



PASTOR'S CORNER



ADVENT – AWAITING THE LORD'S VISIT

"The word 'advent' is derived from the Latin *adventus* meaning 'coming' or 'arrival'. However, Advent is a pilgrimage and the Bible is a travelogue outlining God's

faithfulness to his journeying people. We are called like the early Christian community to detach ourselves from the familiar ways of sin and laziness, and commit ourselves to a journey of faith. Therefore let us look upon Advent as a time of getting our life in order. Sometimes Jesus does not come to us in the way that we expect. That is why the primary lesson of Advent is not the coming of Christmas, but learning to wait for the visitation of the Lord when and how he decides to reveal Himself. When we see all things as part of a constant Advent, there is always space, availability to advance along the way, even though it may be through the desert, without finding a place to stay. But trusting that even though it might be in a stable, God will be born, there will be a visit, and Emmanuel will be present.

NO PEACE IN THE LAND OF JESUS' BIRTH!

At Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, the angels sang 'Peace on earth to people of good will'. But since the start of the War, there has been an atmosphere of sadness and pain in the land of Jesus' birth. Thousands of innocent civilians, including women and children, have died or suffered serious injuries. Many more grieve over the loss of their homes, their loved ones, or the uncertain fate of those dear to them.



Throughout the region, even more have lost their work and are suffering from serious economic challenges. Yet despite the repeated calls for a humanitarian ceasefire and a de-escalation of violence, the war continues.

BUT THERE IS HOPE

As the Patriarch of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem says, "The sublime commission has been given to each of us to take Christ's peace into our hearts and our homes, so that it will radiate from there to every part of the world... During this season of giving, we also invite the faithful to advocate, pray, and contribute generously for the relief of the victims of this war and for those in dire need, as well as to encourage others to join them in this mission of mercy. In these ways, we believe, we will be standing in support of those continuing to suffer, just as Christ did with us in his Incarnation, in order that all of God's children might receive the hope of a New Jerusalem in the presence of the Almighty, where "death shall be no more, neither mourning, nor crying, nor pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4). Christmatis about peace, and giving, and love—God's love for us and our love for Him and for each other. Here is the way Irenaeus expressed that idea: "The word of God, Jesus Christ, on account of His great love for mankind, became what we are in order to make us what He is Himself... We approach what He is when we observe Christmas in the spirit of self-giving." MERRY CHRISTMAS.

+ Lumen, CSC

RELIGION MATTERS!

All these years we have been spending much of December preparing for Christmas like most Christian populations all over the world. Differently, this December we find ourselves here in Tripura in the curious position of having to defend our Christian faith against onslaughts directed at it. More than the substance of these accusations, it is the absence of any substance in them that renders us momentarily transfixed and unsure how to react. Perhaps, these are part of the run-up to the approaching general elections, - a re-run of an old gimmick in a different format intended to impact the ballot box.

A peek into the history of Tripura's tribal shows that over the years their identity has been pieced, portioned, and labeled as upajati, janajati, songduk bosong, pahari songduk janajati, and many such demeaning entities by those who had the power to call the shots. This was because, thanks to the vagaries of history, the indigenous people had numerically contracted into a meek minority in their own land. The identity of the people was whimsically defined and altered as it suited others' interests.

The clamor for the removal of ST status from Christians is based on a confusion between the 'dynamic' aspect of one's identity and the unchanging core of one's identity, which is visible in the cultural milieu of one's birth. Religion, in its best sense, brings about enlightenment and a transformation of individuals and societies, but not a change in the ethnic DNA of the adherent. In that sense, the Rampada argument that the Christian tribal ought to lose the Scheduled Tribe status is yet another assault on the identity of the Tripuri indigenous. Only it is all the more deplorable and humiliating because the demand is made by one of own kind, a bedfellow. It also shows the extent of the sellout that sections of the indigenous people have unwittingly accepted. The commotion is hardly about Christianity, despite the many half-truths they utter about it. It is at least as much about how a people views itself. The overwhelming reaction from sections of people, even non-Christians, to the inane demand is an indication. We as a Church and a Diocese ought to be concerned, more because it has the potential to harm our faithful and their future, than out of some compulsion to defend the Christian faith and its contribution to this land, both of which are crystal clear to the perspicacious although well beyond the grasp of those of Rampada's ilk.

