

Pastor's Corner

Ubuntu Life = I am because we are!



This is not a new story but a very nice story about the motivation behind the Ubuntu culture in Africa. An Anthropologist proposed a game to the African tribal children. He placed a basket of sweets near a tree. And made the children stand 100 metres away. Then announced that whoever reaches first would get all the sweets in the basket. When he said 'ready, steady, go' do you know what these children did? They all held each other's hands, ran

together towards the tree, divided the sweets equally among themselves, ate the sweets and enjoyed it. When the Anthropologist asked them why they did so, they answered UBUNTU which meant "How can one be happy when the others are sad?" Ubuntu in their language means 'I am because we are!' A strong message for all generations! Let all of us always have this attitude and spread happiness wherever we go. Let's have an Ubuntu Life = I AM BECAUSE WE ARE. The Ubuntu story has inspired me and I want to recommit myself to God and his people to be an instrument of happiness wherever I go.

This month I celebrate yet another year of God's gift of life to me. Thank you God for my life, my

vocation, and for giving me hope, the one ingredient so essential for life, about which Orson Marden said, "There is no medicine like hope, no incentive so great and no tonic as powerful as expectation of something better tomorrow." Let me thank each of you for being a blessing to me.

+Lumen, CSC



Editorial

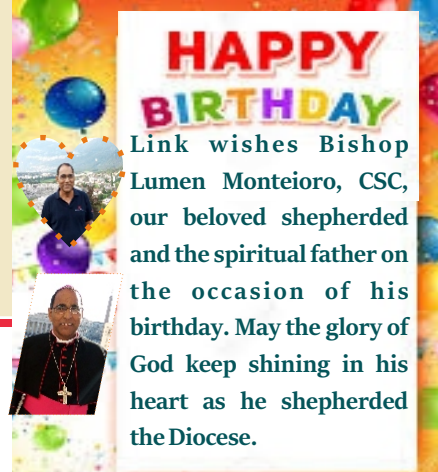
Right to Choose



The State of Tripura is all set to go through another round of Elections this month. The importance of the State Legislature Assembly elections is certainly not lost on the people of Tripura famed to go full throttle into elections with a seriousness not many other States in the country even come close to. The fervor and the frenzy underlying elections point to the polity's desire for a better life. For good or ill, this desire gets galvanized into party politics. And at times such as these, when party affiliations supersede all else and astonishing inter-party combinations and permutations based on meticulous calculations emerge and re-emerge on every morning's newspaper, one might be excused perhaps in succumbing a little to the temptation of compromising beliefs and ideals, even core ones.

Seemingly there is a widespread perception that this election and its outcome will have far reaching consequences for the indigenous people of the State. To know if the decisive steps taken by their political *gurus* and representatives are going to stand them in good stead, one will need to wait, not for 3rd March when the election results will be known, but for a considerably longer period of time, perhaps decades. For now, the restive, *mela*-like atmosphere surrounding the pre-election period continues to dazzle, also baffle.

Has the Church got a take on all this? Should the Church begin to develop cold feet when it comes to matters of politics in a place like Tripura? While the Church finds political party-pandering, not its preferred cup of tea, it does not forget that it stands for something. As an entity that is microscopic yet commands some measure of respect, the Church in Tripura perhaps ought to "influence" the ballot process and enrich it with ethics, values and beliefs it embodies and stands for. There is both merit and



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Link wishes Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, our beloved shepherd and the spiritual father on the occasion of his birthday. May the glory of God keep shining in his heart as he shepherded the Diocese.

urgency in such an agenda because learning to integrate private beliefs with public political positions continues to be a challenge not only for Church members, but for all.



The interest of the Church in 'politics' stems from its interest in whatever touches human beings. The Church does not minister to its people in a vacuum but strives to get involved in the life matters and struggles of its people. Hence, in matters political, it would at best be naïve to adopt a neutral stand that neither contributes nor hampers. It would do well, rather, to infuse the elections with a conscience, and right values as it continues to uphold and defend the people's right to choose.

J. Pulinthanath, SDB

GACHIRAMPARA PARISH



New mondoli at Manacherra

A new Catholic community under the patronage of St. Thomas was inaugurated by Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro, CSC, at Manacherra Village under Gachirampara Parish on 24th December 2017. At 10a.m. people lined up on either side of the road and welcomed Bishop Lumen with flowers and song. Then they accompanied Bishop, the Priests and Sisters right through the village and up to the Church singing their traditional Reang song and dance. Bishop Lumen inaugurated and blessed the newly built 'temporary' church. During Eucharistic celebration the Sacrament of Confirmation was administered to the baptized. The Joy of Christmas was resounding all through the liturgy as we celebrated the birth of a new Catholic Community to coincide with Jesus' birth. The cultural program added colour to the celebration. A delicious meal was served to all the people. So far about 90 people have received the Sacraments of Initiation. Several others are being prepared.

