



TEA LEAVES

DARJEELING DIOCESE NEWSLETTER

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Bishop's House, Darjeeling - 734101 INDIA

OCTOBER

Bishop's Message



October, the Month of Mary

As we enter the month of October, a time dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, I invite you to reflect on the profound role of Mary in our lives and in the life of the Church. October is especially important because it is the Month of the Holy Rosary, a prayer that has been cherished by countless generations of the faithful for its power and grace.

The Rosary is more than a simple repetition of prayers. It is a meditation on the life of Christ, seen through the eyes of His loving Mother. Each mystery invites us to walk with Mary through the key moments of Jesus' life—from the announcement of His birth to His glorious Resurrection. Through this devotion, we are drawn deeper into the mysteries of our faith and reminded of the boundless love of God.

I encourage each family, parish, and community in our diocese to rediscover the beauty of the Rosary during this month. In our fast-paced world, the Rosary provides a moment of peace, reflection, and connection with God. Whether prayed alone, with your family, or as part of a parish gathering, let it be a source of strength and consolation.

Mary's life was one of profound faith and trust in God's will. From her "yes" at the Annunciation to her presence at the foot of the Cross, she remained steadfast in her faith, even in the face of uncertainty and sorrow. As we reflect on her life, may we also find the courage to say "yes" to God in our own lives, trusting in His plan for us, even when the path is not always clear.

During this Marian month, let us seek to imitate Mary's humility, her openness to God, and her unwavering faith. She is the perfect example of what it means to be a disciple of Christ, and through her intercession, we can grow in holiness and grace.

In these challenging times, when the world faces so much uncertainty and division, we turn to Mary, Queen of Peace, asking for her maternal intercession. May she guide our diocese, our country, and our world closer to the heart of her Son. I invite each of you to pray the Rosary for peace in our families, our communities, and our world, trusting that God hears the prayers of His children through the loving intercession of our Blessed Mother.

May this month of Mary be a time of renewal for each of us, drawing us closer to the love of Jesus through the heart of Mary.

+Bishop Stephen Lepcha

Translators' workshop held to expand access to Church literature in Nepal

Translators from Darjeeling-Sikkim and Nepal have held a two-day Pastoral Literature Translation Workshop to focus on translating key Church documents for Nepali-speaking Catholics. By LICAS News The Pastoral Literature Translation Workshop was held at the Divya Vani Pastoral Centre, in the Indian city of Darjeeling, on September 10-11. It brought together 12 participants, including resource persons, to focus on translating key Church documents for Nepali-speaking Catholics. Organized as a continuation of a previous workshop held in Bangkok in June 2024 under the guidance of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) Office of Social Communication, the event aimed to establish translation teams for major Asian languages. The goal is to ensure that crucial Church documents reach the faithful across linguistic divides. At the conclusion of the workshop, participants expressed their enthusiasm for the project, with many experienced translators stating that they gained valuable insights into new tools and methods. The translators prioritized the completion of the Nepali Bible, which they noted was outside the typical scope of pastoral literature but essential for their community. In light of Pope Francis' call for Catholics to read the four Vatican II documents as part of the Jubilee 2025 preparations, the team committed to translating these texts into Nepali by Christmas 2024. In addition, the team agreed to undertake the translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) incrementally. They also planned to develop a Nepali glossary of religious terms and translate the Lives of Saints and the Church's social teachings. The next meeting of the translation team will take place in Damak, Nepal, on November 15, 2024.

