

### Pastor's Corner



The month of December is special because of Christmas. Christmas celebrates the gift of Emmanuel-God with us- the guiding light of God in the unfolding history of human beings. Christmas is about the wonder of God among us coming in vulnerability and teaching us to look beyond ourselves and reach out to others. In 'Berich and happy from within' George Stephen SJ shares an incident: With the car parked on the road, I got on the bus. But seeing the crowd inside, I was scared. There was no place to sit. At that moment, a seat became vacant. The next one could easily sit there, but he gave me that seat. Next stop the same thing happened again. Again he gave his seat to another. This happened four times in our entire bus journey. The man looked very normal, that is, he must have been going home after his job. Now the last stop. We all got off. Out of curiosity I spoke to him. Asked why you were giving your seat to another every time? The interesting answer he gave was: I haven't studied in my life. I do not know many things or have much money and I have nothing to give to anyone-- no knowledge, no money. So I do this every day. That's all I can do easily. I can stand for a little longer. I gave you my place. You said thank you to me. I was very satisfied. I did something for someone today is the great source of satisfaction to me. I do this every day and feel I am contributing to the best of my



### The art of giving is at the heart of Christmas

abilities and thus I go home refreshed and happy every day that I gave something to someone.

"That's what I do every day," these words shocked me.

And he says he's uneducated. What do you mean? Wanting to do something for someone completely unknown and on a daily basis is the ultimate. This man taught me a lot of things today. I started to examine my life. How easy it is to be rich from within! God must have taught this angel of his this splendid lesson. Moral: Beautiful clothes, tons in your bank account; best mobile or car; best of accessories; luxuries or educational degrees. These may or may not make you rich and happy. But the simple art of giving is enough to make you feel rich and happy every day.

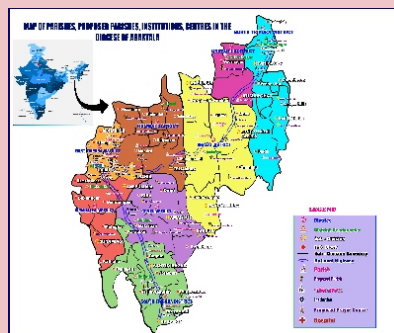
Christmas is about giving because Jesus gave himself to us. Christmas is a time to look beyond what we see, however bleak it might seem, and to discover signs of goodness and beauty, of hope and of joy, wherever people are trying to grow through adversity. It is hard to practice the art of giving during adversity as in this time of the pandemic. But we look at our God who entered history in human form and taught us the art of giving. Let's share our hope of brighter days with others, especially those for whom this time is a real struggle, and who may need a bit of cheering up. Merry Christmas to you dear reader!

**+Lumen, CSC**

### Editorial



The announcement by our Bishop that we would soon have five more Parishes in the Diocese feels like music to our ears. No doubt, it also adds a steely credence to the approaching Jubilee of the Diocese. 25 years, 25 Parishes... well, it's something! And despite the Covid-19-induced sobriety that we are getting used to, announcements such as these, we feel, call for full-throated songs and full-blasted celebrations. Not because we are very number-fetish that way, but because, like it or not, they are, indeed, blessings from above! Hence the need to make a pause and consider decades, perhaps more, of rudimentary work done by those



### Glimmer of Hope...as winter approaches!

who have gone ahead of us...Often with no din, no fanfare!

LINK congratulates all those who have put in their widow's mite towards this. Some of them are with us, some, no more.

And for our leader himself, the Bishop, what better gift on the occasion of his own Silver Jubilee than that which he deemed it proper to give birth to!

We are all earnestly looking forward to the event of the Jubilee, and yet, we know more than those days of celebration, it's what it signifies, things such as these that truly warms our hearts and make us want more.

We devoutly wish that the advantages which come along with a Parish will coagulate into a greater faith and

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fervor not only for the faithful of the five new parishes but for all in the Diocese.

Covid is still around, but Christmas is also to come. The good and the bad! Perhaps, Covid will purge Christmas of its numerous trappings we are generally prone to mistake it for, and make us better meditate on the fragility that surrounded the first Christmas.

We pray that amidst all the pain and unpredictability that surrounds us, we get to see a star shining somewhere yonder, a star that as if in defiance, shines brighter as clouds grow darker. Merry Christmas!

