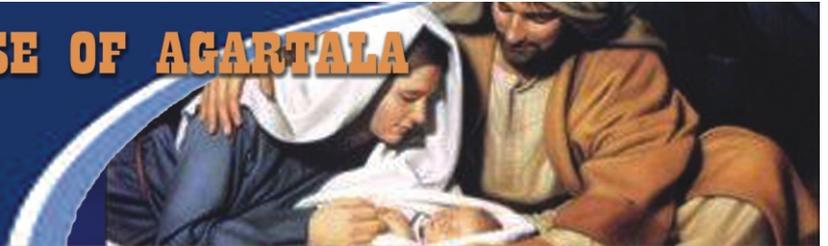




LINK
Lead Us Onward

DIOCESE OF AGARTALA



Agartala Diocesan Newsletter

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Pastor's Corner

Time to say Thank You Lord



What does one do 18 times a minute, 1800 times an hour and 25,920 times a day and rarely be conscious of it? The answer is 'breathe'. And each of these breaths is a measured gift from God. But how often have we thanked God?

On the fourth Thursday of November every year America celebrates Thanksgiving Day, a practice that has come down from the 17th century. Thanksgiving Day is also celebrated in different parts of the world. Though the meaning, date and customs may vary, they all still revolve around the concept of thankfulness. Thanksgiving has been defined as an expression of gratitude, especially to God.



I'm of the opinion that thanksgiving should not be confined to a day but to a way of life; [even though I myself am writing this piece keeping in mind the end of the calendar year, a time to say Thank You Lord!] But gratitude is an attitude. Genuine thankfulness is the wellspring of godliness. People who truly see their unworthiness of God's favour and are filled with gratitude to God cannot be proud, discontented, selfish, unforgiving, or hateful. A grateful person is also a humble person. So let us develop a grateful heart, one that recognises the gifts of God and turns it into a thankful heart, one that glorifies God.

The last day of December provides us a good opportunity to thank God for his numerous blessings during the year that is about to close. There's a story of a pastor who, looking back over his life marvelled at the goodness of the Lord to him, said, "I don't know if I am finishing well, but I am certainly finishing thankful." Such must be our thoughts at the end of the year. The Book of Psalms is filled with songs of thanksgiving and Psalm 136 is one such Psalm. Let us join the Psalmist in praising God, and also praying for a heart that will always remain grateful.

In less than a month we will be celebrating the joyous feast of Christmas and a week later will be New Year's Day. Let me take this occasion to wish all our Readers a joy-filled Christmas Season and a Happy New Year 2018. +*Lumen, CSC*

Editorial

Of things past, passing and yet to come!



There is something puzzling about the speed with which December always comes, bringing with it tad regret and surprise. Surprise that we have arrived at the end of another year so quickly and regret that we could not keep pace with the breakneck speed at which time galloped past us.

Despite our unfinished jobs, there is much to thank God for. Heaps of blessings we received as a people life, love and light, and as individuals too numerous or personal to mention. Then the thousand other blessings, most of them undeserved, that we take for granted as birthright. The Eucharistic Procession that was held a couple of weeks ago is still fresh in our minds - an extraordinary manifestation of faith and devotion.



The beautiful month of December that gently welcomes us into the festival of Christmas has a warmth and glow about it despite the cold and frozen atmosphere it thrusts us into. It's a warmth and glow that is easily contagious and heart-warming.

If we learn to handle well the commercial frenzy that surrounds the run-up to Christmas, it comes across to us as a time that brings out the best parts of our character and makeup. Generosity, for example. One hears of people voluntarily indulging in charitable deeds like free clothes distribution in the rural hamlets of the State, and rendering monetary assistance to poor students and other deserving sections of people.

In a State like Tripura, and a time when it is fearfully poised for an electoral battle, people have hardly time to think or talk about anything else. And yet, Christmas, one hopes, will arrive as a life-changing celebration, lighting up our tired, weary and wintry life. One must not forget to mention the first World Day of the Poor that we celebrated on the Sunday preceding the feast of Christ the King. It's a new celebration that has the potential to grow into a much-awaited event in the future. Its nearness to Christmas makes us want to think of it as the feast that inaugurates the Spirit of Christmas.

