



Pastor's Corner

We are in the Season of Lent, the 40 days period before Easter, participating and reflecting on the sufferings of Jesus as He endured His passion and death. Lent is a universal call to repentance and presents us with a discipline to strip away those things which clutter our life or impede us from being in relationship with God. One characteristic is abstinence which put differently translates as 'Giving Up'. The Prophet Isaiah, several hundred years before Christ, says that 'Giving Up' is more than giving up food, drink or pleasure. His is an invitation to *remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free. Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear...* (Is. 58, 6-7)

A modern day writer, Marguerite Theophil, suggests this 'Giving Up' could be replaced with a more positive 'Taking On'. In *The Speaking Tree* she beautifully narrates how as a young person she took 'Giving Up' very seriously. *Year after year I actually made it through all 40 days with no chocolate, cake, sweets or ice-cream feeling piously wonderful over the accomplishment. But like others, right after Easter, I began eating sweets again; perhaps more than before. There was no long-lasting benefit from the abstinence. And it was not only we children who behaved*

this way. Lent can and should be a time for expansion, re-dedication, and connection with others; either replacing the somewhat reluctant 'Giving Up' with a more positive 'Taking On', or doing a bit of both. With a hope that these actions would last far longer than the designated 40 days, Marguerite proposes 'Taking On'



activities like *actively volunteering our time and resources; befriending the lonely; feeding the hungry; listening more deeply and caringly; speaking more kindly; reducing our non-ecological habits.*

So, rather than make Lent 2012 only a time of self-denial let us make it a time of pursuit of justice and peace as well.

+Lumen, CSC

From 'Giving Up' to 'Taking On'

Editorial



The 2011 census revealed some thought-provoking data regarding Tripura. The percentage of indigenous population of the State is said to have further shrunk from the 31 percent it was earlier despite the State's total population registering an improved 36,71,032.

Another interesting bit of information is about the urban-rural ratio found in the State. Since 2001, the census says, there has been a growth of 9.12 percent in urban population but an almost 11 percent dwindling of the rural population. The rural population of Tripura went down to 73.82 per cent from the earlier 82.94 percent".

If we thought 'migration into cities' is a phenomenon that happens only in the large cities of India, the census tells us to think again.

The villages of Tripura are gradually becoming abandoned places inhabited only by children and the elderly that have no possibility of moving 'town-wards'. The youth have left the village long ago. In earlier years, insurgency-related reasons made them come out of the villages; today education does.

There is much in this bit of information for the community to think about. Most often, going away from the village, even temporarily, signals the beginning of a going away from land. For a community that traditionally depended on agriculture, it is a

Movin' Matters

death knell of sorts. It also causes other things like village festivals, village structures, and the language itself to suffer immensely.

The saddest thing in all this is perhaps the mind of the migrant that has implicitly given up on things like culture, tradition, language, childhood memories, emotional bonding with the village, etc, to more practical considerations like education, financial security, better prospects.

But then, one cannot go on living in an idyllic notion of some perfect village that simply does not exist; one must get on in life.

Considering that the greater part of its members consist of villagers, there is much in this bit of information for the Church to think about too. Most of them received and continue to receive 'faith' in the village setting. When they do, there is generally the village Church to back them, support them and nourish their faith.

It is true similar assistance may be found in the city too; but it is never the same. Being uprooted from their 'context' of faith, it takes a while for them to acclimatize to the new surroundings and ways. And there isn't unfortunately much they can avail the help of, in this specific area.

The city-ward movement is certain to continue at least for a while more. That's sufficient reason for us to take stock of the dynamics of this 'movement', and ensure that we accompany our flock at all times and in all places.

J. Pulinthanath, sdb

Congratulations

LINK
Congratulates
Bishop Lumen
on his election
as Chairman of
Caritas India.



Kathalcherra Parish

22nd Maria Sangha Annual Meet 2012



The twenty second *Maria Sangha* Annual Meet was conducted at Josephnagar on the 21st and 22nd January. The theme of the Meet for this year was "Faith and Holiness."

