



LINK

News Bulletin of the Diocese of Agartala



Vol: XXVIII

Issue : 01

JANUARY 2024



Editorial

New Year Musings

As we step into another year, sentiments of gratitude well up in our hearts to God Almighty for everything he has done for us throughout the years past. Our gratitude extends also to fellow travelers on the highway of life, with whom we have shared joys and sorrows, pains and problems.

Looking back at the time gone by is most of the time a sobering exercise. While we find that there has been impressive success on many fronts, there has also been considerable negligence about many things. It is a phenomenon applicable to most people as individuals and as members of society.

It is customary, at the close of the year, to look back and spot the most significant events, achievements, and failures. As a country, there have been things we felt good about like, say, the Chandrayaan, or the recent rescue of trapped miners. There have also been things and events we wished did not take place – like the Manipur mayhem, for example.

In Tripura, the State Legislative Assembly Elections were the high point of the early months of 2023. The ending of the year had as its focal point, the much-talked-about Rally demanding the delisting of ST Christians. It brought the year to a close on a peculiar note of antagonism and discord among a people who had religious division as the last thing on their minds. The legendary Greek 'apple of discord' comes to mind. The golden apple that Eris, the goddess of discord casually threw into a banquet gave rise to a series of events that culminated in nothing less than the Trojan War. Have we overrated the restlessness of those who call themselves JSM? Or were we right in trying to nip in the bud the cankerous worm that we suspect can gradually poison a whole society, only time will tell.

The Year 2023 was the Year of the Eucharist for us in the Diocese. It was a golden opportunity to delve deep into what is inarguably the centre of our faith life as Catholics. Have we squandered the opportunity or done it justice? This year, 2024, we are told, is dedicated to the Word of God. An equally wonderful opportunity to ensure that our lives become more centered on the Word – "a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

" Happy New Year!

J. Pulinthanath, SDB

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

New Year Blessings



On New Year's Day we generally wish each other the very best for the year ahead. But hope for the New Year stems from lessons from our life. Life's lessons are a beautiful gift, but they don't always come wrapped in a shiny, red bow. Sometimes tragedy brings us wisdom. Sometimes joy does. At other times we stumble upon life-changing lessons when we least expect to. And the experiences of resilience of the past do matter. We should never underestimate our resilience. You have survived because of your resilience in difficult times, because inside you there is an inner strength. Your potential is greater than any problem. Think of some difficult times in your life, of those big challenges that seemed insurmountable! Surmounting some of them has paved the way for great success. Can you say you have learned a lesson or two? Can you say a few years later, that a wonderful path revealed itself out of those times? I certainly can, when I look at the challenges that I have experienced in my life.

Many good things have revealed themselves to me as a direct result of the challenge. Though tough when it happened, there's a beautiful silver lining to it every time. And that brings me to my motto, Lead Us Onward, which fits right in. As we enter another year in the life of the Diocese I ask the Lord to lead us onward. Progress isn't always a leap forward.



Sometimes it is those tiny, almost imperceptible steps. Each step, no matter how small, brings you closer to your goal. Great challenges allow for great expansion. If we did not have the challenge, would we even seek the solution? Choosing the safe path, cannot

create great success. All great leaders have taken risks, be it in business, politics, spirituality, and even personal life. Many times amazing paths reveal themselves out of great adversity. No matter how difficult it becomes, never let yourself give in. After some time, the spark will eventually return. You will come out happier, healthier, and above all stronger. As we step into the New Year let us keep moving onward!

This is the 319th issue of the LINK, our Diocesan Newsletter, as we enter the 28th year of its existence. This humble Newsletter has been coming to you on the first day of the month, month after month, for the past 27 years! In 1996 it was just 2 sheets of Parish Reports and the Bishop's program. Over the years LINK has become a 5 page Newsletter covering snippets from our Parishes and Institutions with the idea of keeping in touch and informed. I have purposefully limited the Newsletter to five pages keeping in mind that brevity enhances curiosity. As we enter another year I like to thank Fr. J. Pulinthanath SDB, who has always been there with a thought-provoking Editorial each month. I also thank Fr. S. George who has taken up the task of designing the Newsletter with appealing graphics and colors. And thanks to our dear Readers for your support. THANK YOU. I wish you a joy-filled and peace-filled NEW YEAR 2024.

