



The ABC of the Year of Mercy

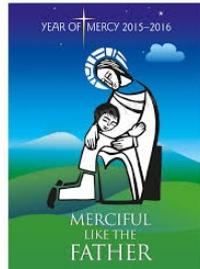
A=ask for God's mercy

B=be merciful

C=communicate God's mercy to others

We all know that God is merciful and forgiving. So, when a person experiences the mercy and forgiveness of God s/he must be ready and willing to forgive others. Our forgiveness is the concrete expression of our experience of God who is merciful and forgiving.

Jesus' forgiveness should be the standard of our forgiving. He expects of us to forgive others without any limit. For instance, the parable of the unmerciful servant (Mt 18:23-35) tells us that we must forgive those who have offended us, because we have been greatly forgiven by God. God has forgiven us countless times, and this



experience of his forgiving mercy should impel us to forgive those who have injured us. If we do not do this, it means that we have not yet experienced God's forgiveness in our lives.

The root cause of our difficulty in forgiving other people is our failure to appreciate how completely and unconditionally God has forgiven us. Had the unforgiving servant understood how much the Master had done for him he would most certainly have forgiven his fellow servant his small debt. We are able to forgive others insofar as we know of the extent of God's forgiveness.

During this Year of Mercy let us employ the ABC of Mercy. Let it be our constant and concrete agenda to forgive everyone unconditionally. But if we often

recall the wrongs done to us by others and speak about it frequently, it is a clear sign that we have not yet forgiven those persons. May the Lord give us strength to forgive others as he has forgiven us! +Lumen, CSC



Pastor's Corner

Congratulations to Bethany Sisters New Superior General

The Bethany Sisters elected a new Superior General in the person of **Rev. Sr. Rose Celine, BS**, during the ongoing XVI General Chapter of the Congregation, held at the Motherhouse, Bendur. She is the 10th Superior General of Bethany Congregation. A Team of four Councilors to the Superior General Srs. Lillis BS, Shanti Priya BS, Mariette BS and Lilitta BS, were also elected.

Congratulations to Apostolic Carmel Sisters New Provincial Superior

The Kolkata Provincial Chapter elected Sr. Marcella, A.C, as their new Provincial.

Staking our Claim



Editorial

About a week ago the elections to the village councils in the Autonomous District Council Areas were held in Tripura. Each time an election comes round, one cannot but admire the fervor with which the people look forward to it, prepare for it, and go through it. The tiny State of Tripura has the peculiar distinction of being the State that always records the highest voter turnout whenever an election happens in this large country of ours. It is not far behind when it comes to attendance in party *michils*, (rallies) either.

Aware of the inordinate party sense they are 'blessed' with, the Tripuri can even talk about it in a lighter vein, "the *Tiprasa* is first and foremost a party person, then, member of a tribe, and then, time permitting, member of a religion," they joke. Jokes apart, there is something in the way loyalty to Party



easily relegates all other considerations - ethnic, religious, even familial - into background. Sometimes Party fervor spills over into families and gives rise to conflicts, feuds and hatred among one's own kith and kin. The way one flag or another is able to hold absolute sway over a mass of people offers, no doubt, the social analyst, a wonderful case for study and research.

Although it would surely be simplistic and unwise to draw conclusions regarding the curious phenomenon mentioned above, one can hazard a guess that it has something to do with the way the community sees its past and also its future. Perhaps it just indicates an unwillingness to be indifferent to a reality that has substantially changed their collective lot in decades past. And the glimmer of hope, they believe, it still holds for their future.

Where do our 20 parishes, and an even bigger number of educational

institutions come in? Do we dare even to attempt a comparison with 'their' (*read Party*) programs and 'our' programs? What is the extent of our people's loyalty and belongingness to the Party and to the Church? Tough and discomforting questions, perhaps; but challenging ones too! They dare us to prove that what we stick out our necks for is not mere cosmetic add-ons, imported from elsewhere, optional and ornamental at best. They goad us on to demonstrate that what we offer is more than merely a soothing balm for anguished lives, but the very stuff that can infuse those agonies with hope, comfort and 'life' in a sense quite alien to political parties. **J. Pulinthanath, SDB**

LEARN KOKBOROK

Koborok Learning Course (basic) for priests and religious, 27 May -10 June 2016 at Peace Centre, Agartala. Those interested please register by 31 March. Total Course Fee Rs. 3500 (includes lunch and refreshments). For registration and other details please call 9436126649.

