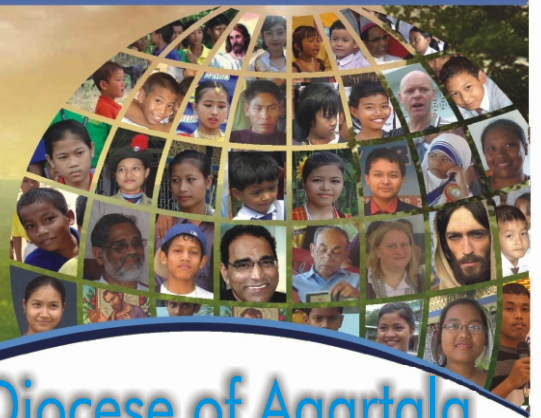




Agartala Diocesan News Letter



Diocese of Agartala

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Pastor's Corner

New Year 2013

A new minister was walking with an older, more seasoned minister in the garden one day. Feeling a bit insecure about what God had for him to do, he was asking the older preacher for some advice. The older preacher walked up to a rosebush and handed

the young preacher a rosebud and told him to open it without tearing off any petals. The young preacher looked in disbelief at the older preacher and was trying to figure out what a rosebud could possibly have to do with his wanting to know the will of God for his life and ministry. But because of his great respect for the older preacher, he proceeded to try to unfold the rose, while keeping every petal intact. It wasn't long before he realized how impossible this was to do. Noticing the younger preacher's inability to unfold the rosebud without tearing it, the older preacher began to recite the following poem:

It is only a tiny rosebud, a flower of God's design,
But I cannot unfold the petals with these clumsy hands of mine.
The secret of unfolding flowers is not known to such as I,
GOD opens this flower so easily, but in my hands they die.
If I cannot unfold a rosebud, this flower of God's design,
Then how can I have the wisdom to unfold this life of mine?
So I'll trust in God for leading each moment of my day,
I will look to God for guidance in each step along the way.
The path that lies before me, only my Lord and Savior knows;
I'll trust God to unfold the moments, just as He unfolds the rose.



The wisdom of this poem is that it is ok to acknowledge our limitations and give chance to God to unfold his grand designs. God will not let us go through more than we can handle. The year 2012 is behind us and we are once again faced with the uncertainties of the New Year. We will let God unfold what is in store for us. Trusting in Him and entrusting ourselves to His providence let us step into the New Year 2013.

The New Year volume of LINK wears a new look thanks to the expertise of our designer, Fr. Prasad Rao and Editor Fr. Pulinthanath. The 197th issue of LINK since its inception in July 1996 is in your hands. Then a mere 2-page cyclostyled paper containing the Report of the Clergy Meeting and the Bishop's engagements today's LINK has news snippets from Parishes in the Diocese, from the NE Region and tidbits from the world all packed in its 4 pages!

Last January I had made a promise to Readers to reach you a copy of the LINK on the first day of every month and we succeeded. We will try to do it this year too! With determination, despite the many challenges, we are on the journey ...LEAD US ONWARD.

+Lumen, CSC



Editorial

Sweet Seventeen!

The 'Year of Faith', which the Diocese of Agartala will soon step into, could turn out to be the most memorable year yet, in its 17 years of existence. That's because enveloped in the freshness that this January exudes, comes a year-long opportunity for the Church in Tripura to renew and revitalize itself like never before. No better prescription, perhaps, for a Diocese that's emerging from its years of adolescence to step safely and securely into the maturity of adulthood!



We wish the year before us became memorable in ways that, many years hence, when looking back, our hearts will still feel a stir and our lips break into a smile.

We wish it became a year during which 'Faith' assumes centre stage, both as a subject to talk about, study, and understand, but more so as a life force that defines our attitudes and actions.

We wish that we as the church became a community of people that care about people and issues, about our own individual fears and our common concerns.

We wish we became truly 'the Body of Christ' more tolerant, forgiving, sharing; salt and light for an insipid and dark world. And we pray for fearlessness and confidence to cast our nets, at his word, into the deep.

As of now these are wishes - deep and devout no doubt, nevertheless, wishes. In these times of resolution and new beginnings, may we resist the unusual urges and temptations that a mist-filled January could bring along with it: the urge to embark wantonly and recklessly in life like a 17-year old or to retreat reclusively like those that feel they've seen it all. Happy New Year.

J. Pulinthanath, sdb



Nandan Nagar Parish

Confirmations

For the parishioners of Don Bosco Quasi-parish Nandan Nagar, 4th November 2012 became a Sunday to remember as on that day 89 of its faithful received the Sacrament of Confirmation at the hands of Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC.

