



Pastor's Corner

Malachi 3:3 - This verse puzzled some women in a Bible study and they wondered what this statement meant about the character and nature of God. One of the women offered to find out the process of refining silver and get back to the group at their next Bible Study.

That week, the woman called a silversmith and made an appointment to watch him at work. She didn't mention anything about the reason for her interest beyond her curiosity about the process of refining silver. As she watched the silversmith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames were hottest as to burn away all the impurities.

The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot; then she thought again about the verse that says: "He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver." She asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the whole time. The man answered yes, and he not only had to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. If the silver was left a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed. The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked the silversmith, 'How do you know when the silver is fully refined?' He smiled at her and answered, 'Oh, that's easy -- when I see my image in it.' If today you are feeling the heat of the fire, remember that God has his eye on you and will keep watching you until He sees His image in you.

As I begin a new year today, I thank the Creator God who loves me and the many people who support me. In my life I am faced with recurrent trials, challenges and what appear to be insurmountable difficulties making me believe that I got a raw deal. Lee Iacocca has a piece of advice: "There ain't no free lunches in this country. And don't go spending your whole life commiserating that you got the raw deals. You've got to say, I think that if I keep working at this and want it bad enough I can have it. It's called perseverance." God bless. +Lumen, CSC



HAPPY BIRTH DAY DEAR BISHOP!

LINK Wishes,
 it's founder & our
 beloved Bishop
 LumenMonteiro, CSC,
 on his Birth Day.




Editorial

Tripura has become considerably noisier these couple of months. Towns and villages alike! And the noise level keeps increasing like *chaitra mela* does when it nears *poila baishak*. There is a crescendo coming, one

can almost see it. And it's neither the April New Year, nor the October *pujas* this time, but the February elections.

It is invigorating to see the enthusiasm displayed on the streets these days and also humbling to realize that despite being a young church, the best of our conventions is not able to elicit the kind of enthusiasm and participation that even a minor, localized political rally is able to.

Of course, most election-related exercises are party exercises that seldom offer choice, especially to the poor. And the poor do not have the luxury of being indifferent to it all because there are a hundred little benefits of utmost importance to them that continue to be intentionally linked to party membership.

Those that, on the day of a central rally of any prominent party in the state, stand aside and watch with amusement the hordes of people that descend upon the streets of Agartala as if from nowhere, belong most likely to the better off segment of the society. They hardly know that in order to avail of little benefits, the poor must necessarily walk, sing, sway and shout their hearts out, at times even without grasping the implications of the slogans they shout. When circumstances have forced the poor to confine their dreams to the benefits of the Ration card or MGNREGA, the circus becomes imperative.



If the mode of behavior that a political party instills into the people has spilled over into other areas of their life and easily manifests itself even in the church, it is understandable and pardonable. The Year of Faith that we just began in the Diocese is

a huge opportunity on a platter, among other things, to clarify how membership in church differs from membership in the party.

Ever since the time, Jesus of Nazareth attracted the wretched of the earth to Himself, the Church, at least in these areas, has attracted the poor. Church's predilection for the poor continues to be a matter of strength and pride. An Election about to happen and the Year of Faith already on! There's no better time to learn how Faith, that free gift we have received, should make a world of difference in our lives.

J. Pulinthanath, sdb

Kathalcherra Parish

Advance Christmas Celebration:

Good Shepherd Parish Kathalcherra organized advance Christmas celebration at the parish centre on 23 December 2012, first of its kind in the



Parish Centre. The celebration commenced with the Holy Eucharist presided over by Bishop Lumen Monteiro followed by a short get-together at the church premises. The advance Christmas was the culmination of five day program organized by the Evangelization Team at different sub centres. While acknowledging the presence of Bishop, Fr. Lourthu appreciated the efforts of Joseph Nagar mondoli for their team work and bringing the Parish community together to celebrate the birth of Emmanuel.

New Mondolis: The Parish grew in strength and stature on 22 December as two Reang villages accepted the faith formally after two years of preparation and catechesis. We appreciate the efforts of the



Evangelization Teams and the Catechists. The remote villages of Tuichandrapara and Besiah are situated about 24 KM from Challengta District Headquarters. Fr. Simon Fernandes CSC, blessed and inaugurated the new prayer hall built by the villagers. Sr. Simon Teresa BS, organized a health camp on the previous day. The efforts of the Church to reach out the remote natives were much appreciated by the SDM.

