



PASTOR'S CORNER

Due to the worsening epidemiological situation in our country, in addition to hospital beds, medication and oxygen which are badly needed, we will also need 'compassion'. Fyodor Dostoevsky explains the meaning of compassion as "the ability to pull out the main root from another's pain and without hesitation to make it yours". *Karuna*, meaning "compassion" is a key virtue in Karmic religions. It is also a key virtue in all Abrahamic religions and is called *reham* in Hebrew. *Karuna/reham* is the common ethical call that beckons various religions together in their fight against the current pandemic. The New Testament calls us to participate in caring for the vulnerable through individual and corporate endeavors. While the Good Samaritan is an epitome of individual compassionate action, we also see Jesus's compassionate mission involving a corporate effort when he calls his disciples to feed a huge crowd in an isolated place (Matthew 14:14-15). Of course, the call underscores the doctrine that serving the vulnerable means joining hands with the all-compassionate God. The call is more urgently for genuine compassionate care for each other. We all want the COVID19 pandemic to end and together we have the power to end it faster.

As India hits nearly 350,000 cases of infections a day, it is a turning point in the debate on healthcare in the country. Covid-19 is a turning point because even the most expensive and exclusive hospitals are



running out of something as basic as oxygen. You can no longer buy yourself out of this crisis. And there is nowhere to fly off to because most countries have bans on visitors from places with a major surge in virus outbreak. One Mr. Abhinav rightly said, "health insurance cannot help in a health crisis if there is no infrastructure. So, for all the people who used to advise us that mass health insurance will resolve India's healthcare needs, well, today they face the reality of the situation where insurance or no insurance, there are few beds to be had in hospitals, and still fewer oxygen cylinders."

In this background we step into the month of May, a month which is very special to our Diocese. In fact, since the past two years, we have been looking forward to May 2021 with great expectation to participate in the mega event of the Silver Jubilee celebrations on Pentecost Sunday, and each of you has received an invitation for the same. But in solidarity with the suffering millions, especially now with a steep surge in the Covid19 pandemic, I do not feel it right that we should celebrate by coming together...rather, we will praise and thank God from wherever we are. For me celebrating the Jubilee is not celebrating an accomplishment but an act of gratitude to God for the past 25 years of my shepherding ministry. Moreover, every Parish and Institution and community in the Diocese has celebrated the event with much pomp and gaiety during the past eight months and I enjoyed every bit of it. Now it is time to ask God to Lead us Onward with compassion/*karuna/reham*.

+Lumen, CSC

Jubilee thoughts in Pandemic times

considered the month of Mary, every May is dear to us, but this in a particular way. As we are all only too well aware, the Diocese completes 25 years of existence as

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EDITORIAL

As the pandemic rages on and unleashes its fury in all parts of our country, the fragility of our systems stand very exposed. Till date, in comparison to other parts of the country, the magnitude of the virus spread in most of Northeast has been mild. In Tripura, although numbers look negligible, the upward trend, however, is alarming. The pathetic state of the health facilities and services available here should make us doubly cautious and alert.

We have just stepped into the month of May a month special in so many ways. Traditionally



This is the most appropriate time to say **HAPPY JUBILEE & HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS** to our dear Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, on his Episcopal Silver Jubilee on 26th May 2021.

Agartala Diocese welcomes the new Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop LeopoldoGirelli: Archbishop LeopoldoGirelli was appointed Apostolic Nuncio to India and Nepal on March 13, 2021. He was previously papal nuncio to Israel and Cyprus and apostolic delegate to Jerusalem and Palestine. We welcome him and pay our respectful regards to His Excellency.

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a Diocese this month. For a couple of years our thoughts have been focused on this event scheduled to take place later this month. The pandemic however makes us pause, take stock, and make fresh decisions in the light of this unforeseen situation. Certainly not an easy call to make! We pray that whatever the decision, it may be in the best interests of everyone.

The all-pervasive nature of the contagion is what makes us all so helpless. With news of double mutant and triple mutant cases, we might be tempted to consider as futile the normal precautionary steps prescribed; nevertheless, we ought to persist with these ordinary practices of hand washing, physical distancing and mask-wearing, simply as there isn't much else we can do. May be we should not allow the pandemic to come in the way of observing the month of May with special Marian devotions as we generally do every year. Although we are not able to have prayer gatherings or processions at parish level, or even zonal level, we can spend valuable time at home praying with our family members--praying the rosary, reading the Bible, singing hymns, etc.

