

Pastor's Corner

My Cathedral has a ceiling of blue no more!



With no church building in Agartala for years I kept singing the famous song 'My cathedral has a ceiling of blue'. Thankfully that will be over; on 23rd April the new cathedral with a roof will be blessed! For the majority of our LINK Readers the meaning of a Cathedral is well known; but it is not so for most of the relatively new Catholics in this Diocese. So when the idea of a Cathedral came up it could only be understood from the literal

translation of a *maha girja* = big church! Of course over time the understanding has improved, especially since the foundation stone blessing in February 2010. Fr. Pulinthanath's Editorial explaining that we are the cathedral is very timely.

A Cathedral is the center of the life of the local Church. The very word *cathedra* in Latin or Greek means "chair." From the *cathedra* the Bishop teaches, sanctifies, and guides the people of God, the church. From the cathedral, the Bishop oversees and safeguards the life of the Catholic people of a particular diocese. In early ecclesiastical literature it always conveyed the idea



of authority. Erection and division being what are known in canon law as important affairs (*causae majores*) are reserved to the sovereign pontiff, and the erection of cathedrals likewise belongs to him.

This is true of Agartala Diocese. When Pope John Paul II erected the new Diocese of Agartala on 11th January 1996, he actually wrote a Decree, (in Latin called *bull*), in which details like the name and date of establishment and territory and the new Bishop were mentioned: "...Moreover, We decree that the Bishop's Residence or See should be in the city of Agartala and the Church, dedicated to God in honour of Holy Mary, the Queen of Peace, be the temporary Cathedral. For the rest, let the norms of Canon Law be observed." Accordingly, in 2008, when the idea of constructing a cathedral came up and some funds were raised, I applied to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and got permission to build the new Cathedral at its present location.

Since the early centuries, the bishops have preached the gospel of Christ from the Chair. Respect for the Chair and Cathedral has always signified respect for the bishop and for his sanctifying and governing role, for his role as leader and witness to Christ the Good Shepherd. The Body of Christ, the Church, comes to a full stature when its members gather for prayer and worship together with their bishop, his presbyters, deacons, and other ministers at the altar, united to every local church in the world and to the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, as their head. It is here that the unity of the church becomes visible. This is the prime expression of the Church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, the marks of the Church, affirmed week by week as Catholics throughout the world profess the Creed together. Every bishop's ministry is to preserve communion among all those who come together at the table of the Word and Sacrament as Christians have done since the time of the apostles.

A cathedral is above all, a house for the Church--church understood as the baptized people of God. It must be a fitting place, worthy of the mysteries celebrated and received in it. It is to be high enough, lean and spare enough, so that the eye and the heart are lifted up to God. It is to be wide enough to welcome all who come, believers and unbelievers, people who belong to the Catholic community and those who don't. The cathedral is to invite all of us to a future full of hope and promise even while keeping our minds and hearts rooted in the truth that has been handed on to us from generation upon generation, like God's mercy rolling down through the ages. (catholiconline.com)

Let us continue to pray for the success of the celebrations on 23rd April. God bless. +Lumen, CSC

Editorial

We are the Cathedral



Come 23rd April 2017 and the long wait for the Cathedral would be over. Despite the unholy mix of the mundane and the profound in most arenas of life, there are spaces that qualify as eminently sacred. The Cathedral is such a space that reminds us of God and God-related things.

Of man-related things too. With its spire pointing to the heavens like a prayer, it reminds us of our ultimate destiny. Dressed in bricks and mortar, stones and slabs, it hints at the beauty and the grandeur not only of God but of the life we are called to live.



It is a sacred place not only because it houses the 'holy of holies' - the most Blessed Sacrament and the Altar, but also because it holds the anguished prayers and earnest hopes of people like you and me.

It warms our hearts to think that in future, the hallowed portals of this awesome edifice shall welcome thousands that come seeking for solace and peace in their tired lives. Others like us shall, for generations to come, desperately clutch these solemn pews and whisper heart-wrenching stories of pain and agony, or wipe away joyful tears of thanksgiving from these oaken panels. In the words of TS Eliot, "we are here to kneel where prayer has been valid."

We are the Cathedral too. A much awaited occasion like this also reminds us that Church is always a community, never a building, merely. Without a vibrant community to enliven it, the Cathedral, however magnificent, would still remain a façade at best. The history of the Christian faith in Tripura boasts of a great tradition of makeshift chapels and *shon-roofed* churches. They have been effective instruments in fanning into flame the spark of faith in thousands of simple people in all parts of the State. The Cathedral signals a devoutly-wished culmination of sorts.

