



### PASTOR'S CORONER

There's the ancient story from the desert fathers about the monk who came to "Abba Joseph" for advice, much like the rich young man who came to Jesus to ask whether he was doing what was necessary for salvation. The monk told Abba the ways he was being a good person praying, fasting, keeping the rules and asked, what more should I do? The older monk reached his hands up to heaven and his fingers became like 10 lamps of fire, and he said, "Why not become fire?"

Jesus told the rich man something similar. He told him to give up all his possessions and then "follow me." Sometimes, when we read this, we decide it can't apply to us. Most of us can't give up everything. So Jesus isn't talking to me, is he? It has taken me a while to realize that the point of the story isn't about possessions. The point is that Jesus speaks to each of us individually about his will for us, but he always includes the call we are always asked to follow him, and if we do, we become fire.



### SHARING LIGHT GENEROUSLY

Pablo Picasso says, 'The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of your life is to give it away. As I celebrate the gift of life my thoughts go to a lit candle.

The lit candle becomes a metaphor for my own generosity and my attitude toward giving, toward using what I have as God intends. So I light the candle and now it burns, reminding me that light is meant to be shared generously. I am asked to follow him, and if I do, I become fire.

A young man asked the priest, "How much should I give?" The priest replied, "Give more." So let's realize that we're called to be lavishly, spontaneously, sacrificially generous with our time and resources. And when I light my candle, the flame reminds me of this!

These post-Covid times are hard times for everyone and we all need to help each other get through. Archbishop of Suwon Mathias Lee Yong-hoon, the new President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea (CBCK), says that in 2021 the world needs to respond to the ongoing challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic with the "virtue of hope". Each one of us is provided the opportunity of learning to stretch the warm fire of generosity to others. **+Lumen, CSC**



### EDITORIAL

On this first day of February, we wish our dear Bishop a very HAPPY BIRTHDAY and God's blessings!

For a moment let's turn the light on those who are seldom in the limelight: those who feel left out and are, in fact, left out. Out of the inner circle of our parishes, villages, mothas/mondolis, institutions, even organizations and associations. Left out for various reasons geographical distance perhaps, temperamental difference perhaps, a thousand other things perhaps.

Most of our places have a buzz about them and it draws people. Out of necessity, curiosity, interest, whatever. Some people have a natural propensity for such hubs and the feverishness they have about them. Some others have an in-born disenchantment with centre-stages and so intentionally steer clear of the hustle and bustle of such happening places. They generally thrive on the margins.



However, those who get excluded and pushed to the edges on account of their inability to match others in talents, capability, confidence and money power do not generally relish the experience.

By succumbing to the temptation of surrounding ourselves with the rich, learned and the powerful are we unwittingly relegating to the peripheries those who perhaps need us most the poor, the weak and the vulnerable. We risk becoming

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On the occasion of the Birthday of our beloved Bishop Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro, CSC. LINK and the entire Diocese wishes him a wonderful Birthday and we continue to follow the light he has shown to us. May God grant him health and strength to shepherd the Diocese of Agartala.

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unchristian if we fail to realize that economic prowess and English language effectively edge out the poor and the weak in all rungs of society. Jesus of the Gospels has a remarkable knack for befriending those languishing in the margins.

We have important seasons and events ahead; the Lenten Season that begins later this month and the immediate preparations before the Diocese and our Bishop celebrate their Silver Jubilees. As part of the preparations, it seems particularly appropriate to focus a little on this and make the peripheries our priority even though an already crowded agenda maybe engaging us hectically. **J. Pulinthanath, SDB**

## ST. MARY'S PARISH, TUIKARMAW

### Confirmations and Silver Jubilee of Bishop

Jubilee is looking back and looking forward. According to the spirit of Jubilee seen in the Book of Leviticus (25:8-28) it is an occasion of remembrance of the past events; of recognition of God's mercy towards his people and of rededication looking

forward for making 'the Kingdom of God at hand'. This was absolutely true about the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Diocese and our Bishop Lumen held at St. Mary's Parish Tuikarmaw. The Jubilee aimed at thanking the Almighty for the abundant blessings upon our Diocese and our dear Bishop Lumen since both complete 25 years of fruitful service to the Church and the society. A grand celebration was held that attracted hundreds of faithful who attended the holy Eucharist and a beautiful cultural program from various communities followed by a fellowship meal. All these performances permeated a sense of divinity within one and all. Parishioners from across the *mondolis* gathered in the church to take part in the event that officially felicitated the Bishop for successfully completing 25 years of dedicated service to the Diocese and to the church at large.