Preparations for receiving the Sacrament began months in advance and thanks to the insistence of Fr. Davis Aricatt, the Parish Priest, all the candidates took part in the weekly instruction that began three months earlier. The instruction sessions, held in Kokborok and Bangla, systematically dealt with the meaning of Confirmation and the Rite of the Sacrament. In his homily, Bishop Monteiro reminded the candidates of their responsibility to live their faith now that they were strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit.

After the Eucharist, the parishioners who came from all parts of the newly demarcated Quasi-Parish felicitated Bishop. Fr. Davis, who spoke on behalf of the parishioners thanked Bishop Lumen and assured him of all collaboration.

Fr. PJ Joseph, sdb

Mandwi Parish

Soitanni Mari Katorni Hamari

Mandwi has somehow been the dinner table conversation right from the time of the rebellion for one reason or the other. For those interested here's something that will tickle not only your ears but hopefully your heart too.

This October 2012 saw the usual din of loud-speakers blaring and lights glaring. Attracted as always young Bhapon Debbarma a Catholic from the village of Kittingsordar in the Parish of Mandwi, went for the Durga pooja and even after his friends had left he strayed back to join in the festivities. In his own words he narrates, "... it must have been around 1.00am as I was crossing a dark patch of forest road to reach home, that suddenly I felt a hand holding me back. I shouted, and tried to free myself, but could not go or move. I tried to catch the person but could find no one. At that moment I remembered Jesus and I called out his name. Only



Khwmulwng Parish

Child Jesus on the Wheels

As nothing escapes the digital and modern age, baby Jesus was driven on wheels rather than a donkey's back this



Christmas. Innovation and creativity is always welcome. The vibrant parishioners conceived the idea of carrying the 'Live Crib' and proclaiming the birth of Christ on the motor vehicles. 16th December was the red letter day for entire area of St. Alphonsa Parish, Khumlwng. The live crib was rolled on the road covering about 50 kilometers on an attractively decorated vehicle followed by 30 cars and 50 motor bikes with flags and banner on them. There were at least 8 sound systems to blur the Christmas message and carols. 12 Christmas Messages were delivered at different places by Frs. Arun and John Bosco SVDas well as Village Leaders. There was a street play at Jampuijala market. It was truly a proclamation of Catholic faith besides Christmas message on the wheels. The Christmas Carol Motor Rally commenced at Belbari at 9.30am and concluded at Khumlwng ADC Market with a message and blessing at 5pm.

Fr. Arun Minj SVD

then did it free me. On reaching home I lay down in sweat. I then felt a burning on my chest and when I unbuttoned my shirt I found this mark," referring to the mark of the 'hand' on his chest (see picture). He now wears a rosary around his neck and says his faith has become stronger. The devil's mark (soitanni mari) was in fact God's blessing (Kaitorni hamari).

We are narrating this incident in and around all our villages, and have even posted his photographs on facebook convinced that God was giving us another opportunity to make known to our people that Jesus alone is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

You may not be so lucky, as some of us were, to see the mark, as it is slowly fading but you could come and meet him and hear him bear testimony to the greatest wonder of all times Jesus Christ.

Fr. George Rodrigues, sdb

Tuikarmaw Parish

SCC Animators Training and Confirmation Program

On 2nd Dec after the Sunday Mass 70 SCC Animators from all SCC units of the Parish assembled for a training program. Fr. Lancy D'Souza CSC, conducted the program with few role plays and through power point explained what is expected of a SCC animator in every unit. Later the *mondoli* level SCC groups chalked out various activities for the coming three months. Participants appreciated the program and broadened their idea of SCC and the emerging leadership in the church and their role in the participatory church.



On 16th Dec Bishop Lumen Monteiro officiated at the Holy Eucharist and Confirmed 26 newly baptized Catholics. At the homily the Bishop spoke of the laity's responsibilities to keep their faith alive. He also asked the SCC who is the local and neighborhood church to address local concerns in their SCC units by getting the inspiration from the Holy Bible. He also blessed the 70 SCC animators and empowered them to become apostles of Christ in their SCC unit. This was a very unique experience for many. Bishop Lumen laid and blessed the foundation stone for Katalia village chapel later that day.

Mr. Karuna Reang

Our Readers Write

Thank you for the beautifully done LINK for December. Congrats for giving us news of the Diocese on the first of every month. Great! Have a grace-filled Advent and a lovely Christmas. *Sr. Mirabelle, AC, Kolkata*

I love all your letters. Thank God for all you do for so many! *Rudy Schlosser, USA*

Thanks for sending me regularly the LINK. I read it with great interest. Am hoping and praying that soon SFX will announce the arrival of PILARs in your Diocese. *Tony, sfx, Goa*

Thanks for your LINK, very interesting what happen in your Diocese. *Inge, Liechtenstein*

I thank you again very, very much for the monthly LINK. The pastor was very prudent regarding an answer about the income of the young man... *Rudy Tengler SDB, Germany*

News from the Just Awareness Program

On 09 November an awareness program on Health, Hygiene and Herbal remedies was conducted at Jagatarampara under Takarjala RD Block. 33 participants attended. Manmohan Debbarma, the IDEA Animator spoke to them about keeping good health, maintaining proper hygiene and using herbal medicines. The people were really cooperative in the program. The program ended with tea and biscuits.