Even as we gratefully acknowledge God's mighty providence, we congratulate Bishop Lumen for his tireless efforts, and the numerous benefactors for their generosity. The Cathedral of St. Francis Xavier stands as a magnificent testimony to all these. We pray that it helps us in our vocation to be 'truth in its beauty and love in its tenderness' in a world aching for unalloyed love, truth, and beauty!

J. Pulinthanath, SDB

Congratulations!

LINK congratulate Fr. Maxim Rodrigues SVD, the new Regional Superior, Fr. Jeevan Kennady the Vice Regional Superior, Fr. Manoj Antony the Admonitor, and the new Council Members, Fr. Arun Minj and Fr. Ivan Vas.

KHUMULWNG PARISH

Hospitals and Markets experience Joy of Silver Jubilee

St. Alphonsa Parish Khumulwng-Champaknagar is celebrating the Silver Jubilee of the arrival of faith this year. Bishop Lumen Monteiro inaugurated the Silver Jubilee year with 'Blessings of Faith' along with the Parish Church blessing. One of the activities of the celebration is visiting the



hospitals and cleaning the markets. The parishioners got together and went to the Govt. hospitals and markets on 24th February.

The hospital authorities heartily welcomed and requested to pray over the patients followed by fruit and sweet distribution. At the markets, people were gathered together for the prayer and cleaning the surrounding. People witnessed the meaningful celebration of silver jubilee of faith. **Fr. Arun Minj, SVD**

Silver Jubilee Celebration brings Faith to the Villages Hospitals

To mark the silver jubilee celebration, the parishioners decided to evangelize new villages this year. They began preaching and



contacting villages.

The villagers of Radhadaspara (Debrakami) under St. Alphonsa Parish Khumulwng were very enthusiastic and responded positively to the faith. They received faith on 12th February 2017, with grateful heart. The Holy Eucharist and the baptism ceremony were solemnized with attractive and melodious singing and music. The entire village experienced the arrival of faith. **Fr. Arun Minj, SVD**

KUMARGHAT PARISH

One day Leadership Training for SCC Group Leaders

One day Leadership training was organized on the 12th February for all the SCC Leaders of St. Paul's Parish, Kumarghat. The training programme started with the Eucharistic celebration. The purpose of the one day training was to help all the Leaders of SCCs in



the Parish to function effectively. There were 41 Leaders present for the training. Frs. Jilson Tom and Arul J. were the Resource Persons. Group discussion, posters and games were the methods used for the training.

After the training, Parish level and Zonal level Committees were formed. Parish level and Zonal level leaders were elected. After the election, their roles and functions were discussed. The responsibilities of the Zonal level Leaders are to train the faithful on SCC. They decided to conduct regular meeting to evaluate and to plan programs for SCC.

Fr. Arul J, CSC



AMARPUR PARISH

Shepherd's Pastoral Visit to the parish

On March 18 at 4.00pm while we had heavy rains Bishop Lumen landed at our Parish center. Fr. Mathew Vazheparambil, MSFS, Superior of the house and Fr. Pratap Kerketta the Parish Priest of Amarpur Parish welcomed our dear Bishop. The Bishop's Pastoral visit programme was arranged in *Tiyari motha*. The parishioners were eagerly waiting to welcome the Bishop with flower bouquet and *risha*. Thereafter the Holy Eucharist began during which Bishop Lumen conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation to 26 members. This was followed by a short felicitation program and a fellowship meal. **Fr. Pratap, MSFS**

GANDACHERRA PARISH

Inauguration of Cemetery and Grotto of Velankanni At Gondacherra Parish

Most Rev. Lumen Monteiro, CSC, made a two days visit to At Arnold Parish on March 4th and 5th during which he inaugurated and blessed the new cemetery and a Grotto dedicated to Our



Lady of Good Health (Velankanni). Fr. Bosco the Parish Priest welcomed Bishop Lumen, Fr. Cyprian, SVD and all the faithful who came from different *mondilis* of the Parish. At the end of Holy Eucharist presided over by Bishop Lumen he inaugurated and blessed the new Cemetery and the newly constructed Grotto of Our Lady of Velakanni and placed the statue in the Grotto. A good number of representatives from different *mondilis* took part in the inauguration and blessing of the Cemetery and Grotto. **Bro. Bala Antony**

AMBASSA PARISH

Media and Social Communications

Ambassa: 19 March- 125 Women leaders gathered to commemorate International Women's day at Ambassa Parish. This gathering was to make women aware of their situation in the family and in the society. The Resource Persons Fr. Ivan D' Silva, SVD the Communication Coordinator in the