+ Lumen, CSC

Amarpur Parish

Inauguration and Blessing of St. Joseph Vaz Church, Amarpur



St Joseph Vaz Church, Amarpur, which was once a dilapidated church of more than 25 years now got a new face after the renovation work being done under the care of Fr Lijeesh Mathew MSFS, Parish Priest of Amarpur. On 10th December it was inaugurated by Fr Santhosh MSFS, Provincial Bursar and Provincial delegate of MSFS Guwahati Province. Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC, officiated the church blessing ceremony and was the main celebrant of the Holy Mass assisted by MSFS Frs. Santhosh, Lijeesh, Athikho, and Aloysius. Bishop expressed his wholehearted thanks to Fr Lijeesh Mathew MSFS, the PP of Amarpur.

On this momentous occasion, Mrs. Doly Reang EM of TTAADC participated in the spiritual event with more than 200 laity. Mr. Biren Datta Jamatia, PPC Secretary, expressed his gratitude to MSFS Fathers of Guwahati Province for the generous help in funding 75% of the cost incurred for the renovation of the church, and Fr Lijeesh Mathew for his bold step to complete the work within a short span of time. The program came to an end with a fellowship meal.

Fr. Lijeesh, MSFS

Challengta Parish

A unique Christ-birth Gift for all of us



Just a few days before Christmas 2023, seven erstwhile families of Gangajoypara, Dhalai District, all on their own came over to our fold. A little Chapel was put up mostly from our own local funds – a rare feat by any counts! Part-time Catechists Takarai Reang and Amalesh Reang did their part in imparting the Christian Doctrine to

these innocent and innocuous villagers belonging to remote place (35Kms. from our Parish Centre half of it on dirt-road). Though they eke their livelihood on their own produce of Jhum cultivation, every family is BPL, all that mattered was their eagerness to belong to Christ for his numerous values of Love, Joy, and Peace. In his homily the main celebrant, Fr. Harry CSC, gave a clarion call to all present to be St. John the Baptists for the surrounding villagers. Herein lies our future hope.

Despite the distance, some 60 of us celebrated pre-Christmas to rejoice with Gangajoypara faithful beginning with a Carol Service on the previous night. Under the leadership of the Parish Priest, the Parish Council, and the Maria Sangha, we had a gala event—the greatest gift of the year for our Parish and for our Diocese.

Vinsent Lynshiang,

Sacred Heart Study House, Lembucherra

Depacherra Parish

A Joyous celebration welcoming 10 families of Rabiraipara to our fold



In a heartwarming ceremony that marked a significant spiritual milestone, 10 families from the quaint village of Rabiraipara, under Depacherra Parish, officially entered the Catholic faith. The momentous event unfolded on the hallowed grounds of the newly inaugurated village chapel, witnessed by members of the Duluma Area Catholic Community. The inauguration of the Rabiraipara Village Chapel was a modest yet spiritually profound affair. The Parish Pastoral Council members, alongside the Parish Priest, led the inauguration ceremony, signifying the birth of a new spiritual haven within the community. The joyous occasion reached its pinnacle as the Parish Priest administered the Sacraments of initiation to the 10 families who embraced Jesus with open hearts. The ceremony took place on the evening of 3rd December. The Duluma Area Catholic Community played a big role in embracing the newcomers and extending a warm welcome to the new families. At the end a fellowship meal was served, providing an opportunity for the entire community to come together, share in the joy of the occasion, and strengthen the bonds of friendship and faith. As the Rabiraipara Village Chapel opens its doors to the faithful, it symbolizes a new chapter in their spiritual journey.

Fr. Amalraj

Newly Ordained Priest Fr. Derrick welcomed



The Depacherra parishioners gathered in joyous celebration on December 10, to extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to the newly ordained priest, Rev. Fr. Derrick. Ordained on October 18, 2023 Fr. Derrick expressed his gratitude to the parishioners for their unwavering prayers and support during his journey to the priesthood. He also conveyed heartfelt appreciation to Bishop Lumen for ordaining him and entrusting him with the new responsibilities. "I am truly humbled by the prayers and support I have received from this wonderful community. Your encouragement has been a source of strength for me during my Diaconate ministry, and I am honored to be here as your servant in the vineyard of the Lord," remarked Rev. Fr. Derrick. Following the Holy Mass, a felicitation program was organized by the Parish Pastoral Council. The atmosphere was filled with joy and anticipation as parishioners, young and old, lined up to personally greet and congratulate the newly ordained priest. Fr. Derrick's presence is expected to bring renewed energy and inspiration to the parish, and the community eagerly anticipates the positive impact of his ministry in their midst.

