



**Twenty Years - a time to be Grateful**

The Diocese of Agartala completes twenty years of its existence on 26th of May. In 1996 the day was Pentecost Sunday. Quite like the Apostles who were strengthened by the Holy Spirit and went forth, I began my life as Bishop ill-equipped, with fear and trembling I should say! But something made me strong within--the Holy Spirit and the holy Eucharist, which brought some steadiness into my life!



**Ron Rolheiser tells about** the Trappist monks who were martyred in Algeria in 1996. They were first visited by the Islamic extremists who would later kidnap and kill them, on Christmas Eve, just as they were preparing to celebrate Christmas Mass. After some initial threats, their eventual murderers left. The monks were badly shaken. They huddled together as a group for a time to

digest what had just happened. Then, not knowing what else to do in the face of this threat and their fear, they sang the Christmas Mass. In the words of their Abbott: "It's what we had to do. It's all we could do! It was the right thing." He shared too, as did a number of the other monks (in their diaries) that they found this, celebrating the ritual of Mass in the face of their fear and panic, something that calmed their fear and brought some steadiness and regularity back into their lives. The Mass can bring steadiness and calm into our lives at those times when we desperately need to do something, but there's nothing to do! I have many reasons to thank God, the first being a spirit of determination,

that nothing is impossible with God on my side! I am blessed with an enthusiastic team of priests and religious and a laity who are very supportive. I have received a lot of help from benefactors both India and abroad, and the infrastructural development is a proof of the same. We have been safe despite so much danger on our doorsteps and health hazards looming large in the State. And the Lord was there at every step of the journey. How can I forget the goodness of the Lord and NOT BE GRATEFUL? **+Lumen, CSC**



**Pastor's Corner**

**CONGRATS** **20th Anniversary**

On behalf of the Clergy, Religious and Laity of the Diocese of Agartala, LINK expresses most cordial congratulations to His Lordship Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro, CSC on his 20th Episcopal Ordination Anniversary and offers best wishes and prayers.

**Looking Back 20 Years**



**Editorial**

The beautiful month of May, this year, brings with it a special reason for us to feel thankful. It was exactly 20 years ago, on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of this month that Fr. Lumen Monteiro of the Holy Cross Order became Bishop Lumen Monteiro, DD, and took charge of the newly erected Diocese of Agartala. Twenty years away from that sweltering day of grace and cheer, we stand as a Diocese today - the people of God, the religious, and the clergy with Bishop Lumen still at the helm, to thank God for the heartwarming story that has unfolded here in Tripura for the last two decades. Mammoth changes have taken place in Tripura in the last 20 years. It went through a phase of widespread communal tension fuelled by armed militancy. There has been phenomenal growth in number and quality of institutions and infrastructure in all fields; systems of communications have improved, streets have broadened, Districts have doubled, four-lane roads, broad gauge

train tracks, international bus service, frequent flights and a host of other things. The Church scenario in the State too has undergone a great deal of change during the 20 years the Diocese has been in existence. Its progress and growth has been tangible. The nine parishes of 1996 have now become 20. The numbers of church personnel, congregations and institutions have considerably grown. Countless number of people have benefitted in various ways from the works carried out by the Church in the field of education, social work, and health service to mention a few. The Church has become a recognized partner in development of the peoples of the State. Types of ministries have multiplied, frequency of programs has increased, and faith - of the people and our own, we hope, have deepened.



Bishop Lumen has been through it all the agonies and ecstasies of pioneering a Diocese in, at times rather challenging circumstances. He would perhaps agree, like life itself, it has been a medley, mostly of wonderful things, but also of not so wonderful things. Surely, the good times have become good memories and the bad times have become good lessons. Link joins the entire Diocese in thanking the Lord for its Pastor. We congratulate Bishop Lumen and pray that God grant him many more years in the service of the Great Shepherd and His people.

**J. Pulinthanath, SDB**

**Kokborok Course (for priests and religious) begins at 10.00 AM on 27th May 2016. Venue: Peace Centre, Agartala Contact:9436126649**

## Becoming a Church of Mercy

As the Church and the world strives to grasp the true meaning of the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, our Diocese is continuing to experience a deeper relationship with the Merciful Father in order to become more like Him. A variety of programmes have been conducted in many parishes with this theme; many more are on the calendar for the year. There is definitely a greater awareness of the significance of the precious time given to us. The

Sacrament of Confession has been more widely used. God's abundant blessings are coming to the faithful and the parishes during this time of Grace.