Diocese and Dr. Ashok Debbarma spoke at length on Media and Social Communication. Doctor requested the women to get informed with the latest gadgets and media. He cautioned the mothers to peep into their children's room and question them often about their activities. Fr. Ivan too seeks the help of women to drive out all the evils that prevalent in the media. He said, "The best person who communicated to the world is Jesus, through his Word and very life". The next date for training will be on June 24 & 25, 2017. The home work given to the leaders of different villages is to present activities report and to prepare a five minutes short one act play on Jesus & Media. **Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD**

Catechists get Renewed with Charismatic Retreat at Pastoral Centre

Fr. Joachim Kullu SVD, the Catechetical Secretary of the Commission organized the Catechists' Renewal program with Charismatic Retreat from 13th to 16th March 2017. It was his noble idea and planning that the Catechists of the Diocese



should be spirit-filled for mission and evangelization. 27 fulltime and part time Catechists attended the renewal program. The two day Charismatic Retreat was led by Frs. Bennet and Xavier Kumar, V.C., of Divine Retreat Centre Mariamnagar. Bishop Lumen Monteiro explained the Pastoral Guidelines, Frs. Cyprian SVD & Harry CSC encouraged them to do their duty with greater enthusiasm, Fr. Hormis CSC reminded them of the teaching of the Church on marriage and Fr. Joachim SVD reiterated the importance of SCC, about their responsibilities, and conducted evaluation assessment. The Catechists were truly renewed with the spirit to proclaim the Good News. **Fr. Arun Minj, SVD**

Small Christian Community (SCC) Regional Convention

SCC Regional Convention took place at Tezpur, Assam. All the 15 Dioceses of the region with a total of 235 participants took part in the three days SCCs festival from February 23rd to 26th. In the opening ceremony Bishop Ignatius of Shimla and Chairman of SCCs inaugurated the festival by hosting the flag and encouraging the delegates. The main theme of the festival was "Evangelizing Families through SCCs". Five Bishops were present. At the inaugural Mass Archbishop Dominic Jala highlighted the strength and success stories of our catholic women to make the families better. Bishop Pulloppillil of Bongaigaon spoke on: "The Joy of love experienced in Families is the Joy of the Church" (*Amoris Laetitia*#1) Fr. Vijay Thomas National Secretary and Sr. Martina MSMHVC the Regional Secretary for SCCs also highlighted the role of families in strengthening in the church. Bishop Stephen of Aizawl said

families are agents of change and should base their family life on Gospel values. All delegates were grouped and sent to various parishes for SCCs exposure under the able leadership of Bishop Michael Akasius of Tezpur, the priests, Religious and lay people. 15 delegates from Agartala under the leadership of Diocesan SCC Secretary Fr. Lancy CSC, participated in the festival. All were filled with enthusiasm to work for the parishes in their dioceses.

Fr. Lancy CSC, Coordinator

Family Commission

The Family Commission, Diocese of Agartala, organized two Marriage Preparation Courses in the month of March. The first one was in Tuikarmaw Parish from 11 to 12 March in which 29 participants attended. The second Course was conducted at JUST Agartala from 18 to 19 March and 19 participants attended. All the participants were issued a Certificate of completion of the course which is mandatory for the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage. It was conducted by the Family Commission Team. The participants felt happy to learn more about marriage and family life. **Fr. Bosco Lathees**

Ursuline Sisters @ Laxmicherra - Blessing of Foundation Stone for new School Building

It was a joyful day for the people of Laxmicherra and the Ursuline



Franciscan Sisters as there was the blessing of the Foundation Stone of the new School on 18th of March by our dear Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, in the presence of Rev. Sr. Mary C.J the Provincial Superior of UFS Northeast Province and the other Sisters, Fathers, Staff and Students. We look forward to its successful completion at the earliest to help realize the dreams of the people of this area. The UFS Sisters have been residing at Laxmicherra for over one year and have been running the primary school and girls boarding for the people here. **Sr. Jessy, UFS**

Thank you very much for the LINK with a nice thought and reflection on Lent and also a lot of news from the Diocese of Agartala. **Zachary Varickasseril SDB, Provincial House, Guwahati**

Thanks Bishop for Link which is very active in linking with others. **Sr. Mary David, FS, Kumarghat**

Your LINK is always so much welcome on the dot of the first day of the month... A ray of Indian sun in our grey skies here in Canada. Hats off to the Editor and to you! **Conrad, CSC, Montreal**