Fr. Hormis John CSC was the Resource Person. More than ninety women participated in the Annual Meet. During this meeting a new Executive Committee was formed with Mrs. Sadhona Darlong as President and Mrs. Jamuna Darlong as Secretary. Each Parishioner shared their views on activities like SCC, village visits, and prayers over the sick and bereaved families, charitable works, and self sacrifice. The main activities organized by the *Maria Sangha* were "Women's Day," "Father's Day," "Mothers Day" and "Girl Child Day". The concluding Holy Eucharist was offered by the Parish Priest Fr. Lourthusamy, CSC. At the end of the

Depacherra Parish

Annual Sports Day

Holy Cross High School, Depacherra celebrated their annual Sports day with usual fanfare on 18th February 2012. The preparations were made much in advance and the whole campus wore a festive look. Lot of parents and *alumni* were present to witness this sporting festival of the School. Mr. Rajib Sengupta, Asst. Commandant, TSR 5th Battalion was the Chief Guest. The program began with prayer dance followed by felicitation of the Guests. Fr. George Jacob, CSC, gave a short



encouraging speech and declared the sports meet open. Once the torch bearers lit the flame, the March Past by the four houses, the equestrian display, Mass Drill, Action Songs and Traditional Dances were some of the highlights that all seated were agog. The 100m race for parents had all standing in awe. Junior students enjoyed fun sporting events. For seniors, athletic events like sprint race, zigzag race, shuttle run, relay and obstacle race were held. The programme ended with the prize distribution and the vote of thanks *Mr. David*

Kumarghat Parish

Annual Parish Sabha 2012

The entire Parish of Kumarghat gathered at Dolubari for the **Parish Sabha 2012** on the eve of 27 Jan 2012. Focusing ourselves on the Year of the Mission, the



Theme chosen was '**Faith by itself, if it has no works is dead**' (James 2: 17). Bishop Lumen Monteiro in his inaugural Message called upon every Christian to be a living witness in the family and society and thus be an active evangelizer. In his address Fr. Joachim SVD invited the faithful to deepen their faith and inculcate the habit of family prayer. The three days were filled with very many activities like presentation of the village reports, cultural competitions, input sessions, free discussions, Parish report, etc. It was also an occasion for the Parish to celebrate the 50th Birthday of Fr. Thomas Pereira, CSC, the PP Kumarghat. The *Parish Sabha* ended with the solemn Eucharist presided over by our dear Bishop Lumen wherein over hundred faithful received the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Fr. Valerian Castelino, CSC

MSMHC gets new Superior General

LINK congratulates Rev. Sr. Philomena Mathew who has been elected the 4th Superior General of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians' (MSMHC) Congregation on 28th January 2012, during the General Chapter at their Generalate in Guwahati. She succeeds Sr. Mary Thadavanal who served in office for two consecutive terms. Sr. Philomena earned her Licentiate in Missiology at the Urbaniana University Rome, and a Doctorate in Missiology from St. Peter's Pontifical Institute of Theology Bangalore.

News from the Parishes

Gachirampara Parish

Holy Childhood Day Celebrations

"Children Beacons of Hope for the Future" was the theme. Keeping in mind



this theme we the Assisi Catholic Mission Centre at Gachirampara celebrated Holy Childhood and

Assisi Hostel day on 12th February 2012. On this day the students of our hostel conducted the liturgy meaningfully with a melodious choir that helped the faithful to pray better.

After the Holy Mass, we had a cultural program organized by the hostel students under the guidance of Fr. Dominic and Ms. Gondarung. Fr. Felix Pinto and the Rtd. Head Master of Gachirampara High School were the invited guests of the program. The students performed a colorful galaxy of programs exhibiting their talents. Prizes were distributed to the students. Parents and the parishioners who attended the program went back home contented, leaving a note of appreciation to Fathers and students.

Fr. Godwin OFM Cap.

Calcutta gets new archbishop

Co-adjutor archbishop Thomas D'Souza was named the ninth archbishop of Calcutta by Pope Benedict XVI. He succeeds Archbishop Lucas Sirkar, who resigned after attaining the age of superannuation, according to a statement from the Archbishop's House in Calcutta.



Born in Mangalore on August 26, 1950, Archbishop D'Souza came to Darjeeling 16 years later and was ordained a priest for the diocese in 1977. He was later named the first bishop of the newly created diocese of Bagdogra in 1977.

Academic Year of Minor Seminary Inaugurated...Hip...Hip...Hurray!

Jeevadhara at Champaknagar is the Diocesan Minor Seminary administered by the SVD Fathers. It was befitting to have His Lordship Bishop Lumen Monteiro to inaugurate the Seminary Academic year 2012 with the Holy Mass. Two days of Recollection under the guidance of Fr. George Rodrigues SDB, the Diocesan Youth Director, served as a good preparation. In his interactive talk the Bishop stressed on three elements needed for the academic year-- to be authentic in words and action, to be prayerful, and to excel in studies. The candidates are encouraged and energized with the friendly interactions of the Bishop. The spirit of joy led the candidates to win the Volleyball Match with Montfort hostellers. Let us continue to pray for local vocation.

