

Link

Silver Jubilee Edition





PASTOR'S CORNER

The Danger of Not Thinking

In 1952, Nobel Prize winner, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, was interviewed by a reporter who asked him, "Doctor, what's wrong with men today?" He paused for a moment and responded by saying, "Men simply don't think!" He may have said these words almost 70 years ago, but his answer is as



relevant as ever in today's world. We live in an age of constant stimulation, where most of us will do almost anything to distract ourselves so that we won't have to be alone with our thoughts, even if only for a few moments. But perhaps it may be a timeless truth that humans have always been lazy to think for themselves. As George Bernard Shaw, the famous playwright amusingly remarked, "Two percent of the people think; three percent of the people think they think, and ninety-five percent of the people would rather die than think." Our ability to think is what sets us apart from other species on the planet. But throughout our lives, all of us are told what to think by everyone else. From a young age, our minds are filled with limiting and fear-based conditioning of society. One of many bad habits we unconsciously picked up from our schools is to meekly conform and look towards authority figures to tell us what to do and think. Research indicates that humans flock like sheep and subconsciously follow a minority of individuals. It takes a minority of only five per cent to influence a crowd's direction, and the other 95 per cent follow without realizing it. The danger is that if we don't think for ourselves, by default, we end up blindly conforming even when it is not in our best interest to do so.

Expressions of Joy and Love continue to surprise me!

The Jubilee Year celebrations will end (finally, I hope) with the rescheduled grand finale on 4th December. It began a couple of years before Corona got in the way of large gatherings. That hiccup notwithstanding, I have been showered with expressions of joy and love from all the Parishes and Institutions and Communities in the Diocese. These have been moments of gratitude, remembrance, repentance, and thanksgiving. I continue to be overwhelmed and humbled by these generous expressions of gratitude for my shepherding ministry spanning twenty years.

In January 2021 LINK came up with this novel idea of carrying a column called 'Throwback Memories' which I am told, will end with the present issue. The column has had 25 persons from all over the world share their sentiments about me and their association with me. From the time this column was introduced, I have been in for a series of surprises. I had not the slightest idea of who was writing or what was being written until the LINK reached me. I thank Fr. Prasad whose brainchild this was and each of you writers for the accolades heaped on me. It has been such a pleasant surprise to meet people from my school days, formation days, ministry days, and up until these years in the episcopate. Each had stories to share and praises to heap on me. It has been a humbling experience for me and I thank each and every one of you. I do not want to be pretentious and say I did not enjoy reading about myself--your pieces were magic casements that afforded me a peek into how I came across to you. A rare gift indeed! I continue to be surprised, humbled and thankful for the 'memories'.

Merry Christmas

We have just entered the Advent Season and soon will be celebrating the joyous feast of Christmas. At Christmas God who comes to us bringing Joy, Hope and Peace. I take this occasion to wish you all a joy-filled, peace-filled and hope-filled Christmas Season.

+Lumen, CSC



EDITORIAL

Circumstances beyond our control have forced us to be content with celebrating a trimmed edition of the twin Silver Jubilees – that of the Diocese and that of its pastor, our dear Bishop Lumen. That notwithstanding, there is an unmistakable something in the air that makes us joyful and excited.

The Jubilee Finale

The occasion would, legitimately, evoke very special feelings in the Bishop, having not merely completed 25 years as Bishop or associated with the Diocese for that period of time, but having spent those years the way he was privileged to – see his Diocese take birth and right before his eyes assume sinews and marrows, substance and shape.

It is indecent to call twenty-five years of such intimacy, mere 'association'. In fact, it seems apt to compare his relationship with the Diocese to that of a mother with her child. The intimate link that began even before the birth of the Diocese and got only strengthened over the years with every step on the ladder of growth, which in Bishop Lumen's case was synonymous with struggle – one that he faced with indomitable courage and deep faith. Alongside the Episcopal Jubilee, we are also celebrating the Diocese on its completion of twenty-five years. Bishop Lumen has insisted time and again that the Jubilee of the Diocese celebrates every individual in it. Fortunately, even the term is amorphous enough to take on board every person within its contours.



What makes it so special is that it celebrates every individual – past and present, those known and

unknown; and every event – momentous and insignificant; every decision – however trifling and inconsequential. What a blessed coagulation into a moment of time of all that has gone by, of all that has gone into the making of our story as a Diocese!

It is an arrival of sorts, 'arriving where we started'; (*celebrations held in the very same grounds 25 years ago*). We come heavy-laden with blessings, wiser with knowledge and more resolute than ever.

We cannot forget that we have stepped into the blessed season of Advent. As Christmas approaches, we set about tidying up the mess and preparing Him a room good enough.

J. Pulinthanath, SDB

PITRA PARISH

Holy Eucharistic Procession

The first parish Eucharistic procession of St Joseph Pitra, held at Twirupa, Killa, was a beautiful manifestation of the faith of the people. On 14th November, about 450 people from the different *mondolis* of the Parish actively participated in the Holy Eucharistic



celebration. The venue was brightly decked and the altar was gracefully decorated. The Eucharistic procession with the blessed Sacrament on a float colorfully decorated, went through the Killa market and nearby villages with singing, prayers and came back to the Church where the benediction concluded the program. It was a wonderful proclamation of the faith in a predominantly non-Christian area and the unity of purpose that the parishioners exhibited was amazing.

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Women Convention



A one-day Convention for Women was held on 4th

November at Twirupa, Killa for the Parish of Pitra. With the purpose of bringing all together and deeper awareness of the faith, the Convention was organized with the support of all. The 74 Women from all the village communities, who gathered for the day were very attentive and active. The first Session by Miss Monica Debbarma, senior Scientific Officer in the Forensic Department of the Crime Branch, Government of Tripura, was very informative and through provoking. She spoke also about the Rights of Women and people in general. The Holy Eucharistic celebration presided over by Fr Blasius was prayerful and devotional. After lunch, the Bible Quiz, dance competition and other activities brought all the Women together. In all, the very coming together of all the Women from the various *mondolis* was a matter of great joy.

Vacation Camp

There was an air of joy and expectation as 72 young people gathered for the 'Vacation Camp' on 12th October at the new parish of Pitra. The Parish, which was inaugurated on 8th August 2021, formed the Youth group almost



immediately and set out to work. The leadership, ever active and enthusiastic, guided by the Parish Youth Animator, Michael Jamatia and the Advisor, Yudister Jamatia, under the guidance of the Parish Priest, planned the three-day program meticulously. The Input Sessions by people from all walks of life motivated them.

The President, the Secretary, and the Treasurer, with the executive members and the support of all the Youth, were able to keep the group enthusiastic and joyful through the program. The music and support of Sr. Theresa Sangma MSMHC, and the many other talented

young people created a festive atmosphere. The beautiful dances, meaningful skits, the various competitions, football game, all contributed to the happiness. The Parish Council solidly supported with the sponsorship, careful management of the food and other requirements. The people of Pitra need special mention as they selflessly sacrificed their time and energy to set up the pandal, prepare the food and see to the other needs. On 15th morning, Fr Sunny celebrated the concluding Mass. During the discussion that followed, the young people drew up a time-bound Action Plan for the coming year. The call-to-action beckons them now.
Fr. Sunny, SDB

MOHARPARA PARISH

New Church Blessed at Nelsi

November 14th, 2021, was marked as red-letter day in the chronicle of Sacred Heart Church Nelsi, under Moharpara Parish. People feel that God has blessed their faith concretely with this new Church building.



The event commenced with a grand welcome to the Shepherd of our Diocese our dear Bishop Lumen Monteiro. The new Church building was inaugurated and blessed in the presence of many faithful who are waiting for this day. After the Holy Mass a short felicitation and cultural program was organized wherein the Guests were welcomed and felicitated. The Bishop exhorted the people and expressed his happiness and joy to see the growth of the church. The memorable event came to the end with the agape meal.

Marriage Preparation Course



Diocesan Vocation Camp at Champaknagar

The Commission for Vocation and Formation organized a Vocation Camp for the Diocese of Agartala at Jeevadhara Minor Seminary, Champaknagar. The Camp was held from 4th to 7th November. Thirty-four



Immaculate Conception Parish Moharpara organized two days Marriage Preparation Course on 17th and 18th of November 2021. 22 couples from different parts of the Parish participated in the event. The Resource Persons for the program were Fr. Ivan D'Silva SVD, Parish Priest of Ambassa Parish and Dr. Ashok Debbarma. Fr. Ivan clearly explained to the participants about the purpose of marriage and marital relationship and its indissoluble nature. Dr. Ashok shared his personal experience of family life and thus, further threw light to the couples on how to cope with daily family problems. The participants took active part during the Session and expressed their happiness about the session.

Fr. Alfred D'Souza, CSC

KAMARANGA PARISH

Kumarghat Deanery SCC Conference

Kumarghat Deanery organized SCC (Small Christian Community) gathering in St. Raphael Parish Kamaranga on November 4, 2021. Representatives from 6 Parishes along with the priests and nuns attended. 48 people assembled around the Bible to share the word of God and listen to one another. The host parish leaders took initiative for the Bible procession and enthroned it solemnly.



