



28<sup>th</sup>  
Episcopal Ordination Anniversary

# LINK

News Bulletin of the Diocese of Agartala



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## Pastor's Message

### The Twenty-Eighth Episcopal Anniversary



On the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 1996 I was consecrated a Bishop of this Diocese. Hard to believe, but this May I complete twenty-eight years since my episcopal ordination. It has also been twenty-eight years since the Diocese of Agartala was inaugurated on that very day, which was Pentecost Sunday, the birthday of the church. As I pen these few lines, emotions of joy and gratitude well up in my heart, alongside memories of adversity and challenges.

Quite like the Apostles who were strengthened by the Holy Spirit and went forth, though they had their fears, I too began my life as Bishop with the same kind of fear and anxiety as the Apostles did! I felt I was ill-equipped, inexperienced, lacking personnel, paucity of money, and so on. But soon I realized that these were my fears and there was something within me urging me to go onward. Lead us onward has been my motto and prayer. I strongly believe that it was the holy Spirit and the holy Eucharist that gave me the needed strength to overcome challenges and adversities.

The idea that adversity and challenges can lead to personal growth and resilience is something that I believe in. When we face difficulties, we're often forced to confront our limitations, develop new skills, and adapt to changing circumstances. Overcoming obstacles can build character, resilience, and confidence, ultimately making us stronger individuals. So, with St. Paul I say, *"we also boast of our troubles, because we know that trouble produces endurance, endurance brings God's approval, and his approval creates hope. This hope does not disappoint us, for God has poured out his love into our hearts."*

Not everyone responds to adversity in the same way, and not all challenges necessarily lead to growth. However, when approached with the right mindset and support, navigating through troubled times can indeed foster personal development and strength. I have many reasons to thank God, the chief among them being a spirit of determination to navigate through tough times, believing that nothing is impossible with God on my side!

Today, as I complete twenty-eight years of my episcopal life in the Diocese of Agartala, I thank God. This anniversary is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on my journey, to express my gratitude for the experiences I've had, and to reaffirm my commitment to God and his people. This anniversary is not just a celebration of my accomplishments, but also a time to acknowledge the grace and guidance that have brought me to this point. I have received a lot; how can I NOT BE GRATEFUL? I lift my heart to Almighty God in joy and gratitude. Lord, for all that has happened THANKS...for all that will happen YES!

+ Lumen, CSC

## EDITORIAL

### An Emmaus Journey, 28 years long!



As this is being written, many parts of the country are experiencing intense heat waves. Despite a rain or two, the temperature keeps soaring to frightening levels. Earlier, the sweltering heat only brought a lot of discomfort. Today it threatens life itself. Nature too, like much else in life, has become emphatically unpredictable.

We have stepped into a month that every Catholic considers special - the Marian Month of May. Observance of May Marian devotion is one of the good practices that has percolated right down into the village level in all parts of our Diocese. The parishes and their pastors have played a major role in this. In many parishes, rosary is prayed unit-wise throughout the month of May. All members of the unit gather in one of the houses and pray the rosary. Every house in the Unit gets an opportunity to host the rosary at least once, if not more.

May is memorable for yet another reason. It was on the hot afternoon of 26<sup>th</sup> of May 1996 the Holy Cross priest Lumen Monteiro turned Bishop, thanks to a glittering, historic ceremony that took place in the Holy Cross School grounds, attended by a large number of people. The fanfare of the occasion was well warranted because it marked the beginning of huge changes, all of which did not come about suddenly, of course, but gradually and steadily. Post May 1996, it almost felt uncanny that the monthly trip to Silchar for clergy meeting had become a thing of the past, all of a sudden!

Today, twenty-eight years after, our Bishop Lumen is among the most senior bishops of the region and Agartala Diocese has grown well out of that 'young Diocese' tag. Age and experience have lent a rare charm both to the Diocese and its Pastor. Like the legendary mustard seed Jesus spoke about, the Church here has taken root and reached out to every nook and corner of the State marking thereby not merely a quantitative growth but also a qualitative one.

We are still in the Easter season. The wayfarer duo of the Emmaus story is brought to a point from which they can look back and realize that everything that happened along the road now make sense.

