaired. They studied in Mumbai; later Joseph went to USA as part of his studies. Holy Cross Congregation has special ministries for speech and hearing impaired. Joseph Thermadom approached Fr. Biju Moolakkara, CSC, who was in charge of the ministry. Fr. Biju told the media that Joseph studied here for one year and then another year in Pune. After this he completed his Novitiate period in Tamil Nadu. (**mathrubhumi**)

Indian Catholics welcome reopening of Churches

Church leaders and faithful are rejoicing at the Indian Government's plan to open religious places across the country from June 8 but say the Guidelines for the distribution of *Prasad* (Holy Communion) should be clearer. The Federal Government on June 4 released guidelines to manage the spread of Coronavirus in religious places, the hospitality sector, restaurants and offices that are set to reopen. "Indeed, it is a matter of joy because many faithful as well as churches had requested the Central and State Government to open religious places, and now finally Churches will open from Monday (8th) but with strict Guidelines," Father Anthoniraj Thumma, Executive Secretary of the Federation of Telugu Churches, told **UCA News**

Bishop from Botswana writes a farewell letter to friend George Floyd

[George Floyd, who was unarmed, died May 25 after being pinned to the ground by a Minneapolis police officer during an arrest.]

Bishop Frank Nubuasah of Gaborone, Botswana, said he met Floyd in the early 1990s at a baseball game in Three Rivers Stadium in Pittsburgh, when Floyd was on a trip there. The Ghana-born Bishop said Floyd was "barely 20" when they met, before the Divine Word priest was appointed a Bishop in Botswana. In his letter which addresses Floyd directly, the Bishop recalled: "You came wearing blue jeans, T-shirt, a cap on, holding a huge paper cup filled with Coke in one hand and a bag of popcorn in the other. ... We got to chatting and become friends." Bishop Nubuasah said he cherished Floyd's "very infectious smile." "It was as if the coronavirus learned from you how to infect people," the Bishop joked. "Your heart was very big and accommodated people. It was always OK with you to reach out to one more person. Yes, you would run a mile for anyone." Noting that his letter would be "my last communication with you in this 'land of the living' that rejected your right to live," Bishop Nubuasah asked: "How can I forget you, George?" "My heart is heavy as I sit in my prayer corner to write you this missive, knowing well that others will read it but you will not. We humans, through a representative of ours, made sure that your eyes were closed and would not open again," the Bishop wrote. But, he added, "your eyes will remain forever, seeing the fire you started at death." The Bishop told Floyd in his letter, "you just have one more task to perform. It is to prepare to welcome the notorious four who killed you into heaven when their time does come and show 'em round the jolly place we call heaven." "I will miss you George. You can now breathe eternally the breath of love. Rest in Peace," he concluded.

every month. I know it is because you are behind it. With appreciation.

Sr. Celine FMA, Agartala

Thanks for all the news of the Diocese... most interesting. I can see on the Globe that the Diocese of Agartala is in the forefront to fight Covid-19. Here we are a bunch of old people busy protecting ourselves...

Conrad, CSC, Montreal

Thank you once again for the LINK and Congratulations. Special greetings as you have entered the "Silver Years". May the Lord who began his work in and through you bring it to fulfillment. **Fr. Thomas Manjaly, Shillong**

Thank you Bishop for the LINK, which happens to be the first mail that I receive on the first day of every month. I love reading it as it is concise, interesting and motivating as well. **Sr. Marina BS, Siliguri**