After that through 7-steps method Mr. Bishu Debbarma and Mrs. Kimi Halam conducted the Bible sharing. Fr. Arun Minj SVD the Parish Priest of Kamaranga Parish welcomed everyone to participate whole heartedly in the SCC gathering. Mr. Pioglama Darlong the Secretary of SCC Kumarghat Deanery thanked the Leaders of the host Parish for animating well for the preliminary programs of the meeting. Mr. Darlong read the previous meeting Report and it was passed unanimously. Then all the parishes read their activities Reports and Action Plans. After keenly listening to all the Reports there were few suggestions and opinions to make the Deanery level gathering more participative. Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD the Coordinator of the SCC in the Deanery level thanked everyone, especially the host Parish for making all the arrangements.
Ivan D'Silva, SVD

SVD Fathers on different topics and motivated and encouraged during the Camp. Apart from the orientation the boys had meaningful prayer service and Adoration during the day. They were given chances to display their abilities and talents through different games and activities. The Camp

ended with the Holy Eucharist and the boys left to their respective parishes. Let us continue to pray for more vocation to the Diocese of Agartala. *Fr. Antony Balan*

JUST NEWS BRIEFS

Peace Award Function



Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura (JUST) conducted Peace Award Function with target Shools in the month of October 2021. In the month of September 2021 JUST staff observed International Peace Day with different Competition like essay writing, drawing and speech competition on PEACE with all the target Schools. After the Competition the school Peace Club animators and the JUST staff selected the best performer among the participants and awarded trophy during the Peace Award Function in the month of October 2021. After giving away the Awards the JUST Staff explained in brief the six

Principles of Peace, i.e., Reconciliation for peace, Sacrifice for peace, Voluntarism for peace, Self-Realization for peace, Hospitality for peace and Non-Violence for peace

Awareness and Sensitization program on Health & Hygiene

The Awareness & Sensitization program on Health & Hygiene was conducted in all the 10 JUST Coaching Centers under Ganganagar R.D Block. The students



were taught about the importance of health and the meaning of personal hygiene and using of mask, sanitizers, washing of hands after meals, drinking of fresh

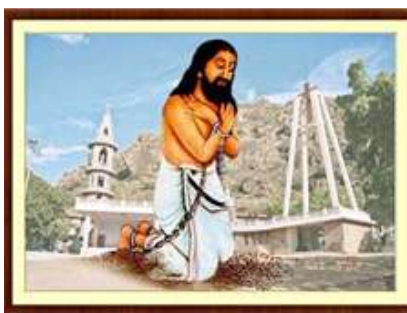
water from filter. The coordinator explained that cleanliness should be maintained in the coaching centers as well as in our daily life and certain habits like washing hands before meal, bathing, brushing teeth and cutting nails should be practiced. He advised them to have shower at least twice a day with soap. The students as well as the guardians are very excited to receive such type of awareness program and were happy about the awareness Programme.

Mr. Cyril Darlong

WORLD NEWS BRIEFS

Devasahayam's canonization a 'historic moment' for India

The official declaration of an 18th century Indian Hindu convert to Catholicism as a saint by the Catholic Church in May next year, is a "historic moment", according to an official of the Catholic Church in India. "To many of us who have received the faith from our forebears, Devasahayam's testimony reminds us that the Gospel is a treasure to be discovered and to which devote a lifetime," said Archbishop Felix Machado of Vasai Diocese, Secretary General of the CBCI. Blessed Lazarus, known as Devasahayam, became "poor for the sake of the poor and had love for the poor, as Pope



Francis says," he told AsiaNews. The canonization "is an encouragement to us to emulate Devasahayam". Blessed Lazarus, also known as Devasahayam, will be the first layperson and martyr of Indian origin who will be officially declared a saint of the worldwide Catholic Church. He was martyred for his faith nearly 270 years ago in what is Tamil Nadu state today. The Congregation for the Causes of Saints on November 9 declared that the canonization Mass will take place in the Vatican on May 15, 2022. The Pope will preside over the liturgy.

Robin Gomes for Mattersindia

OUR DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

- Br. Varghese, SG Provincial from Guwahati
- Sr. Ishpriya, FSMA Provincial from Jaipur
- Fr. Tom Mangattuthazhe, NEIRBC from Guwahati
- Fr. Joseph Mapilaparampil, CMF from Guwahati

- Fr. Jonson, CMF from Shillong
- Archbishop Jacob Toomkuzhy, Emeritus of Trissur
- Sr. Tina, SKD Superior General from Calicut
- Sr. Mily, SKD Procurator from Calicut



THROWBACK MEMORIES





The missionary leadership of Bishop Lumen Monteiro has been outstanding with a clear vision for the area he spent himself totally labouring for his people with love and passion. I have been associated with him for many years, already from his very beginning of his episcopacy; have learnt much from his person and style of functioning. We pray for our Heavenly Father's continuous blessings on dear

A missionary

and also the medical and social work of the Church in the State. These activities are more recent in Tripura given the somewhat later establishment of a formal ecclesiastical presence of the Church in the State.

I know that Agartala Diocese even in these challenging times is growing from strength to strength and with faith and prayer will overcome all obstacles. The motto of the diocese, 'Lead us Onward,' is but three words. These words express sentiments of trust in



Bishop Lumen and his mission and on all his collaborators working for the spread of the Gospel and its joyful reception among the people of Tripura.

The establishment of the Church Mission, where there is hitherto little presence of the faith is a challenging endeavour. Despite innumerable problems and challenges the Church has been able to reach out to the many tribes and communities in the North East. The annals of the early history of the missionaries and Religious Congregations in Tripura are evidence of the bountiful blessings of God on this beautiful land. The Church has made an indelible mark in the spread of the Gospel that is evident in the increase in the number of the faithful, in her manifold activities including peace initiatives and works for social harmony, the establishment of educational institutions

the Lord with a prayer for His continued blessings on the mission of the Church in Tripura.

I congratulate Bishop Lumen Monteiro and all those who have been involved in giving their time and energy for the Silver Jubilee Celebrations.

God bless you dear Bishop Lumen. Congratulations on your Episcopal Silver Jubilee. *Ad multos annos.*

+ **Oswald Cardinal Gracias**

Archbishop of Bombay
President, CBCI



Those who enter a field of action at a later stage take existing realities for granted; but beginners know how tough it was at the start. Too few people, too few things. When an area is away from commercial and media centres, too few facilities, too little attention. When in public notion it is linked with remoteness and under-development, even the venturesome hesitate. When communication lines are long and wearisome, visitors waver. Even helping hands do not reach out readily to less



known areas.

I would not like to project a negative image of Tripura in trying to describe the early difficulties the new diocese faced, but I admire Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, as he plunged into this great field with a sturdy sense of mission to change the world from the place called Agartala.

They say, you can change the world from where you are. That is what Bishop Lumen has done. To build up the basic infrastructure of a young Diocese is one thing, but to inspire social initiatives all over the country that reach out to benefit millions, is quite another. That is what Bishop Lumen has done.

Our first congratulations to him for putting Agartala Diocese on its feet with a Bishop's House, Cathedral, Seminary, and increasing number of parishes and institutions at the service of education, health and social development; with also steadily growing number of apostolic men

Beginnings Are Tough

and women belonging to the Diocese and to various Congregations. They will multiply his energies and yield fruits beyond what they are able to foresee now.

But an additional word of appreciation to Bishop Lumen for giving an impetus to the social ministry in the region and in the country. The early Missionaries in the Northeast had found the fast-expanding pastoral work already far beyond the possibilities of their small team, that in the social dimension of their services had not greatly developed. Even as educational and health services were fast expanding after World War II, our missions took time to enter seriously in the various fields of social ministry. Here is where Bishop Lumen played a big role in our region through the work of the Social Forum in Guwahati and in other ways. He took the same dynamism to the national level stimulating initiatives in diverse regions in India.

I am sure others will give to more details of the work he has done with a great amount of creativity and enthusiasm, while keeping a low profile and a learning attitude. The mission field is the best the Teacher. As needs arise, we learn to respond. As burdens increase, help comes. In proportion to the rightness of the response, fruits come to encourage us. Tripura is a gold mine whose potentiality will show the way forward in the evangelical and pastoral fields, and whose fruitfulness will make the workers grateful to the shepherd who opened doors to these possibilities. May the great work initiated from Dhaka and Chittagong, continued from Haflong, and now from Agartala under Bishop Lumen bear its hundred fold in the days to come.

I wish Bishop Lumen and his collaborators a very Happy Silver Jubilee.

+ Thomas Menampampil, sdb

Archbishop Emeritus of Guwahati



My time with Bishop Lumen Monteiro C S C

I met Fr. Lumen Monteiro, when he was the Vice Provincial of the Holy Cross, North East, in 1995. He had preached a retreat for the Missionaries of Charity and had come up to Borduria just for an Arunachal darshan.

As transport facilities were very limited, he came up with the Sisters late in the evening after dinner in the convent, came to sleep in Don Bosco. As the only bus to Tinsukia would leave 6 a.m., he left by that.

Later in 1996, as Bishop when he was coming to Dibrugarh for Mass and felicitation, we were in the same flight from Kolkata to Chabua. Since we were seated far from each other and as were landing in the air force airport, there were many formalities and we could not meet each other.

