

Pastor's Corner

A LEGACY OF GOODNESS TO BE INHERITED

Pope Francis has gone to his heavenly home and we are still in the official mourning period following his death, daily praying for his mortal soul. We also look at the legacy that he has left us with, especially the strong legacy central to his vision and pastoral imperative: go to the periphery!

This call extends beyond geographical outskirts to the existential margins - those places where suffering,



exclusion, and despair reside. "Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the 'peripheries' in need of the light of the Gospel" he wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium*, §20. With the 2022 apostolic constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*, he restructured the Roman Curia, placing evangelization - not doctrine - at the heart of its mission. This reorientation reflects a Church more focused on proclaiming the Gospel than guarding tradition.

Pope Francis has revitalized the practice of synodality - shared discernment and journeying together - affirming that all the baptized, not just the hierarchy, are called to shape the Church's path. "A synodal Church is a Church which listens... The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit."

Pope Francis' encyclicals have resonated far beyond the Catholic world, offering moral clarity on some of humanity's most pressing concerns. In *Laudato Si'* in 2015, he issued a stirring appeal to protect the planet: "The cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are one and the same". In *Fratelli Tutti* in 2020, he envisioned a world grounded in universal fraternity, unequivocally rejecting nationalism, xenophobia, and indifference.

Pope Francis has remained unwavering in his commitment to a Church that is missionary, merciful, and synodal. He has reoriented the Church from the center to the margins, from rigid institution to compassionate encounter, from static doctrine to dynamic accompaniment. In doing so, he has not only reshaped the image of the Catholic Church but also rekindled its soul. As Pope Francis often reminded us, "The Church is not a customs house; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone." Our greatest tribute will be to remain faithful to the mission he entrusted to us: to pray unceasingly.

Stephen Covey, in his book, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, has stated four goals of life: to live, to love, to learn and to leave a legacy. Fr Jacob Peenikaparambil, SJ says, "A person who achieves the first three goals will definitely be able to leave a legacy for posterity. Pope Francis lived an enthusiastic, passionate and vibrant life; his love was all-inclusive and selfless; he was always eager to learn not only from various media sources but mainly from people and the Book of Life. Thus, he was able to leave a unique legacy... Pope Francis lived the values of Jesus: all-inclusive love, unconditional forgiveness, compassion, sensitivity, justice, respect for every human being and care for the Earth, our common home. Pope Francis's papacy offered a timely and compelling vision of what it means to lead the Church today. His example calls for Church leaders to embrace humility, foster inclusion, prioritize the marginalized, and stay rooted in the essentials of the Gospel. While not without critics or controversy, his leadership reflected a profound faith in the transforming power of love, mercy, and grace."

29th Anniversary of my episcopate!

The 26th of May always brings me memories of 1996, the day I was consecrated the first Bishop of the Diocese of Agartala, even though the Diocese itself was established on 11th January 1996 by Pope St. John Paul II. Emotions of joy and gratitude continue to well up in me as I reminisce the one more year that has gone by, bringing me to the 29th anniversary. I thank Almighty God for His numerous blessings throughout the last 29 years. The Holy Spirit who descended on the Apostles and set them on fire precisely that they in turn would set the world on fire is the same Spirit who descended on me and sent me forth on that Pentecost Sunday in 1996! I entreat the Holy Spirit to bless us with the gift of Hope, in the words our late Pope Francis 'Spes non confundit' = Hope does not disappoint!

+ Lumen, CSC



26th of May 2025

29th Episcopal Anniversary



LINK wishes our dear Bishop Lumen a Happy Episcopal Anniversary



29 Years of Grace

As the Diocese of Agartala completes 29 years of its existence, we pause with gratitude, reflect with hope, and look ahead with faith. The news about the creation of the new Diocese was announced on 11 January 1996, but it was about four months later, on 26th of May, that the bishop-designate, Holy Cross priest Lumen Monteiro entered the ranks of the Episcopate and took charge of the Diocese as its first bishop. The memorable program, the first of its kind in the State, was held at Agartala Holy Cross grounds and signaled the beginning of a new chapter for the Catholics of the State, the import of which was perhaps too huge to grasp then.

Today, 29 years later, it stands as a growing tree rooted in Gospel values, bearing fruit in both the visible structures of Church life and the invisible strength of a faith-filled community.

It has been a journey of visible signs. From its humble beginnings, the Diocese has witnessed remarkable growth in its physical and pastoral infrastructure. From 11 Parishes then to 25 today, new churches and institutions have emerged, often through sacrifice and deep collaboration. Church-run Schools and hostels have become beacons of education and dignity, nurturing children from all backgrounds, regardless of faith.