*Fr. Sojan, CSC*

## IMMACULATE CONCEPTION PARISH, MOHARPARA

### Parish Youth Movement



The Parish Youth Movement met together for one day Seminar at St. Sebastian Church Singlwng on 17<sup>th</sup> of January. The Seminar commenced with the

Holy Eucharist presided by Fr. Micheal, CSC, Assistant Rector of Sacred Heart Seminary Lembucherra Agartala. Soon after the holy Mass the

guests were felicitated which was followed by a Session animated by Mr. Sujoy Uchoi, Agartala Diocese Youth President, Fr. Micheal, CSC and Sr. Mary Halam, CSC. Fr. Lawrence Darlong the Agartala Diocese Youth Director in his homily exhorted the Youth to be active and stay alert to the temptation of Satan which starts from a small thing but gradually leads to big sin. Mr. Sujoy in his Session encouraged the Youth to focus in life and show passion, love, generosity to all human beings. The program ended with a common meal.

*Fr. Arbok Lyngdoh, CSC*

## GOOD SHEPHERD PARISH, KATHALCHERRA New Chapel Blessing

The Good Shepherd Parish, Kathalcherra, built a new Chapel dedicated to St Joseph at Uttar Kathalcherra, in this Year of St. Joseph. Our dear Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC blessed and inaugurated the village Chapel on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2020.



The Parish Priest Fr. C Abraham CSC, Catechists and Family Rosary Ministry Leaders took the initiative to give faith formation to the people of Uttar Kathalcherra. On the same day 19 people were given the Sacraments of Initiation and 6 Marriages were rectified, adding four new families to the church community.

## Mary: the Model for mothers of the Catholic family

On January 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> the Women Association of Good Shepherd Parish organized their annual *Maria Songho Sabha* at St Mary's Church, Dhumacherra. There were around 200 Women who gathered from all the village *mondolis* of the Parish. Rev.



Fr. Valerian Castelino, CSC,

the Administrator of Holy Cross Fathers North-East India Province, Mr. Lokhoram Reang, and Fr. C Abraham CSC the Parish Priest enlightened the people based on the theme. The *Maria Songho* also had their meeting and came out with an Action Plan for the year ahead. The occasion provided an opportunity for the whole Parish Women Association to come together and strengthen their bonds of faith and love.

## Jubilee Felicitations

On 28<sup>th</sup> December 2020 Good Shepherd Parish celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> year of Episcopal Jubilee of our beloved Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC, DD. A short cultural program was organized and the Jubilee cake was shared to mark the occasion. It is



our prayer that God will bless our dear Bishop with good health to do his shepherding ministry.

Our Catechist Mr. Lalrina Darlong was also felicitated on the occasion of his Silver Jubilee as Catechist. He remembers how the then 'new Bishop Lumen' had

commissioned him and his 13 companions. Mr. Lalrina has worked in several Parishes in the last 25 years and presently he is in our Parish, which is also his home Parish. *Fr. Ishwar, CSC*

### DEANERY LEVEL SCC GATHERING AT AMBASSA

January 23, 2021: Kumarghat Deanery organized SCC Meeting at Ambassa for the first time after the Lockdown. Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD the Coordinator of the SCC Deanery level was in apprehension whether to have this gathering. After much consultation it was conducted in Ambassa Parish. More than 40 representatives along with the Parish Priests from 6 Parishes gathered for the half day conference. The event started with the seven steps Bible sharing after that Mr. Pionglama Darlong the Secretary for the SCC read the Report of the last meeting. It was then the turn for all the Parish Leaders to read out the report of SCC activities held in their Parishes. Fr. Lancy CSC the Diocesan Secretary for the Commission for SCC briefed the gathering about the importance of coming together and to rejuvenate SCC groups in different *mondolis* due to the lockdown. Fr. Ivan



