

## Pastor's Corner



### Hope amidst turmoil in the light of the Resurrection

Amid the escalation of war in the Holy Land and the suffering and fear it is causing, Father John Luke Gregory, Franciscan Father of the Custody of the Holy Land, reflects on the many challenges posed by the current situation and on how faith gives him the

power to look to the horizon with hope and even find joy amid despair. I transcribe some excerpts from his touching and heart-rending reflection.

Our living presence as Franciscans in the Holy Land in the midst of conflict, chaos, and despair reveals stories of resilience and faith that shine through the darkness. We have dedicated our lives to serving the people in the Holy Land and have endeavoured to be unwavering beacons of hope emanating from the light of the glorious Resurrection even amid the ongoing war in Gaza and the present-day unbridled violence involving Israel and Iran. Whilst the tumultuous political landscape can be overwhelming, my personal experience reflects a deep-rooted commitment to the Pentecostal gifts of the Spirit of love, hope and peace, all embodied in the promise of Resurrection.

My journey as a custodian of hope began long before the current hostilities erupted. I arrived in the Holy Land with a heart full of compassion, inspired by the teachings of Christ and the Franciscan commitment to embrace poverty, humility, and service. Yet, how could one maintain such spirit in the face of violence that pervades daily life?

The answer lies in a profound faith and understanding of the Resurrection. Every day, we witness the fragility of life. The sounds of sirens, explosions, and cries of those suffering have become a constant backdrop to our mission both in the Holy Land and the territories served by the Custody, which include Rhodes. Yet, within this bleak exterior, we see the resilience of the human spirit. It is the people surrounding us—families torn apart, children frightened by the sounds of war, and elders burdened with sorrow. In these interactions, we can find the essence of hope and love. We are inspired by individuals who, despite losing everything, continue to help one another, embodying the very teachings of Christ.

Our ministry extends beyond spiritual care; it involves tangible acts of service, doing all we can to unite people of different faiths in a common quest for peace. Each Easter, as we celebrate the Resurrection, we encourage our communities to see beyond the sorrow of the moment and to envision a future where peace reigns. The hope of the Resurrection is not just an event but a powerful invitation to see every moment of darkness as a precursor to light. Holding onto the gift of the Spirit means fostering an inner disposition of peace, regardless of external circumstances. During our daily prayers, where silence becomes a refuge and listening to God's voice becomes a central practice,

it is in these sacred moments that we can experience the transformation of our hearts, as fear gives way to faith, and hopelessness is gently replaced with the courage to forge ahead amidst turmoil.

I have been in the Holy Land for the past week with this war raging around us, missiles flying over the monastery roof by the hundred-fold, and yet, it became a poignant reminder that joy can flourish even in despair, and peace can be firmly planted when nurtured by acts of kindness, understanding, and love. Indeed, whilst the wars may rage on, the seeds of hope we nurture will bloom wheresoever believers and seekers gather, fostering a resilient spirit of faith that looks ever toward the horizon with anticipation.

After all, hope is not just a feeling—it is a powerful action born from unwavering faith in the goodness of humanity and the promise of divine love embodied in the Spirit of truth. *Fr. John Luke Gregory ofm, Custos of the Holy Land*

### Ahmedabad flight crash: Manipur unites in grief, across the ethnic divide



The Guwahati edition of the Hindu had the above heading on its front page on June 15. Meitei and Kuki-Zo groups mourn the deaths of both K. Nganthoi Sharma and Lamnunthem Singson, two cabin crew hailing from different communities, in the Air India plane crash on June 12. The pair were among the 10 cabin crew members of Air India's London-bound flight, which crashed seconds after take-off from Ahmedabad. "Both were full of life, serving with dedication and pride. Their sudden passing is a huge loss for their families, friends, and for all of us back home. May their souls rest in peace and may their loved ones find the strength to get through this unimaginable pain," former Manipur Chief Minister, Nongthombam Biren Singh, posted on X.