And as regards the Jubilee, whether the grand finale happens in the form of the previously planned mega-event or not, nothing should prevent us from fully participating in what is undoubtedly the essence of this milestone: lifting our hearts and minds to God in praise and thanksgiving for the wonders He has done amidst us and through us. We offer our deep appreciation and congratulations to the head of the Diocese dear Bishop Lumen Monteiro as he too goes past this wonderful milestone. Nurturing a Diocese from its start for twenty five uninterrupted years is, no doubt, something to write home about.

The pandemic cannot deprive us of the essentials, anyway! Or, on second thoughts, can it?

J. Pulinthanath, SDB

AMBASSA PARISH

A new community of Believers

Ambassa (Tripura): A new Catholic Community is added to the Ambassa Holy Spirit Parish on April 4, Easter Sunday. Dumjakrai Village community experienced the light of Risen Christ.

More than 400 people gathered to witness the inauguration and blessing of the new village Chapel. The patron saint for the chapel is St. John Paul II. At 9:30 am the parishioners gathered around the village Chapel and the Parish Priest Fr. Ivan D'Silva along with the village Catholic community Members inaugurated the Chapel by cutting the ribbon and blessed it. During the Holy Eucharist the Parish Priest gave the Sacrament of Initiation to 20 Members of Reang tribe from Dumjakrai village. The village Chapel is with mud wall, bamboo railing and bamboo ceiling. It was prepared by the parishioners through their volunteer labor from different sub-stations. In short it was the outcome of Small



Christian Community participatory effort.

Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD

KAMARANGA PARISH

A creative and meaningful Easter Triduum

It was one of the creative and meaningful celebrations after the lockdown last year. Parishioners felt that an important faith event is missing since last lockdown. There was a quest and thirst to experience the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord. Consequently, they participated in Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services in large numbers. The climax of the *Triduum* was the Passion of the Lord, where men, women and youth acted the various scenes. The initiative has strengthened faith of the parishioners.

Fr. ArunMinj, SVD



KUMARGHAT PARISH

Village Chapel blessed at MasliGaro II

17th April 2021 was a memorable day for the MasliGaro II *mondoli* under Kumarghat Parish as a new Chapel dedicated to St. Antony was blessed. Earlier the people had a small Chapel made of bamboo which could accommodate very few people. Realizing the need of this *mondoli*, Fr. Lancy began the construction of the new Chapel with financial help from Church in Need, Germany. Despite many odds he completed the work and the

Chapel was blessed on 17th April 2021. The day's event commenced with a grand welcome to Bishop Lumen Monteiro who inaugurated and blessed the new Chapel in the presence of Fr. Lancy CSC the Parish Priest, Fr. Lourdu CSC, MC Sisters, Fatima Sisters and people from the local *mondolis*. After the Holy Eucharist there was a short program wherein all the Guests were felicitated. Bishop Lumen thanked Fr. Lancy for his hard work in spite of the odds of the pandemic. The people of this *mondoli* also thanked Fr. Lancy and the benefactors from Germany for constructing a beautiful Chapel. The program ended with a community meal. **Bro. Derrick Augustine**

Training on Leadership and Documentation

On 18th April 2021 a training program on "*Leadership and Documentation*" was conducted for Maria Sangho Leaders at Kumarghat Parish Hall. The Resource Person was Mr. S.K. Darlong from Kanchancherra village. A total 37 Women Leaders participated in the said program. At the beginning of the program Fr. Lancy

the Parish Priest in his inaugural speech said that Women have the power and they are the leaders in the family. He wished them new learning and told them to make use of the same in life. The Resource Person gave them inputs for the whole day, during which there were several interactive sessions. The participants said that this training was very useful and they were clear about their roles and responsibilities as Leaders. The Women expressed the need to have such trainings regularly. A vote of thanks was proposed by Sr. Bastian FS, and snacks were served to all.