*J. Pulinathan, SDB*

### AMBASSA PARISH

**Sacrament of Confirmation:** On 1st November, Ambassa Parish organized Confirmation day for 47 parishioners. Bishop Lumen administered the Sacrament to those candidates who were ready since a few months. The Parish church was filled with faithful. It was visible

that there was no fear of Coronavirus as leaders stood at the entrance and helped people to sanitize their hands before entering the Church. When Bishop Lumen looked at the large congregation he whispered to me 'it looks like a parish feast' -- indeed they were over 250 people. For the first time such a big crowd had gathered after the lockdown.

**Jubilee Felicitation:** After the holy Mass our Bishop was felicitated on his Episcopal Jubilee year. Mr. Kamal Debbarma PPC vice Secretary read the history of the Diocese and Bishop Lumen. Miss Anjana Bongcher vested the celebrant with locally designed chasuble, while a woman greeted Bishop

with flower bouquet. When Bishop cut the jubilee cake the choir sang a melodious song. It was wonderful to see all the *Mondoli* leaders in line to present and wish Bishop Lumen on the occasion of his Jubilee. *News Bureau, Ambassa*

### AMARPUR PARISH

**Pastoral Visit cum Episcopal Silver Jubilee celebration:** Our dear Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC reached St. Joseph Vaz Parish center on 7th November 2010. Rev. Fr. Mathew MSFS Superior of the house extended him a hearty welcome. Next day on 8th November our dear Bishop was welcomed by Fr. Mathew, Fr. Pratap, Sisters and all the faithful with a flower bouquet. There were three

hundred faithful present for the program. After the welcome the Bishop and Fathers were led in procession and dancing to the altar for the Holy Mass. Fr. Pratap MSFS the Parish Priest on behalf of Fr. Mathew,



Sisters and the faithful of the Parish invited Bishop to light the Episcopal Silver Jubilee candle and preside over the Holy Mass. In his homily the Bishop urged everyone to be strong in faith and spread the word of God to the world. After the Mass we had a small felicitation program where our dear Bishop was presented with a *risha* and a gift of love. Then the short cultural program was performed. The program ended with a vote of thanks by Parish Secretary Mr. Biren DattaJamatia. This was followed by fellowship meal for all.

*Fr. PratapKerketta, MSFS*

### DEPACHERRA PARISH

**Parish Feast celebrated with gaiety:** Christ the King feast, the patron feast of Depacherra Parish was celebrated on 22/11/2020. All the guests (Bishop, Fathers and Sisters) were welcomed by a traditional Uchoi dance. Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro CSC was the main celebrant for the holy Eucharist. During Holy Mass he conferred the



Sacrament of Confirmation to 49 candidates and gave first Holy Communion to 16 children. After Mass we had the Eucharistic procession. All participated with proper devotion, praying and singing. The procession ended with a solemn blessing by our Bishop. All the Priests were felicitated with a traditional *Risha* at the end of the Benediction. Though numbers were restricted due to the pandemic yet many people had taken part in the Feast by following all the Covid-19 protocols. Different committees were given responsibilities and all worked together so the whole celebration was successful. The celebration ended with a festive meal. *Fr. BhubanSarkar*

### AMBASSA PARISH

**New Village Chapel at Dhoncherra:** 15 November, 2020 a new village Chapel at Dhoncherra in Ambassa Parish was blessed by Bishop Lumen Monteiro CSC. It was a day of Joy and Blessing for the people of Dhoncherra. They had been waiting for this day since the village chapel construction work began one



year ago. Around 450 parishioners were waiting at 9:00am to welcome the Bishop almost one kilometer away from the Chapel. He was received by young and



old with flowers and a song in the Molsom language. Bishop then blessed the life-size statues which were taken in procession with hymns and dancing. After placing the statues Fr. Jeevan SVD, the Vice-Regional Superior of ING along with local church leaders inaugurated the Church by cutting the ribbon. Fr. Lourdu Mareddy unveiled the plaque and Bishop Lumen blessed the Chapel. Bishop and concelebrants were led to the altar by traditionally dressed girls with an entrance dance in Molsom tribal language. Holy Mass was a thanks giving to the Almighty for the beautiful church. It was the time to pray and thank all those who worked for it, donated money, and slogged to complete the work. The beautiful choir in Molsom language added to the devotion to the liturgy. The felicitation to Bishop, Fathers, Sisters, Masons and the local leaders with tradition attire was a symbol of love and gratitude. The lunch was a community meal prepared by the people to thank one another.