We in the Diocese of Agartala remember the 245 victims and pray for their souls while also praying for their sorrowing families for strength to endure this horrific tragedy. As Fr. Pulinthanath says, "We can't save every life—but we can cherish the life we have, pray for those who don't, and love with all the time we're given."

+ Lumen, CSC



# Editorial

J. Pulinthanath, SDB



## 'Such stuff as dreams are made on'

Life is fragile—sometimes too fragile to fathom. Last month, when Air India Flight 171 plummeted into a residential block near Ahmedabad's B.J. Medical College shortly after take-off, the magnitude of the loss was staggering: 242 souls aboard and nearly 40 more on the ground were lost in an instant. A nation was silenced — stunned into grief and prayer.

Just days later, another storm raged: Israel and Iran—long adversaries—erupted into open war. In a cascade of missiles, airstrikes, and horrific hits on targets military and civilian, more than 800 people have lost their lives according to Human Rights groups, and thousands are wounded. At the time of writing this, however, the glimmer is not of missiles whizzing past, but of hope. We are hearing that both sides have agreed to a cease-fire.

These tragedies—one sudden and accidental, the other drawn-out and political—remind us that stability is a fragile veneer, that our existence is so unpredictable. Be it a routine flight, or the simmering geopolitical tension, they can anytime spiral well beyond our control.

The realization hits that safety can vanish in a single heartbeat, and that Peace can fray in a flash, should at least make us wake up thankful—for the breath we take, the loved ones who surround us, the roof above us. We often underestimate the quiet miracles of ordinary days.

These tremors shake our illusions of control. We turn our gaze upward—to God, to the universe—seeking comfort that goes beyond ourselves. Our present becomes more purposeful. Our every "hello," every "thank you," every hug, matter more. And as tragedies have always shown, amid rubble and chaos human kindness shines brightest.

When tragedies—from an Ahmedabad crash to distant airstrikes—break our hearts, they also break open our souls: to gratitude, to faith, and to each other. We can't save every life—but we can cherish the life we have, pray for those who don't, and love with all the time we're given. Life is fragile. But gratitude... gratitude is fierce. Let it shape our days, our prayers, and our world.

When tragedies have shorn life of all ambition what remains? Love. Service. Connection. The small choices we make today sculpt our legacy.

# Congratulations



**LNK Congratulates our Deacons James Kaipeng and Khakchang Uchoi on their Diaconate Ordination**

**On 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2025**

**at Oriens Theological College, Shillong.**

**We wish them and pray for them.**



These six candidates joining the Diocese are on their way to West Bengal for the Spiritual Orientation Course for one year.

We pray for them and wish a meaningful year of spiritual integration.



### Chailengta Parish Bishop's Pastoral Visit



On the 1st of June, Ascension Sunday, Bishop Lumen made a pastoral visit to St. Joseph Parish. He celebrated the Holy Mass and took the opportunity to meet with the faithful. This time, the celebration was held at Mainama St. Mother Teresa Church. Despite the heavy rains, the unity and enthusiasm of the parishioners were truly inspiring. Many faithful participated in the celebration, including members from the two sub-centers that is, Chailengta and Hakrai Para. In his homily, Bishop Lumen encouraged everyone to become bearers of the Good News. He reminded the faithful to be witnesses for Christ, drawing strength and inspiration from the Holy Spirit.

A special moment during the celebration was the felicitation of Bishop Lumen on his 30th Episcopal Ordination Anniversary. The parish community expressed their love and gratitude by offering heartfelt wishes and celebrating with a cake-cutting ceremony. The local motha of Mainama honored the SRA Sisters, the Parish Secretary, Maria Sango, and the Priests, by presenting each of them with a traditional risha. Another joyful moment was welcoming the newly appointed catechist, Mr. Hopendra Debbarma.

Following the Holy Mass, a special event was held to inaugurate "Green Sunday." Bishop Lumen planted saplings in the church compound, officially launching the diocesan celebration of Green Sunday, which will be observed throughout the Diocese on the 15th of June.