Fr. Amalraj

Ambassa Parish

Women's Association Annual Seminar



December 10, 2023: Women wing of Holy Spirit Catholic Parish Ambassa, organized two days of Annual Seminar for the Women of the Parish. There were 84 participants from various villages of the parish. Mrs. Nayanmoti, the Secretary of Maria Sangha, had planned this event much in advance. On 9th December at 2pm was the registration followed by the introductory session. At 5 pm Fr. Ivan D'Silva the PP took a class on Pastoral Communication. After an early dinner they had various competitions such as Bible quiz, Speech competition, and Gospel group song competition. At night they were

accommodated in different families and early morning at 6:30am they were back to the Church for another day's program. After the Sunday Holy Mass Dr. Asok Debbarma lectured on Health and Hygiene. The two days Seminar ended with the distribution of prizes and lunch.

Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD

Blankets Distributed to 50 Families



Ambassa (Agartala) 17 December, 2023: The Parish Council decided to distribute blankets for the poor families. There was a special drive to collect funds to buy the blankets. More than 25,000 rupees were collected and bought blankets from Agartala. Mothers association collected clothes too and hampers were made and distributed to the families. In Kulai Gantachara and Aichukni Pohor warm clothes were distributed. On 17th December the parish celebrated Christmas. Big number of people from different villages gathered and offered home prepared sweets which were distributed after the Mass as the faithful wished one another 'advance Christmas'. Then the leaders organized a Christmas Peace Rally with two wheelers, cars and a bus to Aichukni Pohor. The village is a government established colony with the Reang and Molsom tribes. Originally they were brought in from Attaramura villages and they are very poor. We wished them Christmas through messages and songs and distributed blankets to 20 families. From there the motorcade went to Kulai Gantachara another 3 kilometers away and distributed blankets for 30 families. With prayers, songs and dances we concluded our 'advance Christmas' and Peace Rally.

Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD

Kamaranga Parish

Christmas message from the Wheels



St. Raphael Parish Kamranga preached Christmas message through motor rally with about 40 motor bikes and 10 four wheelers in Kamalpur Subdivision on 17th December. It was a proud event for the parishioners to proclaim Christmas message with music, banners and live holy family crib of Joseph, Mary and child Jesus. The motor rally filled the atmosphere with Christmas joy and happiness. The rally has inspired and encouraged the parishioners to preach message of Christ with such creative means.

Fr. Arun Minj, SVD

**Kamaranga Christo Mela
A Platform of Unity & Harmony**



The celebration began with adoration prior to the Holy Eucharist. Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, presided over the Christo Mela Holy Eucharist at 12pm. The people witnessed 'Kishan Mela' as well, where the SHGs of Farmer Club could sell their agricultural products. The evening programme began with blessing of the five Cribs made based on Annunciation, Visitation, Angel's good news to the Shepherds, and the visit of three Kings from the east and birth of Jesus in the Manger, praise & worship and kissing of child Jesus. The preaching was focused on peace, joy, unity and harmony among people. There were group singing, dancing and skits on birth of Jesus and awareness on drug addiction, etc.

Fr. Arun Minj, SVD

Moharpara Parish

Parish Feast celebration



Immaculate Conception Parish Moharpara celebrated its Feast day on the 17th of December 2023 in the Parish Center. The event commenced with the Holy Eucharist presided over by Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro the Bishop of Agartala along with three con celebrants. To mark the day a memorable event in the lives of the faithful, Bishop administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to the 60 candidates and first Holy Communion to the 59 candidates. In his homily Bishop exhorted the faithful to be united as one because through

baptism we have become one family. After the Holy Mass the faithful walked together with the Lord in procession and witnessed their faith to the people around the village. Soon after the Eucharistic procession, there was Praise & Worship with Adoration of the Eucharistic Lord and Benediction. After the spiritual events the whole community shared in a fellowship meal.