J. Pulinthanath, SDB



Depacherra Parish

FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING



The village Chapel at Killa was Depacherra witnessed a vibrant celebration at Christ the King Parish Feast, commencing with a triduum and flag hoisting by Rev. Fr. Janardhan CMF. The festivities were enriched by a spiritually uplifting Retreat conducted by Rev. Fr. Leenus VC, paving the way for a day filled with reverence and devotion. The peak of the celebration unfolded with the Feast day's Holy Eucharist, presided over by Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC. In his homily, Bishop Monteiro emphasized the central role of Jesus Christ as the living Lord of lords and King of kings, emphasizing that from Him, the faithful draw their life. The Bishop administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to 117 faithful, reinforcing their commitment to the Christian faith, and also gave first Holy Communion to 78 children, marking a significant milestone in their spiritual journey. The culmination of the religious proceedings took the form of a meaningful Eucharistic Procession, weaving through the village with profound reverence. The community came together for this symbolic journey, expressing their devotion and faith. The festivities concluded on a joyous note with a festival agape, fostering a sense of unity and communal joy among the participants. Christ the King Parish Feast at Depacherra left a lasting impression, blending spiritual reflection with communal celebration in honor of Jesus Christ, the revered Lord of lords and King of kings.

Fr. Amalraj

Ambassa Parish

HOLY EUCHARISTIC PROCESSION

Ambassa 29 October: The Parish had decided in Parish Council Meeting to have Eucharistic Procession because

of the Year of Eucharist in the Diocese. October month is usually celebrated for the Catholics as Rosary month and the Council Members also thought that culmination of the Marian month could be by taking Eucharist in the procession. Accordingly, on 29th October many parishioners from 20 sub-centres gathered in the Parish Church for the Holy Mass at 9:30 am followed by the Eucharistic Procession. The Parish Priest Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD welcomed the all and spoke on the importance of Eucharist during the homily. After the Mass we had solemn Holy Eucharistic Procession on the road of Ambassa. More than 300 people participated in the Mass and procession. On reaching the Church the Procession concluded with the Benediction.



BLESSING OF VILLAGE CHAPEL AT KULAI GANTACHARA

Ambassa 13 November: Holy Spirit Parish, Ambassa, blessed one more new village Chapel at Kulai Gantachara sub-station. Bishop Lumen Monteiro inaugurated and blessed the Chapel and later he offered Holy Mass in the Chapel. In 1998 the first Catholic faith was found in this village through Moni Kumar Bongcher and later few more families joined. But there was no proper place to build a chapel and Mass was taking place in the houses of the faithful. Mr. Nandamoy Molsom who grieved, "before I die there should be a church erected in this village" and he gave a place in his compound to build the Chapel which was blessed on 13th November. Bishop Lumen who came here for the first time was solemnly welcomed by the parishioners with flower garland and bouquets along with other guest priests and religious. Bishop inaugurated St. Lawrence Chapel by cutting the ribbon and unveiling the plaque. After that he prayed the prayer of blessing which was followed by Holy Mass. After the Mass a short



felicitation program was arranged and Mr. Dinesh Molsom the active leader of the local community read the history of the sub-station and welcomed all. Bishop and religious were welcomed with traditional shawl and with cultural songs and dances. More than 200 people enjoyed the lunch prepared for the occasion.