Capuchin Fathers Gachirampara

AMBASSA PARISH



Inauguration & Blessing

Ambassa: January 07, 2018: Kachuchera St. Arnold Sub-Station inaugurated and blessed a new village chapel by Bishop Lumen Monteiro. It was a cold morning and people from Kachuchera and from the vicinity gathered on the Kachuchera road to welcome Bishop and other guest Fathers. There was blessing and procession of statues to the newly constructed village church. The President of the Church, Mr. Rajesh Marak requested the Local Ordinary to unveil the plaque and cut the ribbon. Ambassa Parishioners witnessed this great event and for

the local community it was a breath taking event because their hard labor is blessed. 6 Priests concelebrated the Mass along with the Bishop. Over 250 people were present. Bishop Lumen praised the local community members and benefactors, especially the leaders for their hard labor and unity to build this beautiful village Chapel. He said, "The faithful must be present in this newly constructed Church regularly to experience God's presence through prayer and Mass". He called on the faithful to pray for the benefactors for their sacrifice. After Mass there was a short program, felicitating the workers. The faithful of Kachuchera village deserve our appreciation for their tremendous work.

Social Communication Seminar

Ambassa, 20 January, 2018; The Diocesan Communications Coordinator organized



one day Seminar for Teachers (TOT). St. Arnold H.S. School has 48 Staff with the 1700 students. The Principal Fr. Jaibu Mathew requested the Diocesan Coordinator to give one day Seminar on Social Communication. There were 44 participants for the Seminar including the Principal and Vice-principal. Resource Person dealt elaborately on the subject through Power Point and appropriate clips. He said, "We the teachers should be good communicators. We need to use the latest materials to communicate with the students and teachers and make the classes more attractive". He further drew attention of the teachers, saying "we the tutors can waste the time of the children if we have not prepared for the class. This means, our communication would be so bad, that children would lose interest in the class". After the Seminar there was friendly interaction between School management and Teachers. They decided to hold Seminars on second Saturday on Media related issues.

News Desk, Ambassa

KATHALCHERRA PARISH

Parish Youth Sabha 2017

The Annual Youth Day was observed at Kathalcherra on 20th and 21st of December 2017. The Youth gathered at Garo II sub centre. The Youth Sabha saw a new light as they were divided into groups of mixed language, different from other years.



Speaking on the theme 'Igniting our faith in God' Fr Ivan, SVD, enlightened them with the message of Jesus, 'Do not be afraid'. With various examples like working of smart phone he called them to be smart and increase their faith in God. Fr Ishwar, CSC, threw light on being God's instruments, allowing God to use us and various problems in the society and how to overcome it, through different games. They had Competitions on the Theme, Collage and Bible Quiz. It was a unique experience and a good preparation for the upcoming Youth.

Kathalcherra Youth at 8th Diocesan Youth Convention



Kathalcherra Youth exhibited their unity, love and youthfulness at the Convention held at Nandannagar. 49 delegates represented our Parish. Various activities at the Convention kept them alive and active. They brought laurels to our Parish as they stood first in the Bible Quiz, third place in Singing and Painting competition and Runners-up in the football Tournament.

Wishes to new VG and new Assistant Priest

Kathalcherra Parishioners were extremely happy to offer their good wishes to Fr. Lancy CSC, the newly appointed Vicar General of Agartala Diocese. He was on felicitated on 14th January during the Parish Mass and on the same occasion we welcomed Fr Ajith, CSC, to the Parish community. *Sr. Prema, BS*

AMARPUR PARISH

St. Joseph Vaz Parish Feast

On the eve of the Feast Day of our Patron St. Joseph Vaz, Amarpur Parish, celebrations started on 13/01/2018. The Parish Feast began with a spiritual preparation by a *Triduum*. It started with Adoration and Holy Mass which



continued for three days with different spiritual themes. There were many Parishioners who attended. On 13th January our dear Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, arrived at Amarapur Parish in the evening at 8:30pm for a small cultural programme comprising of singing and dances. The Parishioners, Fathers and Sisters were eagerly waiting the arrival of our Bishop to welcome him, which they did with lighted candles and song and dance. There was welcoming ceremony with *risha* and flower bouquet.

Next day, Sunday the 14th of January at 9:30am was the solemn Holy Eucharist which was officiated by His Lordship Bishop Lumen Monteiro, during which he conferred 27 of them the Sacrament of Confirmation on 27 candidates. The 3-day festivity ended with a fellowship meal.