Fr. Arun Minj SVD

Apostolic Carmel step in Agartala Diocese

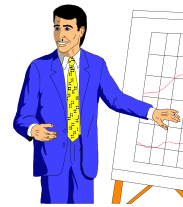
The Apostolic Carmelite Sisters (commonly known as AC) are here in Tripura at the invitation of Bishop Lumen Monteiro to continue the work of Christ, rooted in our charism especially that of the Eastern Province. Sr. Mirabelle, the Provincial Superior accepted to begin our endeavor in this Diocese by assisting in the educational venture. Srs. Christell, Jasmine D'Souza and Marie Fay arrived at Agartala on 16th January 2012 to take up the new responsibility entrusted to them. We as a Congregation are overjoyed by the warm welcome and support we have received and pray to the Lord to 'Lead us Onward'.

The ardent desire to be with the Creator, urged Mother Veronica of the passion to serve humanity with generosity, courage and determination which gave birth to the Apostolic Carmel. She founded the Congregation of the Apostolic Carmel at Bayonne in France in 1868 and established it in Mangalore, India in 1870. The Sisters of the Apostolic Carmel try to combine in their lives contemplative prayer and serve the needs of the day. The focus of their apostolic service is to find Christ in his people, the Church and the world. Today there are over 176 institutions of the Congregation. Mother Veronica's work lives in our 2,000 Sisters who serve God and people throughout the country and abroad.



Assessment, Evaluation and Planning Workshop for 2012

25 representatives reported from 10 different parishes for the Assessment, Evaluation and Planning session that was held from 27th- 29th January at JUST. Elections for the new team were also held at this time. In the report, the secretary



Mr. Andrew Uchoi, enumerated the various successes and the shortcomings of the Commission. The successful completion of the Youjub Cross from parish to parish,

the release of the theme song, "together with faith.", and football tournament that was successfully completed, were some of the high points of the ICYM-Agartala. Dr. Mrinal Debbarma, who was invited to meet the youth leaders, very candidly, spoke of the need for physical health, social health and educational health. Another feather to be added in our cap was the plan to start a website: www.icym-agartala.com. Mr. Roshan Debbarma as President and Ms. Nirmala Hrangkhawl as Secretary were elected as the new Office Bearers among the others. At the Eucharist celebrated on the 28th Jan 12 and before the Youth Director the new Executive members pledged to be faithful to their offices. At the conclusion the Director Fr. George Rodrigues sdb, warmly thanked the outgoing Office Bearers for their services to the youth of the Diocese. He also thanked Fr. Robert csc and his team from JUST, who saw to the lodging and boarding of the delegates and to all parish priests/the parish youth animators/leaders who responded positively by sending their delegates.

Sr. Marie Fay, AC

Fr. George Rodrigues, SDB, DYD

New Diocesan School at E. Gokulnagar

February 10, 2012 stands as an important day in the annals of the Diocese of Agartala, as Bishop Lumen cut the ribbon to inaugurate St. Joseph School at Gokulnagar, a suburb of Agartala

Town. The School has the distinction of being the first one to be started by the Diocese. Our dear Bishop along with the Vicar General and other dignitaries lighted the lamp to mark the beginning of this new venture in the presence of a large number of Priests, Religious, Parents, Well wishers and Friends. In his address, the Bishop expressed his happiness over this new venture and promised to make the School an institution of excellence. The School will be administered by the Apostolic Carmel Sisters of Kolkata Province. At present the School has Nursery and KG I classes with students numbering to 58. *Fr. George Jacob, CSC*



New Office Bearers of CCBI

Cardinal Oswald Gracias is re-elected as President of the CCBI, Major Archbishop Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis Catholicos of the Syro-Malankara Church as Vice President, Archbishop Mar George Valiamattam of Tellicherry Archdiocese as second Vice President and Archbishop Albert D' Souza of Agra as the Secretary General of the CCBI.

Other new elections include Most Rev. Francis Kallarackal of Verapolly as Chairman of St. John's National Academy of Health Sciences, Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro of Agartala as Chairman of Caritas India, and Most Rev. Thomas Dabre of Poona as Chairman of NBCLC.