SVD explained about Diocesan Pastoral Plan on SCCs. He read out clause 3.8, "We strengthen and promote Small Christian Communities and make them care for the total welfare of the community..." The gathering concluded with proposal to have next gathering in Gachirampara Parish in April. *Ivan D'Silva, SVD*

### St. Arnold Parish, Gandacherra

#### Parish Feast

Our parish feast of St. Arnold Jassen was celebrated with joy and devotion on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2021. Rev. Fr. Ivan D'silva, SVD Parish Priest of Ambassa was the main celebrant. Mass began with processional dance and Fr. Prasad Rao, the Parish Priest welcomed the faithful to participate in the Eucharist. Fr. Bobby, CSC and Fr. Sojan, CSC joined the concelebrated the Mass. Large number of faithful from all our sub-stations participated in the feast day celebrations. This was followed by short felicitation program. The highlight of the day was fun games and cultural programs organized by the parish youth. The celebrations came to an end with an agape.



*Bro. Bala Showry*

### Blessing & Laying the Foundation of JUST Niwas at Damdamia

The long-awaited mega Project of the construction of JUST Niwas, a Training Centre with Offices and Guest Rooms, took the first stride on 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2021 with the laying and blessing of the foundation stone by Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro, CSC, the Bishop of Agartala



at Damdamia, the new future campus of JUST administration and training.

Our dear Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, led the prayer service and blessed the land and laid the foundation of JUST Niwas and prayed for God's blessing for safety, progress and success in the completion work.

Rev. Fr. Bosco, the Director of JUST, Sr. Jolly, Fr. Amalraj and Fr. George along with the Building Contractor and JUST Staff participated in this simple function to mark the beginning of the construction works. We wish and pray for safety of all and the swift completion of the construction work. *Fr. George S.*

### An astonishing Welcome Ceremony at Gokulnagar

Each and every Institution needs a backbone to stand firmly and go smoothly. Just as the backbone gives strength to a human body in the same way the

### NEWS BRIEFS FROM THE DIOCESE

Principal plays an important role in the growth of an Institution. We are happy to have a new Principal for Saint Joseph School Gokulnagar, in the person of Fr. Anthony Balan.



The Management, Staff and Students of organized a short program to welcome our new Principal, Father Anthony Balan. The program began with a Prayer Service followed by welcome song and other cultural items by the students of Saint Joseph School. Then the Headmistress of the School delivered her welcome address. Fr. Shaiju CSC the Financial

Administrator of the Diocese of Agartala read the appointment letter given by the Rev. Bishop to the new Principal.

Father Anthony Balan the newly appointed Principal expressed his gratitude for his appointment as the Principal and promised to work hard in collaboration with the Staff. The Management Staff and Students are grateful to our dear Bishop Lumen for appointing Father Balan as the principal of Saint Joseph School to lead the school to the heights of its glory. *Sr. Surekha, AC*

### SVD Mission Day celebrations at Kamaranga in Tripura

The family tradition of St. Arnold Janssen was to read the 'Prologue of St. John's Gospel' every day in the family. As a result, St. Arnold Janssen became a priest and founded the 'Society of the Divine Word' called SVD



Congregation to spread the Word of God to unknown territories. In order to continue the legacy of St. Arnold Janssen, the three Parishes of St. Alphonsa Parish Khumulwng, Holy Spirit Parish Ambassa and St. Raphael Parish Kamranga celebrated SVD Mission Day on the Feast day of St. Arnold Janssen on 15<sup>th</sup> January. The celebration began with Holy Eucharist, followed by report presentation of success stories of the

Parishes. Bible quiz was organized among the parishes which brought interest and enthusiasm among parishioners to read the Word of God. Besides, there was a talk on 'SVD Lay Partners' involvement in the parish. The following Action Plan was taken - to read Bible in the family, to give catechism to the children, to organize youth convention, to organize retreat and leadership seminars for Joseph and Maria *sangho* and to get one each new sub-station in each Parish. There were group singing and cultural dances amidst the program. SVD Mission Day celebration has united the parishioners and encouraged them to read the Word of God.