We are deeply grateful to God for the abundant blessings we received on this special day. The presence and message of our Bishop, the unity among the parishioners, and the joyful celebrations made this pastoral visit a truly memorable and grace-filled occasion.

**Fr. Jayaseelan, CSC,**  
**Parish Priest, Chailengta**

### Ambassa Parish

#### Young Catholic Students in Ambassa

Ambassa (Tripura) June 5, 2025: Holy Spirit, Ambassa Parish organized a one-day YCS (Young Catholic Students)/YSM (Young Students Movement)



gathering on 1st June 2025 with 124 participants. The program began with a prayer led by Bikash Halam from Bagmara. Mr. Lalengmoy Halam, the Ambassa Deanery youth president, gave a short talk on the YCS/YSM movement and its motto. Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD the parish priest of Ambassa Parish gave an encouraging message on the importance of education in the life of a student. He said, "Students find it difficult to go to reputed colleges after their higher secondary because of financial constraints". He further said, "there are Catholic colleges in South India who provide good education with very low college fees". He named a few colleges and said he would be ready to help them if anyone approaches him. Mr. Joseph Marak came out with a very good action song and taught it to them. Towards the end of the get-together there were few Gospel group songs and cultural dances from different villages. A good lunch was prepared by the local village youth which was enjoyed by all.

### Pentecost Sunday and Farewell



Holy Spirit Church, Ambassa celebrated its parish feast on Pentecost Sunday, June 8, 2025, along with the farewell of Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD, after 10 years of service.

On June 7, a Parish Sabha was held where mondoli leaders presented reports, and Fr. Ivan chaired the session on action planning. A St. Joseph Fathers' Association was formed with Dr. Asok Debbarma as convenor.

The day concluded with the final novena and a short cultural program.

On the feast day, nineteen First Holy Communicants led the entrance procession. Fr. Ivan presided over the festive Mass, and Fr. Jeevan Kennedy, SVD, ING Regional Superior, gave the homily.

The community offered a heartfelt farewell, and over 1,000 people joined for the festive lunch.

**Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD**

### Kumarghat Parish Leadership training on BEC (Basic Ecclesial Communities)



A one-day leadership training session on BEC took place at Kumarghat Parish. Approximately 140 participants from various ministries of the parish attended the program. The seminar began with Bible enthronement, after which Mr. Paul Sangma conducted the first input session. He started by explaining the concept of BEC. He also highlighted the significance and the jubilee year of BEC, discussing how we must uphold BEC in the local units.

The Parish Priest, Fr. Lancy CSC, explained what BEC and its structures are through a PPT and placard presentation. Speaking on the importance of BEC, that is Church as Communion of Communities, he enlightened the people how the Apostles proclaimed the Word of God to the early Christians, and that BECs are the tools given by the Holy Spirit to make this happen.

After the lunch break, Mr. Lala Darlong facilitated the group on the need for Bible sharing and coming together, centering on the Word of God through the Seven Steps of the BEC. The concluding session by Mr. Roitua Darlong highlighted the Diocesan Pastoral Plan by dividing it into nine groups. After the action plan, all the groups presented their report, and they asserted that they would strengthen the BEC units in the villages and be a good neighbor to others in the village. During the evaluation, they all appreciated the well-organized seminar on BEC in the Parish. At the end, Fr. Lancy gave the final blessing to the participants.

**Sr Amali FS**

### Kamaranga Parish Installation of a new Parish Priest



On 15th June, Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD was installed as the Parish Priest of St. Raphael Parish, Kamaranga, by Fr. Lancy D'Souza CSC the Vicar General of the Diocese, in the presence of many faithful from different substations of the Parish of Kamaranga.