Healthcare and development projects, especially in the rural and interior regions, speak of the Church's commitment not just to preach the Good News but to live it through acts of mercy, justice, and solidarity. Institutions like JUST (Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura) continue to express the Church's social mission with competence and compassion.

Over the years there have been growth and transformation in the spiritual realm too—the growth in faith, unity, and commitment among the faithful. Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and other prayer groups like the Disciples flourish as spaces of prayer, sharing, and mutual support. Local vocations to the priesthood and religious life have begun to sprout from the soil of Tripura, a sign of a maturing Church ready to serve from within. The invisible growth is felt in the quiet daring and commitment of parish priests, co-pastors, brothers, sisters, catechists and lay people who do not shy away from the demands of the Gospel, in youth groups animated by Gospel values, and in families living their faith with humility and joy.

This journey has been guided by the wise and consistent leadership of Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, DD, the first and only bishop of Agartala so far. He has walked with his people, respected cultures, encouraged lay participation, and promoted a Church that listens and learns. His leadership is not only seen in diocesan administration but felt in personal encounters, village visits, and in the quiet witness of his simple lifestyle. The Readers of Link, heartily congratulate Bishop Lumen.

As we mark 29 years, we celebrate not a completed journey but a living one. The future calls us to continue sowing seeds of faith, forming committed disciples, embracing youth with new energy, and deepening the Church's presence through sustainable service.

J. Pulinthanath, SDB

"29 Years of Shepherding with Faith and Love – Ad multos annos, Bishop!"



Agartala Cathedral Parish

Lenten Retreat for Parishioners



As the faithful journeyed through the sacred season of Lent, the St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Agartala, organized a Lenten Retreat on 31st March, on the theme: "Return to the Lord with all your heart" (Joel 2:12). This spiritual gathering provided parishioners an opportunity to deepen their faith, reflect on their lives, and prepare their hearts for the joy of Easter. The retreat commenced at 9:00am with the solemn Eucharistic Adoration led by the Parish Priest. The time of prayerful silence and reflection set the tone for the day's spiritual nourishment. Fr. George S., the Parish Priest, delivered the first session on the topic "The Call to Repentance." The second session was led by lay leaders Mr. Subash Debbarma and Adi Sadhan Jamatia, who spoke on "Be Reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20). The importance of the Sacrament of Reconciliation was further emphasized by Mr. Binod Debbarma, the Parish Secretary, who encouraged participants to embrace God's mercy with open hearts. The Parishioners had the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Confession, engage in personal prayer, and adore the Blessed Sacrament in silence. This sacred moment of grace and reconciliation strengthened their resolve to return to the Lord wholeheartedly. The retreat concluded with a final blessing, leaving participants spiritually renewed.

Fr. George S.

Ambassa Parish

Jubilee Retreat: A Spiritual Renewal



Holy Spirit Catholic Church organized two days of Jubilee Retreat for the parishioners on 5th & 6th April in Ambassa. There were over 300 parishioners participating in the spiritual renewal. It was well planned and meticulously organized by the Parish Pastoral Council who invited Fr. Leenus

V.C. as the resource person. His team had Fr. Antony V.C, Sr. Sheela CMC and Sr. Jayanti CMC who were actively involved in singing and helping people to pray. Fr. Ivan DSilva, SVD welcomed the resource team to animate two days for the spiritual nourishment during this Jubilee Year. It was a Word of God retreat and healing event. That is why there were many non-Catholics and non-Christians too. Many witnessed the healing power of Jesus during the course of the event. Mrs. Hiramoti Debbarma said, "I am healed of my physical ill health which was causing me more tension". Mrs. Bipul Ma said, "She is healed of her joint pains". It was a time of penance and they were sobbing and weeping during the sacrament of reconciliation. Mr. Prabath Marak the choir master said, "I would have lost this opportunity if I were not to attend the retreat because the preacher explained the Word of God in such a way that the Words were piercing my heart". People were in gratitude to the preacher for spiritually rejuvenating them during this season.

Ivan DSilva, SVD

Kumarghat Parish

Women's Day celebrated



Kumarghat Maria Sango organized International Women's Day at the Parish Centre on April 6, 2025. Many women gathered for the day-long celebration. Many other faithful were present. The Holy Eucharist was presided over by Parish Priest Fr. Lancy CSC and concelebrated by Fr. Francis CSC. In the homily, the Celebrant upheld the Biblical Women and their positive response.

They were brave, committed and very positive in their approach to God's plan. He called the women to be prayerful, holy, and courageous, and to follow Mother Mary as their role model.

After the Mass Mrs. Huansungi Darlong, a local medical staff gave a session on Health and hygiene. This was followed by various other activities. There was a short cultural program organized by the committee to make the Women participants happy and cheerful. Prizes were distributed to the winners.