Maria Sangha Sabha

Kathalcherra Maria Sangha members came together for the 22nd Annual *sabha* from 18 to 20 January 2013, at K u k i c h e r r a Village. Being the Year of faith the theme chosen for the Sabha was



'Faith in God: Newness of Life' (Rom 4:16). Fr. Thomas Thengumpally CSC, being the

Resource Person for the *sabha* dwelt on the role of women in faith foundation. Mr. Roitua Darlong insisted on the Christian values in every Catholic family. Fr. Simon, CSC, while stressing on the expansion of Maria Sangha and its activities, applauded the efforts of the Central Committee, Catechists, Advisors and Animators of Maria Sangha. The event was witnessed by 240 women who came from different Mondolies of the Parish.

Fr. Valerian, CSC

Khumwlng Parish

Memorable Christmas of the Seminarians

As Jesus called the Twelve to him and began to send them two by two (Mk 6:7), the J e e v a d h a r a Diocesan Minor Seminarians, for the first time,



were sent two by two for village experience from 23 25 December, 2012. Though the villages and villagers are not totally unfamiliar to them due their timely village visits along with the priests, yet they had their fear, hesitation, anxiety, etc., for now they had to manage everything on their own. However, under obedience and trusting in the Lord, they set out to their respective villages. They are happy to say that this was the first Christmas away from home but a memorable and a very special one in their life. During their stay, they joined the children, youth, men and women of the Mondoli in preparing and actively participating in the Christmas related activities: carol singing, singing practice, making Crib, decorations, skit on Jesus' birth, preaching, Rosary, family visit, sports and games, dancing, cleaning the village surroundings. Through this short stay in the villages they have come out convinced that the Lord cares for those whom he called for his mission. We can say that their stay in the villages have not only enriched and strengthened the seminarians' vocation to priesthood but it has inspired the youth and children of the villages to consider vocation to priesthood in their own life.

Fr. John Bosco SVD

Depacherra Parish

Adieu Welcome

January 20th was memorable day to all the Parishioners of Depacherra, as we thanked



Fr. Bosco for his years of work in the Parish and welcomed the newly installed Parish Priest Fr. Prasad. A grand send off program was organized on 19th

January 2013 by the Parishioners, acknowledging the good works done by Fr. Bosco in the Parish. On this occasion many leaders from different *mondolis* spoke glowingly of Fr. Bosco and wished him all the best for his future ministry. On 20th January, Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC installed Fr. Prasad as the new Parish Priest of Depacherra. During the Holy Eucharist the Bishop invited the faithful to foster unity and to grow in Catholic faith. He also urged the *mondoli* leaders to play an active role in the life of the Parish and their full cooperation to the newly installed Parish Priest.

Sr. Benny, BS

Tuikarmaw Parish

Goodbye and God bless you dear Father

On the 20th of January Fr. Lancy D'Souza



CSC was given an emotional send off from St. Mary's Parish by the parishioners. He served at St. Mary's Parish Twikarmaw for three years and was

fully involved in the construction of the church, while at the same time he built the people of God through SCCs. He established SCC in almost in all the villages and also brought about a lot of innovations through SCCs to make all age groups to participate in the activities of the Church. We wish him all the best for his new ministry. Fr. Sijo Joseph, CSC

Gandacherra Parish

Fr. Bosco Lathees installed as PP



On 21st January Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, installed Fr. Bosco Lathees as the new Parish Priest of

Gondacherra during the Holy Eucharist in the presence of the faithful and the student community. Bishop thanked Fr. Denis for taking up the responsibility and single-handedly managing the Parish during the interim period. Bishop congratulated Fr. Bosco and urged the community to support their pastor by cooperating with him. Link News Service

News from the Just

Awareness Program

On 6th December a program on 'Family Planning' was conducted at Murabari village. 18 participants took part in the



program. The coordinator spoke about the importance of family planning. He said that a good family always plans ahead for their betterment so that they don't face big problems in the future. He also spoke about the important role of mother in the family as she plays a greater role in maintaining the family. He insisted the participants to respect their parents for their great work they do for their development and growth.

On 6th December the district coordinator visited Kamalpur Degree College and met the General Secretary of students union of the college Mr. Rajesh Das. The General Secretary welcomed him for the program on the topic of 'Drug Addiction'. 40 students, both boys and girls, took part in the program. The coordinator began with a small note on Peace and then spoke about the harmful effects of drugs. He said that use of tobacco, cigarette, alcohol, tablets, dendrite causes various harmful diseases. He advised the students not to use such harmful drugs. The program concluded with the General Secretary thanking the coordinator for his talk.

Report by Bishwajit Debbarma

Drinking Water and Sanitation



On 9 December Mr. Manmohan Debbarma conducted a program on safe drinking water and low cost sanitation at Jagatram Para under Jampuijala R.D Block. There were 23 participants in the program that started at about 2:00pm. He spoke about waterborne diseases and not using sanitation facility and taught them on how to prevent from these types of diseases caused by water and unclean surroundings. He advised the participants on the use of filters, or boiled water for drinking and to construct toilets. The program ended with light refreshment.