"Peace to men of goodwill." The Christmas song of angels seems especially composed for times such as these. Nothing, not even a crucial Assembly election like the one approaching, must keep us from entering wholeheartedly into the mystery of the Christmas and the joy it brings. Merry Christmas to you and Good Bye 2017!

J. Pulinthanath, SDB



LINK wishes all our Readers a MERRY CHRISTMAS and a Joy-filled, Peace-filled and Love-filled New Year 2018.



BAIJALBARI PARISH

Parish Community Day Celebration=2017

29th of October, 2017 was a great day of celebration for the parishners of Baijalbari. On that auspicious day, the parish people assembled at Baijalbari to celebrate the Parish Community Day. Parishioners remembered their Patron, St. John Paul II, and honored him in a fitting manner. The Parish Council had planned the function much ahead of time. All the sixteen *mothas* shared responsibilities for collection of funds, the spiritual preparation for reception of first Holy Communion and Confirmation, and the festal meal. Our Bishop Lumen presided over the Holy Eucharist and twelve priests concelebrated with him. The Bishop conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation and gave first Holy Communion to some of the parishioners. The holy Eucharist was followed by a short cultural program for welcoming the Bishop, Priests, Sisters and the Parishioners. Fr. Paul Panachickal SDB, Mr. Ramchanra Debbarma and Fr. Robert Mathias CSC spoke on the occasion. A sumptuous meal was served for all the participants from the funds generated by them. The Parish Community Day has certainly generated much enthusiasm among the faithful.

Fr. Paul Panachickal, SDB

KUMARGHAT PARISH

Retreat for Couples for Christ



The Inner healing Couples Retreat was conducted at Kumarghat Parish. Mr. Lawrence Ekka and Team from 'Couples for Christ' Calcutta guided the Retreat. It was held in three Zones of the Parish namely, Masil Reang on 17th, Kanchancherra on 18th, and Kumarghat on 19th. All the neighbor villages joined the Retreat. The themes for the Retreat were-- God's love for Couples; the meaning of Christian life; Sin; and the meaning of conversion. The Sessions consisted of Praise and Worship, Talks, Group discussion, Confession and concluded with the Holy Eucharist. The sharing of the participants was enriching experience for all. This Retreat helped them to deepen their faith in God and strengthen their relationship with one another and the family members. The participants felt the need to organize more of this kind of Retreats in the future.

Bro. Amalraj

BODJUNGNAGAR PARISH

Charismatic Retreat at Uruwa Motha and Tamakari Motha



The people of Uruwa *motha* had a wonderful chance to renew their life and come closer to Jesus through a Charismatic Retreat perched by Fr. Xavier, VC on 4th & 5th November. He guided the faithful to realize and experience the unfathomable love of God. The faithful too actively participated and made use the opportunity. Nearly 250 people experienced the compassionate love of God during these two days.

The faithful of Tamakari *motha* also participated in a two days of Charismatic Retreat preached by Fr. Paul. C.R CSC, on 11th & 12th November. The Retreat was concluded with the Holy Eucharist and nearly 220 people attended the Retreat.

Confirmation at Murabari and Tamakari mothas :



The Shepherd of our Diocese, Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, was here to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation to 60 people on 18th at Murabari *motha* and 75 people on 19th at Tamakari *motha*. Bishop gave them a meaningful message to spread the good news and inspire others bring to come closer to Jesus as mentioned in the Gospel of the day, to multiply and increase our talents not just in material things but in spiritual things too. This was followed by a colorful cultural programs in both *mothas*. The program was concluded with a fellowship meal as a traditional way of sharing their happiness with everyone gathered there.