Fr. Arbok, CSC

Ganda Twisa Parish

Christmas Joy celebrated at the Govt. School Ground



Christo Mela an Inter Denominational program was organized under the banner United Christian Forum, Ganda Twisa Chapter, on 15th December at the Government School grounds. Every year Christo Mela is celebrated in different ways like bike rally, song and dance programs on Christmas, etc. This year under the guidance of Fr. Prasad Rao, Parish Priest, we decided to have a public celebration along with different Christian Denominations. Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, was the Chief Guest and Mrs. Nandita MLA of Raima Valley, the SDM, and Pastors were the Guests of honor. About 35 villages belonging to different churches participated in the event. The event was dazzled with dances, singing, Band and messages given by various pastors on Christmas. Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC in his address highlighted the real meaning of Christmas and invited everyone to share joy, love and peace that the world so badly needs at this moment. Over 2,000 people who were present for the program were happy and appreciated this unique initiative to bring all Christian Denomination under one platform.

Fr. Praveen Yeddanapalli

Caring and Sharing Christmas with our neighbors

In the festive spirit leading up to Christmas, St. Arnold Parish Ganda Twisa, has embarked on a month long series of impactful social programs.



The latest initiative unfolded at Jayakishore Para neighborhood on December 18, where a compassionate gesture brought warmth and sustenance to the underprivileged families residing in the area. A brief yet impactful ceremony took place at Jayakishore Para as blankets, dry ration and other essentials were generously distributed among the impoverished and distressed families. During the program Fr. Prasad Rao extended Christmas wishes to all present, setting a festive tone for the upcoming celebrations. He spearheaded a series of diverse programs, aimed at spreading the joy of Christmas across communities, regardless of religious affiliations. This innovative approach has garnered significant appreciation from the local community. Expressing gratitude for the positive response, Fr. Prasad Rao affirmed the Parish's commitment to sustaining such meaningful social initiatives in the days to come. The spirit of giving and inclusivity demonstrated by St. Arnold parish reflects the true essence of Christmas.

Fr. Praveen Yeddanapalli

Inauguration & Blessing of St. Clare Convent & Hostel



2nd December 2023 was a remarkable and memorable day for FCC Sisters in Tripura. On that day St. Clare F.C. Convent and Hostel were opened. The celebration started with a warm welcome to our dear Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC. FCC Provincial Superior Rev. Sr. Anita Jose inaugurated the Convent by cutting the ribbon and Bishop Lumen Monteiro unveiled the plaque. After the inauguration the Convent was blessed, followed by the Holy Eucharist which was solemnized by our Bishop, Fr. Alfred CSC (Provincial Administrator) and Fr. Varghese MSFS (Parish Priest of Sindukpathar), along with many other Priests. Bodhjunjagar parish choir sang during the Mass. After the Holy Eucharist, there was a short Felicitation program which was followed by the fellowship meal. Sr. Maria Davis is the Sister Superior and Sr. Mary Jacob, Sr. Jissa John and Sr. Jyothi George are the members of the new community. The presence of the Sisters from various communities, Parish representatives, well-wishers and neighbors gave more joy to the blessing ceremony.

Sr. Jisa Rose, FCC

CONGRATULATIONS



Congratulations to St. Xavier's School Pathaliaghat, who represented the State of Tripura in the Eastern Zonal Level Inter School Band Competition (under Girl's Brass Band Category) held on 22.12.2023 in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, who were declared the champions. They will now be going to Delhi for the National Level Competition in January 2024.

Staff Reporter



Our Distinguished Guests

- Sr. Anita Jose, FCC Provincial from Kerala
- Sr. Tessa, FCC Provincial Secretary
- Sr. Shanti Priya, BS Asst. General from Mangalore
- Sr. Santhosh Maria, BS General Secretary
- Sr. Mary Diksha, AC Provincial from Kolkata
- Sr. Nishita, AC Provincial Bursar from Kolkata
- Sr. Gladis, OLG Superior General from Rome
- Sr. Grace, OLG Provincial Superior from Indore
- Srs. Rinsi & Roshni, OLG, from Manipur
- Archbishop Menampampil, SDB, from Guwahati

Bishop's Program for January 2024

- 01: Kasithai Chapel Blessing under Gachirampara Parish
- 03: Clergy Meet, Agartala
- 04: SMC Meet, St. Joseph School Gokulnagar
- 06: Holy Cross B.Ed. College Blessing
- 06-07: Silver Jubilee Celebrations, Ganda Twisa Parish
- 09-19: IXA-GOA-IXA
- 20-21: Parish Sabha Kumarghat
- 23-26: CHAI Board Meeting, Kerala
- 27-28: Silver Jubilee Katalutma under Kamaranga Parish