For the Bishop, this is perhaps an anniversary that takes him back down the vista of years. And looking back, perhaps he recognizes now patterns and purposes in matters that once eluded clarity. If it's a 7-mile-long journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus, it has been exactly four times that number of years for us all, as a Diocese. The protagonist of the journey has been the same. Which is why despite 28 years, our hearts keep burning within!

J. Pulinthanath, SDB

## Tuikarmaw Parish

## Annual Parish Convention



The three days Annual Parish Convention (Sabha) was held from 12th -14th April 2024, at St. Mary's Parish Tuikarmaw.

The Theme of the Parish Sabha was 'Be rooted in the living Word'. Fr. Cyprian Pinto SVD was the Resource Person on all three days. At the Inaugural Session Mr. Jagdish Uchhoi, the Parish Secretary, welcomed our Fr. Cyprian, Sisters, Fathers, the Leaders and all the Members for the Sabha.

Bro. Pintu Marak CSC gave the ice breaking session on the second day of the Convention.

Bishop Lumen Monteiro arrived on 13th April. He was warmly welcomed by our parishioners and taken in a procession to the school Hall where Parish Sabha was being held.

In the presence of the Bishop all the mondoli presidents read out their respective mondoli reports.

It was followed by a brief discussion on the pastoral concerns of the Parish.

Bishop Lumen then gave a talk on the Theme 'Be Rooted in the living Word'.

In addition to Input sessions and spiritual exercises, we also had Singing and Dance Competitions to cheer the participants.

On 14th morning Bishop Lumen presided over the Holy Eucharist. After the Mass there was a Talk by Fr. Cyprian.

After that Fr. Thomas made a PPT of the Pastoral and Financial report of the Parish for the year 2023-24.

At the end there was prize distribution.

Fr. Renju, CSC, the Asst. Parish Priest proposed the vote of thanks. The Sabha ended with Bishop's final blessing and a fellowship meal.

*Mr. Jagdish Uchoi  
Parish Secretary*

## Chailengta Parish

## New Village Chapel Blessing



All thanks to God Almighty and our former Parish Priest Fr. Thomas Pereira CSC, coupled with the Sisters of the Queen of Apostles (SRA), this fledgling parish had been endowed with two Village Chapels, viz., Tui-chando and Basaiha. Now with the help of our generous parishioners we've been able put up TWO more: one at Gangajoypara (2023—already reported in "LINK") and one more at Bijoy Master Para—the last one was inaugurated on 7th April with a host of parishioners, particularly the Parish Youth newly constituted. One interesting fact was that those who helped to ready the meal for us, all with one voice assured us that they would join us eventually. Presently there are just a couple of families; but inspired by the administration of the sacraments of initiation for seven, two more have opted to be in.

At the time of writing this we are busy with two more village chapels, viz., Hakraipara and Krishna Kanto Para (repair and maintenance) – that would give us a new boost. Right now, we have St. Mother Teresa (Mainama est. 1993), and Jamircherra who would be having their Golden Jubilee in a few years. With the two additions, we are growing slowly and steadily.

*Fr. Harry D'Silva CSC*

## Ambassa Parish

## Acts of the Disciples in Ganganagar



"The Lord is working through his disciples." The Word of God continues to spread powerfully gaining new adherents in Ganganagar. No doubt, on 21<sup>st</sup> of April a group of people from the neighboring villages gathered in Ganganagar, St. Arnold School, for Sunday prayer and worship with the local community

in the presence of Frs. Jaibu Mathew and Cyprian Pinto SVD.

It was Good Shepherd Sunday and on this auspicious Sunday, many families received the sacrament of initiation, and accepted Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior, hoping to find new life in this life and in the life to come. We pray that the desires of their hearts may be fulfilled and may they find life in abundance in all areas of their life.

*Frs. Jaibu & Cyprian, SVD*

## Gonda Twisa Parish

## Blessing of Tribhagyo Para Chapel



24th April 2024 was a memorable day for the faithful of Tribhagyo Para as they have a new 'house of God' to pray and to worship together as a community. This day began by welcoming our dear Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC, Fr. Prasad Rao the PP, Fr. Praveen and Fr. Ivan SVD the PP of Ambassa, in a Molsom traditional way. People lined up on either side of the road and welcomed Bishop Lumen with flowers and song, and accompanied them through the village and up to the Church in their traditional Molsom songs and dances. Bishop Lumen inaugurated and blessed the newly built Village Chapel which was followed by a concelebrated Holy Eucharist. Bishop Lumen appreciated the Parish Priest Fr. Prasad Rao and the people for taking this great initiative to build Chapel and share their resources to make this big dream come true. The local motha felicitated our Bishop, the Fathers, Sisters and Brothers, and other village leaders. Parishioners from all mothas were present and extended their helping hands. Fr. Prasad Rao thanked the benefactors from India and abroad for their generous contribution towards this village Chapel. The celebration ended with a sumptuous community meal.