The Installation ceremony was a moment to welcome the new PP Fr. Ivan SVD as well as thank the outgoing PP Fr. Arun Minj, SVD for his many years of service. The Parish which



celebrated its Silver Jubilee has been under the administration of the SVD Fathers, while the SJA Sisters help in the pastoral, educational and medical apostolate in the parish. The parish caters primarily to the Halam, Reang, Debbarma and Adivasi communities in the Kamalpur Sub Division of Tripura. "We are very happy to welcome our new Parish Priest and pledge our united support to him" said a parishioner, as he proposed the vote of thanks on the occasion.

**Parish Reporter**

### Ganda Twisa Parish Parish Youth embark a spiritual



"Pilgrimage is a journey of the heart, a journey of discovery, and a journey of transformation." On Sunday, June 22, 2025, 30 youth from St. Arnold Parish, Ganda Twisa, embarked on a spiritual pilgrimage to Don Bosco Parish in Nandannagar and St. Francis Xavier's Cathedral in Durjoynagar. The group was led by the parish Youth Animator, Fr. Sebin. The pilgrimage aimed to deepen the youths' spiritual connection with God and foster a sense of community among them. The visit to Don Bosco Parish and St. Francis Xavier's Cathedral provided a unique opportunity for the young people to reflect on their faith and seek guidance from the Lord. The spiritual journey started in the morning from St. Arnold parish after the Holy Mass and reached the destination in the afternoon. The youth spent time in praying at the pilgrimage centers and received a special blessing.

The event was a resounding success, with the youths actively participating in the spiritual activities and bonding with one another. The pilgrimage served as a refreshing experience for the young people, rejuvenating their spirits and strengthening their commitment to their faith. The St. Arnold Parish community is proud of its youth and the youth animator for taking this initiative.

*News Bureau – St. Arnold Parish,  
Ganda Twisa*

### Ambassa Parish

#### Installation of a new Parish Priest

Rev. Fr. Lawrence Darlong, the Chancellor of the Diocese, installed Fr. Arun Minj SVD as the Parish Priest of Holy Spirit Parish, Ambassa, during the Holy Eucharist on 22nd of June. The Installation ceremony was well prepared and officiated



successfully. Fr. Nabin Lakra SVD, the Regional Councilor represented the Regional Superior Rev. Fr. Jeevan Kennady SVD in the installation ceremony. We remember Fr. Ivan D'Silva SVD, who worked hard to develop the parish in the pastoral, social and education fields, in his long 11 years of tenure as Parish Priest. Today, the parish has become quite vibrant, pastorally and socially. One can feel the unity and harmony among the communities in organizing and implementing the various programmes. We are grateful to him for his contribution. We hope and pray that this parish becomes a model parish.

*Fr. Arun Minj SVD*

## News from the Diocese

### Agartala Diocese Youth Commission conducts State-wide Cleanliness Drive



Agartala, June 10, 2025: The Agartala Diocese Youth Commission organised a state-wide Cleanliness Drive on June 7 in which youth and members of the Young Catholic Students (YCS) units from all parishes of the diocese participated. The campaign was organised to clean up public spaces in each parish of the diocese and promote environmental stewardship throughout Tripura. Enthusiastic youths and YCS members from parishes across the state actively participated, while also raising awareness among local residents about sustainable waste management practices. Their energy and dedication were evident as they took to the streets with tireless commitment to make a lasting impact on their communities. The initiative not only resulted in visibly cleaner public spaces but also increased awareness about waste management and a renewed commitment

towards sustainability. The drive was a significant step forward in building a better future for the state and its coming generations. "The Cleanliness Drive helped our young people understand how collective action can lead to positive change," said Fr. Derrick Augustin, Assistant Diocesan Youth Director. "Their efforts have not only made a significant impact but have also inspired others to join the movement towards a greener tomorrow."

The Diocese of Agartala, under the leadership of Bishop Lumen Monteiro, has been actively promoting environmental awareness and community development in the state of Tripura. The cleanliness drive by the Diocesan Youth Commission closely aligns with the Diocese's ongoing mission to build a just society through education, empowerment, and environmental conservation.