Pre-Christmas Celebration

On 18th December 2012, pre-Christmas celebrations were held at JUST. About 100 people joined in the celebration. Bishop Lumen Monteiro was the Chief Guest of the celebration program. The celebrations started with a Prayer Service led by Fr. Jeevan, SVD. After the prayer service, we then had a cultural program. Several performances were presented by different groups of people, including a short play on the birth of Jesus. Gifts were distributed for all the Staff of JUST, GB Members and Guests. Before the closing of the cultural program Bishop Lumen Monteiro blessed each and every one who was present for the celebration program. The program ended at about 8:45pm followed by Dinner.

Report by Vincent Debbarma

SCC Training at Khumwllwng

On 10th November, St. Alphonsa Parish, Khumwllwng organized a Seminar on SCCs for the parishioners. The Seminar was coordinated by Diocesan Secretary for SCC, Fr. Lancy D'Souza and Team. During the sessions the importance of SCC and the new way of being the church was explained. In his talk, Fr. Lancy asked the people to make 'daily gospel reading' a habit and said that it should become our daily bread. The Gospel is the love letter of God. 70 people participated in the Seminar. The participants were astonished to hear the connection



between the Sacraments and SCC and expressed their satisfaction regarding the Seminar. At the end of the Seminar, the 7 steps of SCC were explained by the diocesan team members Mr. Ashim Uchoi, Ms.

Meena Marak and Mrs. Rita Reang. The participants were assisted to form the SCC units.

Mr. Ashim Uchoi

Visitors at Bishop's House

Frs. MD James, KC James and George P from Kohima Diocese Fr. P. A. Augustine, SVD Provincial from Guwahati Mr. Jeremy Monteiro from USA

'Paul Course' Trainees to change face of Tripura

An innovative training program called 'Paul Course' has transformed 34 young men into evangelists afire with zeal for direct proclamation of Christ. The 10-day residential course on Evangelization, held at Don Bosco Agartala, has brought about major changes in the attitudes and priorities of its 34 participants. The Prerona



Team from Krishnanagar led by Fr. Subash Baroi, Fr. Newton and Sr. Sheela SMI and two

lay animators, who have experience of training such Teams in other parts of the country, were the animators of the Course.

For most participants, the training was far more beneficial than they had anticipated or expected. "I never thought it would be such a life-changing course. I go back with the decision to give Jesus to whomever I shall meet," says Subendra Debbarma of Baijalbari. "This training is an unexpected grace from God. I have no other aim in life except to become a missionary, even if it means a lot of sufferings," says Simon Khetro Munda, from Bodhjunnagar parish. "The best thing I liked" says Simon,

"was learning how to evangelize unreached peoples the topic of *kerygma* inspired me so much."

The Secretary of the Diocesan Commission for Evangelization, and the Chief organizer of the 'Paul Course', Fr. Sunny sdb, says he organized the Course in order to give a much-needed boost to the evangelization efforts of the Diocese. Besides numerous activities and group-dynamic exercises, the course offered the participants ample opportunities to pray, work and live together as a community. The trainees were also given practical experience of direct proclamation. On two days they were sent into the villages two by two, the gospel way with nothing but only the Word of God. On the last day of the training the parish priests joined the group for a session of evaluation, and more especially, planning future course of action. Fr. Sunny says he has already planned a follow up Course for the trainees who have just completed the first 'Paul Course'.

Fr. P.J. Joseph, sdb



Carol singing



As the birds reached their nests and the sun to its setting there arouse much joy and enthusiasm among the parishioners of

St. Joseph Parish Agartala because it was time for the carols and make known the people of the coming of Messiah. The carol led by Fr. Robert Mathias, CSC, the parish priest along with sisters and parishioners around 35 of them, reached Bishop's House on 21st December at 7.30 pm. It was a delight to see a big group going for carols house to house and participate in the carols. The members of Bishop's House joined along with Bishop in singing and dancing with the tunes of carol songs. Bishop wished and blessed all. Such carol singing was held in several parishes in the Dioceses. Fr. Roby, CSC

Parents Day at Don Bosco School Mandwi

On 15th December Don Bosco School Mandwi premises took a different look. A colourful day was dedicated by the students to their parents. The program was ushered in by a Feast day greeting song sung by children and each one offering a bouquet of flowers to their own parents, a noble gesture of love. One should note that this is a privileged moment for them to appreciate the insurmountable contributions made by parents in nurturing and bringing them up. The inaugural ceremony commenced with the auspicious lighting of the candles by all, the Chief Guest and other Guests and candle bearers mingled with the audience meaning to show that children are the light to the parents and vice-versa.