*Ivan D'Silva, SVD*

### Christ Hill Jampuijala celebrates Bishop's Jubilee

On 14<sup>th</sup> November St. Mary's School, Christ Hill, Jampuijala, had the Jubilee celebration in honor of our Bishop Lumen CSC and the Diocese of Agartala in a colorful and grace-filled manner. We began our program with a Kokborok Mass in the School hall. The Bishop was solemnly welcomed by the faithful of the Charkolok community towards the altar with a colorful dance. All the students and teachers of the school and the committee members along with their family from the village joined the celebrations. The Bishop gave a jubilee message and distributed prizes for the children who had won the



competitions held in the School on the occasion of Children's Day. After the Mass we had a small felicitation program organized by the students and the village youth. We concluded the celebration with a lunch for all with the Bishop. It was a day of real joy and blessings from the divine for the people and the students. *Fr. Babu Paul, SJ*

### KAMARANGA PARISH

#### Christ the King unites us at Kamaranga

Christ the King feast was celebrated with a Eucharistic procession at Kamaranga Parish from one community to another amidst singing and prayer slogans. Parishioners appreciated and participated wholeheartedly in the Procession for the first time. It was truly joyful to experience Christ the King bringing unity and harmony amidst a divided society.



#### Leaders must Lead

Leadership training program was organized at Kamaranga Parish on 24<sup>th</sup> November. All *motha* Presidents, Secretaries of village sub-stations and Women leaders participated in it wholeheartedly. Fr. Jeevan Kennady SVD was the Resource Person. He emphasized the importance of active leadership in village community. The training program has encouraged and boosted our village leaders. *Fr. ArunMinj SVD*



### News Briefs from the Diocese

#### New Ways of Communicating the Church

Ambassa (Tripura): Holy Spirit Church Ambassa organized two days program for the lay-leaders on 'New Ways of Communicating the Church' on October 24 and 25<sup>th</sup> at Ambassa. There were young and old around 105 participants from various villages. Fr. Buban Sarkar Parish Priest of Depachara Parish and Fr. Ivan D'Silva SVD Ambassa Parish Priest were the Resource Persons. They dealt on the topics of Family, Marriage, Social media, active participation in the church and Leadership. The Sessions were more participative and interactive through the PPT presentation and Questions. The pandemic has made us to opt for a new normal and in this new normal period we have found more complex problems mushrooming. Leaders today should know how to handle new problems emerging due to online and virtual mode where students and youth are occupied. These days are considered holidays and the tendency among the Youth is to



loiter in towns and near festival pergola. In order to keep away from this lure the Parish Council Members decided to organize these two days of classes. Participants requested for more classes in the coming days. *News Bureau, Ambassa*

#### Tripura's NCC Lt. Daniel Debbarma awarded DG NCC Commendation

(We in the Diocese are proud of Lieutenant Daniel Debbarma, one of our Catholic Laity from Tripura, who received this prestigious award. He is one among the 160 cadets of all ranks from across India. This is indeed a proud achievement and we congratulate you Lieutenant Daniel.)



**Agartala, Nov 23:** On the occasion of NCC Day on November 22, the Directorate General of NCC, Ministry of Defence announced the award of "DG NCC Commendation Card" for the year 2020 to 160 cadres of all ranks in NCC across India. From Tripura Lieutenant Daniel Debbarma, ANO cum Assistant Professor, Government Degree College, Khumulwng, and Cadet Puja Roy from Ramthakur College, Agartala, brought the laurels for the State they were also awarded the "DG NCC Commendation Card". They belong to 13th Tripura Bn. NCC, Tripura Unit, under Silchar. *Courtesy Tripura Tribune*

### Medical Camps

On October 20 JUST organized 4 Medical Camps at Bata Para, Brikharam Para, Moniram Para and Kolabari under Ganganagar R.D Block in Dhalai District. As many as 396 people benefited from the Medical Camp. The objective of conducting the health camp was to create awareness on general health among the people, to provide general health care services and counseling to them on basic healthcare and hygiene issues. Majority of the people who attended the Camp were suffering due to lack of proper drinking water facilities. People were diagnosed with various common but seriously neglected problems such as acute fever, gastric, diarrhea and mal-nourishment. All the children were provided with medicines and vitamin



tonics and those suffering from diarrhea were given ORS.