I took a few minutes to read through this issue of LINK. In particular I was touched by the story of inauguration of the new academic year in your Diocesan Minor Seminary with 16 students. **Fr. Jolly, Delhi**

I just read Link of March 2017, ready on the first of the Month as usual. Thank you! It is interesting as always. It keeps me in touch with a lot of things happening in your Diocese. **Descary, CSC, Montreal**

I received your kind email the "March Link". Thank you. Always interesting. **Andrew Marak, Bishop of Tura**

Just a short note to say to you what a joy it is for me to receive and read the Link every month. It invites me to reflect further upon some of the important things in life and to try and stay close to God. Thank you for this small blessing from far away. **Marco Lombardi, Milano**

I receive every month your wonderful newsletter I want to thank you. **John Michael Franke @ Helios University Klinikum at Wuppertal, Germany**

Awareness on Malaria

In the month of February, JUST conducted 21 Community Consultation and Message Dissemination activities and 27 Infotainment activities under IMCP-3 Project to create awareness on the prevention of malaria. 17 CCMD activities were conducted in Dhalai and 4 were conducted in Khowai Tripura, while 21 Infotainment activities were conducted in Dhalia and 6 in Khowai Tripura. The Field Supervisors and Community Health Volunteers of JUST organized the activities in the selected Villages under the project. The Project aims to reduce the percentage of Malaria in the Malaria prone areas.



Andre Bodhjunnagar, Don Bosco Nandannagar, Baijalbari, Montfort Champaknagar, and Dukli.

The facilitators explained about the Human Rights which are inherent to all human beings, whatever their nationality, place of residence, sex, race, color, religion, language ethnicity. The facilitator also explained about United Nation Organization (UNO) and their Aims to facilitate cooperation internationally in law and security, economic development, social progress, etc., in an effort to achieve world peace and that UNO is founded mainly to stop wars between countries and to provide a platform for dialogue between nations. They also shared about the challenges faced by the youth today. There were group activities for the students. The trainings were conducted successfully with distribution of refreshment after the programs.



Mr. Vincent Debbarma

Peace Promotion

In February 2017, JUST, under Peace Project conducted training program on the topic "Human Rights and United Nation and Peace" in all the target Schools. The programs were conducted at Holy Cross School Kumarghat, Kathalcherra, Depacherra, Dharmanagar, Panisagar, Notre Dame Mohorpara, Synod Lefunga, St. Arnold Gandacherra Ambassa, St.

Bishop's Program for April 2017

- 01: Healing Service & Mass, Mariamnagar
- 02: Parish Pastoral Program, Mandwi
- 05: meet SD Sisters Provincial
- 07: Inauguration and Blessing, Montfort Champaknagar
- 09: Palm Sunday Mass, Nandanagar
- 11: Pastoral Meeting, Agartala
Chrism Mass, Cathedral Parish
- 13-15: Easter Triduum, Agartala
- 16: Easter Sunday
- 18: Nutanbari Bari Chapel Blessing under Kathalcherra Parish
- 23: Cathedral Church Blessing, Agartala
- 30: Debra Kami Chapel Blessing, Khumulwng Parish

KOKBOROK FOR PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS:

Announcing Koborok Learning Course (basic) for priests and religious, 27 May -10 June 2017, at Peace Centre, Agartala. Those interested may please register by **30 April**. Total Course fee Rs. 3500 (includes lunch and refreshments). For registration and other details please call [9436126649](tel:9436126649). Starts at **9.00 AM** on 27th and ends at **2.00 PM** on 10th.

FOLLOW UP: There will be two short follow up sessions for those attending the course. The first follow up will be in September and the second in January or Feb. Each of the follow up sessions will be of three days duration only. The exact dates of the follow up classes will be announced later.

Our Distinguished Visitors

- ◆ Frs. Onil D'Souza, Harold Mascarenhas,
- ◆ Peter D'Souza and Ronald D'Souza from Mangalore Diocese
- ◆ Sr. Yvonne Pereira, SSpS from Guwahati
- ◆ Fr. C.M. Joseph & family members of Fr. Jilson from Kerala
- ◆ Bro. Devasy, SG Provincial from Guwahati
- ◆ Bro. Varghese, SG Provincial Bursar from Shillong
- ◆ Ms. Dipsha & Mr. Sebin, CA from Guwahati
- ◆ Fr. Devasy of Bijnor Diocese
- ◆ Fr. Anto Paul of Peace Channel, Dimapur
- ◆ Mr. & Mrs. Kaiser from Kolkata