COUPLES SPIRITUAL ANIMATION PROGRAM



Ambassa Catholic Church coordinated the Couples' Retreat through the Holy Cross Congregation of Agartala. More than 150 people came for the annual spiritual renewal program for two days. Fr. Leenus a Vincentian Priest from Mariam Nagar Retreat Centre of Agartala animated Retreat with praise and worship. The preacher mainly stressed on family life with prayer. He said, "The family that prays together, stays together". The Priest called on the Couples to be faithful to one another. He said, "Infidelity among married couples happens when they don't get the ideal partner". The preacher educated the participants saying, "Marriage life is successful when both partners love, forgive, and sacrifice". The 2-days of spiritual animation has really helped the participants to be faithful partners and model families. Mrs. Lata Marak, one of the participants who gave witness, said "I am spiritually energized after attending this Retreat". Mr. Neithunglien Halam said, "I had a heart attack a few months back and doctors had lost hope of my recovery. But the prayers of many healed me and today I want to give testimony to the Lord".

Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD

Mandwi Parish

**NEW CHAPEL AT SRIDAM KOBRA
- A SIGN OF HOPE & BLESSING**



For many years the people of Sridam Kobra motha were waiting to get a new and better chapel. On 19th November 2023 was the remarkable and memorable day for this motha and the whole Parish of Mandwi. It was on this day that the new Chapel at Sridam Kobra was blessed and inaugurated by Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC. The Chapel was blessed and inaugurated in the presence of Fr. Hubert Thyrniang the Parish Priest, Fr. Davis Aricatt the Administrator, the Sisters, the Parish Council Members and many faithful who came from far and near. The presence of Fr. Blasius Kujur from St. Xavier Pathaliaghat and Fr. Christopher from Don Bosco Nandanagar brought more joy to everyone. When the Bishop arrived the Fathers and faithful gave him a warm welcome. Then was the inauguration and blessing of the Chapel, followed by the Holy Eucharist which was solemnized by our Bishop. He exhorted the people to have a sense of belonging and care for their new Chapel. After the Holy Eucharist there was a short felicitation program which was followed by the fellowship meal. Many people who had come from far and near witnessed the blessing of God on this village. One elderly man said, "The chapel is the sign of hope and blessing for us". The Parish Council and the Youth played a big role in organizing the program.

Fr. Hubert, SDB

Kumarghat Parish

MARIA SANGHA ANNUAL PROGRAM



The 13th Annual Maria Sabha of Kumarghat Parish took place in

Kurmapara village from October 21-22, 2023. The theme was "Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her". The lamp was lit by Fr. Lancy CSC the Parish Priest, Sr. Ignatius Mary F.S, Sr. Vero Anthony M.C, and Women representatives. Fr. Lancy encouraged the 167 Women attendees to participate wholeheartedly. Sr. Divya M.C led the first session, highlighting the faith-filled lives of Women. Sr.Vero M.C covered the roles of faith-filled Women in creating a praying family. After lunch competitions and discussions were held and also planned the next Annual Maria Sabha to take place in Masli Reang. Sr. Ignatius Mary addressed the challenges faced by Women in the family, society and church at large, emphasizing cooperation and courage. The day concluded with Rosary and evening prayer. On the second day Mr. Roitua Darlong took a session. Fr. Lancy was the main celebrant at Mass. Others who joined were Fr. Andrew CSC General Councillor of Holy Cross from Rome, and Fr. C. Abraham CSC, PP of Kathalcherra Parish. Bro. Prodipt the General Councillor from Rome was also present. Fr. Lancy CSC emphasized the vital role of women in building up of the local church.

Sr. Ignatius Mary F.S.

SENIOR CITIZENS DAY



November 5th was indeed a special and gracious day for 89 Senior Citizens of Kumarghat Parish. We began with solemn Mass celebrated by Fr. Hormis CSC, the former PP, who is now celebrating his golden Jubilee of priestly Ordination. He gave a heartwarming homily. Soon after the Holy Mass there was the felicitation program, acknowledging his dedicated service and commitment. He was presented with a shawl and a gift to express gratitude. Recognizing and honoring the presence of Senior Citizens is

crucial for fostering a sense of community and respect within the parish. A blanket each was given as a gift, especially as the weather may be getting colder in the months ahead, thus making the elderly feel valued and cared for.