*Fr. Arun Minj, SVD*

### JUST distributed dry rations to post Covid19 affected persons

On 28<sup>th</sup> December 2020 Jana UnnayanSamiti Tripura (JUST) distributed dry rations to 65 families at Daigola and TwisaMwngkwru under Hezamara R.D Block at West Tripura. JUST delegates handed over the dry ration to the poor and most needy families who are worse affected due to post



COVID-19 lockdown. The dry ration included grocery items and other essential commodities. During the distribution the beneficiaries were also given awareness on some of the safety measures of preventing COVID-19 such as maintaining physical distances, frequently washing hands and wearing face mask while going outside for any purpose.

The Diocese of Agartala congratulates the new General Administrative Team of the SCV Congregation who elected the following by the 7th General Synaxis: Superior General: Very Rev.



Sr. Philo Moolakkarayil; I Councillor: Rev. Sr. Gracy Vailapally; II Councillor: Rev. Sr. Christina Kizhakkekozhuvalan; III Councillor: Rev. Sr. Rose Maria Thottathil; IV Councillor: Rev. Sr. Vincenza Areakattil.

Dear Bishop Lumen, Thanks a lot for sharing the Link entering into its Silver Jubilee Year. Long live the Link and may it continue to grow in its stature and also in continuance of the inspiring messages from the Shepherd's Voice and the enlightening Editorials along with the account of the spread of God's reign in the remotest parts of the Diocese. Hearty Congratulations for entering into the Jubilee Year of the Diocese. May the good Lord continue to work wonders in the lives of the people in all the remotest parts of the diocese through you as its Bishop, the Clergy and Religious and the believing community. May God be praised through you all especially during this Year of Diocese Jubilee. *Sr. Ventura, FS, Pune*

Dear Bishop Lumen and my brother in Holy Cross, I have just read the Link of Jan. 1, 2021. It is focused on the Silver Jubilee of the Diocese. I remember very well your Episcopal Ordination as the first Bishop of Tripura-Agartala. I was present and was very happy to witness this historical event for the Church of the North-East of India.

That was 25 years ago. The Diocese has grown so much since that day. You have given it the leadership it needed at that time. It is a day to give thanks to God and to pray for the growth of the local Church, particularly for more Vocations to the priesthood from Tripura. *Jean Charles Descary, CSC, Montreal, Canada*

Sr. Lucious, BS Provincial from Silchar  
Sr. Harsha, BS Councilor from Silchar

Sr. Sara Grace, MC Regional from Shillong

### JUST NEWS BRIEFS

#### Skill Development Training on Mushroom cultivation

Jana UnnayanSamiti Tripura (JUST) organized Skill Development Training on Mushroom Cultivation on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2020 at Teliamura, JUST field office. The Resource Person was Miss Sadhana Sharma a successful Entrepreneur from Teliamura. There were 15 PwDs and 10



Parents of CwDs during the training. The Resource Person demonstrated theoretically and practically on how to cultivate mushroom in their households by giving minute details such as cutting of hay, boiling of hay, seedlings, and making of hay beds, and so on. The Women's Group was fascinated by the training and opportunity to build up their financial resources. *Mr. Cyril Darlong*

### CONGRATULATIONS

### OUR READERS WRITE

### OUR DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

### Fr. C.V. Jose recalls his experiences with Bishop Lumen

In the context of the silver jubilee celebration of the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC, I am happy to recall some experiences I had with him which bring out his character as a service minded person. I have known Bishop Lumen from the year 1970 when we were together as minor seminary students at Holy Cross Study House in Bangalore. We were also together at the major seminary at Pune. I had the opportunity again to work and live together in the same community at Holy Cross School, Agartala. Personally, at this juncture I like to wish him good health and peace of mind as he continues to lead the diocese towards progress and bright future.