Bishop Lumen Monteiro the Chief Guest of the occasion reminded the parents of the noble privilege and commitment that lay ahead of every

parent in upbringing their children in the right way. Shri Ratan Biswas, the SDM of Jirania who was Guest of Honour, stressed on choosing the right school which can offer quality education and bright future.

The festive stage witnessed oozing talent show of students in their songs, dances, skits, speeches and dresses. The staff and students helping at the backstage also contributed to the fabulous program. The day was brought to its contented end with a sumptuous traditional fellowship meal. *Fr. Suman Kiro, sdb*



Bishop of Agartala, as the Chief Guest. In his address the Bishop expressed his happiness in

seeing his dream come true for the diocesan School. We could see the joy and happiness on the face of the kids to perform for their parents. They mesmerized all present with their various skills, in singing, dancing and acting. A special word of appreciation goes to the AC Sisters who prepared the kindergarten children so beautifully. The presence of Fr. Robert Mathias CSC, the Vice Provincial, Fr. Prasad Rao the Secretary of Diocesan Education Commission, Mrs. Sumati Bhowmik, the village Pradhan, many Fathers, Brothers and Sisters made the occasion a memorable one.

Fr. Roby csc

Parents Day at St. Joseph School Gokulnagar

St. Joseph School Gokulnagar celebrated its first Parents Day on 17th November. It was a delight to watch the little ones on the performers' stage with all the beauty. The celebration was graced by the presence of Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro, CSC, the

Indo-Bangla rail link planned



Of the 15-km rail line, five km of track falls in the Indian Territory and the remaining in Bangladesh. In-order to increase bilateral

relations, India and Bangladesh have agreed to set up a new railway link to connect each other. Both the countries would soon sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to set up a link between Agartala, capital of India's Tripura state, and Bangladesh's southeastern city of Akhaurah. India will build a 15-km railway track linking Agartala with Akhaurah which is an important railway junction connected to the Chittagong international port, resource-rich Sylhet and Dhaka. The project will cost 2.71 billion rupees (Some US\$ 50 million). *Source: firstpost.com*

Catholic nun given lifetime achievement award for art



Salesian Missionaries of Mary Immaculate Sister Claire received the Assisi Art Award 2012 from Srinivasa Murthy, chairman of the Karnataka Legislative in Bangalore City. The award comprises a

citation and a cash prize of 50,000 rupees. Sr Claire is the first recipient of the Assisi Award, set in 2010 by the Office for Social Communications of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (OSC-CBCI) and ART, a forum of Indian Christian artists and art lovers. *Source UCAN-India*

Best Community Care Center Award

The Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled Madhya Pradesh State has awarded a Catholic-



managed care center for its outstanding service to some 4,000 people living with HIV in the State. Sister Geeta Joseph Chennattu accepted the

Award on behalf of the Center from State Health Minister Anup Misra, in the presence of Health Education Minister Narottam Misra on Dec. 1, the World AIDS Day, in Gwalior. Sister Geeta, a member of Servants of the Holy Spirit Sisters, is director and project coordinator of Vishwas Community Care Centre in Indore. It cares and supports some 4,000 people living with HIV in the area. The Care Centre was started in 2008 and Sister Geeta is a founding member. The Center aims to improve "the survival and quality of the life of the people living with HIV/AIDs. The theme of the World AIDS

News Notes from All Over

Day 2012 was "Getting to Zero: Zero new HIV infections, Zero deaths from AIDS-related illness, Zero discrimination."

Source CSF

BISHOP'S PROGRAMME FOR JANUARY 2013

- 01: St. Joseph Parish, Agartala
- 05: CSC Minor Seminary Blessing, Bodhjunnagar
- 06: Parish Mass
- 07-15: Home Visit
- 16-18: Caritas Forum Directors Meet, Goa
- 20: Installation, Depacherra Parish
- 21: Installation, Gondacherra Parish
- 22: Nurses Meet, Agartala
- 23: DPC Meet & Inaugural of YoF, Agartala
- 24-25: With Architect & Parents, Gokulnagar
- 26-27: Parish Sabah, Kumarghat Parish
- 29: SVD Regional House Blessing, Guwahati
- 30-31: With benefactors from Europe