After some refreshments, the inclusion of party games and the active participation of all the Senior Citizens, followed by prizes for the winners, shows that the event was not only a spiritual celebration but also about fostering a sense of camaraderie and joy. The program concluded with lunch. Overall, it was a well-rounded and thoughtful celebration that brought joy and warmth to the Senior Citizens of Kumarghat Parish.

Bro. Thamby Joseph



POPE'S PRAYER INTENTION FOR DECEMBER 2023



BIBLE CONVENTION CUM EUCHARISTIC PROCESSION 2023



Theme: "Believe in the Lord Jesus; you and your household will be saved..." (Acts 16:31)

The Bible Convention cum Holy Eucharistic Procession at the Diocese level was conducted at Don Bosco Nandannagar, Agartala. It began on 9th November evening and ended on 12th November with the Eucharistic Procession. The Bible Convention was a kind of Charismatic Retreat with Talks, praise and worship, healing and anointing. The famous Preacher Fr. Mathew Naickomparambil VC and his Team guided the Convention. Fr. Leenus VC and his parish community accompanied the Team during the Retreat. Thousands of faithful and many Religious turned up for this event including our Bishop Lumen who was present throughout the program. Many people experienced the healing miracles and came forward to give their testimony.

On the 12th November the 13th Diocese level Eucharistic Procession took place at Don Bosco School Ground. A huge crowd from all the Parishes joined and made the Procession very beautiful. Everyone was served food and water during the Retreat as well as on the Procession day. All the arrangement of these four days was the responsibility of the CLT under the leadership of Fr. Bosco Lathees the Director of the JUST. Thanks to them, the Volunteers, the Choir, and Don Bosco community of Nandannagar.

Fr. Merkush, SDB

SILVER JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS AT DON BOSCO SCHOOL, UDAIPUR



The Silver Jubilee of Don Bosco School Udaipur was celebrated on 18th Nov. Our Bishop Lumen, Priests, Religious, and special invitees were accorded a warm welcome with a band display. The cutting of the ribbon was done by our dear Bishop. SDB Frs. Sebastian, Babu and Albestar, and Fr. Varghese MSFS assisted the Bishop for blessing the building. The Holy Eucharist was presided over by Bishop Lumen and 16 priests concelebrated. The presence of many Sisters, FMA, VSDB, FCC, SABS, MSMHC, past pupils, and special invited teachers and the students made this event a grace filled and joyful one. Being closely associated with the mission here, our Bishop shared the fond memories of late Sr. Jane Francis and her team and recalled their struggles in the initial stages, which they overcame with eagerness and enthusiasm. There were only 15 students at the start. After completing 25 glorious years with admirable strength and infrastructure, we need to strive and work hard for a better tomorrow said the Bishop. After the Holy Mass there was a sumptuous lunch served at Ferrando Nivas Convent. It was followed by an hour of cultural extravaganza during which Bishop Lumen released "Meliora" the School Magazine. On Behalf of the management, the Principal proposed vote of thanks.

Sr. Tessa, MSMHC

HOLY CROSS COLLEGE 12th GRADUATION DAY



Agartala, November 18: Holy Cross College in Agartala celebrated its 12th Graduation Day ceremony at the College premises, honoring the accomplishments of the Class of 2023. A total of 423 students, including 8 University rank holders with 2 Gold medals, 2 Silver medals, and 4 Bronze medals, received their Degrees across various subjects in the presence of their families and friends.

The ceremony was distinguished by the presence of chief guest Dr. Fr. Patrick Daniel Gaffney, CSC, the Vice Chancellor of Notre Dame University, Bangladesh. Dr. Fr. Benny K. John, CSC, the Principal of the college, extended a warm welcome to the chief guest, the guests of honour, graduates, and their families. He congratulated the graduates on their academic achievements and conveyed best wishes for their future endeavours. The event served as a momentous occasion to celebrate the academic journey and success of the graduating class.