Fr. Pratap, MSFS

KHUMULWNG PARISH **New Year with New Hope at St. Alphonsa Parish**

The Kaipeng community is deprived of basic facilities and privileges; so they keep struggling to get developed in the society like other communities. There are economic, social and educational struggles in this community. Poverty is the biggest hurdle to education and development. Social and cultural life is endangered due to the attraction of modern life style. At that juncture, the parishioners with the help of Missionary Sisters of Charity organized an



awareness program at Chaigaria village. People gathered from five villages. The program began with the Holy Eucharist. Later with Awareness Talks and distribution of household articles to at over 70 families, people felt they were cared for, loved and helped. They were given rice, *daal*, edible oil, biscuits and a bucket. The villagers were very happy and grateful to the Fathers and Sisters for their help and generous support. **Fr. ArunMinjSVD**

Diocese News Nuggets

8th Diocesan Youth Convention at Don Bosco Nandanagar



The 8th Diocesan Youth Convention came to life on 27th of December 2017 after months of planning and excitement, with the Theme, "Young People: Faith and Vocational Discernment." The Delegates were 520 Youth from all Parishes. The Convention was an occasion of coming together and praying together as Youth of Christ. Great excitement, enthusiasm and spiritual fervor were displayed by the Youth during the three days with inputs from Priests, Lay and Religious from the Diocese. The Eucharistic celebrations by Bishop Lumen, Fr. Robert and Fr. Sunny SDB; the Adoration by Fr. Jomon SVD and Bishramganj Youth; Inspiring Sessions and Talks by the Resource Persons namely Sr. Regina NERYC Regional Youth Director, Sr. Celine FMA; Fr. Jeevan SVD, Fr. Joe Paul CSC, Fr. Hormis CSC, Mr. UttamDebbarma, Mr. Paul Darlong and Mrs. GitaDebbarma from AICU, Mr. Bosco Debbarma HoD in Engineering College; animations by Youth leaders and PYAs. The homely atmosphere provided by Don Bosco Parish and Auxilium Sisters for the Boys and Girls, motivated our Youth to a better discipleship and openness to the Church. The sense of belongingness and oneness in faith was visibly seen as the Youth joyfully

participated throughout the Convention. New Leaders of the ADYC were elected and commissioned by Bishop Lumen during the Closing Ceremony. The Youth departed to their respective parishes on the 30th December, taking with them the beautiful memory to cherish and messages to live with in their lives. **ADYC News Desk**

Thank you Lord... Thank you All

HERE I am SEND Me, was the response of Sr. Mary Jamatia who made her first profession in the MSMHC Congregation on 8th December 2017. A Thanksgiving holy Eucharist was organized on 2nd January 2018 at Ferrando Convent Agartala in which Bishop Lumen was the main celebrant along with Fr. Robert the Provincial Superior of Holy Cross Fathers and few other Fathers along with the family members, Sisters of the neighboring communities, friends and well wishers of Sr. Mary Jamatia were present. While thanking and congratulating Sr. Mary Jamatia for responding to the call of God, Bishop Lumen made those present become aware of our role to live a holy life and to lead others to God. Mr. Dominic Jamatia the elder brother of Sr. Mary Jamatia on behalf of the family members expressed his gratitude to God for choosing their sister and to the congregation for molding their sister to be a religious. Sr. Mary Jamatia thanked everyone present for their prayers and requested them to remember her when they kneel before the Lord in the days to come that she may serve generously Him, who called her.

MSMHC Desk, Agartala

First Catholic Priest from Debbarma community

For the Church in Tripura, 13th of January,

2018 was a historic day, as the Catholic Church through Most Rev. George SDB, Bishop of Miao Diocese, conferred the Sacrament of Holy Orders on Fr. Rabindra Debbarma at Mandwi Parish. Hailing from Kantai Kobra village he is the first Priest from the Debbarma Community and is incardinated in the Diocese of Miao, Arunachal Pradesh. The Ordination Mass was celebrated by



Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, in the presence of Priests and Religious and Laity that exceeded 1,500 faithful from all over who came to witness the Ordination ceremony. The Bishop of Miao thanked the parents for their generosity and for cooperating with God for their son's vocation to priesthood. He also thanked the people of Mandwi Parish for the arrangements they had made. Fr. Rabindra gave his first priestly blessing and also expressed his sincere thanks to God, the Bishops, Priests and Religions and the Lay faithful for their prayers and support throughout his journey. The Mass was followed by a short felicitation program and a sumptuous meal prepared by the local Parish community. **Agartala News Desk**

World Disabled Day

JUST Agartala observed World Disabled Day at State Level and District Level on 2nd Dec. 2017 in collaboration with Social Welfare Dept. and DDRC respectively. Social Welfare Minister and Sports Minister



inaugurated the events. Many CwDs and PwDs participated in the Sports. Master Chandra Shil from JUST CBR

project area won 3 first prizes, whereas Master KishanDebbarma won the first prize in spoon and marble race. Mr. RathayatraJamatia and Manti Shil participated in the Cultural program at RabindraBhaban.