As a sign of joy and happiness, a fellowship meal was served. A total of 136 women participated in the program. Thanks to Maria Sango Parish Executive members and Sr. Margret or their great leadership.

Sr. Margret FS



Holy Spirit School, Belonia Shines at IIT Delhi National Level Competition



The students of Holy Spirit School, Belonia achieved a remarkable milestone by securing the 5th position at the National Level Science and Innovation Model Competition held at IIT Delhi. The event saw participation from schools across various states in India, with 35 of the best innovative models being showcased.

Representing Tripura, the young innovators from Holy Spirit School stood out for their creativity, scientific approach, and practical application of ideas. Their model impressed the judges and audience alike, highlighting not just technical knowledge, but also critical thinking and teamwork.

This achievement is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the students, the guidance and support of their teachers, and the vision of the school management to promote holistic education. Competing at a national platform like IIT Delhi is a significant feat, and placing among the top five is a matter of pride for the entire state.

The Principal, faculty, and fellow students congratulated the team for bringing laurels to the school. This success story inspires other students to dream big and pursue excellence in academics and innovation.

Congratulations
to the students
and the school for the outstanding
achievement!

Pastoral Meeting & Chrism Mass at Cathedral



On April 15, 2025, the Diocese of Agartala held a Pastoral Meeting and Chrism Mass at the Cathedral, attended by over 200 participants, including clergy, religious, and lay leaders. Bishop Lumen Monteiro, C.S.C. delivered the keynote address, highlighting diocesan developments and pastoral priorities. The morning concluded with the Chrism Mass, during which priests renewed their vows and the bishop blessed the holy oils.

The afternoon was dedicated to reviewing diocesan reports. Fr. Amalraj presented parish-level updates, followed by Fr. Derrick's summary of commission activities. The meeting emphasized collaboration, reflection, and unity in mission. Bishop Lumen expressed gratitude and urged continued teamwork in strengthening the faith community.

— Fr. Derrick Augustin

Blessing and Certification of new Catechists



On April 5, 2025, fifteen catechists from nine parishes were commissioned at the Pastoral Centre, Champaknagar, after completing three months of training. The program, which began on January 5, focused on catechesis, leadership, and liturgical preparation.

Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, presided over the commissioning Mass and reminded the catechists of their vital role as Spirit-filled evangelizers. The catechists received the Mission Sending Cross and certificates.

Fr. Maxim Rodrigues SVD, course director, commended their commitment and thanked all who contributed to the success of the training.

— Fr. Maxim Rodrigues SVD
Director, Pastoral Centre

YOUTH COMMISSION and YCS/YSM ExCo Meeting

March 31, 2025: The Agartala Diocese Youth Commission and YCS/YSM Executive Body Meeting was held successfully at the Cathedral, bringing



together 52 youth leaders and animators. The gathering featured reports from ADYC, YCS/YSM, deaneries, and parishes, offering valuable insights into youth ministry.

The meeting fostered learning, sharing, and collaboration, and provided a platform to plan future initiatives aimed at spiritual growth and youth empowerment. It set a hopeful tone for the year, marking a key step toward building a vibrant Church in Tripura.

— Fr. Derrick Augustin, Asst. Director

YCS Delegates Attend Leadership Training in Guwahati



April 4–6, 2025: YCS/YSM Northeast organized a Leadership Training Program in Guwahati on the theme "Grooming Leaders for a New Generation." Delegates from across the region, including our Diocese, participated in sessions on leadership, mental health, and cultural exchange.

The training included engaging talks, group discussions, and a cultural evening showcasing diocesan traditions. Sr. Wansuk Lyngdoh, the Regional Coordinator, and Fr. John Barman, MSFS, inspired the participants with their presence and guidance. Certificates were awarded at the end of the program.

We are grateful to Sr. Wansuk for her tireless efforts in organizing this enriching event.

— Udis Darlong

YCS President, Holy Cross H.S. School, Kathalcheria

Catholic Bru Leaders Meet in Ganganagar



2 March 2025: Over 100 Catholic Bru leaders from various parishes gathered at St. Arnold School, Ganganagar, to initiate the formation of a "Catholic Bru Association." Centered on the theme "Lord, show us the way to walk by faith and not by sight," the day included Holy Mass and reflections by Fr. Cyprian Pinto, Fr. Jaibu Mathew SVD, and Mr. Mosi Ram.

An ad hoc committee was formed to plan the

way forward. The meeting concluded with a fellowship meal shared in joy and unity.