(Courtesy TC News Desk)

WOMEN COMMISSION 5th NATIONAL CONFERENCE



The 5th National Conference of Women Commission was arranged by Sr. Lidwin Fernandes the National Secretary of CCBI Commission for Women at Bangalore from 20th to 24th October 2023. The five day program was hosted by the Women Commission of Bangalore Archdiocese. The prominent persons present for the program were Archbishop Peter Machado of Bangalore, Bishop Kishore Kumar Kujur, the Chairman of the Commission, Rev. Dr. Stephen Alathara, Deputy Secretary of CCBI. In their address to the members they encouraged us to be more active and alert in reaching out to the women of all walks of life and make their presence felt in the Synodal Church. As part of the Strategic Plan for the Women Commission Rev. Fr. Joseph Xavier SJ initiated and assisted the Members into planning and preparing the plan for the next ten years. Though the five day program was fully packed it was a time of learning and sharing for everyone. Following the advice of Pope Francis to make the church more active with the participation of women in all the Church related activities the CCBI encouraged the women members to be more effective in their services. Various issues of common interest were touched upon such as Communion India, the launching of Catholic Connect Mobile APP, Pilgrims of Hope – 2025 Jubilee, awareness and orientation on general Elections 2024.

Sr. Jolly, FS



Livelihood Support

Livelihood support was given to 25 most needed people under Karbook Block in the months of October and November 2023. The main aim is to help small business and micro enterprises not only gain adequate profits but also to help those in need with skill, knowledge and access to benefits and resources by diving deep into the problem and bringing relief to the downtrodden.

Through this livelihood support JUST intends to enhance self-reliance and can develop or build a set of specific skills. The sustainable livelihood framework provides structure for holistic poverty alleviation action. JUST helps the neediest families to sustain development in an attempt to go beyond the conventional definitions and approaches to poverty eradication. Through the livelihood support scheme, the neediest families receive the secondary livelihood for residents. They are given an amount to purchase domestic animals like piglets to rear at home and sell it after a year or when it is matured, and they are expected to return the amount of loan they are provided with no interest. This scheme really helps the people to start up with their small home business. The guardians are also encouraged to make handicrafts items of bamboo and sell it to the Organization which can help the NGO centers to use it.

We have many success stories but cannot report them here. As we celebrate these achievements, we shall also recognize the importance of supporting and replicating such empowering models to transform more lives and communities across the nation.

Mr. Robert Lushai

Our Distinguished Guests

- Sr. Mary Tiernen, CSC, from USA
- Fr. Tony Menezes, SVD from Mumbai
- Sr. Elsa SABS, General Councillor from Kerala
- Sr. Catherine, SABS Provincial Superior from Nagaland
- Sr. Pavitra, CMC Provincial from Bhopal
- Sr. Shalom, CMC Procurator from Bhopal
- Fr. Mathew Naickomparambil & Team from Pota, Kerala
- Sr. Avita, UFS, (sister of Fr. Alfred CSC) from Mysore
- Ms. Ruth Aigner from MISEREOR Germany
- Sr. Anifa, FCC, Provincial Superior from Kerala
- Sr. Tessa, FCC, Provincial Secretary from Kerala

Bishop's Program for December 2023

- 03 : Cathedral Parish Feast, Agartala
- 05 : Clergy Meeting, Agartala
- 08 : Episcopal Ordination, Imphal
- 10 : Burburia Church Blessing, Amarpur
- 11 : CBCI CARD Meet, Delhi
- 12 : IGSSS GB Meet, Delhi
- 13 : St. John's Board Meet, Bangalore
- 14 : Meet BS Sisters General Councilors
- 15 : Christo Mela, Ganda Twisa
- 17 : Parish Feast, Moharpara
- 19 : Gratitude Day, St. Mary's Belbari
- 20 : Meet OLG Superior General
- 21 : JUST GB & pre-Christmas celebration
- 22 : Christo Mela, Kamaranga
- 24 : Parish Mass
- 25 : Christmas Day Mass
- 31 : New Year's Eve Thanksgiving