Diocese launches Catechesis on 'Sacrament of Reconciliation'.



The Diocese of Agartala has initiated steps to catechize the faithful on the Sacrament of Reconciliation as part of its Year of Mercy programmes. At a moment when, in the words of Pope Francis, young people all over the world "are rediscovering a path back to the Lord, living a moment of intense prayer and finding meaning in their lives" (*Misericordiae Vultus*), the Commission is making all efforts to "place the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the centre once more in such a way that it will enable people to touch the grandeur of God's mercy with their own hands" (*MV*).

As a first step an animation programme (TOT) was organized on 13th February at Don Bosco Parish, Nandannagar, to understand more fully the meaning of this great sacrament. 32 leaders from 8 parishes had a beautiful experience. Fr. Joseph Pulinthanath SDB animated the lively session bringing to focus the need and the importance of this healing Sacrament. With the help of a beautiful power point presentation in Kokborok, the many doubts about the sacrament and requirements for it were dealt with at depth. The Holy Eucharistic celebration at the end, presided over by Fr. Sunny was well participated. We are confident that this programme will help to build up awareness in the Diocese of the need for this great Sacrament and help to make them more fruitfully.

Fr. Sunny SDB

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI PARISH, GACHIRAMPARA

A new mondoli at Khasi Thai Para



24th of January was a joyful day for the parishioners of Gachirampara and to the Diocese of Agartala as 62 new members of Khasi Thai Para, the new mission station of Gachirampara received the Sacraments of Initiation from our dear Bishop Lumen. The people from the village who belong to the Reang community which is located in a remote area in the mountains are simple and loving. Their interest in the Catholic Church came through the efforts of the laity of our Parish. Though the area is remote and the communications are bad (only a mud road in the dry season) our Bishop was ready to brave the odds and was happily present in the village to inaugurate a new *mondoli* and dispense the Sacraments. I sincerely thank him and the parishioners and the Catechist for their accompaniment with me. After a dusty drive and walk we reached the village and were warmly welcomed with flowers and singing and dancing. After the Mass there was a short felicitation program, mainly Hojagiri dance and speech, after which we all shared in the simple 'community meal' prepared for all.

Fr. Prasanna, OFM Cap

ST. ANDRE PARISH, BODHJUNGNAGAR

Borgacia Chapel Blessing

January was very eventful and grace filled month for St. Andre Parish, Bodhjunnagar. There were 15 marriages in the months of January/February along with the Marriage Preparation Course. On



26th January, there was a Retreat for the Couples at Blessed Theresa of Calcutta Church, Borgacia, from 9am to 4pm. It was led by Fr. Bennet, the Secretary of Diocesan Charismatic Team and Assistant priest of Gondacherra Parish. There were around 70 couples and 100 people who attended the Retreat.

Blessed Theresa Church at Borgacia was inaugurated and blessed on 27th January at 11.am. Bishop Lumen Monteiro blessed the Church and Fr. Suresh Kagoo, CSC,

Rector of SAMS inaugurated it along with *motha* leader. There were around 150 representatives from different *mothas* of the parish. There were many religious sisters and priests attend the event. The Parish Priest has expressed his gratitude for the financial as well as material help received from laity of different *mothas*. He also appreciated the hard work of the local community. *Fr. Binoy, CSC*

GOOD SHEPHERD PARISH, KATHALCHERRA

Holy Cross Schools

On 1st of February at Holy Cross School, Chailengta, new class rooms were inaugurated and blessed by Fr Lancy, CSC, the Parish Priest of Kathalcherra Parish.