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Editorial

From the editor's desk



The Age of AI: Double-Edged Sword In the past decade, artificial intelligence (AI) has moved from being a concept in science fiction to an integral part of our daily lives. From self-driving cars and virtual assistants to smart algorithms predicting our preferences, AI is shaping industries

and transforming society. Yet, despite its groundbreaking potential, AI remains a double-edged sword, promising great benefits while presenting significant challenges. AI's impact can be seen across multiple sectors. In healthcare, AI has revolutionized diagnostics, enabling faster and more accurate identification of diseases, sometimes even outperforming human specialists. In education, adaptive learning platforms adjust to individual students' needs, providing personalized experiences that were once impossible. The business world, too, has seen AI streamline operations, boost productivity, and innovate customer engagement strategies through intelligent systems. This kind of efficiency and precision is invaluable in a fast-paced, interconnected world. With AI, large data sets can be analyzed in mere moments, offering insights that would take human analysts years to uncover. The advent of AI promises to unlock new opportunities, particularly in automating mundane tasks, allowing

humans to focus on creativity, strategy, and innovation. However, the rapid rise of AI has sparked widespread debate over ethical, social, and economic implications. The automation of jobs, for instance, threatens to displace workers in industries ranging from manufacturing to services. While AI can augment human efforts, there is growing concern that entire segments of the workforce may be rendered obsolete, leading to job polarization and increasing inequality. Ethical questions also loom large. As AI systems grow more powerful, issues of bias in algorithms, data privacy, and surveillance come to the fore. AI's decision-making is often opaque, and without proper safeguards, we risk perpetuating inequalities or enabling malicious use of this technology. Deep fakes, for example, have already shown the potential for AI to manipulate media, presenting dangers to democracy, truth, and societal trust. Despite these concerns, the future of AI need not be bleak. With responsible governance, transparent development, and inclusive policymaking, we can harness the potential of AI while mitigating its risks. Regulation around AI is still in its infancy, but steps are being taken globally to address concerns. The European Union's AI Act is one such example, aiming to ensure AI systems are safe, transparent, and respect fundamental rights. At the same time, there needs to be a focus on education and reskilling, ensuring that workers can adapt to a future where AI plays a significant role in the economy. By equipping individuals with digital literacy and fostering a culture of lifelong learning, we can build a society that thrives alongside intelligent machines. AI is neither inherently good nor evil; it is a tool, shaped by the intentions of its creators and users. Its potential is immense, but so are the responsibilities that come with it. As we continue to innovate and integrate AI into every aspect of our lives, we must ensure that it serves humanity as a whole, creating a future where technology amplifies our strengths rather than deepening our divisions. In this delicate balance lies the true promise of AI.

MEDICAL CAMP AND BLOOD DONATION CAMP AT ST. MAURICE CHURCH, SURUK



On September 29, 2024, St. Maurice Church, Suruk, had organized a Medical Camp and Blood Donation Camp in collaboration with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny and the Indian Catholic Youth Movement (ICYM). Held on the church premises, the event received support from the Kalimpong District Blood Donors Forum and the Blood Center of Kalimpong District Hospital. A significant number of participants from the local community and neighbouring areas benefitted from the Medical Services and the opportunity to donate blood.

The Medical Camp provided essential healthcare services to the residents of Suruk and nearby villages, including free consultations, basic health check-ups, and essential medicines. Fifty-six individuals received personalized care and attention from a dedicated

team of doctors and healthcare professionals, including Dr. Jenny Lepcha, SJC, and Dr. S. Khan. They were assisted by Sr. Lucy Pradhan, SJC, Sr. Dorothy Lepcha, SJC, and a committed staff who worked tirelessly throughout the day to address various health concerns.

In conjunction with the medical services, the Blood Donation Camp saw 54 generous donors from St. Maurice Church and the neighbouring parishes of St. Alphonsa Church, Samthar, and St. Margaret Mary Church, Nimbong, step forward to contribute. Dr. S. Khan and his team, in collaboration with the Kalimpong District Blood Donors Forum and the Blood Center of Kalimpong District Hospital, ensured the smooth operation of the drive. This blood donation initiative was crucial for preparing for emergencies requiring urgent blood supply, significantly supporting local hospitals.

