



Pastor's Corner

Christmas - A time to look beyond ourselves and reach out to others



Christmas celebrates the gift of Emmanuel -God with us- the guiding light of God in the unfolding history of human beings. God entered history in human form with unconditional love, to love even his enemies into loving. The birth of Christ planted hope in the heart of

history. May the celebration of the birth of Christ remind us to uphold human dignity and to nurture respect for all forms of life, especially in the wake of the religious violence, ethnic conflicts, armed revolutions and intolerance that threaten the peace of our country, whose hallmark has been openness and tolerance.

Christmas is about the wonder of God among us coming in vulnerability. It's about the simplicity of life as a pure gift. It's about the hope we all can have that however non-descript our origins, we are destined for something eternal.

Christmas is also a time to look beyond ourselves and to reach out to others. A time to capture a glimpse of God whose gift is hope. A time to look beyond what we see, however bleak it might seem, to

discover signs of goodness and of beauty, of hope and of joy, wherever people are trying to do their best.

Christmas is a time to pause, reflect, and enjoy the simple blessings of the season giving each an opportunity to reconnect with family and friends, to capture its joy, to experience its peace and comfort and to wonder at the sights and sounds of the holidays.

I wish you a Joy-filled, Peace-filled and Love-filled blessed Christmas
+Lumen, CSC



Editorial

Summing Up!



The month of December, despite having 31 days, always feels too short for the many things we want to do that month. We want to make a good ending, and neatly sum up all that we have procrastinated in past months. At least, we want to tie up the butt ends of our days and ways in some satisfactory manner before we take leave of the year. But December is deceptive. It seldom provides the time we require to do these things. And seldom do we feel more tellingly time's winged chariot hurrying near than at the twilight time of the year when something like a small regret grips us. It seems there are "too many books I haven't read, too many places I haven't seen, too many memories I haven't kept long enough" (Irwin Shaw) not to mention the set of resolutions we had made at the

beginning of the year, most of which are in shambles, really.

A little time we need, indeed, to take in the fact that we're at the fag end of another year and look back at the path we have trudged. And a little time to relish the memories that still linger because arguably, December is the month that stirs up most memories of Christmas shopping, carols and family reunions.

For the Tripuri tribal, there is *Tring* too, the slightly controversial New Year that most brothers and sisters of the tribal community celebrate with a great deal of sacrifice and also mirth. (Sacrifice because it calls for keeping vigil the whole night in some *maidan* or other, suffering the December cold and fog).

For us Christians December is primarily about none of these, but about getting ready for Christmas and about Christmas itself. It's the time of the year when our parishes and villages of the Diocese come alive with enthusiasm and fervor. But the popularity that Christmas enjoys is at times part of the very problem. Come December, it's celebrations already: pre-Christmas gatherings or advanced Christmas as they are called. The practice of plunging into Christmas celebrations from the start of December that some Denominations indulge in don't help much either. The season of Advent struggles to survive. Even where it survives, it is shorn of the

penitential aspect that once surrounded it.

The spirit of commerce that surrounds Christmas of the present times has invaded even our remote villages. It takes a great deal of effort to keep the Child Jesus and his story at the centre of Christmas and of the Season.

As a Church it's perhaps worth the trouble to see if there are ways in which the goodwill and enthusiasm that Christmas generates among our faithful can be better harnessed for deepening their faith. Christmas is round the corner once again "Glory to God in the highest and peace to men of goodwill". Merry Christmas! **J. Pulinthanath, SDB**



Christmas Greetings

LINK wishes all its Readers and Patrons a Merry Christmas and Seasons greetings. blessings on you and your family in this joyous Season.

AMBASSA PARISH Ecumenical Youth Gathering



An all denomination Youth gathering was held at Catholic Church, Ambassa on October 19, 2018. Prior to it the United Christian Forum for Human Rights Executive Committee had Meeting to discuss about this gathering and chalked out the details of the program. The Chief Guest was the honorable Minister for Tribal Welfare & Forests Mr. Maver Kumar Jamatia. In his address he called on all the Christian Leaders to unite together for Peace in Tripura, saying "Peace doesn't come if we sit quiet, but we need to work for it". Over 250 Youth, Pastors and Leaders participated. Mr. Antony Debbarma, the well known Human Rights activists of Tripura, gave a session on Human Rights. He made all the participants aware about the Rights of tribal people. Later Dr. Ashok Debbarma spoke on the 'Drug abuse'. He said, "Youth have become the victims of drugs and lost their lives. It is high time for all of us to aware of the situation and stop this menace". Pastor Himdri Kalai led the whole gathering into praise and worship. Mr. Prabath Marak welcomed the gathering with two beautiful group songs sung by the Catholic Youth choir. The gathering ended with Lunch for all the participants. *News bureau, Ambassa*