I remember vividly an incident that happened at the minor seminary at Museum Road, Bangalore when I was doing my third year BSc. at St. Joseph's college. I had contracted jaundice and had to be isolated so that it would not be spread to others in the dormitory where I used to stay. There was an old house adjacent to the main building which had some rooms to accommodate visitors. I was staying in one of those rooms for nearly a month. Since I was a science student, attending the classes and doing the revisions were so vital for the final year exams. As I was the only science student in my class, I had no help with regards to the missed classes. Besides I missed the games in the evenings and socializing at the refectory during meals. So, you can imagine the predicament I was in at that time. The only time I would meet someone was when the infirmary in-charge brought the meals three times a day. Bishop Lumen (a student junior to me at that time) happened to be the infirmary in-charge most of the days when I was isolated. I remember that he would faithfully bring my meals and say a few words which were consoling. He even brought some sugar cane juice some days which was a medicine for jaundice. In spite of his classes and other engagement he was always faithful to this service which he was given during that term. It was not a pleasant job to



be an infirmary in-charge at that age; but he was willing to handle that joyfully.

Another incident I am going to describe is something that happened at Holy Cross School Agartala when I was serving as the principal there. Bishop Lumen was serving as the vice principal and administrator in the school. This happened just a year after I took over as the principal. We used to have umpteen troubles already with the transport workers' and teachers' union in the school. That year we got also some backlash from the parents of the children who were newly admitted as we had decided not to give transport facility to them. One of the school buses we were using was an old, out of model Tata bus and we wanted to get rid of it. So, we thought of dismantling it or selling it for what it was worth. We knew that we could not do it in Agartala because the union would object to it and so we planned to take it out of the state. Somebody had to accompany the driver and it had to be done secretly without anyone noticing it. Though it was not an easy job, Fr. Lumen (at that time) volunteered to take up that challenge. He managed to take the bus out of the town before it was day break and reached Kumarghat that day. It was raining heavily that day and the next day; but he managed to take the bus to Silchar somehow wading through the flood on the road at many places. This was a great risk that he took. But knowing the urgency, he willingly took upon this job wholeheartedly. I had a sigh of relief when I learned that he reached Silchar safely with that old bus. He did it only because of his love for the community and being service minded and faithful to his duty.

I can narrate quite many experiences that Bishop Lumen and I had together. I always cherished his company and we had a lot of good times too, being together. I want to extend my warm wishes to him as he crosses a milestone in his life and I wish him all God's blessings as he celebrates the silver jubilee and the diocese also completes her silver.

### Fr. Arul, CSC recounts his association with Bishop Lumen

The Diocese of Agartala is celebrating its silver jubilee belles under the Pastorate of Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro CSC. I personally congratulate our beloved Lordship and seek God's manifold blessings upon him. Under his leadership the Diocese has grown far and wide. It was a singular privilege to work with Bishop

Lumen in the diocese, whom I know since my seminary days. Whether on the many road trips to parishes, JUST Programs, and school events, in deliberations on administrative matters, discussion of social issues or SHGS programs, IHDP events, I experienced Bishop as a thoughtful and kind person and was always present and guided me immensely throughout my tenure as the Director of the JUST. He has been both insightful and witty (sometimes at my expense). I am honored to share my experiences of Bishop Lumen and on JUST (JANA UNNAYAN SAMITY TRIPURA), the social wing of the diocese. I feel blessed to be associated with JUST then IHDP for 12 long years. As JUST caters to the poorest of



the poor in the society in their overall development. During my tenure I experienced the warmth and complete support from His Lordship, Most Rev, Lumen Monteiro CSC the Chairman of JUST. The inception of IHDP was initiated by the Fathers of Holy Cross in collaboration with the Diocese of Agartala, Bishop being its Chairman. IHDP programs were implemented in collaboration with Parishes.

I would like to place on record the numerous contribution made by JUST to the people of Tripura is remarkable. I am proud to exalt the untiring commitment shown by His Lordship Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro CSC the Chairman who has made commendable impact on JUST to make it what it is today. His Leadership was vividly experienced in the North East Church as he held the Post of the Chairman of North Eastern Social Forum. He was recognized in the Church at the National level as the Chairman of Caritas India for two terms. With his vast and rich experience in the field of social works motivated and guided the transformative works of the JUST. I am pleased to see JUST is touching the lives of Poor and the marginalized.