The event was part of the broader Action Plan of the Parish Pastoral Council in preparation for the Jubilee Year 2025, reflecting the church's commitment to both spiritual renewal and social outreach. At the end of the day, Fr. Fredrik Gurung, the Assistant Parish Priest, expressed heartfelt gratitude on behalf of St. Maurice Parish to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, the ICYM, the Kalimpong District Blood Donors Forum, Kalimpong District Hospital, and all the donors and volunteers who contributed to the program's success. He acknowledged the hard work, dedication, and support of everyone involved. In appreciation, Fr. Christopher Lucksom, the Parish Priest, presented flower pots as a gesture of thanks to all the guests.

Happenings at St. John Berchman's Parish, Kurseong

New Nari Sangthan Committee Elected

It is time for change of guards at St. John Berchman's Parish, Kurseong. Nari Sangh successfully completed their three years term in August 2024. New committee has since been elected and fresh office bearers have been elected for another three years. This significant event marks a fresh chapter in the parish's leadership, bringing together a diverse group of dedicated individuals committed to fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and spiritually enriching community. The newly elected leaders are expected to focus on enhancing parish activities, promoting social justice initiatives, and ensuring that the church remains a welcoming space for all. Their tenure will be pivotal in steering the parish towards growth and unity, while upholding the values and traditions that define St. John Berchman's Parish vibrant community.

As the new leaders embark on their journey, they organised nine days novena devotion in honor of Our Holy Mother Mary to invoke her blessings upon the newly formed committee. The novena culminated on the 8th of September which the Parish community celebrated solemn Eucharistic celebration and rosary procession to holy shrine Grotto.

As the new Committee begin their official responsibilities St. John Berchman's Parish community moves forward under new Nari Sangthan leadership, there is a palpable sense of excitement and anticipation. With a shared vision and collective effort, the parish is poised to grow stronger, more united, and ever more devoted to its mission of faith, service, and love.

Mrs. Cecilia Lama, heads the new committee as its President,

Mrs. Asha Pokhrel - **Vice President**,
Mrs. Rosalia Chettri Rai - **Secretary**,
Miss. Aruna Subba - **Jt. Secretary**,
Mrs. Sabina Rasaily - **Treasurer**,
Mrs. Silvina Clement Chettri - **Jt. Treasurer**

We join Rev Fr. Andrew Lama, Parish Priest and Assistant Parish Priest Fr. Conard Lepcha in congratulating the new committee and assure them of our prayers.

St. John Berchman's Catholic Welfare Association Dissolved

The St. John Berchman's Catholic Welfare Association was dissolved on September 21, 2024, after completing a three-year term, as declared by Rev. Fr. Andrew Lama PP. A steering committee will manage emergency matters until a new committee is elected. The outgoing members dedicated their efforts to promoting the parish community's welfare through charitable initiatives, concluding their term having fulfilled their mission. This dissolution marks the end of a significant chapter, highlighting the association's positive impact and commitment to compassion and service over the past three years.

The community reflects with gratitude on the achievements of the outgoing members and executive body over the past three years. Rev. Fr. Andrew Lama expressed his appreciation for their service and encouraged parishioners to engage actively for the improvement of the Parish. He emphasized the importance of collective efforts in maintaining the Gospel values of the St. John Berchman's Welfare Association. Rev. Fr. Conard Lepcha also shared his thoughts and appreciated the work done by the committee. Mr. Adolf Tamang, (members from the Darjeeling Diocesan Charismatic Group) and Mr. Peter Kerr (executive member DDCA) also expressed their views and thanked the outgoing committee. The AGM session ended with a prayer led by Thomas Subba Gurubabu and blessing by Rev. Fr. Andrew Lama PP. Thundering of applause sent a message that a renewed sense of purpose had been regenerated among



ICYM 25 YEARS JUBILEE CELEBRATION AND REGIONAL SPORTS MEET

Venue : Raiganj, Cathedral

“Those who hope in the Lord will run and not be weary.” -Isaiah40:31



Darjeeling-Sikkim Diocese had attended and participated.

The first day began with Jubilee Mass in Cathedral which was celebrated by Rt. Rev. Bishop Fulgence Tigga and soon after the mass concluded we gathered together for a group photo session followed by breakfast.