BAIJALBARI PARISH Parish Day celebrated



Baijalbari Parish celebrated the Parish Day of its Patron St. John Paul II on 4th of November. The occasion brings together a large gathering of the faithful of various villages at the Parish Centre, highlighting the unity of the people with the priests and Religious at the Centre. This sense of unity with the church always generates a great enthusiasm and joy. One observes

a renewal in faith and an innate desire to proclaim the Good News. This year witnessed spiritual preparations for the Parish Day. A Charismatic Retreat of four days was conducted by a group of spirit-filled and committed lay Christians from Kerala. The participation of sizeable number of parishioners was an indication of their desire for the Word of God. We also conducted first Holy Communion instructions in various villages insisting that parents be present for the first Communion of their children. For the first time people were prepared for the sacrament of Confirmation. All were blessed by the presence of our dear Bishop Lumen who exhorted all for greater unity and fidelity to Jesus and the Church. Eight concelebrants joined the Bishop for the holy Eucharist which contributed to the solemnity of the Feast.

Fr. Paul Panachikkal, SDB

KUMARGHAT PARISH Maria Sango Annual Retreat



From 19th to 21st October, Maria Sango Annual Retreat was held at Sonaimuri Village in Kumarghat Parish. The theme for this year was "Behold I am the Handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word" Lk: 1:38. The participants were around 105 Women from different Villages of the Parish. The first day started with holy Rosary after which Mr. Chandrajoy Reang from Kathalcherra Parish gave an awareness session on the prevention of Cancer by explaining about the causes like, Cosmetics, Tobacco and Smoking, etc. Next day Fr. Ivan, SVD, spoke about the importance of Family life. He emphasized on the responsibilities of the mother and father in the family and their role in the family as well as in the society. He also showed that in the present scenario parents should protect their children especially the girl child, and a mother's special responsibility to take care of the children. In the evening the Women participated in Competitions on the Bible and traditional cultural dances. They elected new Office Bearers at the Zone level and central level. On the last day Fr. Arul, CSC, highlighted the importance of the families. It was a fruitful Retreat.

Sr. Amali, FS

GACHIRAMPARA PARISH Youth Gathering

Three day's Youth gathering was held at our Parish from 5th 6th and 7th of Oct which brought together 47 Youth from the different substations. Various Input Sessions were given to the Youth like 'What is gospel/good news; 'How to be a present day leader in the church'; 'what are the strengths and roles of youth in the church' etc. Youth gathering was animated by the Parish Youth Animator Fr. Walter D'Souza. Various portfolios were made for the functioning of Youth in the Parish.

Parish Feast day celebrated



It was a day of joy and celebration on 7th of Oct for Gachirampara Parish as the people from various substations gathered for 2 days to mark the Annual Feast of our Patron St. Francis of Assisi. We had the privilege of having amidst us Fr. Thomas Pereira, CSC, the Principal of Holy Cross School Chailengta who presided over the Holy Eucharist and gave a meaningful homily. Fr. Kiran added more insights as to why St. Francis is called as 'Mirror of Christ' and his relevance in today's society. Many Priests and Religious Sisters from the neighboring parishes and convents were present and who doubled our joy. The Parish Priest Fr. Felix Pinto gladly thanked everyone and the day's celebration ended with a festal Meal.

Cancer Control Awareness Program - 14th October

A day of Cancer Control Awareness Program was held at Kudungsei substation. There were around 45 Women participants from different substations. Sr. Prema, BS and Dr. Ashok were the Resource Persons. The Parish priest Fr. Felix Pinto on the importance of being aware of Cancer which in the present day. It was an enriching and successful program which was organized under the direction of the Agartala Diocese.

Bishop's Pastoral Visit

It was our special privilege to have



Bishop Lumen in Phaikua Substation on the 28th of Oct. not even 16 continuous hours of rain which started on the previous evening could hinder the determination and enthusiasm of the Bishop from entering the little prayer house at Phaikua village. Though the well-planned cultural items were completely cancelled due to the rain, the Holy Eucharist was celebrated by the Bishop amidst rain and water all

around the prayer house. The faithful in the village waited for Bishop in spite of the heavy rain and Bishop was led to the prayer house supported by both the hands of the *mondoli* President and Secretary.