Don Bosco Church Nandannagar has been the Centre of quite a bit of activity during the past one month. Besides the many activities in the Parish several groups from the Diocese are coming for a day of pilgrimage. On Divine Mercy Sunday, 75 Youth of Depachera Parish made a great effort to be close to the Lord. The Maria Bodol, the Women's organization of the Diocese, under the leadership of Sr. Punitha, SJA, made their programme memorable by coming in prayerful procession from JUST to Nandannagar and having Confessions and Mass early in the morning on 13<sup>th</sup> April. On 13<sup>th</sup> afternoon children from Kathalchera Parish made a visit to the Shrine. Again on 14<sup>th</sup> April the members of the CRI Unit with Fr. Joe Mannath SDB, the National Secretary, visited to the Shrine. About 40 people from Tuikarmaw under the leadership of Fr. Alfred CSC made a very prayerful pilgrimage on 19<sup>th</sup> April. On 21<sup>st</sup> April, a group 42 women under the banner of the Maria Songho had a wonderful experience of the Mercy of God. Fr. Joachim celebrated the Mass. *Fr. Sunny, SDB*



## KUMARGHAT PARISH

### St. Francis Chapel at Attharamuri Blessed

A new *mondoli* was added to St. Paul's Parish Kumarghat on Easter Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2016. It was a joyful time to have Fr. K.J Abraham,



CSC, the Provincial Superior of Holy Cross North East Province, to inaugurate the Chapel and give the Sacraments of Initiation to the catechumens. Their new village is dedicated St. Francis. It was really very inspiring to witness the enthusiasm of the Villagers. They put up a Chapel by their own efforts and the support of the nearby village Sonaimuri and Maria Sango, Parish Council Members, the Evangelization Team, Fathers, Sisters, and Catechists all initiated and encouraged the people of this village to receive the good news. *Bro. Lawrence, CSC*

## AMBASSA PARISH

### Jesus come into my heart



Ambassa: April 2, 2016: Many school children witnessed 65 of their companions receiving the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Vested in white garments and crowned with white flowers eligible boys and girls from St. Arnold's School, Ambassa, received Jesus for the first time in the form of Holy Communion. They entered the Church along with the Local Ordinary, Bishop Lumen Monteiro, with an entrance procession hymn and dance. They were received to the Altar with a traditional Tripuri dance and an introduction. The well disciplined sixty five of them from different villages and parishes of Tripura we

very happy to receive Jesus. Bishop Lumen Monteiro gave a good discourse to the first communicants and the rest of the school children. He spoke on the importance of Holy Mass and the Holy Communion. It was also a birthday of Fr. Jaibu Mathew, SVD, the Principal of the School, and this called for a special variety entertainment after Holy Mass.

*News Desk, Ambassa*

## KHUMULWNG PARISH

### "Renew all things in Christ"

St. Alphonsa Parish Khumulwng, organized two days of Youth Convention on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of



April. There were 66 participants from different villages. The theme of the Convention was "Renew All Things in Christ". The program began with the Ice-breaking Session followed by welcome speech by the Youth Director of the Parish, Fr. Roshan Kujur SVD. The Parish Priest Fr. Arun Minj, SVD, introduced the speakers and declared the 'Parish Youth Convention open. There were four eminent speakers: Fr. Remol Marak SDB (DYD), Fr. Lawrence Darlong, Fr. Arun Minj SVD, and Mr. Tarun Kanti Debbarma. All the Speakers dealt with the current and relevant topics like, importance of Prayer and Devotion in the life of the Youth; Marriage and Relationship; Abortion; Bible and the Youth; Confession; Impact of Mass Media and Communication. The cooperation and commitment of the former Youth President and the Team of Belbari has encouraged the Convention. Thanks to Dn. Stany Pereira SVD, Bro. Praveen, Minor Seminarians and the Staff for the great support and hard work throughout the Convention. We firmly believe that the "youth have renewed all things in Christ" to excel in life through the Convention. *Dn. Stany Pereira, SVD*

## MANDWI PARISH

### Sinaikami Village Chapel inaugurated

A village Chapel at Sinaikami was inaugurated on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2016, that is, Easter Sunday, by Most Rev. Lumen





Monteiro CSC. Majority of the people in this area belong to the Rupini Tribe.

Many Rupini people from neighboring villages both Catholics and non-Catholics were also present. Inaugural function was followed by grand Holy Eucharist which was followed by a short felicitation programme and fellowship meal.

Fr. Remol, SDB

### MOHARPARA PARISH

#### Taidu mandoli celebrates Golden Jubilee of Catholic faith

Fr. Roger Marcel, CSC, then Parish Priest of Mariamnagar Parish, contacted five Kaipeng families of Taidu area in October 1965 with the help of catechist Lucas master.