On 3rd February the new academic year was inaugurated at Holy Cross School, Dhumacherra, with the theme LISTEN - LEARN AND EXCEL, and farewell was given to Miss



Sharmista Tripura who rendered her generous service in the school for last one and half year.

Holy Cross Higher Secondary School, Kathalcherra, also had various programs to inaugurate the new academic year.

De-worming Day on 10th and 15th of February was observed in all the three schools without difficulties.

Annual Parish Sabha--February 5th to 7th

Good Shepherd Parish Kathalcherra celebrated the Silver Jubilee of Parish Sabha and



Maria Songho at Puranbari village. The program was well attended. It comprised of prayers, flag hoisting, report

reading, Sessions on "YEAR OF MERCY" by Fr. Cyprian SVD, talks on the importance of Eucharist and its relevance by Bishop Lumen Monteiro. Marian procession with candles, adoration, and confession were part of the program. On the concluding day the Holy Eucharist was presided over by Rev. Bishop Lumen. The Parish Priest and many fathers concelebrated. The Sabah was a spiritually enriching celebration for the people of the Parish. Next year Parish Sabha will take place at Koraticherra village.

Fr. Ishwar Happa, CSC



ST. ALPHONSA PARISH, KHUMULWNG

Lenten Preaching Inspires Villagers



A day of instruction and catechism program on the 'Year of Mercy' was organized in an interior tribal village on 14th February. The

preaching programme comprised of instruction and faith formation on 'Year of Mercy', Lenten preparation, Confession, Holy Eucharist and a film on 'Passion of Christ'. People from other villages too assembled to participate in the program. The preaching inspired many to accept and deepen their faith in the Lord.

Fr. Arun Minj, SVD

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION PARISH, MOHARPARA

Retreat, New Sisters, Vibrant Campus

As part of the Year of Mercy celebration, we had the Annual Preaching Program in sixteen out of twenty eight *mandolis* beginning from 23rd January to 14th February. Small *mandolis* came over to bigger *mandolis* to hear the Word of God. Fr. Pradeep CSsR, resident priest of Fatima Parish, Kolkata preached this Retreat.

Attendance or response for this Retreat from the people was quite encouraging. Many of them availed the Sacrament of Confession.

Two Holy Cross Sisters of Chavanaud, Srs. Sheela Tirkey and Maria Silchae are in Twithampui Village of Moharpara Parish trying to do the spade work in order to take over the Primary School there, now run by lay people. As we welcome them to this Parish and we wish them all the best.

With the opening of the School and Hostel here on the 18th of January, the campus has become vibrant with a total of 1,045 students in the School. This year Boys' hostel has 163 boys and Girls' hostel has 135 girls. We hope to complete the extension and renovation of the school building by the end of March.

Fr. Agi Paul, CSC

ST. MARY'S PARISH, TUIKARMAW

New Village Chapel Blessing at Gagan Chowdhury Para

26th January 2016 remains as a great day for the faithful at Gagan Chowdhury Para, the day in which 10 persons received the

Sacraments of Initiation. Our Bishop Lumen blessed a new Chapel is located near dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi. The people in their own efforts have built a small tin roofed chapel and made this is a place of prayer and coming together for worship. Bishop in his Homily reminded the people to remain faithful to the faith. He appreciated the nearby catholic communities for their efforts to spread the Gospel message.

New Village Chapel Blessing at Raipara

Fatima Rani Village Chapel at Raipara Parish was blessed and Bishop Lumen Monteiro, February. The faithful members to experience the God in the life of this



village. The village is located in such a place that even the access road to the village is very bad. The faithful from the village have worked very hard for building their Village Chapel. Bishop in his homily appreciated the efforts of the faithful and invited them to experience the mercy of God during this holy season. Fr. Abraham C, CSC the parish priest took lot initiative to organize this great event. The whole celebration came to an end with the community meal.

