



TEA LEAVES

DARJEELING DIOCESE NEWSLETTER

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Bishop's House, Darjeeling - 734101 INDIA

AUGUST

Bishop's Message

Jubilee: Pilgrim of Hope on the Synodal Journey is a concept connected to the Catholic Church's celebration of the Jubilee Year 2025. This Jubilee Year, declared by Pope Francis, carries the theme of "Pilgrims of Hope," which is intertwined with the ongoing synodal process initiated by the Church.



The key elements of the Jubilee Year are as follows:

Jubilee Year: In the Catholic tradition, a Jubilee Year, or Holy Year, is a time of special graces, prayer, and pilgrimage. It usually involves the opening of the Holy Doors of the major basilicas in Rome, symbolizing a path to salvation. The 2025 Jubilee is particularly significant as it marks a quarter-century since the Great Jubilee of 2000.

Pilgrim of Hope: This theme emphasizes the journey of faith that Catholics are invited to undertake. Being a pilgrim of hope means moving forward with trust in God's promises, embracing the future with optimism, and being a witness of hope in the world.

Synodal Journey: The synodal process initiated by Pope Francis is about deepening the Church's commitment to synodality, which means "journeying together." This process involves listening, dialogue, and communal discernment. It aims to foster greater participation and co-responsibility among all members of the Church.

Connection between Jubilee and Synodality: The Jubilee's theme of hope and pilgrimage aligns with the synodal journey's emphasis on communal discernment and participation. As pilgrims of hope, the faithful are called to walk together, listen to one another, and discern the paths the Church should take to be a sign of hope in the world.

In essence, "Jubilee: Pilgrim of Hope on the Synodal Journey" highlights the call for Catholics to engage deeply in their faith journey, fostering hope and unity within the Church and the broader world through a spirit of pilgrimage and synodal collaboration.

+Bishop Stephen Lepcha

Church and Media in the light of INTER MIRIFICA



Vatican II addressed social communication in the document *Inter Mirifica* ("Among the Wonderful"), which was promulgated on December 4, 1963. Here are some key points from this document:

Recognition of Modern Media: The council acknowledged the profound impact of modern communication tools such as the press, movies, radio, and television on society.

Moral Responsibility: It emphasized the moral responsibilities of those who work in the media industry, highlighting the need for media to respect truth, justice, and human dignity.

Role of the Church: The Church's role in media was stressed, encouraging the faithful to actively engage with media in a way that promotes Christian values. The document called for the establishment of special training and formation programs for those in the Church who work in media.

Public Authorities: It called on public authorities to ensure that media serves the common good and respects moral norms.

Audience's Responsibility: It pointed out the responsibilities of the audience, encouraging them to consume media critically and responsibly.

Promotion of Good Media: The document urged the promotion of media content that aligns with Christian values and contributes positively to society.

World Communications Day: One practical outcome of *Inter Mirifica* was the establishment of World Communications Day, which is celebrated annually by the Church to reflect on the opportunities and challenges of social communication.

Inter Mirifica was one of the initial steps by the Catholic Church to formally engage with the rapidly evolving field of social communication and to provide guidance on its ethical use.



A CENTURY OF SHAPING YOUNG MINDS- ST. JOSEPH'S CONVENT

By Sandip C Jain



Kalimpong over the ages has been called by different names- some have called it the Nest of smile, some have labeled it the orchid town while others once called it the gateway to Tibet. In my opinion Temple of knowledge would be the apt name for this beautiful

town, for this town has excelled in the art of educating young minds.

This town boasts of several historical educational institutes who have had illustrious pasts and are well known across the region. Dr. Graham Homes, SUMI, St Augustine's School are some of the better known one but one school which has gone about its way, without any fuss, without any noise, without any publicity and worked with the utmost dedication and sincerity towards not just educating several generations of students but towards shepherding our society towards a better tomorrow, is the jewel in Kalimpong's crown- St Joseph's Convent.

Established in 1926, by the sisters of St Joseph's of Cluny, in times when female educations was still looked down upon, in this part of the world, the vision of the founding sisters of this temple of knowledge, has provided inspiration and motivation to hundreds of future teachers and administrators of this great institution to take this school to greater heights. On the threshold of completing a century of dedicated service, St Joseph's Convent stands on that decorated platform on which very few schools in India can hope to find a place on.

While many schools not just in Kalimpong but across the region have completed a century of existence, St Joseph's Convent, stands on a pedestal very different from most because of its emphasis on quality value education and emphasis on character building. Ever since those saintly brave heart sisters of Cluny envisioned the concept of this school in Kalimpong, educating young minds who would fashion a new progressive society was the top most priority of this school.

This history of this school and the Catholic community in Kalimpong is one of dedication, struggle, grit, and deep passion towards creating a society that was educated, progressive with women being equal partners in it.