Bro. Derrick Augustine

Annual Pastoral Meet and Chrism Mass

All the Priests, Religious, Laity Representatives from the Catechists, Parish Secretaries, Youth and Women in the Diocese, gathered at Bishop's House on 30th March for the annual Pastoral Meeting. Bishop Lumen welcomed all and presented his Report of the Diocese. He began by mentioning the new challenges faced by the Parishes during the total



lockdown in March 2020. This is the Silver Jubilee Year of the Diocese and the Bishop and several programs have already been executed. Then Bishop Lumen introduced the Diocesan Pastoral Plan which was explained in detail by Fr. Jeevan SVD who proposed a Road map for the way forward. A Report was given of the help given by the Diocese to the poor people of Tripura through dry food rations and cash in two phases. A sum of money was also given to the Chief Minister's Fund.

In the afternoon hours the Parish Reports and the Commission Reports were presented which were well appreciated.

Commemorating the day of Priests the Chrism Mass was celebrated magnificently in which all the Priests in the Diocese, including the Priests from the SyroMalabar and SyroMalankara Rites renewed their vows. In his homily Bishop Lumen focused on the Spirituality of Priests. The 'holy oils' were blessed during the Mass. All the Priests were presented with a red rose and a Book on Priestly

Capacity Building on Peace Building and Leadership Skills for Youth Peace Volunteers

Training on peace building and leadership skills for the Youth Peace Volunteers was held on 27th March at JUST Hall, Agartala. The Resource Person was Mr. Rahul Das TPS. 22 Youth participated in the training. The Resource Person shared on various aspects of Leadership and encouraged the Youth to work enthusiastically with objectives and goals. The participants were divided into three groups and given tasks to share their views on three topics i.e. personal mental health and addiction, Social change and client centered services. The Resource Person also shared on Team work, on how to cultivate

Spirituality. With the agape meal the day came to a close at 8.00pm.

Fr. P. Amalraj

A Vehicle carried the Eucharistic Lord on the Streets of Agartala

In honor of the feast of the Divine Mercy Jesus the Eucharistic Lord was carried to every nook and corner of Agartala Town in a silent manner. All through the way the Eucharistic Jesus was lifted up and



shown to the world and continuous prayers were going on in during these blissful moments with the Lord. We began at 12 noon by reciting the Divine Mercy Chaplet at Mariamnagar and through the Town came to the Cathedral and later went on to Nandanagar Parish. Altars were magnificently decorated to welcome the Eucharistic Jesus and Adoration was conducted in these two parishes to mark the significance of the event. The community implored for God's mercy and blessings to be poured out from the heart Jesus to the whole world as it is still suffering from the clutches of Covid-19. After taking Eucharistic Jesus across Town, we were back at Mariamnagar at 4.00pm.

Fr. Abraham, VC

Tools and Tips for emerging Teachers

'Tools and Tips for emerging Teachers' was a one day Orientation program for four Schoolsheld on 9th of April at Holy Cross High School, Panisagar. 80 Teachers and Principals from four Schools, namely, Holy Cross High School, Bagbasa; St. Francis School, Kanchanpur; St. Francis of Assisi School Gachirampara; and Holy Cross High School, Panisagar participated in the program. The humble self was the Resource Person and I enjoyed every bit of it. There were much kudos from the participants who felt good about attending such a program and spending the day at Panisagar.



Fr. Davis Konuran, CSC

JUST NEWS BRIEFS



peace building skills from the grassroots and create an environment of peace among the people. The training ended with a mock test on Leadership Skills by Mr. Cyril Darlong, the Peace Project Coordinator.

Promotion of nutritious backyard garden by Families



Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura (JUST) conducted a program on Promotion of nutritious backyard garden at family level in the month of March on different dates for different target villages under Hezamara and Padmabil R.D Blocks. The FARM NE Team of JUST initiated the family and group level interaction and motivation process to improve backyard gardens by promoting eco-friendly techniques under *Laudato Si* and self-consumption of organic vegetables and surplus production for markets. The main aim was to reduce the burden on the family to buy from market and avoid consuming chemically produced food. The gardens will provide organic food to the families throughout the year. The JUST Team also shared the importance of making maximum use of their cultivable land to increase production. They motivated the Farmers to pass on their traditional knowledge of farming and improve healthy atmosphere and healthy lifestyle in the long run. They also motivated the Farmers for promotion of Trellises for enhancing crop production.