Inauguration and Blessing of New Chapel at Tamakari

November 19, was a memorable day for the people of Resurrection Church at Tamakari. The people welcomed Bishop



Lumen and Fr. Hormis CSC, the V.G. of the Diocese and all the Fathers and Sisters with flowers and lighting the candles. Then the new village Chapel was inaugurated by Fr. Hormis, CSC, and blessed by our Bishop Lumen Monteiro, in the presence of the Fathers, Sisters and large number of faithful from Tamakari and the neighboring villages. The Holy Eucharist was presided over by Bishop Lumen. In his message he asked the people to be more of compassionate and merciful towards the poor and multiply the God given talents in their lives as proposed in the day's gospel. Bishop also appreciated the Parish Priest and the people for their efforts to build the house of God, and reminded them to remain ever faithful to the precepts of God. After the Holy Mass the people organized a short felicitation program. The entire celebration was concluded with festive meal.

Inauguration and Blessing of Peyton Block at St. Andre School

The extended new Peyton Block was constructed within a short span of time under the initiative and headship of Frs. Michael, CSC the Principal and Binoy, CSC, the Secretary of the School. It was built exclusively for the class XI and XII



students with all the modern technology for better education. On 11th November the Chief Justice of Tripura High Court Justice T. Vaiphei inaugurated the new Building Block after which Most Rev. Rev. Lumen Monteiro, CSC, blessed it in the presence of Fr. Robert Mathias, CSC, the Provincial

Superior of the Holy Cross NE Province. Several other Dignitaries, Priest, Brothers, Sisters and Parents attended the ceremony which was followed by a short felicitation program and a mind blowing cultural extravaganza. The event concluded with a festive meal. *Dn. Anthony Balan*

KHUMWLWNG PARISH

Marriage Preparation Course



There were 16 Couples for the Marriage Preparation Course arranged by St. Alphonsa Parish Khumulwng held at Pastoral Centre from 16th to 18th November 2017. Five Resource persons, three religious and two lay, were there to conduct the Course. The Parish has made the Course compulsory due to the deteriorating situation of marriages and family life. Couples and the families are going through very difficult and unpredictable times. It is the need of the hour to guide the Couples before they begin their married life. The Marriage Preparation Course was concluded with Confession, Holy Eucharist, and the issuing of Course Certificates.

Fr. Arun MinjSVD

GACHIRAMPARA PARISH

Blessing and Inauguration of Assisi School

The Inauguration and Blessing of Assisi English Medium School Building, sponsored by Kindermissionswerk Germany, was held on 15th November 2017. Rev. Fr. Joseph Dolphy Pais, the Provincial of Capuchin Fathers inaugurated the new Building and Bishop Lumen Monteiro blessed the new Building in the presence of the local MLA, Govt. Officials, Fathers, Sisters and about 2,000 people. The School children entertained the crowd with varieties of dances, songs and drama. The light and sound show thrilled the audience. A sumptuous meal was served for all the guests and special invitees.

Fr. Joel OFM Cap



EUCCHARISTIC PROCESSION ENTHRALLS AGARTALA



Agartala, 12 Nov. 2017: The city today witnessed a Procession, when the Catholic faithful from all nooks and corners of Tripura converged at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Durjoynagar for the 9th edition of State level Eucharistic Procession. An estimated six thousand people walked along the Airport Road adjacent to the Cathedral and the new Capital Complex, singing hymns and chanting prayers. Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro, CSC, DD, the Bishop of Agartala and the head of the Catholic Church in Tripura reverently carried the Eucharist on a decorated float with thousands of believers

devoutly accompanying it in a spirit of prayer and adoration. The Procession was preceded by the Holy Mass, which the Bishop celebrated in his newly built Cathedral, with over 60 priests concelebrating and thousands participating. In the homily the Bishop gave an overview of the history of the Eucharistic procession in the Church and called the procession “an opportunity for us to manifest the faith we live by, to reiterate to ourselves and others that Jesus is the centre of our lives.” When the Procession returned to the Cathedral, Fr Ivan D'Silva SVD and Fr Joe Paul CSC led the congregation in prayer and praise. Bishop Monteiro gave the people the solemn blessing of the Eucharistic Lord, bringing the days' program to an end.