Fr. Felix Pinto, OFM, Cap.

MANDWI PARISH

Simple but meaningful Marriage

On 23rd October after the Marriage Preparation Course, that was held from 18th to 20th October, Parimal Debbarma from Chakma Para and Kalpana Debbarma from Baljalbari Parish, had a simple yet meaningful wedding. The marriage was blessed with the minimum expenditure. There was no decoration, no big crowd, and no big celebration. Few relatives and witnesses were there during the marriage. Yet both of them spent more



time for prayer before their marriage. The marriage was blessed in the small chapel in Don Bosco School Mandwi by Fr. Hubert Thyrning SDB, the Parish

Priest. Parimal and Kalpana understood the real meaning of marriage. It is not the big celebration but God's blessing. They decided to get married in the simple way. The Parish Priest praised them and encouraged people to prepare more spiritually than externally.

Fr. Hubert, sdb

Diocese News Nuggets

10th State level Holy Eucharistic Procession "Abba Bless our Land"



11th November 2018, will go as one of the most memorable day for the large number of about 7,000 Catholic faithful inclusive of Priests, Religious and Laity who came to participate in the 10th holy Eucharistic Procession held at Auxilium School Grounds, Nandannagar Parish. For the Catholics who total about 45,000 in the Diocese, this is indeed a significant gathering of witnesses. Availing the Sacrament of Reconciliation before Mass was a beautiful experience that many cherished. As the Priests walked towards the Altar for the Eucharistic celebration, they were led by Dancers from all the 20 Parishes who danced to a tune of one musical piece, displaying variety in steps just as the variety seen among the people, but one tune adeptly portraying the oneness of the faith. The Holy Eucharist was presided over by Bishop Lumen and concelebrated by priests from the whole Diocese. Fr. Paul Olphindro, SDB, the Provincial Superior of Shillong Province also graced the occasion. The melodious

choral group of Auxilium Girls and Sisters with familiar hymns made the singing lively and participatory. In his homily Bishop Lumen stressed on the importance of the Eucharist and Thanksgiving in 3 languages which touched the hearts of the faithful. While the shepherd spoke, the people listened with rapt attention. After the holy Mass people walked in procession with the Holy Eucharist placed between the faithful who led and those who followed. From Auxilium School to Sukanta Pali Road through Marak Para and back to the venue, the Eucharistic Lord made the journey with HIS followers. The people sang and prayed making the procession a devotional witness of faith. The melodious choir group of Auxilium Convent, the Don Bosco Band, St. Andre School Band, and the beautifully decorated chariot to carry Blessed Sacrament prepared by Ferrando Sisters, the faithful with their Parish banners, prayers and devotional songs, has added extra beauty to the Procession. After the procession, as the Blessed Sacrament arrived at the venue for adoration, once again the dancers from 20 Parishes went before the Eucharistic Lord towards the altar with their beautiful steps and divine moves. The familiar Biblical event of King David dancing before the Ark comes to mind at such wonderful sight. Fr. Jomon SVD led the faithful to a fervent praise and adoration of the Lord, the devotional participation of the people was worth mentioning.

The wonderful faith event was possible because of the detailed planning and organization of the AICU Leaders along with their advisor Fr. Binoy, CSC, the generosity of Auxilium Convent, the help from the Parishioners of Nandanagar Parish under the leadership of Fr. Sunny, SDB, the support from Women, Youth Volunteers, generous individuals, Parishes and Institutions. The memorable day was truly blessed by the LORD.

Fr. Lawrence Darlong & Mr. Paul Darlong

Free Health Camps



Two Health Camps were organized by JUST at Katonjoy Para and Moniram Para a very remote village under Ganganagar R.D Block in Dhalai District in the month of October 2018. Altogether 188 villagers benefitted from the health camps. JUST Project Staff led by the Project Coordinator Mr. Lilmohan Reang along with Dr. Philip Reang, Medical Officer from Ganganagar PHC examined the patients and distributed free medicines to the villagers. The villagers who attended the health camp

were mostly women and children. Most of them had complaints of Fever, Headache, Cough, Stomachache, Skin diseases, Gastric, etc. But the maximum numbers of them were mal-nourished. Vitamin-B Complex was also distributed to all those who were mal-nourished. During the Health camp four persons were also detected with Malaria and they were given necessary medicines.