In 2006, the day after my episcopal ordination, I had to leave for Agartala as there was going to be the decennial celebration of the Diocese and the anniversary of Bishop Lumen's episcopal ordination. As it was a week-long stay, we had time to interact. From then, we became good friends and it continues and am certain will continue.

As my friend and Bishop, the most striking thing is his releasing the Links before dawn on the first of every month. I try to be one of the first to open and send him a word of thanks and congratulations.

This provides us the key to open the many treasures attached to his life and works. The first quality is his ability to stand by principles. Being the first Bishop of the whole state of Tripura, with a troubled history, geography, ethnic realities and social situations, it is not easy to steer clear. But we see him doing it so effectively and it the steady progress the diocese is making and the acceptability it has achieved among the various communities is unique blessing and the result of the Bishop's ability to get people of all groups into his side.

The spirit of hard work is the next thing that strikes anyone who knows him. He does not, not only shirk responsibility but always to walk the extra mile if needed. Besides, all his responsibilities in the diocese and the region, when he was made the chairman of Caritas India, he was able to combine all three so well,

that no one in any of the departments felt his absence or suffered in any way. The all-round growth of the diocese, is the most eloquent proof of it.

His ability to call a spade a spade and not to prolong or spent time in unnecessary discussions, is an ability that I have most loved in him. In many of the meetings both regional and national, he is called upon to chair the sessions, if there is the possibility of too much discussion and loss of time. He is able to push things forward in such a way that the discussions take place and the conclusions arrived at without the loss of time and patience.

His deep-rooted commitment to prayer and good works and the Word of God, is the driving force in him and takes him through the roughest and toughest situations, which abound in life. Not compromising on this aspect of the life of the good shepherd makes him what he is. His pastoral commitment springs from this.

Inspite of the tensions of life, he is able to relax and spend quality time with others. As I had some connections with the early tribal Catholics of Tripura, I had to travel to Tripura, a number of times on unofficial visits. During all these, he was very hospitable and made sure that we had some time together, sharing some light moments. The Caritas officials who were associated with him also have said this many a time.

From my personal relationship with him, I can say that he is a friend more than anyone else. In fact, we do not address each other with any of those formal vocabularies attached to the bishop. Both of us feel quite at home without them and are able relate or communicate with terms that could be more endearing.

His regular, monthly presentation of the Links, precise, jovial, with a very serious and explicit message, all in few lines is the exact image of his life. Quality, quantity, precision, humaneness and holiness, all in one.

I could write pages about him but I limit myself to this. Bishop Lumen, Congratulations. We all thank God for you and on your behalf. Ad multos annos.

+George Pallipparambil SDB
Bishop of Miao



A Caring Person

On the occasion of the twin celebration of the **Silver Jubilee of the Diocese of Agartala** and the **Episcopal Silver Jubilee of Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC**, I am very glad to write some memories and experiences with Bp. Lumen that goes back to our College and Scholastic days in Bangalore and Pune.

I was one of the 1st three Holy Cross Students who came down for the first time from the North East to Bangalore, Museum Road. You can imagine the cultural shock we had to face of adapting ourselves to entirely different people, place, food, climate, language etc. To our great consolation, one person who stood out from many others was Lumen, though one year senior to us, he was very welcoming and friendly to us, especially for those coming from the North East. We felt at home with him as he took keen interest in knowing and learning more about the N.E. culture, endearing himself with us easily and we could share and enjoy our laughter together even on a local Tribal and very special jokes! Only he can tell you what 'Zangli' means! He picked up language easily and made effort to get correct tone and sound including difficult one like the Mizo language. That's how close and friendly he could make himself in those early years to adapt and tried to understand others. No wonder how or why Providence has chosen and anointed him to be the Shepherd for so many Tribes in Tripura.

Apart from his keen interest in Literature studies, singing, music, cooking etc, he loved Basket-ball and was a good player in the House and at the College level. Among his personal qualities of simplicity, hard-work, disciplined, orderliness etc, I admire his great sense of organization, systematic planning and administrative ability. He is blessed with a spirit of service and good leadership quality which was well utilized even in the Scholastic days in Pune which has blossomed and bear abundant fruit now as the Chief Shepherd for Agartala Diocese. In him we see deep commitment, faithfulness and strong determination. Keeping up of the LINK-News for so many years is a small but significant testimony and example of his exemplary commitment even for a bigger goal and vision for the Diocese.

Coming back to Pune, though Holy Cross was a small Community in the Campus, we were quite well known by our active involvement and participation in the life of the Campus and we made valuable contribution as

Lumen served and became the President of Student Council for quite sometime. On my part, I contributed in the Campus choir, music and singing ('Come down Jesus' was a Hit-song!) and Arts and painting of Drama curtain for Athenaeum Hall etc.

In the lighter side, I remember our memorable Bicycle-race Competition in the Seminary Campus where I overtook Lumen and became first and he became second! Till today that was the One and Only time I was faster than him!! He was a good source of encouragement and support and admirer of my Art works especially the CBCI & CCBI Cartoons when we have our meetings.

Among many other qualities, what is most admirable in him is his capacity for caring others. Persons are important for him. He remembers people with their names and birthdays and makes it a point to wish them. I was fortunate to have known and met Bp.Lumen's parents and elder brother Mr. Pascoal (of happy memories) and his sister Mrs. Lucia and youngest brother Emmanuel, settled in the US as I pray for them.

In conclusion, I would like to say that it is still a great mystery for me to be a Bishop of Aizawl today and now for nearly 20 years! With all my acquaintances and enrichment I have received, one thing I can say is that Bishop Lumen has a great role for what I am today for which I am truly grateful to him and to God, in spite of the grave and heavy responsibility.

We thank God for all the blessings bestowed upon him and the people of the Diocese for the marvelous works and amazing achievements through his dynamic leadership and untiring dedication in the midst of countless obstacles and hardships for 25 years, blessed now with the strength of nearly 48000 Catholics from many tribes and languages in 25 Parishes! Praise the Lord!!

May God grant you abundant blessing and graces to be a **beacon of Light** in our N.E. Region to **"Lead us onward"** to draw many more people to God. May God bless you.

Bishop Stephen Rotluanga CSC
Bishop of Aizawl Diocese



Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC: Shepherd with the smell of his sheep!

The Diocese of Agartala will gather this week for the grand finale of the Silver Jubilee celebration of the Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro CSC, the first Bishop of the Diocese of Agartala. On this joyous occasion, I raise my heart in thanksgiving to God, along with the faithful, the missionaries, the collaborators, and the friends of the Diocese. This historic milestone in the life of the Diocese and in the shepherding ministry of the Bishop is worthy of jubilation and celebration. Congratulations to you Bishop Lumen for the journey you resolutely have undertaken for the last 25 years with the motto of your episcopate, 'Lead Us Onward'.

It was in 1983 that I first met Bishop Lumen. This was my first year in the Congregation of Holy Cross, at the Students Home, Aymanam, Kottayam. The then Fr. Lumen came from Bangalore to teach English grammar and phonetics to us students who had completed our secondary school in Malayalam medium. My first encounter with him is still vivid in my mind as he brought clarity and precision in his classroom pedagogy. After two years, Fr. Lumen became my Rector at my next stage of the formation program in Bangalore from 1985-88. We were 45 students residing at 45, Museum Road, Bangalore, bustling with life and activities. The formation house was crowded, but with ingenuity and imagination, Fr. Lumen transformed it into our nest in the city for integral growth.

I deem it a privilege to have had Bishop Lumen as my Formator in the early years of my vocation journey. The theme 'small things matter' for my first year in the college was both instructive and descriptive of our Rector. Whether it is time or money, spending it wisely is his trademark. As our Rector, Bishop Lumen employed a preventive pedagogy in the formation program. He organized many events in the house that stimulated and motivated both curricular and co-curricular activities. He accompanied us as a true guru, guide, and friend. He was omnipresent: he was on the stage, in the playground, at the table, in the classroom, chapel, TV room, and a visit to our dorms

when we were slipping into dreamland. He valued and trusted us and took great interest in each of our academic successes and integral growth.

We admire Bishop Lumen for the regularity of the '*LINK*', the diocesan newsletter that comes to our Inbox on the first of every month, uninterrupted for the last 25 years! The *LINK* is a lesson for us in how to plan and optimally use our time and resources for touching lives and sustain relationships. He believes in planned meetings and dialogues to execute projects and to resolve issues. As Seminary Rector, he visited and stayed with the families of all his students, to understand and to serve them better. Likewise, today we find Bishop Lumen on all weekends in the villages of Tripura, being with his faithful, listening, praying, singing and sharing life together with them. He is truly, as Pope Francis says, "is a shepherd with the smell of his sheep!"

Given the nobility of his vocation to be the shepherd of the Diocese, today a Bishop must be more than a holy pastor. He is also responsible to the civil authorities and to the Church hierarchy regarding all matters related to the administration of the human and material resources of the Diocese. I can confidently write from personal experience, it is the experience of every missionary in the Diocese to receive the brotherly support and encouragement from Bishop Lumen. Any visitor to the Diocese can see the growth journey of the local church and the all-round development of the People of God initiated under his visionary leadership and guidance. With God's love and His amazing and unfailing graces upon him, Bishop Lumen has been leading the Diocese of Agartala with enduring enthusiasm and hope for the last twenty-five years.