*Fr. Derrick Augustin  
Assistant Diocesan Youth Director  
Diocese of Agartala*

### Inauguration of Bishop Lumen Block @ Gokulnagar School



It was the momentous opening ceremony of the extension block of St. Joseph School named as Bishop Lumen Monteiro Block on 2nd June. The event was marked by prayer dance, lighting the lamp, ribbon cutting and blessing of the building. Fr. K. M. Allwin the Principal of the school welcomed and felicitated our Bishop and all the dignitaries with risha and sapling. This event has marked a significant milestone in the educational and social growth of the children and those who are part of this Institution. The inauguration of the Bishop Lumen Block began with unveiling of the plaque followed by ribbon cutting, lamp lighting, and blessing. In his address, the bishop highlighted the school's mission to nurture academic excellence alongside with moral integrity. He urged the students, teachers, and parents to work together in building a bright future. The presence of the fathers, sisters, brothers and special invitees made this event a graceful one. All the former administrators, principals, teachers, construction workers and carpenters who worked hard in the completion of this Block were specially thanked and felicitated. The school children put up a short cultural program with action songs and dances.

*Scholastic Bro. Kranthi*



### **Celebrating Strength and Self-Reliance: Empowerment gathering for single Women**



On 14th June 2025, Jana Unnayan Samiti Tripura (organized a vibrant and empowering gathering for single women at Twikraukma-A village, Karbook subdivision, under the project "Socio-Economic Empowerment of 180 Single-Headed Women in Tripura."

The event was filled with joy, cultural richness, and learning. Members of the single women's group performed traditional dances and songs, showcasing their talents and spirit.

Motivational and interactive sessions were led by resource persons including Fr. Lathees, Director of JUST, Fr. Balan, Fr. Lawrence, and others.

These sessions focused on boosting self-confidence and encouraging women to take charge of their lives.

A special practical session on government schemes and women-centric entrepreneurship opportunities was conducted by Mr. Naresh Uchoi, Agri-Assistant, offering valuable insights for sustainable livelihoods. The gathering concluded with a heartfelt vote of gratitude by Fr. Lathees S., followed by the distribution of prizes to outstanding members of the group for their contributions to both the group and their communities.

The program not only celebrated the resilience of single women but also equipped them with knowledge and motivation to build a brighter future.

### **Fostering Peace through Dialogue: Interactive Sessions on Conflict Resolution**



Under the project "Empowering Communities and Institutions for Peace-building in North East India," JUST organized a series of interactive sessions with Peace Club members across 20 Schools in Tripura. The sessions focused on the critical theme of Conflict Resolution, aiming to build awareness and equip young minds with tools to handle conflicts constructively. State consultants and animators led the discussions, engaging students in practical and thought-provoking conversations. Topics included the root causes of conflict, the importance of conflict management, and effective steps for conflict resolution.

The sessions emphasized the significance of communication, empathy, and understanding as key components of peaceful conflict handling. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their own experiences and explore peaceful alternatives to resolve disagreements in schools, families, and communities.

Through group activities, real-life examples, and interactive discussions, the students gained insights into resolving disputes without violence or aggression.

These sessions not only enhanced the students' knowledge of conflict dynamics but also strengthened their roles as peace ambassadors within their schools and communities. JUST's initiative continues to empower the youth with values of harmony, dialogue, and mutual respect, contributing to long-term peacebuilding in the region.

**Robert Lushai**

### **Bishop's Program for July 2025**

- 01: Clergy Meet @ Bishop's House Agartala
- 06: Parish Mass @ Karbook
- 09: NEDSSS Board Meeting, Guwahati
- 12: Women Commission Training @ Cathedral
- 13: Srirampur Chapel Blessing under Kamaranga Parish
- 16: Mount Carmel Feast, Gokulnagar
- 19: Tuirubuma Chapel Blessing under Tuikarmaw Parish
- 20: Ichachara Chapel Blessing under Tuikarmaw Parish
- 26-27: Bagirath Chapel Blessing under Ganda Twisa Parish