The seed that was planted there has grown slowly but steadily having about 19 mandolis today, though four of them have become a part of the newly erected Parish of Amarpur. Though Taidu itself is a small community, their enthusiasm to celebrate their Catholic faith was noteworthy. They celebrated it on 3<sup>rd</sup> April in all simplicity in the presence of Bishop Lumen and a good representation

from all the neighbouring mandolis. A stone was unveiled by Bishop Lumen and the local MLA Sri. Daniel Jamatia, to thank God and the missionaries for the gift of the Catholic faith they had received fifty years ago. After the holy Eucharist, a small cultural programme was arranged in which gifts were exchanged and congratulations and felicitations galore! With a fellowship meal the golden Jubilee was concluded. It may be mentioned that students from this locality used to come to Mariamnagar for studies long ago. Now they are going to Moharpara, Ambassa and Champaknagar. God willing, within a year they may be able attend the school in their vicinity in a place called Twichakma and it may be fitting to name it as Jubilee Memorial School.

Fr. Hormis John, CSC

### GOOD SHEPHERD PARISH, KATHALCHERRA

**House Blessing:** The season of Easter is a time of blessing. Good Shepherd Parish began its Easter and annual house blessing at the beginning of April. The message of peace and love of the Risen Lord was brought to every family in and through the house blessings.

**Women's Day:** While the debate and fight for entry to temple and equality for women goes on at the national and international level the Women of the Good Shepherd Parish Kathalcherra on 10<sup>th</sup> celebrated the Women's Day at



Koratichera village. Resource Persons Fr. CV Jose CSC, Sr. Suman BS

and Mr. Zonuna Darlong enlightened the women on the theme "Women: Their Role in the Society and Church".

**Peace Rally:** On 15<sup>th</sup> April the Holy Cross Higher Secondary School organized a peace rally to Nepalitilla. Many students walking in procession conveyed and brought awareness of peace to people and to environment around.

**Parish Feast:** 17<sup>th</sup> of April, Good Shepherd Sunday, was the Parish Feast of Good Shepherd Parish, Kathalcherra.



On the occasion of this joyful feast 82 children solemnly

received their first Holy Communion and 123 faithful received the Sacrament of Confirmation during the Feast Day Eucharistic Celebration presided by Bishop Lumen. Big thanks to our dear Bethany Sisters, Catechists, Teachers and all those who were involved in preparing the children and making the event memorable.

Fr. Ishwar CSC

### Diocese News Roundup

#### Women's Annual gathering and Women's Day celebration

From 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> April 2016 Women's Day was celebrated in our Diocese. Around 208 women from all Parishes were present. The program was inaugurated on 12<sup>th</sup> evening by

our Bishop Lumen Monteiro. Bishop in his inaugural speech encouraged the Women to be aware of the responsibility of procreation as well as the adverse effect of abortion and how they could help in reducing this menace. He encouraged Women to use their capacity constructively.

On 13<sup>th</sup> morning at 5.30am we went on pilgrimage to the Door of Mercy at Don Bosco Parish. Then



we had the Holy Mass. It was an enriching experience. The Women were glad to profess their faith as they marched towards the Door of Mercy. Tripura State Women Commission Chair Person Mrs. Monika Datta Roy was the Chief Guest of our

Function. Miss Teresa, Army Major, and Miss Olivia, the DSP were Guests of Honor. They addressed the Women about the present status of Women and Women's security. Prof. Chandrika Basu Majumdar was the Resource Person who spoke on Women Empowerment. We had Dance Competitions and the winners were awarded. Sr. Punitha, SJA, Secretary of Women's Commission in the Diocese



**Inaugural Program of Handloom Project**

Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura (JUST) in collaboration with SAET, Guwahati, organized the inaugural program of P M K V Y - R P L Workshop on Textile and Handloom which

is funded by Textile and Handloom Sector Skill Council, New Delhi, on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2016 at JUST, Agartala. 206 SHG Women from four Districts of West, Khowai, South and Gomati participated. Shri. S. Prabhu, IFS, Director of Skill Development, Govt. of Tripura was the chief Guest. Shri. Asim Krishna Das, Advisor Scholars Academy Educational Trustee (SAET), Mrs. Jhumur Lodh, Managing Trustee (SAET) from Guwahati were present at the inaugural program. They spoke on Skill Development which the Central Government of India is providing to various States of NE



Region. The benefits of being skilled and obtaining Certificates will enable the women in doubling their income. Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC, Chairman of JUST and Fr. Jeevan SVD, Director of JUST motivated the SHG Women through their speeches and told them to make use of the Workshop so that they would get Certificates which will benefit them in the coming days to earn their livelihood. The Inaugural Program ended with the introductory class by trainer Mr. Omraj on the four trades.