I remember being a Deacon and assisting at the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Lumen on that hot summer day of 26th May 1996. After 25 silver years, I share the joyous sentiments of the faithful and the missionaries who gather for the Silver Jubilee celebration in Agartala. As the sun shone brightly in 1996, may God's favor and fondness continue to shine brightly in the life of Bishop Lumen, his episcopate, and the Diocese of Agartala.

Abraham Kochupurackal CSC
Second Assistant General
Rome.

A Christ - Centered Person



At the request of Fr. Prasad, I would like to share some impressions of the person of Bishop Lumen, to reveal and decode his inner self. Bishop Lumen and I hail from the same village Calangute in Goa. But I was bread and buttered in Bombay since the age of five. I remember seeing him occasionally in Church, but the first personal encounter was when he joined the Holy Cross for College Studies at Bangalore. He was junior to me by three years and after his Ordination he was appointed as my Assistant at Holy Cross Students Home, Bangalore.

After the completion of his D.Min. in U.S.A., he assisted me again as the Administrator of Holy Cross School, Agartala. When he was the

with precision, commitment and dedication. As a priest of the Congregation of Holy Cross, I experienced him as a Christ-centered person disciplined in his spiritual life, well-organized, systematic, faithful, perceptive, honest, joyful, filled with wisdom, approachable, capable of maintaining a positive rapport with all, down to earth and humble. As the Bishop of Agartala it was child's play for him to come down to the level of the ordinary villagers of the Diocese and work towards their integral and holistic human and spiritual formation. The above-mentioned qualities have endeared him to one and all in the Church of Tripura.

Bishop Lumen loves playing basketball, crack jokes and laugh heartily. His communication style is

always with a tint of humor. His style of communication is commended by one and all.

As Bishop Lumen celebrates his silver jubilee as Bishop of Agartala, my heart goes out in gratitude to God and in thanking Bishop Lumen for accepting the responsibility of building the Church of Agartala as a pioneer Bishop with the assistance of the catechists, teachers, liturgical readers, cantors, directors of youth activities, the laity and religious in the Diocese with all the challenges and sleepless nights that took a toll on his health. May Almighty God continue to Bless Bishop Lumen with

good health and a vision to bring God's Divine Light as a herald of hope and peace in the spiritual and moral life of all people.

Fr. Leo D'Souza, C.S.C.
Former Provincial
Bangalore



Administrator, I was elected as General Assistant of the Congregation of Holy Cross and four years later he was appointed Bishop of Agartala by the Holy See.

From his student days he was true to his name Lumen the Light shining in leadership positions, both during his secular and theological studies, and later in key positions in the District and Province. At hindsight, I feel he was being groomed by God to assume the position as Bishop of the Diocese of Agartala.

As my Assistant, I discovered in him an amiable person carved out to work as a team player in the ministries that were assigned to him. All the tasks that were assigned to him were always executed



My Rector and My Guru

Along with all the diocesan clergy, bothers, priests, religious and faithful, I write these few lines to praise and thank the Lord for the marvels the Lord has done to the Diocese of Agartala through the instrumentality of His servant, Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro. On behalf of the North East Province of Holy Cross Congregation, my heartfelt Congratulations and prayers to Bishop Lumen on the auspicious occasion of his Silver Jubilee and of the Diocese. As a confrere

daunting task. Lack of funds, personnel and proper infrastructures are but some of the challenges that a new Bishop would face, and Bishop Lumen was no exception. But what indeed was exceptional about him that helped him surmount these challenges were his skills in proper communication and administrative acumen, besides his complete dependence on providence. With his motto “Lead us onward”, Bishop Lumen, along with his band of dedicated clergy, religious and the faithful and generous

benefactors allowed himself to be led forward by the light of Christ resulting in the diocese of Agartala being what it is today.

25 years as a Bishop is an important milestone in Bishop Lumen's life that deserves celebration. He also had an opportunity to serve the Church in India as the Chairman of Caritas India for two terms that he gracefully accomplished. His vocation as Priest and Bishop has given him the opportunity to celebrate life in the service of God and people – a task he has been doing with total dedication and commitment in a spirit of true love. I take this opportunity to wish Bishop Lumen God's continued

blessings, in every form that he requires, as he continues his mission to make life more meaningful and more relevant for the people he serves. Dear Bishop Lumen, you are different, and you make a difference! You are blessed, and you are a blessing! May the good Lord continue to lead you onward to your Golden Jubilee and beyond!

Fr. Simon, CSC
Provincial, N.E. Province of Holy Cross



and friend, I am proud of you and may the Lord continue to fill your mind with wisdom and pastoral zeal for many more years to come.

My acquaintance with the Jubilarian was way back in 1987 as a college student and him being my Rector at Museum Road, Bangalore. At that time he came across to me as a Person with full of energy, enthusiasm and vigor. He is the first priest to stay in our family while I was in the formation. A formatter who accompanied the formee throughout the formation. A person bubbling with talent and energy, we had plenty to look up to.

As the Bishop of the Diocese it is completely a different story. Building up a new diocese from scratch in its manifold diversity, can indeed be a



An ardent Pastor, Visionary Missionary and a Champion of Social Justice

I have known Bishop Lumen closely since a decade. I had the joy of working closely with him for 6 years under his able leadership as the Chairman of Caritas India. What I liked in him the most is the beautiful blending of his human and pastoral qualities. Besides being the Chief Shepherd of the flock of Agartala Diocese for the last 25 years, Bishop Lumen had been closely associated with Caritas India as its Board



Member for some years and then as its Chairman for 8 years. Caritas India is the official social development wing of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India and the humanitarian face of the Church in India.

Both as the Board Member and the Chairman of Caritas India, Bishop Lumen had played several key roles and contributed to the sustained growth of Caritas India for about a decade. Among all the previous Chairmen of Caritas India, it is Bishop Lumen who has this unique honor of having visited over 110 out of the total 174 Dioceses of India. With his emphasis – 'from file to life' – he took up several field visits and extensive journeys every year into the length and breadth of the country many which had been quite tedious ones! During those field visits, he interacted with the Bishops of the Dioceses, the Diocesan Social Works Directors, the staff of the DSSSs and the rural communities. In those missionary journeys as the Chairman of Caritas India, he emphasized on the spirituality of the Social Ministry of the Church and encouraged the DSSS Directors and their staff to be the ambassadors of hope and new life to the poor of our country through the Ministry of Diakonia of the Church. Even after several hours of long travels by road and by train from one Diocese to another and visits and meetings with the local communities, Bishop

Lumen would still be seen with full of energy and vigor. These field visits and interactions with the Bishops and the DSSS Directors helped in fostering a very close collaboration between Caritas India and all the Dioceses of our country. Bishop Lumen's national and international travels and meetings, representing Caritas India, paved the way for fostering and cementing several bilateral donor relations. His cordial, simple and heart-to-heart talks and interactions with our donors, Board Members, the Management Team and the staff of Caritas India paid rich dividends for the smooth functioning of Caritas India in the past years.

It is indeed a great joy to note that Bishop Lumen's time and contributions to Caritas India did not in anyway adversely affect his Pastoral commitments in his Diocese. During these past 25 years, the new Mission Diocese of Agartala has grown a lot with the establishment of several new Parishes, Church communities, Institutions and with a four-fold growth in the number of Catholics from 10000 to over 40000. All these was possible because of the missionary spirit and pastoral zeal of

Bishop Lumen who has been providing sustained leadership in the Diocese these past years, besides God's continued Blessings on this Mission Diocese.

As the Mission Diocese of Agartala concludes its twin Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Erection of the Diocese and the Episcopal Consecration of Bishop Lumen, I pray that the Good Lord continue to Bless the Diocese of Agartala and its Shepherd Bishop Lumen in the years ahead. May the State of Tripura which is going through real hard times with several challenges be luminated further with the continued mission of the local Church and of our beloved Bishop Lumen, 'being confident that the Good Lord who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ' (cf Philippians 1:6).

Father Jolly
Assistant Executive Director
Caritas India



This is my humble attempt to honor my good friend Bishop Lumen Monteiro and the Diocese of Agartala on the Silber Jubilee of ordination as bishop and the anniversary of the Diocese of Agartala.

I would like to do so by giving the reader a glimpse of Bishop Lumen as a twenty-seven-year-old, freshly minted member of the priesthood whose palms were still moist and perfumed with the Sacred Chrism of ordination.

Ordained in October 1980, Father Lumen Monteiro, C.S.C., was serving at Anandam, in Park Circus, Calcutta. Anandam was an outreach to young Christian workers and others



under the intrepid direction of Holy Cross Brother Ulysses Hamel. Young, guitar-playing, filled with zeal and energy for ministry, Father Lumen welcomed me to Anandam and to the most memorable experience of my life since I had not traveled outside of North America let alone to such an exotic place as INDIA. He and Brother Ulysses smoothed my path through mild culture shock.