Report by Vincent Debbarma

Agartala Diocese Inaugurates the Year of Faith



At a specially organized Eucharistic celebration, Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC inaugurated the 'Year of Faith' in the Diocese of Agartala on 23 January 2013, at St. Joseph's Parish Agartala, in the presence of a large

number of priests, religious and lay representatives from all Parishes of the Diocese. Prior to unveiling an insignia of the Year of Faith, the prelate explained to the congregation the meaning and purpose behind observing the year in a special manner. "It is a year, during which the door of faith is opened for us to enter and make the journey of faith." Immediately after declaring open the 'Year of Faith' the Bishop also led the congregation in prayer. He exhorted everyone in the Diocese to say the specially-composed prayer everyday of the year. The occasion also coincided with the first meeting of the newly-constituted Diocesan Pastoral Council.

On the auspicious occasion of the opening of the Year of Faith, Bishop Monteiro also released, *ad experimentum*, the Kokborok translation of the recently revised text of the English Mass for use in the Diocese. The gathering also felicitated the newly ordained priest Fr. Bennet Joseph Raj. **Link News Service**

Sister-Nurses of the Diocese Meet



On 22nd January 2013 Nurses Meet was organized at JUST Hall to evaluate and plan for the 'healing Ministry' in the Diocese. This meet was attended by seven Sisters representing various Dispensaries in the Diocese. Bishop Lumen and Fr. Robert the Director of JUST, were present for this meeting. After an evaluation of various health programs that are being carried out presently in the Diocese, all agreed that the Sisters are doing commendable service in the interior villages and their frequent visits also strengthens the faith the communities. Fr. Robert assured his support in making the health programs effective. Bishop Lumen appreciated the work of the Sisters and suggested them to make the health programs effective and relevant to the context

Sr. Benny, BS

Diocesan Youth Convention 2012



That the Lord was with us - 'the Emmanuel' was proved by the joyful presence of all the youth

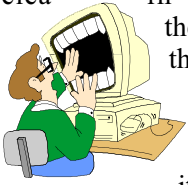
and the smooth success of the gathering of around 180 youth at Bodhjungnagar Parish. This time the Convention included the two new parishes, Bagbasa and Nandan nagar. 26th -28th Dec was a tough time to keep the scheduled Convention being the Christmas season; nevertheless, timely interventions from generous people helped pull it off successfully.

After the initial welcoming ceremony, the Chief Guest on the occasion Rev. Fr. K. J. Abraham CSC, the Provincial Superior, opened the sessions with a talk on faith beautifully displaying his ideas on screen with a power-point program. The following day 28th Dec after mass celebrated by Fr. C. V. Jose CSC in Bengali and a well connected homily by Fr. Jilson CSC, on anti abortion, saw everyone on the field with football matches for the boys and throw-ball for the girls. The I. P. F. Tournament sponsored by the Don Bosco Past Pupils Association had its President Mr. Animesh Debbarma (Deputy Collector of South Tripura), kick-start the football tournament. The rolling trophy was captured by Khumwlngng Parish the runners-up by Bagbassa. The throw-ball for girls was grabbed by Nandan nagar, followed by Kathalcherra.

That evening a deeply thought provoking speech was delivered by Mr. Tarun Debbarma TCS (Land acquisition and Treasury Officer). The need of the hour Be United. The rapt attention was proof that it was being well absorbed. Then came Mr. Joshua Halam with his lilting sonorous voice and regaled the youngsters with his songs. The unison and full throated accompaniment of their voices seemed almost to drown his but, to him it was pure spirit that further ignited his enthusiasm. The cultural dances were well performed and though, the gentle and sensual movements of Bagbassa girls never won the prize yet, it was the most cheered performance of the evening. Bodjungnagar however, took off the first followed by Khumwlngng. The skit followed after a satisfying and delicious menu of pork and *godok*. Gondacheera grabbed the first and Ambassa the second. At the concluding mass celebrated with Fr. Mariaraj CSC, Fr. George Rodrigues - DYD in his homily stressed once again the need to remain united and to save the tribal children. He warmly thanked the Adoration Sisters, the host Parish Youth and Community for their hospitality and co-operation. **Fr. George Rodrigues (DYD-Agartala)**