Fr. Alfred, CSC

Diocese News Roundup

Holy Spirit School, Belonia World Cleanliness Day observed

"Cleanliness is next to Godliness" goes the proverb. All religions insist on cleanliness



before worship. This is because cleanliness is the first important thing in being near to god. By cleanliness we

mean the habit of keeping physically and mentally clean. Cleanliness of body is necessary for physical health. Dirt and disease go together. Disease germs breed and thrive in dirt; and the epidemic diseases which sweep over a country and carry off thousands, are generally the results of the dirty habits and surroundings of the people. To keep our house and neighborhood clean is our utmost obligation as it the only remedy available for national health and hygiene.

The students of Holy Spirit School used this opportunity of observing World Cleanliness Day on 30th of January in its surrounding. It was the students' idea to have the Awareness Rally throughout our village and to give the message of cleanliness to the people who are living around us. With the assistance of the Teachers an Awareness Rally was taken from the School to main road. The students used various slogans on cleanliness and proved

that cleanliness is next to godliness! *Sr. Preethi, SSps*

Jeevadhara Minor Seminary Minor Seminarian make Jesus as their best Friend

Taking chance of the holidays the Diocesan minor Seminarians had an opportunity of two days of Retreat from 11th-12th February. The Retreat was



preached by Fr. Bosco Minj SDB initiating seminarians to strengthen their Vocation

to priesthood. They have found Jesus as their best friend who accompanies throughout their Formation journey. They learnt to discern their call amidst various choices and pressures of life. They enjoyed silence and solitude of two days and listened to the Lord speaking to them and became aware of the qualities they need to develop to be a holy priest.

Fr. Arun Minj, SVD

Zonal level SCC Meet at Kumarghat Parish

Quarterly Zonal SCC Meeting was held at Kumarghat on 13th February. There were 28 representatives from Gandacherra,

Gachirampara, Kamaranga, Kathalcherra and Kumarghat Parishes. The Meeting began with Gospel sharing using the Seven Steps Method, followed by the reporting from different Parishes. After reporting, the representatives gave suggestions to strengthen the SCCs by focusing on activities of mercy to the people. Fr. Prasanna emphasized the importance of Parish priests attending the Zonal level meetings in order to strengthen SCCs. It was also suggested to conduct training for SCC Leaders in the month of April. Fr. Jilson CSC volunteered to conduct the training. Each Parish will send 8 leaders for the training in Kumarghat from 20th to 22nd. The participants were happy to have SCCs in all the Parishes of the Zone. They were also happy to meet regularly to learn from each other to strengthen *the new way of being church* in the Jubilee of Mercy. The next Meeting will be in Kathacherra on 14th May.

Regent Lawrence, csc

Auxilium Girls School, Nandan Nagar

Achievement Day 2016

Recognizing, rewarding, and celebrating achievement is important in terms of raising performance, selfconfidence and selfesteem of the participant. For the past four years AGS has been celebrating "Achievement



Day” the celebration was introduced first, by Sr. Celine D’Cunha, our Principal, in order to encourage, appreciate and reward students who dared to participate and discover their talents and gifts. This year this most awaited day was celebrated on February 12, 2016. To solemnize the occasion a number of dignitaries were invited. Prof Sukendu Debbarma, Head of History and Kokborok Department Head, Tripura University and Commonwealth Academic Staff Fellow, UK, who graced the day as our Chief Guest. Shri Motilal Paul, Principal, Eklavya Model Residential School, Khumulwng, Shri Sanjay Kumar, Principal, Assam Rifles Public School, Shri Ghanshyam Behwal, Comdt. 71 Battalion, CRPF, and Dr. Selim Reza, Director, Tripura Bamboo and Cane



Development Centre, were our Guests of Honour. A number of other dignitaries were also present.

The programme was very well planned and executed.

All the guests praised the quality education imparted in the School, giving numerous chances to students to excel in different fields. The Chief Guest, Prof Sukendu, himself an achiever, spoke in moving terms of his life's struggles to reach the point where he is now, and exhorted the students to work hard, to dream big and to march forward. The programme was skillfully anchored by Mr. Ashutosh Banik, Mr. Sanjit Sinha and Mr. Janish Debbarma, our staff.