Charged with gathering engaged couples in the archdiocese of Calcutta for a weekend retreat, we visited almost every parish in the archdiocese and the Morning Star seminary to collect commitments from pastors to send their young people to Anadam for marriage preparation. Father Lumen said, "We should travel the way the poor do, by Calcutta tram, footpaths, etc." I still remember the trips by tram as near-death experiences because they were so packed and listing to one side.

Much of the month we spent in each other's company traveling, rehearsing for marriage preparation talks about communication, family finances, Natural family planning,

sexuality, and sacramental marriage. The Indian hesitation about discussing sexuality surprised me but made for many laughs with Lesley and Irene Didier-Serre, the junior couple, and Connie and Berti Hyde, the senior couple. They are all departed now but I will never forget them.

Best of All, Father Lumen arranged for me to celebrate Mass with the MC sisters and Mother Teresa. Just as Mass concluded, Father Lumen and I were in the sacristy as Mother Teresa entered to share a few moments with us. In marriage preparation we challenge couples never to let the sun go down on a day without explicitly saying "I love you" to each other.

Mother Teresa said she tells young sisters something similar. She said they often object to her rule to return every day at 3 pm to the chapel for a Holy hour. They observe that there are still poor, dying, hungry and desperate people on the streets who need their love and assistance. She tells them that if they do not spend an hour with their spouse each day in the Blessed Sacrament, they will soon lose the ability to recognize him in the poor where he is disguised.

I will never forget that lesson that Mother Teresa delivered in person. I remain indebted to Father Lumen for introducing me to now Saint Mother Teresa and making that lesson possible. He is also responsible for teaching me another lesson that I cherish. He said we should travel like the poor and the humble and remain close to them. Even as a "baby" priest, Father Lumen showed signs of gifted leadership. God blessed him with the courage and grace to take risks and lead onward. Ordained a bishop on May 26,

1996, the scripture readings that Pentecost Sunday spoke of the Holy Spirit as Father of the Poor. It was no surprise to me or anyone who knew Bishop Lumen that he would lead the new Diocese and its people onward in dramatic growth not only in numbers but in faith, hope and love. Bishop Lumen used the light of Christ, perfectly symbolized in his Baptismal name, to light the path onward always remaining a humble priest close to the poor.

Fr. Wilfred Raymond, CSC.

President

Holy Cross, Family Ministries

USA



A TRIBUTE TO A VERY SPECIAL FRIEND

His Lordship-Bishop Lumen... true to his name—Has shed his Light to the corners of his Diocese-Agartala.. for the past 25 years. And the light Glows with His love, compassion and his Gentleness.

My friendship with This Awesome Personality goes back to about 50 years—since our Philosophy days in Pune-JDV. His warm and loving nature captured me and held me as his captive of friendship till to day. I have delved in His light and Joy. And that has helped me all these years to go on with Life. He was a role

years ago as you took hold of the Shepherds Staff and as you return to celebrate all that has happened over the last 25 years. On this silver occasion its rightly fitting that you give expression to this inner joy and exult in a chorus, **“My soul glorifies the Lord”**.

A Jubilee is a time for looking back and looking forward. The book of Leviticus depicts the spirit of Jubilee, as an occasion of grateful remembrance of the past events; of rejoicing for the graces received; of recognition of God's faithfulness. Dear Bishop Lumen-my Friend the journey of 25 years is not simply journey through a string of days and years. Rather your journeys have been surrounded and intertwined by the intimacy and a relationship, mystery and secret growth. Your journeys have been fulfilling and demanding, risky and exciting. They have been filled with losses and gains, replete with joys and sorrows and in all these the God who called and consecrated you was always with you, enabling you to live the spirit of your consecration and so sing out the glories of the Lord.

I sincerely with a heart full of Gratitude. For your love, friendship and compassion, join you in this silver occasion we are filled with the sense of jubilation,



model to me and a pillar of strength in my own religious life.

Dear Friends, today is surely a day of Joy and Thanksgiving for the diocese and all who have been touched by Bishop Lumen.. We have grateful hearts to remember, to celebrate and to give thanks.

In his apostolic letter Vita Consecrata St. John Paul II accounts, “In every age there have been men and women who, obedient to the Father's call and to the prompting of the Spirit, have chosen the special way of following Christ, and devote themselves to him with an "undivided heart”, leaving everything behind in order to be with HIM and to put themselves in the service of God and humanity.”

Among us today, we have one such exemplary follower of Jesus, Bishop Lumen –His Lordship witnessing to 25 years a leader as the Shepherd of his flock of Agartala. . Today is all about that YES, 25

joy and gratitude. Congratulations dear Bishop- for this unique milestone. On this happy occasion we do remember all your dear and near ones and their support and sacrifices along the journey. We pledge our prayerful support as you now stand at the gate of tomorrow facing the future years ahead. We pray may the one who began a good work in you bring to its completion in you. May our Heavenly Mother, protect you in her mantle and Our Lord- The best shepherd continue to lead you onwards to carry your responsibility to care for your flock of Agartala for many more years.

**Fr. Terrie Pinto, MSFS
Mumbai**



I rejoice together with Bishop Lumen Monteiro, the clergy, the religious, the lay faithful and all people of Good will in Tripura, on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the Diocese of Agartala and in particular of its Shepherd Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro CSC. I join all of you in thanking God for 'His great wonders' accomplished among you, and at the same time, congratulate Agartala Diocese, and Bishop Lumen as you have been very effective instruments in the realization of 'His plans.'

My contact with the diocese and Bishop Lumen goes back to 1996 when the diocese of Agartala was created with Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro as its first Bishop.

The Diocese started with very few Parishes and a small Catholic population, and with only a handful of priests and religious. The Motto of Bishop Lumen, '*Duc in Altum*' means both '*Lead us onward and deeper*.' This is very clearly evident in the well-balanced approach followed by the Diocese during the last 25 years, be it in the quantitative expansion and growth or in the quality of life and service.



A systematic strategy of providing the necessary pastoral infrastructure, mobilizing sufficient and effective Church personnel at all levels, discerning and launching into priority of areas of ministry have produced abundant results –

A Versatile and Multi-talented Personality

25 Parishes, with over 47,000 Catholics.

While we should acknowledge the material support and human collaboration, due recognition and credit should be given to Bishop Lumen who believed that his Motto –'*Lead us onward*'(cf. Lk 5:4) - carried power. We must recognize not just the ability and human resourcefulness of Bishop Lumen to mobilize financial support and ensure good collaboration from his co-workers, but his deep faith and unwavering trust in God. From the latter emerged his Gospel-vision, clarity of ideas and plans, daring spirit for initiatives, inexhaustible energy, thoroughness to the details and undaunted determination to follow up the plans to their logical conclusion. Just take the case of the publication of 'LINK': it is not just a news bulletin, but contain s inspiring messages and stories of new initiatives; besides, to my knowledge, there was no failure of any issue to appear, and no mistake even in the date of its publication. For us ordinary mortals and absent-minded, 'Link' has been a reminder of the dawn of new month.

Bishop Lumen is such a versatile and multi-talented personality that he could shepherd an 'infant' diocese with many problems, but also take up responsibilities in the Northeast Regional Bishops' Council, and at the National level, like being in charge of Caritas India. The last responsibility required frequent travels out of the diocese. He could be in a village on a Sunday morning interacting with the rural people, but by evening he is in Delhi or Bengaluru chairing a meeting of professionals, and vice versa. He successfully combined all these responsibilities because of his great qualities of head and heart.

As the diocese and Bishop Lumen enter the next phase with 'renewed hope', may you be able to reach even 'deeper' levels of faith in the Lord Jesus and greater heights in your efforts to strengthen 'human solidarity.' May you be the 'torch-bearers' of "Christ the Light of the World," and follow the missionary zeal and enthusiasm of your Patron, St Francis Xavier. With prayerful heart, I wish *Ad multos Annos!*

Fr. Thomas Manjaly
Professor Emeritus, Oriens, Shillong



It was sometime in 1996 a solemn celebration took place in the Diocese of Imphal. Many bishops had come, mostly from the Northeast region. We were introduced to two Bishops new to many among the audience. They were looking tall, handsome and robust. One was Bishop Lumen Monteiro of Agartala



diocese and the other Bishop Cyprian Monis of Asansol. The audience gave them a thunderous applause of welcome and felicitation. Eventually, I lost sight of Bishop Monis but frequently in close contact with Bishop Lumen. Thus, we became close friends and collaborators in certain areas of ecclesiastical discipline.

Bishop Lumen is known for his warmth, sense of humour and friendliness in every circle. He brings up insightful ideas in personal chit-chats as well as in formal conferences and group discussions. He served the Church in India as the Chairman of Caritas India, the social wing of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI). It was during this time that he called me to be the Administrator of Caritas India in New Delhi in 2013. He was already popular among the Caritas staff and all partners of various NGOs and governments of different states. Caritas India manifests the merciful face of the Catholic Church in India as it is a champion NGO in various social interventions among the poor, needy and in times of natural disaster in the country. Once as I was chatting in his room in Delhi, I realized that he, being a tall man, has been sleeping with his legs

extended out of the bed in many places he had travelled. Instinctively I felt so uncomfortable to be in his shoes, but he was used to it. As the Chairman of Caritas India, he gave his best commitment to the Bishops' Conference, and the CBCI in turn recognized his yeoman service and extended his term. I could not complete my term in Caritas office, since I was called away to become the Rector of Oriens Theological College, Shillong. But I learnt a lot from this privileged office working under the CBCI, coupled with my previous experience in St. John's Medical College, Bangalore, where I served as the Associate Director.