Mr. Cyril Darlong

News Briefs from all over

The theologian who challenged papal infallibility is no more

Catholic theologian Father Hans Küng challenged papal infallibility and lost his license to teach Catholic theology. The controversial Swiss-born theologian's lucidly expressed thoughts found a place in more than 50 Books and countless speeches. Father Küng's relentless tirade against the Church's hierarchy, particularly Popes, earned him the sobriquet "Antichrist" as he was accused of being the greatest threat to the Church since Martin Luther. The priest, who died peacefully in his sleep in Germany on April 6 at the age of 93, crossed swords with the Vatican on important issues such as governance, liturgy, birth control, clerical celibacy, priesthood of women, mixed marriages, same-sex unions and abortion. His views on papal infallibility made him *persona non grata* with the Vatican. *Courtesy UCANews*



showing how inequality and poverty affect the access to food of a large part of the world's population. Covid-19 has also left many countries vulnerable to economic crises that also affect food security". In March 2020, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres called for a global ceasefire "in support of the fight against COVID-19". This call resulted in a UN Security Council resolution in support of a global "humanitarian phase" to combat the pandemic. The Security Council resolution was supported by Civil Society Organizations and world leaders, including Pope Francis. *Agencia Fides, 21/4/2021*

Catholic schools have become Covid centres in India

In the midst of the pandemic emergency, the Catholic Archdiocese of Bangalore, in the Karnataka state, in southern India, has decided to temporarily transform Catholic schools into hospitals for patients affected by Covid-19. Archbishop Peter Machado, at the head of the community of Bangalore, promoted the initiative after noting the



difficulties in managing the emergency in Catholic hospitals and public structures. The explosion of the second wave of Covid in India has paralyzed the health system. Across India there is a shortage of beds, oxygen and medicines. "Our initiative to make school facilities available can help alleviate the stress on hospitals in managing the health crisis in the Country", Archbishop Peter Machado told *Agencia Fides*. "We appreciate the tireless and selfless service rendered in the most difficult circumstances by doctors and nurses, Catholics and non-Catholics, and we want to offer all the help and support possible".

Agencia Fides

34 million people threatened with famine says ICMC

"This year there are around 270 million people in 79 countries without access to adequate food supplies. Of these, 34 million face acute food insecurity in emergency situations and are at high risk of hunger", said a report by the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC). "These numbers have risen dramatically since 2019 due to a combination of armed conflict, climate change and poverty", the report said. "The consequences of such a complex situation have been exacerbated by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which is



Bishop on his convocation
at Bangalore university



Final Profession at Pune



After Priestly ordination



At Anandam, Kolkata



With Classmates

Reminiscences

It was Easter Tuesday, Fr.K.J. Joseph of good memories and I were on our way to Bishramganj. Near Bishalgarh we saw the Bishop's vehicle coming towards Agartala. He waved us to stop. Then he got down from his vehicle, walked towards us and with a smiling face, wished us Happy Easter. We were zapped and delighted too. We did admire and appreciate this gesture.

That is the kind of person Bishop Lumen is. He does not stand on ceremonies, nor flaunt his position. On many occasions, he would, unannounced drop into Don Bosco, Nandannagar, for a surprise visit or a cup of tea. When we go to visit him in the Bishop's House he would put aside all his works, listen to us, and take us personally for a cup of tea, which he himself makes for us.

The young Bishop and the fledgling diocese had very clear short term and long term vision and plans for its growth and development. Even though handicapped by paucity of personnel, his plans were well in place.

In the Diocesan consultors' meeting he would always share his vision and problems and elicit our response and note them down carefully. His talks, conferences and the monthly recollections were meticulously planned. Like a

good pastor he often closed an eye to many of our shortcomings and deficiencies. He was a good listener.

I do fondly remember the fourteen years spent in the diocese, with the smiling and encouraging Bishop Lumen.

Congratulations to the diocese and Bishop Lumen as you celebrate the Silver Jubilee. May the Lord shower His choicest blessings on Bishop Lumen and the diocese.

Ad multos annos.

Fr. M.C. George SDB