*Bro. Sebin K Thampy*

*Investiture Ceremony  
at St. Arnold Higher Secondary School*



St. Arnold Higher Secondary School, Gonda Twisa, witnessed an inspiring Investiture ceremony, marking the official appointment of student leaders for the academic year on 24th April 2024. The occasion was graced by the esteemed presence of Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro CSC, who served as the Chief Guest, alongside the Principal Fr. Praveen, who warmly welcomed the dignitaries and explained the significance of Investiture program. Bishop Lumen Monteiro presided over the ceremony. He invested the badges and sashes on the SPL and ASPL. He also adorned the house captains with the sashes and endowed class leaders with the badges. This was followed by the solemn oath taking ceremony. The Students' Council pledged to keep the hopes and aspirations of St. Arnold School flying high. Bishop Lumen, in his address, emphasized the importance of leadership, responsibility and service, and congratulated the newly appointed Student Council Members. He congratulated Fr. Praveen the newly appointed Principal, Fr. Prasad the Secretary, and Sr. Rini SSpS, Headmistress, for the invitation. The program concluded with the National Anthem.

*Bro. Sebin K Thampy*

### Bodhjungnagar Parish

#### Installation of New Parish Priest



St. Andre Parish now has a change of guard in the person of Fr. Mariaraj CSC. Bishop Lumen Monteiro in his Circular Letter, dated March 31, 2024, writes: "After being proposed by his Provincial Superior Fr. Simon Fernandis, CSC, I have appointed Fr. Maria Raj Iruthayam CSC, as Parish Priest of St. Andre Parish, Bodhjungnagar, with effect from 14th April 2024." Rev. Fr. Bosco Lathees Pro-Vicar of the Cathedral, the delegate of Bishop Lumen animated the Installation Ceremony on Sunday, April 14, during the holy Eucharist, in the presence of the faithful, he installed the new Parish Priest. Fr. Jayaseelan, the outgoing Parish

presided over the Mass. Fr. Jilson Tom CSC represented the Provincial Superior. Thanking the many Fathers, Sisters and the faithful who were present and who witnessed the installation ceremony, Fr. Mariaraj, the new Parish Priest, invited the parishioners to work together for its growth as the Mission is of the Lord. Fr. Mariaraj is the 10th Pastor of the Parish, returning a second time.

*Fr. Mariaraj CSC*



## Congratulations to

Our Beloved Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC,  
On the 28<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of his Episcopal  
Ordination On May 26<sup>th</sup>.

We pray the Lord to continue to bless our dear  
Bishop and give him good health for his ministry  
of shepherding the Diocese.

LINK Offers  
Heartiest CONGRATULATIONS to:



Bro. Dionigi Taffarello, SG, the newly elected Superior General of the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, who was elected at the 33<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter of the Congregation in Rome.



Bro. Varghese SG, the newly elected Assistant General of the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel. He was the Provincial Superior of the Montfort Brothers NE Province.



Fr. K. J. Abraham, CSC, the newly elected Provincial Superior of the Holy Cross Fathers, Province of North East India. Our prayers are with you Fr. Abraham as you prepare to take up this new responsibility in the middle of May 2024.



Fr. Joseph Mappilaparambil, CMF, is elected as the new and the first Provincial of the Northeast Province of the Claretian Missionaries. Our best wishes and prayers to Fr. Provincial and Team

### Depacherra Deanery Youth Convention



Karbook: The first ever Depacherra Deanery Youth Convention was organized from 5th April to 7th April 2024 at Karbook Parish. 200 Youth from five Parishes of Depacherra Deanery participated. The Convention commenced with hoisting of the flag by the Dean Fr. Thomas Pereira, C.S.C., and Fr. K. M. Allwin the host Parish Priest. During the Convention, various Inputs were given like media education, the relevance of Sacred Scriptures in the lives of young people, etc. Various Competitions like Preaching, Bible Quiz and Singing were also conducted. Praise and Worship, Confessions, and Holy Eucharist were also organized. On 6th April, Bishop Lumen Monteiro was welcomed and honored during the Cultural night where the Youth showcased their talents. On 7th April Bishop Lumen celebrated a solemn Mass for the Youth and stressed the importance of active participation in the church. The Youth also took oath to actively participate in the church. We thank our DYD, Fr. Lawrence Darlong and his Team for organizing this Youth Convention. A special note of thanks to Karbook Parish for hosting this Convention.