On December 8th 2017, JUST organized District Level World Disabled Day in collaboration with DDRC at Teliamura. Mrs. Gauri Das MLA, inaugurated the program by lighting the lamp. Panchayat Samiti Chairperson Mr. Sajal Kumar Dey, Chairman, Teliamura Municipal Council, CDPO, Teliamura, and Fr. Jeevan, Director, JUST attended the program. Each participant received a Certificate of participation from DDRC. It was a memorable day for the CWDs and PWDs.

Awareness on the Eroding Traditional Farming Practices

JUST conducted Awareness Programs



on the theme “Eroding Traditional Farming Practices” at 15 target Villages under Hezamara R.D Block. 273 Farmers took part in the program that was held in December 2017. The main topic discussed was *Jhum* cultivation and community work. The Facilitators shared that *Jhum* is one of the most important cultural practices among the ethnic groups. They shared about the process of *Jhum* cultivation which involves clearing of forest cover on land, slopes of hills; drying and burning before the onset of monsoon; and cropping. The whole process shows the nature of collective work. Farmers they said do not think of planting new trees after cutting down. Besides, they can also plant *betel* nut trees around the surrounding as a landmark or boundary which can also give them some income. The programs were done successfully in all the 15 target Villages.

Mr. Vincent Debbarma

St. Xavier's VC gets Nihil Ultra Award Catholic

St Xavier's College (Autonomous) was presented the Nihil Ultra Award of Excellence 2018 to Father Felix Raj, SJ, a former Principal of the College and the current Vice Chancellor of St Xavier's University. The Award was given at the 11th Annual Convocation of the College.



Father Felix Raj was given the award not only for his "long and dedicated service to the college" but also for his

contribution to the field of education in Bengal, said Father Raphael Hyde, the provincial of Calcutta Jesuit Province. "Today, I stand here with a sense of humility and a feeling of gratitude.... I accept this Nihil Ultra Award of Excellence 2018, conferred on me for my humble service in this Institution. By serving this institution for 33 years, I have learnt many lessons... St Xavier's College has expanded in infrastructure and achieved high academic standards.... I am confident this high standard will be sustained in the years to come," Felix Raj said in his acceptance speech. He steered the College as Principal from 2009. A postgraduate in economics from St Joseph's College, Trichy, Felix Raj was appointed the Rector of St Xavier's in 1996. "This gesture of appreciation and support is a message for me to go ahead," Felix Raj told Metro.

By Mita Mukherjee

Our Readers Write

Thanks so much for your faithfulness in leading the diocese and keep us so well informed. The events described in this issue alone shows how deeply the people of the diocese are growing in faith and in reaching out to those in need. Best wishes on your 22nd anniversary. Tony Krisak Thank you, Lumen-bhai, for LINK and for your wonderful words and actions on behalf of God's people our brothers and sisters! Happy New Year!! David Schlaver, CSC

Thanks Lumen for the Link - thought the Editorial was well written and so apt. Stephen Aaron, Australia

Thanks for LINK month after month; on time, every time. May God bless the team abundantly for the renewed energy to continue spread God's Love and Peace. Mark Dalmeida

Thanks for the Link. Please keep me linked to the Diocese. I love the Diocese of Agartala where I spent more than 20 years. Wishing you all the best in the New Year. Cyprion SVD, Bangladesh
A big thank you for your kind wishes, which I reciprocate with all my heart.

Bishop's Program for February 2018

- 01-10: CBCI Plenary Assembly, Bengaluru
- 11: Parish Sabah, Kathalcherra Parish
- 12: FSM Convent Blessing, Laximipara
- 13: BS Convent Blessing, Agartala
- 14: Ash Wednesday, Mariamnagar Parish
- 17-18: Parish Pastoral Program
- 18: State Elections
- 19-24: Caritas India Meetings, Delhi
- 24-25: Surjo prasad para Mondoli Inauguration, under Depacherra Parish
- 27: Seminar for Priests and Religious, Agartala
- 28: College of Consultors Meet, Agartala

Our Distinguished Visitors

- Sr. John the Baptist, RNDM, from Shillong
- Fr. Pramananda Nayak from Odisha
- Mr. Fabio and Mr. Mauricio from Cittadella, Italy