On two occasions I had visited Agartala Diocese. One was when I preached a Retreat for the Holy Cross Fathers at Agartala, and the other occasion was for some other purpose. Bishop Lumen took me around in some parish centres and institutions. Of happy recall, beginning with Mariamnagar where the Catholic community is said to have begun in 1683; and the other was the memorable journey whereby the army escort was given to civil passengers travelling in northern side through militant infested area, a situation quite similar to Manipur in those days. Then, the construction of the Cathedral was mushrooming up which, now, has become a holy and privileged place for meeting God and His people. I appreciate his great effort in this feat.

I take this occasion to extend my sentiments of gratitude to His Lordship for his friendship and for every kind help and understanding he has shown to me. I congratulate him for his great contributions to the Church, especially in the Northeast, from the time he has begun his priestly ministry, zealously expressing the charism of the Congregation of Holy Cross (CSC) in the building up of the Church and the religious spirit of asceticism and commitment of which is always visible in his life. I wish him every success in his Episcopal ministry as his motto "Lead Us Onward" continues to inspire him.

Fr. Linus Neli
Archdiocese of Imphal



Some years ago! Fr Lumen Monteiro was not yet appointed as the Bishop of Agartala. He was coming to animate a spiritual retreat for the MC Sisters in Guwahati. I happened to be in the same



flight with Fr Lumen. We landed in Guwahati. An MC Sister came and took away my little bag! I was a little surprised. She was convinced that I was Fr Lumen! She would not believe when I told her that I was not Fr Lumen! Anyhow, after a little while Fr Lumen came out of the airport -building after collecting his luggage. We had a good laugh. He took me along with him and asked the sisters to drop me to Don Bosco Provincial House. That was indeed thoughtful of Fr Lumen. It was my first contact with Fr Lumen. He came across to me as someone who is attentive and considerate!

Although I did not work in the diocese of Agartala we met on numerous occasions in Shillong as well as in his diocese, at Agartala. Once he invited me to his diocese for a seminar on evangelization. On another occasion I was in Agartala with the bible commission that was doing the translation of the Bible into Kokborok language. He was presiding at the meetings on both these occasions. He came across to me as a good listener wanting to learn from the participants at the meetings. At the same time he made timely interventions shedding light on the issues that

were being discussed. On other occasions too, whenever I visited the Salesian communities in Agartala I used to drop in at the Bishop's house. He was simply available to sit and listen and share his experiences as a pastor. During his intermittent visits to Shillong, I was happy to interact with him. He was full of fun and joviality. He took note of persons and had a good memory too. His optimism was evident to everyone due to the smile on his face and his cheerful dispositions. His sociable and friendly nature makes him approachable and a very commendable trait of his personality is that he does not distance himself from others. This is indeed an enviable quality in a pastor. In addition Bishop Lumen is appreciative of what his co-workers do, winning therefore their cooperation – of priests, religious, laity and benefactors in India and abroad too!

I was happy to hear from numerous persons working in the diocese that bishop Lumen has an eye for details. He does not do things slipshod, instead, he has a clear vision for the diocese and brings into his pastoral ministry precision and meticulousness. He had a plan and a goal for his diocese and he has taken it forward admirably during these 25 years. He has a taste for perfection in what he does and motivates others to do the same. Thanks to his fluency in Bengali and sufficient knowledge of Kokborok, he can easily interact with the communities and peoples in his diocese. It was nice to see him on the move to different communities even during the pandemic times. He did not abandon them during a time of anxiety and worry – reminding us about Jesus ever on the move during his public ministry!

Lumen (meaning *light* in Latin) is our Bishop's name. May Jesus the Good Shepherd and the Blessed Virgin Mary, the star of evangelization, enable him to continue shedding *light* in the years to come among his flock in the diocese. Congratulations to our Bishop for the *silver years* of his fecund Episcopal ministry.

Fr Jose Varickasseril SDB
Assistant parish priest
Mawlai Parish, Shillong



A Comforting and Comfortable Friend

Good friends are valuable Treasures in our lives. I found one such Treasure in Fr. Lumen Monteiro (before he became Bishop) way back in the year 1988, when both of us were studying at the Catholic University of America, Washington DC, USA. Our meeting there, in a distant land, was like a soothing

whatever way we can. Even though we are far from each other, we keep in touch, support and comfort each other in good times and in bad. I say that Bishop Lumen is a comfortable Friend because he is a sincere person and makes people feel comfortable in his company. It is a privilege to have such a precious jewel of a person as a FRIEND.

Had it not been for the Covid 19 Pandemic, I am sure, there would have been a grand celebration of the dual Silver Jubilee of the Diocese of Agartala and of its first Bishop, Bishop Lumen Monteiro. And it would have been my pleasure to be personally present for the celebration. I would have joyfully participated in the celebration, because I feel part of both the Diocese of Agartala, as well as a friend of Bishop Lumen. I am proud to say that I am part of the Diocese of Agartala, as I was involved with the initial conception and planning of your Cathedral of St. Francis Xavier. I even came for its Blessing and Dedication. Needless to say that Bishop Lumen, being my good friend, would be glad to have me with him on his Silver Jubilee, and it would have been my privilege and joy to join you and him in the Dual Celebration.

On the occasion of the CELEBRATION of the DUAL SILVER JUBILEE in a reserved manner, due to the Covid Pandemic, I take advantage of the Diocesan Magazine "LINK" to express my sentiments in a written form. This note is to say that I wish your Diocese abundant blessings and I pray that God may lead the flock of Agartala to green pastures under the dynamic leadership of Bishop Lumen Monteiro.

Rev. Fr. Valeriano Vaz.
Rector, Minor Seminary
Goa



balm to me. And I am positive that it was the same with him. Both of us, being Priests, and hailing from the same State in India, Goa, jelled with each other and became friends. Now, it is 33 years, we have maintained our relationship and so I can confidently say that we are good friends, supporting each other in



Though I have known Bishop Lumen for many years, it is during the last period of nearly fifteen years since my joining the ministry in Agartala Diocese, that I had the privilege of working with him. As the diocese celebrates the silver jubilee of its existence and the Episcopal ordination of its pastor, just a few thoughts may help to relate to the event. During the past 25 years the diocese has seen remarkable progress in every sphere of activity and the twin jubilee celebration will be a boost for the apostolic



endeavours that it undertakes.

An efficient administrator, Bishop Lumen comes as an amazingly organized, orderly person, almost professional. He always wants his files in perfect order and is hands on with the multifarious works and projects. A distinct mark of his discipline and orderliness is his proverbial punctuality. I have never found him even once late, in fact always ahead of time. It speaks volumes about his personality. Even the LINK which is published every month never misses the date and the time though he may be in some remote corner of the diocese, country or even of the world. The correctness of the language, well edited publications and circulars, and meticulously prepared articles are witnesses of his painstaking efforts to be as ordered as possible. As a pastor, his concern for all groups of people in the Diocese is admirable. In his hectic schedule, which often includes national and international meetings and programs, the pastoral visit to the different parishes and villages takes a prominent place. The journey may be tiring, roads uncomfortable, weather not pleasant, but he will reach out to the remotest area if it is in the scheduled program. He finds time even for the smallest places if a program is set up.

A good pastor

He wants to be part of the lives of everyone, everywhere. In this way, all are encouraged to continue their service and ministry: whether you are in the educational, social development, medical or pastoral field, you always feel as an essential part of the diocese. Leadership is shown when he is able to trust his co workers in the mission. Once a responsibility is entrusted to an individual or a group, he believes in their commitment and ability to carry out the task. The faith and trust encourages everyone to carry on the task at

hand. When freedom is given, individuals respond with greater responsibility.

A wonderful human being, Bishop Lumen is unassuming in his approach and relationship with all. The way he deals with children, young people, and older folk from the villages is indeed admirable and catches everyone's attention. Keeping company with all, he can be quite fun loving when the company is familiar. Mixing with everyone, he finds joy in meeting people and his memory of people whom he has met, remains fresh in his mind. He is unassuming, a ready listener who wants to understand and grasp the situation, accepting suggestions if they seem worthwhile

As the Shepherd of the flock entrusted to him, he has their welfare uppermost in his thoughts. In this he considers his priests, religious, catechists and other co workers as the prime agents. Regular animation for priests and religious and laity at various forums are considered important. His well prepared homilies and instructions, guidance in spiritual and pastoral matters, encourage the faithful in the parishes to grow in their faith. Establishment of new Christian communities, village chapels, service centres is a sure sign of this growth. The overall development of the communities is guided and monitored through the various commissions in the diocese.

We wish Bishop Lumen God's blessings as he continues to shoulder the responsibility of the diocese and its people. May the jubilee celebrations come as a stepping stone to new heights and with the well prepared DPP in hand, may the diocese reach ever greater glory to bring God's love to people.