The pioneers of the Catholic community in Kalimpong were of course great souls like Father Desgodins, Father Mussot, Father Douenel and Father Hervagault who made Pedong their initial base under immense hardships and challenges and later spread their field of services to surrounding areas like Kalimpong, Maria Busty, Kagay and Gitdablang. With their untiring and dedicated efforts, the Catholic community in Kalimpong grew in leaps and bounds, and by the mid of the 20th century, it had established itself as a vibrant and popular community in Kalimpong.

Their popularity was not by chance- they worked their way into the hearts of the people in Kalimpong with their indefatigable work in the field of education, health and child care. St Joseph's Convent was one such effort of the Catholic pioneers in Kalimpong.

The initial reluctance of Mother Ursula, Mother Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, based in Chandannagar (near

Kolkata), to start an educational center in Kalimpong, later turned into a missionary passion for the sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny. After receiving a land grant of 1.85 acres from the SDO, Kalimpong, on the 23rd of July 1920, the construction of the school started in December 1921. Mother Ursula bore the entire expense of Rs. 1,25,000.00, which she collected by literally begging for donations from friends, well-wishers, and the entire Catholic community in Kolkata. Father Douenel and later Father Durel supervised the construction work, and with 65 to 70 workers and 10 Chinese carpenters working on the project, the ground and first floor of the school was completed by May 1922. By March 1923, the construction was completed. The SDO Kalimpong, excited at the prospect of seeing a Catholic school open in Kalimpong, granted a further one acre of land for a playground and the free use of water.

The St Joseph's Convent made a humble beginning on the 15th of July 1926 with just three boarding and seven day scholars. The reputation of this new school grew rapidly, and by the next three years, there were already 60 boarders with six sisters and two other teachers guiding children. On the 3rd of August 1931, St Joseph's Convent received permanent recognition as a secondary school.

From this humble beginning, St Joseph's Convent is today one of the premier institutes in not just Kalimpong but across the region with an international reputation. It has positioned itself as a school that is different, which besides giving topmost priority to total character construction of its students also strives for academic excellence.

The current school administration under the able leadership of Sister Mary James is ushering in a new era in which students are kept abreast of the latest trends in international education. Her modern approach towards education is not only making learning less stressful for the students but also helps them realize their social and community responsibilities. Innovative ideas like "stress buster sessions" every Wednesday afternoons, two "break-times" of 10 minutes, one each in the morning and the afternoon, swimming sessions for boarders every weekend, celebration of grandparents day, playing of soothing music as the school starts, striving to make the school into a zero waste institution and various other such visionary idea have been introduced in the school not just so that learning is fun but more so to inculcate a sense of bonding amongst the students. Another innovative idea that has been implemented is the nature walks that the students are taken on. On these nature walks, the students are guided by the



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A CENTURY OF SHAPING.....

accompanying teachers of the fine art of harmonizing with nature, identifying medicinal plants, and classifying various varieties of flowers and trees. The students also clean the road and drains of garbage and plastic as they enjoy their walk.

The current administration believes that St Joseph's Convent can not be an island but is very much a part of this community, and it needs to teach students the value of community service. Activities like cleaning of drains and roads of Kalimpong, donation of necessary items to students of St. Mary's school for the hearing impaired and also to the students of Mary Scott School for the visually impaired, visits to old age homes etc have all added towards the values and ethics of the current set of students. All these innovative character building initiatives are sure to inculcate strong moral and social values in the students.

On the threshold of completing a hundred years of service, St Joseph's Convent, is raising the bar of quality education to newer heights which not just proves its commitment towards education but more so its determination to see a society which is educated, morally upright and socially conscious.

In a time and era where corporates are trying to turn education into just another money spinning industry, the 100 years of St. Joseph's Convent have been spent curating a generation of students with love, dedication, selfless toil and a single-minded focus on the holistic upbringing of students who have been lucky enough to have their futures shaped in this shrine of learning.

Just as the melodious School Song of St. Joseph's Convent says, "Deep in the valley by a swift flowing river, Stands dear St. Joseph's the School we all love" every admirer, student and well-wisher of St Joseph's Convent prays and hope that this great institution continues to serve love, knowledge, discipline and life-lessons to many more generations, standing in the same deep valley by the swift flowing river.

BEC Regional Council Meeting

Raiganj, 19 July, 2024: The Regional Council Meeting of the Commission for Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) of West Bengal and Sikkim was held from 17 to 19 July at Jeevandhara Retreat Centre, Raiganj. Led by Fr. I P Sarto, Regional Director, the meeting brought together 71 participants from across 8 dioceses. The three-day meeting featured discussions regarding the need for BEC to be established at every diocese and parish, as well as how establishing different ministries within the BEC such as house visiting, youth, faith formation, education and health can play a role in ensuring active participation from every member. The meeting also looked to slowly develop BEC into BHC or Basic Human Communities in all neighbourhoods.



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-Fr. George Jacob SAC

Annual Clergy Retreat Report



The Annual Clergy Retreat took place from July 29-August 02, 2024, at St. Teresa's Church, Kalimpong. The event brought together 47 clergy members from across the diocese for a time of reflection, learning, and fellowship. The theme for this year's retreat was "Priesthood in the light of the Jubilee Year".