Visitors at Bishop's House

- ✘ Frs. Diago Pereira & Albert from Mumbai
- ✘ Sr. Nivedita, SRA, from Mumbai
- ✘ Mr. Jim Manjooran from Goa
- ✘ Mr. Hagen Berndt from Germany
- ✘ Sr. Marie Fay, AC, from Kolkata
- ✘ Fr. Basil P. from Kerala
- ✘ Fr. Abraham, CMI, from Kerala
- ✘ Fr. Ivan from Itanagar
- ✘ Fr. Thomas Parambil from NESCOM, Guwahati
- ✘ Fr. Augustine, SDB, from Chennai
- ✘ Fr. Charles Furtado, OFM. Cap. From Bangalore

9th Annual Garo Catholic Convention - 2012



The 9th Annual Garo Catholic Convention was held at Masli-Garopara under Kumarghat Parish from 17th-19th February 2012. The theme for the Convention was "I am

the true vine and my father is the gardener". Over 200 people participated from different Garo Catholic communities of Agartala Diocese. The Convention was inaugurated by Rev. Fr. Thomas Pereira, CSC, Parish Priest of Kumarghat and the Chief Guest was Rev. Fr. Lourthswamy, CSC, Parish Priest of Katalcherra.

On the 18th February, Frs. Joachim, Hormis, George Rodrigues, Sr. Mitali and Ms. Promita were the Resource Persons who dealt effectively on topics such as: faith, marriage in the Catholic Church, duties of Catholic youth and responsible parenthood. In the group discussion and planning it was unanimously decided to concentrate on education of children, bring to task the teachers who were avoiding their duties, and to strengthen the faith.

Fr. George Rodrigues, SDB, called upon the community to be "fires of faith" by accepting children as a gift from a God and cautioned them of the immoral practices in our State.

Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro, CSC, DD, offered the thanksgiving Mass on the concluding day. During the homily he stressed on the theme of the convention and called upon the faithful to be more united with God.

At the Evaluation most of the participants expressed their satisfaction and thanked the organizers for their hard work and dedication. It was agreed by the committee members to hold the next Convention- 2013 in Ambassa Parish.

Mr. Tonik Jengcham

A Strategy Planning Workshop for Peace Phase 2

A Planning Workshop was held on 11th and 12th February 2012 in JUST Hall.



There were 22 participants including people from other religious backgrounds. The main aim of the Workshop was to bring effective strategy planning for the Peace Project. Mr. Hagen Berndt, the Consultant of Misereor Germany and Mr. Richard Devadoss from Tamil Nadu were the Facilitators of the Strategy Planning Workshop. The important points discussed were "conflict", "violence" and the "strategy" to bring conflict transformation in Tripura which helped us to widen our knowledge on Strategy Planning. There was group discussion, presentation and brainstorming through which all of us

were able to contribute to the project planning.

Training on Improvement of Community Health

A two-day training program on improvement of community health was organized at JUST Training Hall from 15th to 17th February 2012. 19 health workers from different villages participated in the program. The Resource Person was Dr. Anut Debbarma. He dealt on topics like maternal health, reproductive child health, HIV, breast-feeding and nutrition. The participants increased their knowledge and were very happy about the given training. They were able to clarify their queries and problems that they face during the fieldwork. Overall satisfaction and appreciation was expressed by the participants.

Ms. Nancy Jamatia

India gets new 'prince of church' one among 22



prelates

Syro-Malabar Major Archbishop George Alencherry was elevated as a Cardinal by Pope Benedict XVI in the Vatican. He is among the 22

prelates who took the Cardinals' traditional oath of loyalty. Accepting the new title, 66-year-old Cardinal Alencherry pledged to remain faithful to the Church and to "not to make known to anyone matters entrusted to me in confidence, the disclosure of which could bring damage or dishonour to Holy Church". With this, he became the

youngest Cardinal in the country and the fourth one from Kerala to be given the title. Alencherry, dressed in full red choir dress and wearing the cross on a 'rudraksham' chain walked solemnly to the pope with his hands folded to receive the red hat and ring.

Two new FMA Provincials



Guwahati Province. LINK congratulates the two new FMA Provincials.

News Notes

Bishop's Program for March 2012

- 03: Meet Capuchin Provincial
- 03: Program @ Harina, Sindukpathar Parish
- 04: Pastoral Program @ Sindukpathar Parish
- 06: Clergy Meet @ Agartala
- 09-12: SCC Seminar @ Kolkata
- 13: Women's Day Celebrations @ Agartala
- 14-16: Caritas Golden Jubilee @ Bhubaneswar
- 16: NEDSSS GB Meet @ Guwahati
- 17-18: Bishop's House Blessing @ Itanagar
- 21-23: Caritas Programs & Meetings @ Delhi
- 25: Installation of new Pastor @ Bagbasa