Fr Joseph Palamthattel (Sunny) SDB
Parish Priest
Pitra



I am Bishop Lumen's youngest brother and I would like to write a few lines about my



older brother. I can clearly recollect attending Bishop Lumen's ordination on May 26, 1996. The gathering of communities, fellowship, and support were overwhelming. It was truly amazing experience.

A Generous Human Being

Bishop Lumen has always been a very generous human being and always ready to give to others without reserve. He gives away everything he has whenever he is given a gift; he turns around and finds someone who has even more of a need than him.

He is a good judge of character and can see the potential that others may not have identified.

All through the years, I have seen my brother make sacrifices so he can be a help to others. His love of God is what makes him the person he is.

Praise and thanks to Our Lord Jesus Christ for His Blessings on my brother Bishop Lumen today and always.

Emmanuel Monteiro
USA





Memoirs with Bishop Lumen

It is indeed a great joy and privilege to share my enriching and spiritual moments with our dear Bishop,

remember vividly the mission congress of 2011 at Ambassa, wherein we needed constantly his guidance and



direction, to meander the challenging moments, in order to build up the catholic faith at the troubled time. Bp. Lumen stood firm and enabled me and others to experience the guiding hand of God. The Eucharistic processions of 2013 and 2019 were moments, we experienced the deep conviction of our dear bishop, as the rain and storm disrupted, he continued with the Eucharist even though we all, including him were soaked in water. The rain got over and

Most Rev Lumen Monterio csc, as we are celebrating an important mile stone in its history. Bp. Lumen is an excellent signer and can play a guitar that produces melodious sound. This talent of his attracted me to him, for the first time at the Parish sabha of Kathalcherra, way back in 1998. Bp. Lumen's messages, homilies and circulars were always been a deep source of inspiration in living my faith. Me and my family often talked about it and drew inspiration. Chistomala of 2006 at Kamarga, I had another opportunity to encounter at close, with our dear bishop, wherein I experienced his simplicity as a good shepherd. Bishop with ease, sat down among the people and cherished the local cuisine and entered into small conversation with people. Since 2010 onwards, after engaging myself with laity organization of the diocese, I had ample opportunity to meet with him, share with him our thoughts and to work with him on various issues pertaining to the diocese. In all these profound personal encounters, I experienced the outstanding leadership of our dear Bishop. I still

storm stilled and we moved on with our Faith.

I wish him all the very best as he is celebrating his silver jubilee of his episcopal ordination and the silver jubilee of our diocese. May God help us all to move on and deepen our faith experiences !!!

Dr. Vanlalmuana Darlong
Professor, Tripura University





Lumen: the incandescent light that brightens up your life

At the time of this writing USA celebrating its National Thanksgiving Day, a day on which our most predominant sentiment is Thanksgiving. My heart today brims over with that same sentiment of



Thanksgiving to God for Bp. Lumen who has shone the light of Christ to all.

I am extremely grateful to be invited to share my thoughts on Bp. Lumen as he celebrates the extraordinary 25 years of his episcopate. I vividly remember that sweltering hot summer day (May 26, 1996) when he was consecrated as the first shepherd of Agartala Diocese. I considered myself blessed to represent our Brothers in India to be part of that momentous day in the life of the Diocese as well as in the life of the Bp. Lumen. My joy knew no bounds not only because he was someone known to me but above all for he was the first Indian Holy Cross Bishop to be consecrated in India. Extremely gifted in many splendid ways of which you have been reading for the past one year, yet the most distinct of all his qualities are his unshakable trust in the Lord and his resolute commitment to serving the people entrusted to his care beginning from his first assignment as a priest. He has been a rainbow in many people's cloud bringing the hope of Christ.

There is something remarkably unique about the élan of Bishop Lumen when he encounters people. I am reminded of an iconic black woman poet in USA who captures my sentiment as this time when she said: "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people

will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." Yes, that's what is distinct about Bp. Lumen. I may have forgotten many of what he has said to me, or even have forgotten what he did to me but I can never forget how he made me feel whenever we met. The singular attention he devotes to you and the fun and the laughter he brings out of you is irrefutably special. I have the privilege of knowing Bishop Lumen now for more than 35 years for sure. Every time we have met, be it in India or in the USA he has always brought to the table of our friendship an enduring joy, a feeling of fraternity, and an unmistakable sense of oneness in Christ.

May our tomorrows be filled with that same incandescent light of how Bishop Lumen has lighted the flame within each of

us.

With deepest appreciation for Bishop Lumen's special way of touching the lives and hearts of many people and a sincere THANKS to God for choosing him to be a shepherd after his own heart to "Lead Us Onward."

Your brother in Christ

John Britto CSC

Pastor

St. John the Evangelist Catholic Community

Viera, Florida, USA 32940





A dynamic personality

How does one describe a friendship that spans close to 50 years on a piece of paper (with a character limit!). Bishop Lumen and I have our roots in the same village in Goa. Though our schooling was in different corners of the country, we came together to do philosophy in 1974. What initiated our friendship I suppose was that we are both aquarians.



Lumen demonstrated his exemplary skills and talents from a very young age. To speak of his popularity, he was elected as the Class Representative from a mixed batch of students with large numbers from Jesuits, SVDs, Diocesans and other congregations. He took his role as CR seriously and would visit all units and motivated us to actively participate in academics, sports and other extra-curricular activities with full enthusiasm. Interestingly, from this batch emerged a faculty member to Jnana Deepa, Director of Asia Desk at Vatican, Director of XLRI Jamshedpur and XIM Bubhaneshwar, and Lumen as Provincial and Bishop. I think this was just the start of the various leadership roles he would play in his Province, the Diocese and the Commissions he chaired at the CBCI. I thank God for inspiring Bishop Lumen to follow his heart and his missionary spirit that has guided his long years in the NE. In the cradle of nature and the warm community of the state of Tripura, he has provided the leadership to carve out and nurture a Diocese over the

last two and a half decades.

Bishop Lumen's commitment was not limited only to the people of the North-East. He chaired commissions at the CBCI. I was happy as a member of the advisory body to have a close association with him when he was Chairperson of Caritas India. He guided Caritas very effectively in developing their strategic plan and make it

an impactful organisation. He built on the legacy of the past chairpersons and through this process was able to position the organisation for the next decade.

He has stayed true to his name "Lumen" and been a guiding light, to accompany each of his engagements within the Diocese and the Catholic Bishops Conference of India. There is also a strong element of the Ignatius in him no doubt.

On a personal note, he has been a great friend and guide over all these years. I have enjoyed the warmth of his friendship and some fruitful interactions over all these

years. A very simple, affectionate yet dynamic person.

I had the wonderful opportunity early in our friendship to be invited to his home in Calangute and enjoy time with his family. Our friendship has not lost its warmth inspite of the miles between us and the intervals between our meetings.

Congratulations to you Bishop Lumen on the 25th year of your Episcopal Ordination and establishment of the Agartala Diocese. Congrats to laying the foundations of the Diocese and for developing it over the last 25 yrs. I pray that God may continue to shower His Blessings on you and the Diocese to continue spreading His love and joy in the hearts of the people of the state of Tripura.

**Mr. Lourdes Baptista
(Classmate of Bishop)
Mumbai**



I am surprised to receive a note from Fr. Prasad asking



me to write a little note about Bishop Lumen.

As somebody who went to St. Joseph's College, Bangalore, played together in the College Basketball team, and almost grew up together in Holy Cross, what can I say about Bishop Lumen? To say the least, he is very gifted, and can succeed in almost any undertaking. Very sociable, people oriented, trustworthy, dedicated, Bishop Lumen feels the pulse of his people. When, late Rev. Fr. Mathew Vadakedam told me that Lumen will be the Bishop of Tripura, I knew the "Good Lord" has long fingers as late Rev. Bro. Madore used to say. Whether studying in St. Joseph's College or University of Notre-Damme, he remained true to himself "Lumen". He does have broad shoulders for anyone who wants to cry and a great spirit of celebration when it comes to join hands to enjoy the presence of the Lord amidst the ordinary folks. I have always received the "Link" on the 1st, of

every month for say, 25 years! It has always been the miracle news from Tripura, for those of us who are far away. Thank you Bishop Lumen for sharing the ups and downs in your journey.

May the Good Lord continue to inspire you Bishop Lumen long after your Silver Jubilee year, to bring the message of peace to all nations of "Good Will". In Collective Consciousness and in the spirit of Jesus, I wish you a great Silver Jubilee festivities to last a life long.

Chacko Kannikkatt & Marilynne Jacob,
Sherbrooke, QC, Canada.