Emeritus Bishop Thomas Dabre an eminent personality in the National and International ecclesiastical circles was the preacher who came all the way from Mumbai accepting the request of Bishop Stephen Lepcha our beloved bishop.

Bishop Dabre's presentation emphasized the importance of maintaining spiritual health and adaptability in the face of societal and personal challenges. Bishop Thomas Dabre's insights were well-received and sparked meaningful discussions throughout the retreat.

Daily worship services were a central part of the retreat, allowing clergy members to come together in prayer and song. The services were designed to inspire and renew, featuring diverse liturgical styles and music.

The retreat provided ample opportunities for fellowship and networking. Informal sharing enabled participants to build relationships and share experiences. These connections are expected to foster ongoing support and collaboration within the diocese.

Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive. Many participants expressed appreciation for the balance of spiritual nourishment.

The 2024 Annual Clergy Retreat was a resounding success, offering clergy members a valuable time of renewal and learning. The event strengthened the sense of community among the clergy and provided inspiration to support their ministries in the coming year.

Special thanks to the organizing committee, volunteers, and Pushpika Pastoral Center staff for their dedication and hard work in making this event possible.

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HOLY EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION ON JUBILEE, 2025: PILGRIMS OF HOPE, WAY FORWARD TO SYNODAL CHURCH

Venue : St. Teresa's Church, 8th Mile, Kalimpong

Diocesan Youth Commission under the leadership of DYLA Rev. Sr. Sira Lama attended the event held at St. Teresa's Church, 8th Mile, Kalimpong as we were given the major responsibility of leading the Choir during the Holy Mass. The event held on Friday brought together an esteemed assembly, including Rt. Rev. Bishop Stephen Lepcha, Rev. Fr. Michael Lepcha (VG) and the Deans of five Deaneries. Additionally, parish priests, heads of various institutions, different commission executives, members of various social apostolates and lay faithful had participated.

The program commenced with a welcome note by the Master of Ceremonies, Rev. Fr. Urgen Thomas, setting a tone of unity and purpose for the day's proceedings. Rev. Sr. Veronica then delivered a report on a five day workshop on Jubilee 2025 held in Raiganj, providing insights and outcomes that set the groundwork for the Jubilee celebration. This was followed by a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation by Rev. Fr. Robin Kalikotay which delved into the theme and objectives of Jubilee 2025, the explanation of the Jubilee logo and an overview of the 4 constitutions of Vatican II: Dei Verbum, Sacrosanctum Concilium, Lumen Gentium and Gaudium et Spes. Rev. Fr. Ronald Lepcha subsequently presented the Action Plan for the Jubilee celebration, outlining the strategic approach and activities planned for the Jubilee year. A pivotal moment of the event was the launch of Bishop's Jubilee video message which underscored the spiritual and communal significance of the Jubilee. He also blessed two Jubilee crosses that will travel from parish to parish throughout the Jubilee year, symbolizing the shared journey of faith and hope. In a gesture of unity and remembrance, bookmark, souvenirs and Jubilee prayer cards were distributed to all the attendees and a collective recital of the Jubilee prayer further reinforced the day's spiritual ambiance.

The culmination of the program was the Holy Mass presided over by Rt. Rev. Bishop Stephen Lepcha during which he expressed his gratitude to the Jubilee team for their diligent efforts in organizing the event. The spiritual fervor of the Mass was a fitting prelude to the closing remarks by Sir. Mahendra Gurung, who delivered a heartfelt Vote of Thanks.

The gathering concluded with a communal lunch at Pushpika Pastoral Centre, providing an opportunity for fellowship before everyone departed towards their respective places, carrying with them the renewed spirit and shared vision of Jubilee 2025.

ANUGYALAYA DESK:

The Child Rights Project team has successfully conducted a significant program in observance of World Day Against Trafficking in Persons. This initiative aimed at raising awareness within the community and fostering strong relationships with key stakeholders involved in combating human trafficking. The program effectively heightened awareness about human trafficking among community members, a crucial step in preventing trafficking and supporting victims. The team established and strengthened a good rapport with several critical stakeholders, including Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) - India, Armed Police Force - Nepal, Maity Nepal, Drivers' Association, and Local Leaders. Through this program, our organization achieved significant visibility and recognition among these stakeholders. The positive engagement and collaborative efforts showcased our commitment and capability in addressing human trafficking. The World Day Against Trafficking in Persons program conducted by the Child Rights Project team was a notable success. The initiative not only raised awareness within the community but also built valuable relationships with the SSB, Armed Police Force Nepal, Maity Nepal, Drivers' Association, and Local Leaders. These achievements reflect the dedication and effectiveness of our team in advancing the mission of our organization. We congratulate the Child Rights Project team for their commendable work and look forward to continuing our efforts to combat human trafficking and protect vulnerable individuals.



Kindly Communicate!!!

Tea Leaves is the medium through which the individual parishes, communities and institutions can share with others, about the activities and events of your areas of work. So please send in the reports of your initiatives and programmes to:

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