Media Literacy for Teachers and Students

“The illiterate of the 21st Century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn” said Alvin Toffler. In the present age, each of the age-old concepts is getting newer and has layers of meaning than what it meant earlier. This is true in the case of literacy as the world talks of legal literacy, media literacy, computer literacy, etc. In order to bridge the widening gap between the literate and media literate especially at the time where the media is almost replacing in every field to influence what we think, say, do, wear, eat, play, buy, drink, build, read, watch, use, etc., the Commission for Social Communications of the Diocese of Agartala, assisted by SIGNIS, organized a day long Training in Media Education for the School Teachers and Students on 16th and 17th January 2013 at Montfort Higher Secondary School, Champaknagar and St. Arnold's



School, Ambassa respectively. Fr. Ivan D'Silva SVD was the Resource Person. The content of the Seminar focused on the basics of communication of print, electronic and film media and invited the participants to become the critical users of Media. It was well appreciated by both the teachers and the students. Similar Seminars will be conducted in the coming months in the other schools of our Diocese. **Fr. John Bosco, SVD**

Kokborok Course

'A rigorous Course in Communicative Kokborok Basic', for priests and religious will be held from 21st April to 4th May 2013 at Don Bosco Peace Centre. To enable participation the number of days has been reduced but hours of class/work increased to 15 hours a day. The day's program begins at 6.30 AM and ends at 9.30 PM; the course will include Mass, prayers, meals, get together and practical sessions. Accommodation to be arranged by participants. Those interested may please contact - Fr. Joseph Pulinthanath Cell: 9436126649 at the earliest.

Pre-Christmas at District Jail - Dharmanagar

Pre Christmas celebration was organized on 20th December 2012 under the leadership of Sr. Isabella B.S the coordinator for PMI Silchar Unit. The program began with a word of Welcome by Sr. Isabella, followed by lighting the candles by Mr Subhas Das, the Super Head of the Prison, Sr. Leena Miranda the principal and the animator of the community and one of the inmates. Sr. Isabella in her message for Christmas said that we should be love bombs not to destroy but to heal others. The Sisters sang Christmas carols in English, Bengali and Hindi and made the prisoners feel at home. Sr. Leena exhorted the prisoners never to lose hope but believe in themselves that one day they would be free and experience the joy of life.

Mr. Subhas Das thanked the sisters for organizing the program. He asked the prisoners to reform themselves and be back to their homes. The program came to an end singing and dancing to the rhythm 'jingle bells'. Thereafter the Christmas gifts, snacks and fruits were distributed to the inmates. One of the inmates expressed words of gratitude to the Sisters. **Bethany Sisters**

News Notes from All Over

Pakistani girl gets Mother Teresa award



Pakistani schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai, who was shot in the head by Taliban,

has been conferred with the Mother Teresa Memorial International Award for Social Justice in Mumbai. The Harmony Foundation, a city-based non-government organization, honored the 15-year-old girl with the award in absentia. Yousafzai, who had voiced her support for girls' education in the terror-infested Swat valley, was shot at by a group of Taliban terrorists on Oct. 9. She is currently under treatment at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, UK. Both Yousafzai and her father were unable to travel to Mumbai due to a medical procedure. Sevy Ali, a British actress of Pakistani origin, received the award on her behalf. *Source: timesofindia.indiatimes.com*

John Joseph Murphy, Father of Indian rubber honoured



Nearly 56 years after he died at Yendayar, a village he established on the foothills of the Western Ghats, an Irish gentleman will be officially honoured. The Rubber Board has decided to raise an official memorial for John Joseph Murphy, the father of Indian rubber plantation industry and the one who founded India's first commercial rubber plantation, in 1902. Known as JJ among his friends and fondly called 'Murphy saipu' by locals, Murphy (1872-1957) was a man of many parts a zealous colonialist, a staunch Irish Catholic honoured by Pope Pius XI, and an avid racer.

Courtesy Statesman

Visitors at Bishop's House

- ◆ Mr. Jim Manjooran from Goa
- ◆ Fr. T. Bilung SVD, Provincial Superior from Odisha
- ◆ Sr. Katharine, MSMHC Provincial from Shillong
- ◆ Ms. Inge & Ms. Imelda from Lichtenstein

BISHOP'S PROGRAMME FOR FEBRUARY 2013

- 01: Birthday Mass, Agartala
- 02-03: Parish Sabah, Kathalcherra
- 04-11: CCBI Plenary Assembly, Valainkanni
- 12: JUST Director Sendoff, Agartala
- 13: Ash Wednesday, St. Joseph's, Agartala Installation of new JUST Director
- 14: State Govt. Elections
- 16: Kokborok Mass Translation Meet Installation, Kathalcherra Parish
- 17: Caritas Animation & Reflection & PSC Meet, Delhi
- 18-22: Meet BS Provincial, Agartala
- 22: Installation, Tuikarmaw Parish
- 23-24: Caritas India Support Group Meet with International Partners, Odisha