Saplings Distribution

JUST organized Saplings Distribution program on 16th October in the Borkathal area. The program began with an Awareness Talk on the importance of preserving Forest and Environment. The Facilitator shared that we thank God for the environment because the air we breathe comes from the earth. Then he spoke about our ancestors, how they lived longer with good health because of the good environment they had. He also shared on the importance of earth especially on the natural resources such as soil, water, trees, etc. He insisted that every human being is responsible to protect the environment from pollution. He told to the Farmers that we all should take the



responsibility to keep clean the environment that we live in and told them to reduce using plastics and harmful materials to protect the environment and also to give awareness to everyone they know. He also told them to pay more attention and take care of the saplings so that there can be both, income as well as promotion of environment. At the end of the program 170 Mango saplings, 100 Litchi saplings, 30 Mosambi saplings and 50 Lemon saplings were given to 25 Farmers who are under FARM-NE Project. *Mr. Cyril Darlong*

India News Nuggets

Vatican appoints Cyril John as Member of CHARIS

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) congratulates Mr. Cyril John on his appointment as a Member of CHARIS (Catholic Charismatic Renewal International Service) constituted on the personal initiative of the Holy Father Pope Francis. An announcement from Vatican's Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, said that the Holy See was erecting a new body, CHARIS, for providing a new,

single, international service for the needs of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the Church. The Holy See appointed Dr. Jean-Luc Moens from Belgium as the Moderator of the new entity and Rev. Fr Raniero Cantalamessa OFM Cap, Papal Preacher from Italy, as its Ecclesiastical Advisor. Mr. Cyril John will represent Asia on the 18-member new worldwide body, for a three-year term. *CBCINews*

FABC gets a new President

We are happy to announce the election of

His Eminence Charles Maung Cardinal Bo, SDB as the new FABC President. Cardinal Bo will succeed Cardinal Gracias who was FABC Secretary General from January to December 2012 and will complete on December 31, 2018, two terms of office as FABC President. Cardinal Bo's first term of office as Head of FABC will become effective January 1, 2019.

Fr. William LaRousse

Bishop's Program for December 2018

- 01: Montfort School Silver Jubilee, Champaknagar
- 02: Pastoral Program, Khumulwng Parish
- 03: ADPC Meet & Clergy Meet & SFX Parish Feast, Agartala
- 04: Meet SAC, Superior General
- 05: Catechists Renewal Program, Champaknagar
- 06: Garo III Chapel Blessing, under Kathalcherra Parish
- 07: Sr. Maria SJA, Silver Jubilee at St. Joseph Hospital
- 08-09: Parish Feast, Moharpara
- 13-14: CBCI pre-Christmas and Caritas PSC, Delhi
- 15-16: Pastoral Program, Bishramganj Parish
- 16: Christo Mela, Tuikarmaw
- 18: JUST GB Meet & X'Mas Program, Agartala
- 20: Christo Mela, Kamaranga
- 21: Christo Mela, Karbook
- 22: Holy Cross Class of 95 Get Together, Agartala
- 23: Holy Cross Parish Church Blessing, Bagbasa
- 24: Midnight Mass, Mariamnagar
- 25: Christmas Day Mass, Nandannagar
- 30: Parish Pastoral Program
- 31: New Year Vigil Mass, SFX Cathedral

Our Distinguished Visitors

- Frs. Victor, Jerome and Pascal from Udupi Diocese
Fr. Jose Kuruvila Peedikayil, OIC Superior General from Kottayam
Fr. Mathew Jacob Thiruvailil, OIC Provincial Superior from Trivandrum
Fr. Mathew Manaluvila, OIC Mission Coordinator, Trivandrum
Fr. John Nirmaland, OIC Rector of Pre-Novices, Trivandrum
Frs. James and Robin from Kothamangalam, Kerala
Mrs. Inge, Mrs. Bettina & Ms. Jessica from Liechtenstein
Mr. Lukas and Mrs. Berin from Bangalore
Sr. Mary, CSJ from Meghalaya
Mr. Denny, Engineer from Bengaluru
Sr. Elizabeth, FMA Provincial from Shillong
IMS Provincial Fr. Arun John & Fr. Johnson, IMS from Varanasi
Fr. Jagdish Parmar, SJ, National Director of PWPN from Siliguri