Then after, we gathered in the campus for the Inaugural Ceremony which was conducted by the Regional Executives after which the Inter Diocese Football Tournament started. Each teams wonderfully participated and our Diocese gave great competition to the opposing team which was Baruipur Diocese. Even though we couldn't qualify for the next match our boys gave tough competition and it was not an easy win for the opposing Diocese. The Diocesan Football team played wonderfully and energetically. We then had lunch break after which we had Passing the Ball Tournament for girls in which our girls have their best and actively participated. After the Tournament, we gathered in the Parish Hall for a session on Jubilee Year 2025, which was conducted by Rev. Fr. Babla Mondal. Since ICYM was celebrating its 25 years Jubilee Celebration, father encouraged the



young people to thank God for the 25 years he gifted us with. It was a beautiful and fruitful session and then after we had a n i m a t i o n presented by B a g d o g r a , Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling-Sikkim Diocese where all the youth greatly participated and enjoyed followed by the second session on III Documents of Vatican which was presented by Rev. Fr. Dr. Vijay Kerketta. He enlightened the youth with importance of the documents of the Vatican, i.e., Gaudium et Spes, Dei Verbum and Lumen Gentium. It was an informative and fruitful session. The day concluded with Cultural evening where each Diocese presented their cultural items.

The next day started with Holy Eucharistic Celebration followed by breakfast after which our Diocese had to depart from the program due to unreliable transportation issues. It was a wonderful and blissful journey and soon after we reach Siliguri all the delegates departed towards their respective places.



**“May flights of angels take thee to thy rest”
We live in the hope of meeting you again in Heaven.**



On [Date], the Diocese of Darjeeling bid a solemn and heartfelt farewell to Rev. Fr. Michael Lepcha (Senior), a priest who faithfully served the diocese for over [number] years. The funeral Mass, held at St. Teresa's Church in Kalimpong, was attended by a large gathering of clergy, religious, laity, and well-wishers who came to honor and celebrate the life of this beloved priest.

Fr. Michael, known for his unwavering dedication to the Church and the people of Darjeeling-Sikkim was ordained to the priesthood on [Ordination Date]. Over the decades, he served in various capacities, including as a parish priest, educator, spiritual guide, and mentor to many young priests. His pastoral care, deep spirituality, and commitment to social justice made a lasting impact on the communities he served.

In his homily, Bishop Stephen Lepcha, the Bishop of Darjeeling, highlighted Fr. Michael's profound sense of mission and service. “Fr. Michael lived his priesthood with humility, generosity, and a deep love for the people of God. His life was a witness to the Gospel, and he touched the hearts of many with his compassionate presence and wise counsel,” said the Bishop.

The funeral Mass was concelebrated by Bishop Paul Simick from Nepal and Fr. Edward Kerketta the Administrator of Bagdogra Diocese along with priests from across the diocese. The atmosphere in the church was one of reverence and reflection, as mourners gathered to pray for the repose of Fr. Michael's soul. The readings for the Mass emphasized hope in the resurrection and the eternal life promised by Christ, reflecting the faith that guided Fr. Michael throughout his ministry.

As the service came to an end, Fr. Michael's coffin was carried in a solemn procession by his brother priests to the cemetery where he was laid to rest alongside other priests of the diocese. The burial rite was performed with deep reverence, with clergy and faithful alike.

Fr. Michael leaves behind a rich legacy of faith, love, and service. His contributions to the Diocese of Darjeeling, especially in areas such as education, social outreach, and spiritual guidance, will be remembered for many years to come. While his passing leaves a void, his spirit and example will continue to inspire those who knew him.

The Diocese of Darjeeling is united in prayer for the repose of his soul, trusting in God's mercy and the promise of eternal life. As we mourn his loss, we also celebrate the gift of his life, grateful for the countless ways he helped build the Kingdom of God in our midst.

May Fr. Michael Lepcha rest in the peace of Christ.



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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