*Ms. TushiUchoi  
Deanery Youth President*

### Media Education for the Youth



Karbook (Tripura) April 6, 2024: Depacherra Deanery organized a three days Youth Seminar for the six parishes. Diocesan Youth Director (DYD) Fr. Lawrence Darlong called on the Youth of the Deanery to get together at Karbook. There were 182 participants from different parishes. Fr. Ivan, the Diocesan secretary for the commission of Social Communication, was requested to give a media education class on the second day of the Seminar. He spoke on Media--its advantages and disadvantages. It was an interactive session. The Resource Person educated the Youth through practical examples how to overcome evils in the media. He dealt with the Media and Internet and how adversely it affects today's youth. He spoke on Media and T.V serials. He explained how the advertising companies control the serials and beauty pageant competitions to sell their products. He said, "The cartoon network ruined the life of little children at their tender age. Cartoon channels have taught the children how to be violent and aggressive in their behavior". Fr. Ivan also taught the youth on Media & Mobile use. He made them reflect on broken families because of infidelity due to relationships built through mobile phone contacts. He alerted the youth have to get educated more and more in the media and must educate others too.

*News Bureau, Ambassa*

### Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrao invites pilgrims to prepare for Exposition of St. Francis Xavier's Relics

The 18th decennial Exposition of the sacred relics of St. Francis Xavier will begin in Old Goa on November 21, 2024, and will end on January 5, 2025. The Exposition, which comes around once every 10 years, is a mega event for making travel and spiritual plans.

The Basilica of Bom Jesus, Old Goa, brings down St. Francis Xavier's holy remains, housed in a silver casket, for exposition every 10 years. During the Exposition, a procession carries the mortal remains to the Sé Catedral de Santa Catarina, also known as Se Cathedral, the cathedral of the Latin Church Archdiocese of Goa and Daman and the seat of the Patriarch of the East Indies, for veneration. By making the news early, Cardinal Ferrao hopes to make things easier and inspire a large turnout for this important occasion.



*Courtesy RVA News*

### Cardinal De Donatis appointed the new Major Penitentiary

Pope Francis appointed Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, his Vicar General for the Diocese of Rome, as the new Major Penitentiary on April 6. He succeeds Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, who has held the post since 2013 and will turn 80 in September this year. Cardinal De Donatis, aged 70, has overseen the administrative needs of the Diocese of Rome as the Pope's Vicar since 2017 when he was also appointed Archpriest of the Lateran Basilica. With his new role as Major Penitentiary, he will serve as the head of the Vatican tribunal in charge of cases involving excommunication and serious sins, including those whose absolution is reserved to the Holy See.



*Courtesy Vatican News*

### New Church statistics reveal more Catholics and fewer Vocations

The Pontifical Statistical Yearbook 2022-2023 offers information regarding the life of the Catholic Church worldwide for the period ranging from December 1, 2022 to December 31, 2023. During this period, nine new Episcopal Sees and one Apostolic Administration were established; two Episcopal Sees were elevated to Metropolitan Sees and one Apostolic Vicariate to an Episcopal See. The number of baptized Catholics has increased globally, rising from 1.376 billion in 2021 to 1.390 billion in 2022, with a relative increase of 1.0%. The number of Bishops during the biennium 2021-2022 increased by 0.25%, going from 5,340 to 5,353 Bishops. The number of Priests in the world in 2022, compared to that of 2021, decreased by 142, going from 407,872 to 407,730. The number of non-priests professed religious men contracted at the global level. There were 49,774 religious men in 2021, falling to 49,414 in 2022. Professed religious women constituted a population of considerable size. In 2022, they exceeded the number of priests across the world by almost 47%, but are currently in sharp decline. Globally, they went from 608,958 professed women in 2021 to 599,228 in 2022, with a relative decline of 1.6%.