**International Women's Day Celebration**

Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura (JUST) celebrated International Women's Day on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016 at JUST Hall, Durjoynagar, Agartala. SHG Women from four Districts of West, Khowai, South and Gomati participated. 175 Women participated in the celebration. Shri. V.G Jenner, Director

of Industry and Commerce, mission Director TBM and Ex Officio Addl. Secretary Govt. of Tripura was the Chief Guest. He spoke on 50-50 by 2030 through Women Empowerment. Miss Monica Debbarma, Junior Scientist from Pollution



Department, Fr. Arul CSC and Fr. Cyprian Pinto SVD were the Resource Persons. They spoke on the theme "Pledge for Parity" and the importance of education to bring equality. There was a short cultural program conducted by JUST in which most of the SHG Women took part by performing cultural dance and songs. The celebration ended with a festive meal. Fr. Jeevan, Director of JUST thanked all the Women, Staff and Guests for making the celebration successful. **Mr. Vincent Debbarma**

**National & International News Roundup**

**"I gave priority to children of God" says Pope Francis**

When an aide suggested that Pope Francis offer to fly some Syrian refugees back to Rome with him, the Pope said he agreed immediately because it was "an inspiration of the Holy Spirit." In the end, he said, 12 Syrians -- members of three families, including six children -- had all the necessary papers from the Greek and Italian governments in time to fly with the Pope on April 16. The fact that the 12 are all Muslims did not enter into the equation, the Pope said. "I



gave priority to children of God." Two Christian families originally had been on the Vatican's list, too, he said, but their papers were not ready in time. **(CNS via CNUA)**

**Pope's condolence message to victims of deadly fire in Kerala**

**Pope Francis has sent a message expressing condolences and promising prayers for the victims of a deadly fire at a Hindu temple in the Indian state of Kerala, as well as for the victims' families. Sent via telegram through the Secretary of State of the Holy See, the Pope's message also asks God to bless the whole nation of India. His Holiness Pope Francis was saddened to learn of the tragic fire at the Puttingal temple complex in Paravur, and he sends condolences to the relatives of the deceased and injured. Praying for all affected by this tragedy, and for the relief efforts underway, Pope Francis invokes upon the nation the divine blessings of strength and peace. +Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State**

**Pope creates new Diocese of Rayagada in Odisha**

**Pope Francis** has erected the Diocese of Rayagada, India, with territory taken from the Diocese of Berhampur, making it a suffragan of

the metropolitan See of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar. The Holy Father has appointed Fr. Aplinar Senapati, C.M., as Bishop of the new Diocese. The Bishop-elect was born in Surada, in 1960, gave his religious vows in 1989, and was ordained a priest in 1990. He holds Master's Degree in Economics and Philosophy, and has served in a number of roles including parish vicar, teacher, parish priest, and master of novices. He is currently pastor of the St. Vincent De Paul parish and president of the English Medium School in Derapathar, Guwahati. **(CNS via CNUA)**

**Pope Francis appoints Bishop of Dindigul**

The Holy Father has appointed Fr. Thomas Paulsamy as Bishop of Dindigul, India. The Bishop-elect was born in Poolampatty, in 1951, and was ordained a priest in 1977. He has served in a number of pastoral roles, including parish assistant, parish priest in a several parishes, and Vicar General of the Diocese of Tiruchirappalli. He is currently parish priest of St. Anthony's Church, Kallukuzhy. **(CNS via CNUA)**

**Tripura girl wins gold at Rio event**

Dipa Karmakar, a young woman from Tripura, on April 18 created history by bagging the gold in vaults finals at the test event of the Rio Games. The victory came hours after she became the first Indian gymnast to qualify for the Olympics. Dipa won the gold in the first attempt after scoring 14.566 in her second and last try in the women's vaults finals. Dipa scored a total of 52.698 points in the Olympics qualifier event to get a place as an artistic gymnast in the Rio Olympics in August.



**Bishop's Program for May 2016**

- 30-01: Pastoral Visit, Gandacherra Parish
- 03: Clergy Meet, Agartala
- 05: Carmel Convent Blessing and Silver Jubilee, Gokulnagar
- 06: Meet AC Provincial
- 07-08: Pastoral Program, Amarpur Parish
- 13: St. Mary Mazzarello, Auxilium Nandanagar
- 14: ADPC Meet, Agartala
- 15: Parish Feast, Ambassa
- 17: Catechists Meet, Champaknagar
- 21-22: Pastoral Program, Baijalbari Parish
- 26: SDB Pre-Novitiate Blessing, Herma
- 29-30: Pastoral Program, Bodhjungnagar Parish
- 31: Feast of the Visitation
- 31: PSC Meet, Delhi

**Our Distinguished Visitors**

- Fr. Anto Mullanal, SAC (Palotine) from Nagpur
- OMI Fathers Joseph Thambi and Nicholas Santiago from Guwahati
- Frs. Alwin, Paulraj, Shekar, Patrick Paul, and George from Chennai
- Fr. Peter Akkanath, CMI, from USA and Bro. Devraj, MMB, from Utrakhand
- Mrs. Mary, Mr. Anto, and Mr. Varghese from Kerala