### Networking and Advocacy for reasonable market rates

Training on Market Assessment was conducted at JUST Training Hall on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020 for the SHG Groups and Farmers Clubs. The Resource Person was Mr. Sandip Bondhupaddhyai, a successful entrepreneur. There were 44 participants from the SHG Groups and Farmers Clubs in the training. He shared and encouraged the Farmers to do livestock rearing for sustainability of their income especially with organic pesticides and products, online business, cattle stock rearing and Biofloc fish farming. He also shared about online marketing, how to contact the online marketing companies, and how to advertise and sell their products. He promised that he would extend his helping hand as much as possible for market linkages at Agartala City as he is already in to the business and has different linkages.



Mr. Cyril Darlong

## News Briefs from all over

### World Youth Day Cross given to Portuguese Youth

Pope Francis offered Mass for the Feast of Christ the King on Sunday, and afterward oversaw the traditional passing of the World Youth Day Cross and Marian icon to a delegation from Portugal. The event took place ahead of the 16th International World Youth Day, to be held in Lisbon, Portugal, in August 2023. The simple wooden cross was given to Youth by St. Pope John Paul II in 1984, at the end of the Holy Year of Redemption. He told young people to “carry it throughout the world as a symbol of Christ's love for humanity, and proclaim to everyone that it is only in Christ, who died and rose from the dead, that salvation and redemption are to be found.”

Over the past 36 years, the Cross has traveled around the world, carried by young people on pilgrimages and processions, as well as to every international World Youth Day. The 12 and a half foot tall Cross is known by different names, including the Youth Cross, Jubilee Cross, and Pilgrim Cross. Pope Francis also announced Nov. 22 that he had decided to move the annual diocesan-level Youth day celebration from Palm Sunday to Christ the King Sunday, beginning next year. **Hannah Brockhaus CNA**

### Inauguration of Tree and Nativity scene in St. Peter's Squar

The traditional inauguration of the Nativity Scene and the lighted Christmas tree will be held, despite the COVID-19 limitations, in Saint Peter's Square on December 11, at 4:30 pm. Given the circumstances the world is experiencing due to the pandemic, this year's Christmas decoration is intended to be “a sign of hope and trust” and an expression of the “certainty that Jesus comes among His people to save them.”

**The Nativity Scene**, which will be set up in Saint Peter's Square, comes from Castelli, in the Italian Province of Teramo, an important ceramics center since the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

**The Christmas Tree**, the red fir tree is 289 meters tall and 70 centimeters in diameter. It comes from the Municipality of Kocevje in South-eastern Slovenia. This region is one of the Slovenian territories where nature is most intact, taking into account that the forests cover 90% of its territory.

The Tree and the Nativity Scene will be displayed in the Square until the end of Christmastide, which coincides with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Sunday, January 10, 2021.

**Zenit News**

## Our Readers Write

Dear Bishop Lumen,

This short reflection is occasioned by the news item in “LINK” about the “Deanery level” meetings of priests. I am writing this note to congratulate you for taking yet another very useful and relevant initiative. The Church, concerned with the welfare of the faithful and the effective functioning of pastoral care system, has devised and provided various pastoral structures. One of them is the establishment of Deaneries/Vicariates, namely, grouping together a number of Parishes as a Zone or Block. The purpose of this arrangement is to assist the Bishop in the pastoral administration of the Diocese... In order to govern the Diocese effectively, the Bishop may need 'deans' or 'vicars forane' to ensure that the parishes are functioning properly, and the spiritual and pastoral needs of the priests are taken care of. In areas where there are many Catholics stretched over a large area (like in Agartala Diocese), Deaneries are an effective tool that help the Bishop maintain unity among his flock.

In the context of the emerging concepts of participatory Church,

principle of subsidiarity, delegated authority and shared responsibilities, diversification of ministries, ethno-linguistic diversity, and increase in number of Parishes which are quite far apart from the diocesan centre, it is highly advisable that every Diocese follows the Deanery/Vicariate system. In the Dioceses of NE India, this may be a very pastorally effective approach. The Covid-19 situation which prevents frequent and large gathering of Church personnel makes such an arrangement almost a pastoral necessity.

**Fr. Thomas Manjaly and Fr. Jimmy Marngar, Shillong**

## Our Distinguished Visitors

- Sr. Leena, SJA Provincial Superior from Bhubaneswar
- Sr. Prasna, SJA Administrator from Bhubaneswar
- Mr. Manfred Auster, Consul General of Germany from Kolkata
- Sr. Santana FS, Regional Superior from Rangia, Assam
- Sr. Amali FS, Vice Regional Superior from Rangia, Assam