Sr. Rihun, FMA

JUST News Roundup

JUST distributes Water Pumps to Farmers Clubs

On 20th January JUST in collaboration with Caritas India distributed 4 water pump sets to



the farmers clubs under Hezamara R.D Block with a view to increase food security. The distribution program

was at Subalgarh Para, West Tripura. The Chief Guest was Fr. Shaiju, the treasurer of JUST. The special guest was Fr. Jeevan, SVD, Director of JUST. The Director in his short speech encouraged the farmers clubs for the works they do and to keep doing better. The chief guest also spoke on how important is a farmer and encouraged all the farmers for their hard works. The chief guest and the special guest handed over the pump

sets to the farmers clubs at the end of the program. 84 farmers belonging to 4 farmers' clubs will benefit from the pump sets.

Training for Entrepreneurs

50 SHG women entrepreneurs were trained by JUST. The Resource Person was Dr. Praban Kumar Kaushik, Regional Director of CFLE. He began the session by introducing the term 'Development'. He spoke on different types of development like Educational, Economic, Social, Communication, Personality, Infrastructure, Skills, and Agricultural development. He also shared that the most important in life is Human development because human development decides all the other development in the society which were followed by problem identification which needs micro planning. The training provided essential knowledge to the participants to become effective entrepreneurs. **Mr. Vincent Debbarma**

Bishop's Program for March 2016

- 01-10: SCM & Plenary Assembly, Bengaluru
- 12-13: Parish Sabah, Kamaranga Parish
- 14-15: National Conference on Climate Change, Kolkata
- 17: FCC Girls Hostel Blessing, Sindukpathar
- 20: Palm Sunday
- 22: Pastoral Meet, JDC Agartala Chrism Mass, Cathedral Parish, Agartala
- 23: Meet with SRA Superior General and Provincial
- 24-27: Easter *Triduum*
- 27: Sinaikami Chapel Blessing, Mandwi Parish
- 29: School Blessing, Holy Cross Tuikarmaw

Our Distinguished Visitors

- ♦Fr. George Arackal VC, Provincial Superior from Kerala
- ♦Frs. Ebin and Anthony, VC Councillors from Kerala
- ♦Mr. Edgar Afonso from Goa
- ♦Fr. Joseph, MSFS, Bursar from Guwahati
- ♦Srs. Sherly & Annie, SCC Provincial from Guwahati
- ♦Fr. Stephen, SDS, from Warangal
- ♦Fr. Joseph KP. Msfs
- ♦Fr. Stany Roshan, OFM Cap from Mizoram

Catholic Priest receives Education Award

The Education Research & Development Foundation (ERDF), Guwahati, presented the ERDF Excellence Awards 2015 to 18 eminent citizens of Assam who played major roles in various fields and contributed immensely to the society. Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi gave away the awards on January 20, at the University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya (USTM). National President of the Conference of Religious Fr V.M. Thomas and Provincial Superior, Salesians of Don Bosco Guwahati and Chancellor of Assam Don Bosco University, was the only priest among the ERDF award recipients. The citation reads, “The award is presented for his outstanding contribution in building educational institutions and for motivating the youth for positive social transformation.” (*mattersindia.com*)



Prayers sought for Cardinal Gracias

The Archdiocese of Bombay has requested prayers for its Archbishop, Cardinal Oswald Gracias, who is recuperating from a surgery in the US to remove a cyst. *mattersindia.com*

Pope Francis' followers on Twitter now exceed 27 million

The number of Pope Francis' followers on his @Pontifex Twitter account in 9 languages climbed above 27 million during his visit to Mexico. The most popular



language is Spanish with 11,146,700 followers, the second is English with 8,680,000 and the third is Italian with 3,365,500. The other languages in order of popularity are Portuguese, Polish, French, Latin, German and Arabic. Pope Benedict launched the @Pontifex account on the 12th of December 2012 whilst Pope Francis sent his first tweet on the 17th of March 2013. **Vatican Radio**