Gentle Disposition

ANANDAM' was the name given to a Youth Centre which was founded in the late 70's early 80's by Bro Ulysses Hamel csc .(Brothers Of Holy Cross) in Park Circus , Kolkata . The Centre served as a meeting place, where the youth of the local parishes could interact both socially and spiritually . It also provided an opportunity to engage with those Brothers and Fathers of Holy Cross, who were



either resident there or perhaps visiting. Given that some of my friends (Dyllis and Angelo) from the Parish community were employed at Anandam , assisting at the administration level ,was reason enough for me to be a frequent visitor to the Centre. On one particular day I had arrived at the Centre to meet Agnelo, who happened to be away. Just as I was about to leave, I was met at the door by this person who was

bathed in perspiration, having just returned from a game of basketball earlier. He introduced himself as Lumen. When I mentioned that I was there to see Agnelo, his immediate reply was," Why do you need Agnelo, when I'm here?" His infectious manner, sharp wit and gentle disposition were hard to overlook. Months later, when he announced that he was being transferred to Bangalore, we were saddened. However not to be outdone, we had organised a surprise visit to him in Bangalore, soon after. We were provided accommodation at Holy Cross Centre in St. Mark's Road where he would be saying Mass that morning. We had discreetly seated ourselves amongst the others in the Chapel before the Mass and when he entered the room and began the blessing, he caught our eye! The expression of utter disbelief on his face, is still vivid in my mind to this day!! Also once, I had the privilege of visiting his family home in Calangute and meeting his dear parents. Over the years we have stayed in touch in one form or another. His friendship with me and my wife Teresa hold very dear to our hearts. His selfless ministry and dedication have won many hearts and I dare add - to be part of his life's story is a privilege to me and my family. May he remain forever blessed.

**Mr. Stephen
Australia**



I go back to the year 2002 as I was completing my diaconate ministry here in Agartala, I requested my bishop to fix a date for my ordination. It so happened that particular year we were asked to our ordinations separately in our own parishes. We were twelve of us for our Madras- Mylapore Archdiocese and the Archbishop and the Auxiliary bishop could not give

from Dubai. Because his brother was seriously ill and he went to meet him. He did not want to upset me by saying he would not be able to attend the ordination due to his brother's sickness rather he endured the pain and agony to himself and came for my ordination. He made my family members and my parish people happy with his usual style of friendliness and simplicity. My home

A Blessing



me any date as they actually forgot me completely. Then I requested them whether I could ask any other bishop to ordain me. They gave me permission. I requested bishop Lumen Monteiro whether he could come to my home town to ordain me. He willingly accepted to come over there to Chennai. The date was fixed to April 27, 2002. I was indeed very happy that I was the second priest to be ordained by him and the first diocesan priest (first was Fr. Utham Molsom SDB) for any diocese. I could still remember the day I received the bishop in the Airport who came directly

people could not believe that a bishop could be so casual like this. With his usual linguistic talent, he celebrated mass both in Tamil and English. The next day he had fly back to Agartala and after few days he had to go back to Dubai because his brother attained the eternal abode. I have not forgotten the sacrifice he did for the sake of my ordination. Dear bishop your kindness towards me will never be forgotten and I will remain always thankful for that.

K.M. Allwin
Parish Priest
Karbook

! a Good Mentor...

chosen by God to lead us, His chosen people.

At a personal note... I know His Grace, right from my school days in Holy Cross School, Agartala, where he was young and dynamic Administrator. I have a vivid memory of his conducting my admission interview, asking me the name of the colors, animals etc. Later on quite number of junctures he was invited for school annual functions and other important occasions of our school. Very soon in the year 1996, he was chosen to be the first Bishop of Agartala Diocese. He has been always been a spiritual mentor, guide and inspiration during my priestly formation years too. Especially when I came for holidays, I always made a point to visit him, and



“Be Shepherds with the smell of your sheep, in the midst of your people like Jesus, the Good Shepherd.” - Pope Francis

One of the principal potentials of a true shepherd is that he cares and protects the flock, even at the cost his own life. The same notion goes with our most Rev. Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC, DD, who had been a true shepherd for our Agartala diocese for the last 25 years. His vitality, simplicity, humility and compassionate nature replicate the qualities of a true Shepard. Our diocese and the Church, as a whole are blessed to have such a great spiritual leader who is

take his blessings and advice for my priestly formation. I am indebted to him for all the necessary arrangements that his grace has done during my diaconate ministry and priestly ordination last year amidst the pandemic crisis.

On this auspicious occasion of Silver Jubilee of our diocese and the Episcopal Silver Jubilee of Most Rev. Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC, DD, I pray to God Almighty that He may continue to guide his grace and our Diocese in the years to come. May his grace continue to be a Good Shepherd, caring and loving the people of God.

Fr. Robin Sekhar Das SFX
Guwahati



Our Bishop - God's Gift to Tripura

I vividly remember the first time I met our Bishop Lumen Monteiro, C.S.C., D.D., way back in 2001. I had just been baptised the previous year and I was a new Christian. It was at the blessing of a newly constructed village Chapel at Satpara under present Mandwi parish. Looking at him, it gave me an immense feeling of connectedness to the church as well as to God because in my mind he was the ambassador of God on earth. Seeing him, I bowed my



head in reverence and respect. It was such a blessing for me personally to have met the Bishop.

Again I had the opportunity to meet him when he visited our Mandwi Parish in 2009, that time I was elected as the Parish Secretary. That encounter with His Lordship evoked in me a sense of trust and convinced me of the fact that he is truly a people's Bishop. Since then, I had many opportunities to speak to him in close quarters and his insights and zeal for evangelization moved me closer to the church and to be of some help in my capacity as Lay leader. His caring and love for the faithful is very much evident on the faces of people when he visits the villages on pastoral programs. Bishop Lumen Monteiro gives us

all very agreeable and irrefutable views on various aspects of our Parishes and Diocese. One incident that remain etched in my memory was when I had gone to Bishop's House for a meeting as soon as the meeting got over, Bishop called me by my name and told me one day you will become someone and blessed me. His words came true in my life. Bishop is a source of blessing to our Diocese, because of his untiring Pastoral works and visits, the Diocese has grown manifold. Today, we have 24

parishes and more than 50,000 faithful. In 2018, I was elected as the Laity Association Secretary that position has brought me all the more close to His Lordship. His guidance, suggestions, approachability, cheerful nature and love for the people of God makes our faithful call him 'apha kaitor' (our father). On

this occasion of Episcopal Silver Jubilee and the Silver Jubilee of the establishment of the Diocese, I wish our dear Bishop, God's abundant blessings and good health.

Manoranjan Debberma

Secretary, CLT, Diocese of Agartala





As the Diocese of Agartala celebrates its silver years, I congratulate His Lordship Lumen Monteiro CSC DD its first bishop for having completed successfully 25 years and for leading the Diocese onward. It's indeed an emotional moment for me to pen a few lines on this solemn and joyous occasion. Time has flown but memories of 1996 – 1998 as the first office assistant for the newly established Diocese of Agartala has not faded away.

Having worked in active education ministry, it was not an easy task for me to engage in a ministry of office administration. It was a very exciting and a challenging ministry of two years.

I arrived in Agartala, soon after the Episcopal Ordination, looking for a huge edifice of a 'Bishop's House'. The concept of a Bishop's House, from what I have seen in the past was contrary and mind blowing. I was welcomed to my new place of work, to the new Bishop's House, the 'Andre cottage' situated adjacent to Holy Cross School!

The humble cottage where Bishop Lumen and his Vicar General, Fr. Hormis John resembled more of a lower middle-class family trying to live their life most happily and meaningfully. It might surprise you that even in that smallness, the Bishop and the Vicar General had their own separate spaces and with my entry, a common office space as well! In the initial days I always remembered Luke 9/58 "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." My new office space in the cottage also accommodated Bishop's House visitors as its parlour!

As our ministry progressed, my experience was that success and enthusiasm in building the Local Church does not depend on the great facilities though it might contribute. The leadership of Bishop Lumen with his adventurous and daring spirit, dynamic personality, keen intellectual acumen, enthusiasm, humour, friendly nature, simple life style with a clear vision and goal was always visible even in the smallness of facilities for the newly established Diocese.

By the end of 1996, the Bishop's House was

upgraded to 'another cottage' in the present location. It had a little more breathing space and it created a clear identity for the Diocese. The new location enhanced a great enthusiasm for the diocese among the clergy, religious and the faithful. I have experienced a wonderful spirit, cordiality and common vision for the growth and development of the Diocese. As a result, one experienced the emergence of new centers, parishes and institutions even in remote areas. Programs like clergy meetings, commission meetings, etc. became more systematic and regularized in spite of the challenges of the severe insurgency that the state of Tripura faced at that time.

Working with Bishop Lumen and with meager resources for the diocese I learned to be as economical as one could be; not even wasting a single piece of paper if it's one side is empty!

Those years were also wonderful opportunity for me to meet with many priests, religious and the faithful of the Diocese. Their missionary spirit and their adventurous living due to the insurgency were very compelling. The foundation for the Diocese was laid on their wonderful spirit and no wonder that at this time of the Silver Jubilee of the Diocese we see its enormous growth not just in its numerical strength of the institutions and the faithful but their deep commitment to the Local Church. It is indeed a Mission – 'Leading us onward'.

I am grateful to the Lord and for my superiors for providing me an opportunity to serve the new Diocese at its frugal times. I feel blessed for having Bishop Lumen to Lead the Diocese onward with its clergy, religious and the faithful. I pray that the Silver turn into gold for the greater glory of the Lord.

Sr. Severine Pinto, BS
Mangalore