*Courtesy L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO*

### PROMOTION OF INDIGENOUS AND IMPROVED VARIETIES OF SEEDS



JUST conducted a series of programs on Promotion of Indigenous and improved varieties of Seeds at different FARM NE villages under Amarpur and Karbook Blocks. The purpose of the program was to promote indigenous seeds and knowledge sharing on different methods of vegetable farming like trellises, cultivation at fallow land, nutritional backyard garden, preservation of indigenous knowledge, document traditional knowledge, provision of indigenous and improved seeds to farmer collectives for seasonal cultivation, build capacity, and foster networking and collaboration among farmers in the region. This can enhance their understanding of sustainable agricultural practices, traditional food systems, and promote more indigenous seeds to stop hybrid seeds. Farmers shared their experiences of cultivation of indigenous seeds and hybrid seeds. The programme has also helped the farmers to realize the need of preserving local varieties of seeds and multiplying them, protecting local biodiversity, promoting cultural identity, and improving the resilience of local communities to climate change. The program also includes documentation which can help to ensure that this knowledge is preserved for future generations and can be used to inform policy and research in these areas.

### SEMINAR FOR LEADERS OF ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN CONFLICT



On April 6th 2024, a one-day Seminar for The Leaders of Ethnic Communities in Conflict was organized by JUST, in collaboration with NESRC. Different ethnic community leaders attended the seminar along with Fr. Lathees S (Director of JUST) and Fr. Walter Fernandes (Director of NESRC). Mr. Thomas Malsom a Ph.D scholar was the Resource Person. He presented on the topic 'Conflict Management in Multi-ethnic Societies: Some insights from the case of Tripura'. He emphasized on the types of conflict which are Direct, Structural and Cultural violence. In the section of multi-ethnic Tripura, he spoke of cultural violence. Some of the important points were the understanding of 'differences' among the communities in the context of Tripura and the main causes of conflicts in Tripura such as demographic imbalances, culture and identity erosion, State development intervention and identity politics. After the presentation there was time for Q&A. At the end of the Seminar all participated in a pickle making session.

*Mr. Robert Lushai*

### LINK offers heartfelt condolences to SDB Fathers, Shillong Province:



Rev. Fr. Mathew Payyapilly, SDB, (Fr. Mattachan), passed away in Shillong on April 15, 2024. He worked in our Diocese for the past 6 years as Rector of Bosco Home, Herma, in Bishramganj Parish. We thank God for him and pray for the repose of his soul. RIP Fr. Mathew.

### Our Distinguished Guests

- Fr. Babu Joseph, SVD, from Delhi
- Sr. Jaisa Antony SSpS, from Delhi
- Sr. Pigi Pereira FS, from Bagan Para, Assam
- Mr. Anthony Pereira from Vasai, Maharashtra
- Fr. Jeevan Kennady SVD, from Guwahati
- Fr. Royal Nazareth CSC, from Bangalore
- Sr. Amali FS, from Rangia, Assam
- Sr. Veronica Fernandes FS, from Bagan Para, Assam
- Fr. Devadas Sagili, former VG of Kadapa
- Fr. Shouraiyah Pudota, from the Archdiocese of San Francisco
- Bishop Anthonios OIC, from the Syro-Malankara Diocese of Gurgaon
- Rev. Fr. Varghese, Vicar General of Gurgaon
- Sr. Mercy John, DM Provincial of Trivandrum
- Sr. Sophia Paul, DM Asst. Provincial

### BISHOP'S PROGRAM FOR MAY 2024

- 01 : Blessing St. Xavier's Girls Hostel, Kailashahar
- 04 : Blessing of Ichachari Chapel, Karbook Parish
- 05 : New PP Installation, Karbook Parish
- 06 : Fr. Sekhar SFX, Anniversary @ Mariamnagar Parish
- 07 : Clergy Meeting, Agartala
- 09-10: CBCI Standing Committee Meeting, St. John's Bangalore
- 11-12: Museum Road Reunion, Bangalore
- 12 : Tuicholong Chapel Blessing, Moharpara Parish
- 13-18: CSC Provincial Chapter, Agartala
- 15-17: CHAI Board Meeting @ Joe Beach Chennai
- 19 : Bodomaidan renovated Chapel Blessing & Confirmations
- 24-31: Meeting and Retreat, La Obra dela Iglesia, Rome