— Fr. Cyprian & Fr. Jaibu Mathew, SVD

Regional Youth Convention Cross Visits Agartala Diocese



The RYC Cross made a historic and spiritually uplifting visit to the Agartala Diocese, hosted at Don Bosco Parish, Nandannagar. Over 200 enthusiastic youth from across the diocese gathered for this special occasion, marking a powerful moment of prayer, unity, and renewal among the young faithful.

IFTAR celebration by IARF



On March 28, the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) hosted an IFTAR program at Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Lane, Agartala, promoting interfaith harmony. Fr. Nabin Roshan Lakra, SVD, and the MC Sisters represented the Catholic Church. Fr. Nabin highlighted Islam's values of peace, justice, and love—echoing Christ's teachings. Speakers from various faiths, including Dr. Mustafa Ali, shared reflections on IFTAR and Ramadan. The event concluded with prayers, thanksgiving, and sharing of refreshments.

Fr. Nabin Roshan Lakra, SVD

Pastoral Communications for the Catechists



As part of the 3-month catechist training organized by the Diocese of Agartala, Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD, Secretary for Social Communication, conducted sessions on Pastoral Communication on March 21–22 at Khumulwng Pastoral Centre. He covered homily preparation, catechizing children, marriage preparation, and communication during priestless services. The sessions were interactive, with participants eager for more training. Fr. Ivan encouraged them to apply their learning and assured future follow-ups.

— Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD

Kami Hamkhrai SHG to benefit from new Solar Dryer through Partnership with NBirt



Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura (JUST) on behalf of Kami Hamkhrai Self-Help Group (SHG) has recently initiated talks with NBirt to provide the group with a solar dryer at a nominal charge. This promising partnership marks a step forward in rural innovation and community development, potentially paving the way for future collaborations between the JUST and NBirt in various rural initiatives. The solar dryer is expected to bring significant benefits to SHG members, particularly those involved in grinding and processing spices such as ginger and turmeric. Traditionally, drying these spices is time-consuming, labor-intensive, and vulnerable to contamination. The introduction of a solar dryer will not only accelerate the drying process but also reduce the manual effort required, ultimately lowering labor costs. Furthermore, it offers a more hygienic method of processing, aligning with modern food safety standards. This collaboration highlights a shared commitment to empowering rural communities through sustainable technology. By enabling SHG members to enhance the quality and efficiency of their products, the initiative is set to improve income generation and livelihood opportunities. The solar dryer project is just the beginning—both NBirt and Kami Hamkhrai SHG are optimistic about expanding their partnership to drive further rural development.

Empowering Young Voices: PEACE Project engages students at various schools



JUST team conducted an engaging outreach session in 20 schools, as part of its initiative to promote reconciliation and harmony in Tripura through schools, youth clubs, and SHG federations. The session aimed to orient members of the school's PEACE Club on Human Rights and Child Rights through interactive and participatory learning methods. Facilitated by peace project staffs and supported by of interns, the session began with an introduction to the PEACE Club's mission—encouraging students to become peer leaders and changemakers. A brief but impactful talk was delivered on the significance of rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Indian Constitution, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). An interactive rights-matching activity allowed students to apply abstract concepts to real-life scenarios, helping them better understand and retain key rights. Initially shy, students soon engaged actively, asking thoughtful questions and making meaningful connections between rights and social issues such as gender equality and freedom of expression. The outreach not only deepened students' awareness of their rights but also empowered them to contribute to positive change, reinforcing the role of schools in nurturing a more just and inclusive society.

Robert Lushai

Our Distinguished Guests

- Fr. E. P. Mathew, SJ, Provincial Superior from Calicut
- Fr. Stany Koppola, SJ, Provincial Superior from Hyderabad
- Fr. Melville Pereira, SJ, Rector St. Xavier's College, Williamnagar
- Fr. Artemius Myrthong, OSFS, Provincial Councillor from Kannur
- Sr. Catherine, MSMHC, General Councillor from Guwahati
- Sr. Mercy, MSMHC, Provincial Economer from Guwahati

Bishop's Program for May 2025

- 02: Priestly Ordination of Dn. Bala Showry @ Guntur
- 04: SKD Silver Jubilee, Bodomaidan
- 06: R.K. Para Chapel Blessing under Bodhjungnagar Parish
- 08-09: SCM @ St. John's Bengaluru
- 11: Parish Pastoral Program, Pitra
- 12: ADPC Meet @ SFX Cathedral Hall
- 13: Blessing School Annexe, Gokulnagar
- 14: Salnaya School, Investiture Ceremony
- 15: Mass @ AC Convent, Gokulnagar
- 17: SCCG Congregation Feast, Panisagar
- 18: Confirmations, Assisi Parish @ Gachirampara
- 25: Mary Help of Christians Parish Feast, Mandwi