The November Procession, uninterruptedly held for the past eight years, has grown into the largest gathering of the Catholic faithful during the year. It is organized by the All India Catholic Union (AICU) of the Agartala Diocese comprising entirely of lay people. AICU's advisor, Fr Thomas Pereira CSC attributed the success of the Procession to the “meticulous planning and untiring work” of AICU's leaders.

Fr. Joseph Pulinthanath, SDB

25 YEARS OF SVD PRESENCE IN NORTHEAST INDIA

Ambassa, November 9, 2017: More than 1,700 people along with 50 Religious and Priests witnessed the fabulous event of SVD celebration at Ambassa. The smooth conduct of the program should speak of the preparations that went behind it. As many as



26 Committees of Parishioners took up different responsibilities to make the celebration for successful. They were silently working behind the colorful pergola. The Celebration started with taking dignitaries to the tent with a traditional 'Garo' dance. Then Bishop Lumen Monteiro blessed the Mass stoles which were souvenir for the Jubilee. These were given to the Priests and one each to the Sister's communities by the Regional Superior, Fr. Maxim Rodriguez. The SVD Treasurer General from Rome Fr. Stephen Gerdes, was the representative from the

Generalate for this event. The entrance dance by the hostel girls led the celebrants to the Altar for the Holy Mass while the choir sang a melodious hymn directed by Fr. Ivan D'Silva.

Felicitation program culminated the memorable event. The program started with lighting of the lamp, floral tribute to the SVD Saints and a classical prayer dance by the parish youth. Different dances of Tripura such as Kokborok dance from Khumulwng Parish, Halam dance from Kamaranga Parish and Reang dance from Ambassa Parish was a proud moment to cherish the great culture of the tribes of Tripura. During the program the SVD pioneers to the Northeast India (ING) were remembered and honored. The history of SVD in the Northeast was read taking us back to the early days. 'Hati Khwtar' an audio CD by Fr. Ivan D'Silva in Kokborok language was released. Bishop admired the contribution of the SVD congregation in his Diocese and Northeast India as well. 22 SVD confreres from India Guwahati Region who are working in 7 Dioceses of Northeast to celebrate 25 years of SVD presence in the Northeast India.

Ambassa News Desk

THREE DAY WORKSHOP ON ETHNO-MEDICINE AT HOLY CROSS COLLEGE AGARTALA

A three-day workshop on the topic, “Impact of Climate Change to Preserve the Ethno-medicine and Indigenous Technical Knowledge in Tripura”, was organized by the Department of Zoology, HCC from November 08-10, in collaboration with Medicinal Plant Board of Tripura, and Tripura Tribal Research and Cultural Institute. The

Workshop was inaugurated by Sri Badal Choudhury, Hon'ble Minister of Health & Family Welfare and PWD. Sri Choudhury, was in high praise of the performance of Holy Cross College and congratulated the management, staff and students for becoming the first NAAC 'A'-graded College in Tripura. Dr. A.K Gupta, IFS, PCCF, Government of Tripura, encouraged and inspired the participants with his valuable Message. There were 98 participants in the workshop which aimed at helping students, scientists, researchers, academicians and policy makers to protect, safeguard and raise the value of medicinal plants of this region. The three days' workshop was highly inter-active and educative. The Chief Guest at the Valedictory function was Sri Sunil Debbarma, Director of Tribal Research and Cultural Institute of Tripura and the Guest of Honour was Sri Prasad Rao, IFS, CEO, Medicinal Plant Board of Tripura. *Fr. Emmanuel, CSC*



Community Health Association of Tripura

Arlen Specter says, "There's nothing more important than our good health; that's our principal capital asset." To secure the capital asset health of every individual, the members of CHAT work tirelessly bringing God's love and healing to people. The Members assembled for a Meeting along with Bishop Lumen and Fr Jeevan on 6th of November. We listened to the activities of each other and thanked God for the work done in the field of Health. More than 2,000 patients (new and follow ups), 560 students for screening of eye diseases and 394 for the detection of malaria have benefitted from our Centers. Those who are not health professionals are also contributing. Our sincere thanks to Bishop Lumen who is always an inspiration for us and who wishes that all may actively involve themselves in the area of Health as Jesus did whom we see as an Healer in the Gospels. There is a gradual decrease in the number of religious working in the medical field in our Diocese. Let this not be an obstacle to make known the good work that we do as everyone is involved in the health ministry in some way or the other. *Sr. Prema BS*



JUST News Roundup

Human Rights & PIL for Peace Building



On the 7th October JUST organized a State level workshop on Human Rights & PIL for peace building in Tripura. The Facilitators of the workshop were Dr. Colin Gonsalves (Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India, founder of HRLN) and Ms. Olivia Bang, Advt. Supreme Court on India. Other dignitaries present for the workshop were Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro CSC, DD Bishop of Agartala and Prof. K.K Roy retired Principal of Tripura

Government Law College. The Workshop began with a Prayer song and a Welcome Speech by the Director of JUST Fr. Jeevan, SVD. The opening Message was delivered by Most Rev. Bishop Lumen Monteiro and a Speech by Prof. K.K Roy and by all other invitees present in the Workshop. The next Session was by Ms. Olivia Bang who shared about her knowledge on PIL, Maternity benefit under JSSK, Right to Education, Right to Food, and Women's Reproductive Rights followed by Questions and clarifications. The workshop was very fruitful and ended successfully with vote of thanks.

Capacity Building of VDPOs

JUST under CBR Project organized a capacity building program for the Village Level Disabled Peoples Organization (VDPOs) in the month of October at Duski, 14 Ghat and Moharchara under Teliamura R.D Block. The programs were conducted between 10:00 am to 3:00pm at all the venues. About 35 VDPOs members (Male-15 & Female-20) participated in the capacity building program. In the process of capacity building, the Coordinator Mr. Prasata Chowdhury took time in finding out about the status of the

group's activities, Income Generation activities and also reviewing the new RPD Act 2016. The Facilitator gave inputs on various topics and suggestion to strengthening of the VDPOs. The programs were successfully conducted with all the VDPOs in all the target villages. *Mr. Vincent Debbarma*

Our Distinguished Visitors

- Sr. Margaret Gallagher, SJA Gen. Councillor from France
- Sr. Lynett, SJA Provincial Superior from Odisha
- Sr. Mary John, SSpS Gen. Councillor from Rome
- Sr. Alphonse Mary, SSpS Provincial Superior from Guwahati
- SAC Srs. Sharmila & Angela from Bengaluru
- Christian Brothers Simon and Stelljes from Shillong
- Sr. Marcella, AC Provincial Superior from Kolkata
- Mr. Joseph Antony, Sports Editor of Hindu from Hyderabad
- Fr. Augustine VC, Vice Provincial from Kolkata
- Fr. Innocent VC, Procurator from Kottayam
- Sr. Gracia Antony, SCC Provincial Superior from Guwahati
- Fr. Dolphy Pais, OFM Cap Provincial from Bengaluru
- Fr. Stany OFM Cap Provincial Delegate from Mizoram

Bishop's Program for December 2017

- 01-04: Pope's Visit Bangladesh
- 10: Parish Pastoral Program, Bishramganj
- 11-13: Caritas PSC Meet, Delhi
- 14: Meet SRA Provincial Superior
- 15: Christo Mela, Champaknagar
- 17: Silver Jubilee of Belbari, Khumwllwng Parish
- 17: Christo Mela, Tuikarmaw
- 18: Christo Mela, Karbook
- 20: Christo Mela, Kamaranga
- 22: Advance Christmas, Chailentah under Kathalcherra Parish
- 23-24: Monacherra *mondoli* Inauguration, under Gachirampara Parish
- 24: Midnight Mass, Kathalcherra
- 25: Christmas Day Mass, SFX Cathedral
- 27-29: Diocesan Youth Convention, Nandanagar
- 31: Silver Jubilee Singlung *motha*, under Moharpara Parish