



TEA LEAVES

DARJEELING DIOCESE NEWSLETTER

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2025

Bishop's House, Darjeeling - 734101 INDIA

MAY

Bishop's Message for the Month of May – Marian Month



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we enter the beautiful month of May, the Church once again draws our hearts and minds to Mary, the Mother of God and our Mother and an Icon of Hope. May is traditionally celebrated as the Marian Month, a time of special devotion, reflection, and gratitude to the Blessed Virgin, who continues to be a model of faith, humility, and discipleship for all believers.

The Life and role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in salvation history embodies the essence of hope in various profound ways.

Mary teaches us to say “yes” to God’s will, even when the road is uncertain. Her fiat—“Let it be done to me according to your word”—remains an eternal example of trusting surrender. In a world marked by anxiety, conflict, and moral confusion, Her Magnificat expresses profound hope in God’s mercy and justice, her presence at the crucifixion portrays her as a model as steadfast hope amidst sufferings, Mary as the mother of Church gently reminds us to center our lives on Christ, with prayer, silence, and unwavering faith.

As we enter the beautiful month of May, the Church once again draws our hearts and minds to Mary, the Mother of God and our Mother. May is traditionally celebrated as the Marian Month, a time of special devotion, reflection, and gratitude to the Blessed Virgin, who continues to be a model of faith, humility, and discipleship for all believers.

Let us renew our devotion this month by praying the Holy Rosary daily, fostering Marian altars in our homes, and imitating her virtues in our everyday lives. I especially urge our families, youth, and parish communities to make May a time of spiritual renewal through Mary’s guidance.

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May Our Lady, Queen of Peace, intercede for us and protect our Diocese. Let us walk with her, ever closer to Jesus.

With my blessings and prayers,

+ Stephen Lepcha, Bishop of Darjeeling-Sikkim.

Strengthening Family Bonds

St. Paul's Parish Kurseong's Family Cell organized a one-day seminar for married couples at St. Joseph's Girls' Higher Secondary School on 4th of May 2025, led by Parish Priest Fr. Peter Jong Lepcha S.J. The event brought together 30 couples to promote marital harmony and provide guidance on building strong family foundations.

Family Bonds: Mr. Prakash Thapa, resource person of Darjeeling Diocese Family Commission, emphasized the importance of nurturing family bonds. He likely discussed ways to foster stronger relationships within families.

Love in the Family: Mr. Peter Kerr another resource person of Darjeeling Diocese Family Commission highlighted the significance of love in family relationships, providing insights on how to cultivate a loving environment.

Budgeting and Roles: Mrs. Jhuma Rana Lepcha shared valuable tips on budgeting and the importance of trust and cooperation between husbands and wives in managing family responsibilities.

Seminar Highlights:

The seminar aimed to strengthen family relationships and promote marital harmony. With expert guidance from Mr. Prakash Thapa, Mr. Peter Kerr, and Mrs. Jhuma Rana Lepcha, couples gained valuable insights into building strong family foundations.

Role of Fr. Peter Jong Lepcha SJ

Fr. Peter Jong Lepcha SJ, Parish Priest of St. Paul's Church Kurseong played a pivotal role in organizing the seminar, ensuring its success through meticulous planning and execution. His leadership and vision helped create a supportive environment for couples to learn and grow together.

Mr. Edwin Chettri President of St. Paul's Parish Catholic Association and Ms. Nirmala Baraily one of the active member of St. Paul's Parish Kurseong played very vital roles to organized this Seminar.

The seminar was a resounding success, providing couples with practical advice and strategies to strengthen their relationships and build lasting family bonds.

Prepared by : Deepak Lepcha



Congratulations to Bishop Fabian Toppo the New Bishop of Jalpaiguri Diocese



Bishop Fabian Toppo is the current head of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Jalpaiguri in West Bengal, India. He was appointed by Pope Francis on February 8, 2025, succeeding Bishop Clement Tirkey, who retired after nearly two decades of service.

Bishop Toppo was consecrated on May 1, 2025, at Christ Redeemer Cathedral in Jalpaiguri. The principal consecrator was Archbishop Thomas D'Souza of Calcutta, with co-consecrators Archbishop Vincent Aind of Ranchi and Bishop Paul Toppo of Raigarh. The ordination ceremony was attended by hundreds of faithful, reflecting the community's support and enthusiasm for their new bishop.

The Bishop, Priests, Religious and Faithful of the Diocese of Darjeeling-Sikkim Congratulate Bishop Fabian and pray for his Episcopal Ministry ahead.

Eulogy of Gratitude to His Holiness Pope Francis

From the Catholic Diocese of Darjeeling

Most Holy Father,

In the serene hills of Darjeeling, nestled amidst the grandeur of the Himalayas, your name echoes with deep reverence and affection. We, the clergy, religious, and faithful of the Diocese of Darjeeling, come together in prayerful gratitude for your life, your witness, and your enduring love for the Church and the world.

Holy Father, your papacy has been a beacon of mercy, humility, and compassion. You have reminded us that the Church must be a "field hospital" — close to the wounded and the forgotten. From the Vatican to the valleys of Darjeeling, your words have reached us like dew on the mountain grass, gentle yet transformative. You have taught us that greatness lies not in power, but in service; not in commanding, but in listening and embracing the poor.

*We thank you for your unwavering commitment to the peripheries — for reminding the world that the voices of the marginalized matter. In our own hills, where diverse cultures and communities coexist, your call to fraternity and dialogue has inspired renewed efforts toward unity and peace. Your love for creation, especially through *Laudato Si'*, has rekindled in us a sacred duty to care for the forests, rivers, and mountains God has entrusted to us.*

Holy Father, your simplicity, your pastoral heart, and your courage in reform have inspired a new generation of faithful. You have opened the doors of the Church wider — to the young, the elderly, the refugees, the excluded. You have shown us the face of Christ in the most unexpected places.

Today, as we raise our prayers for you — whether in the silent monasteries of the hills, the bustling parish churches, or the humble village chapels — we do so with hearts overflowing with gratitude. Thank you for being our shepherd. Thank you for reminding us that in the Church, there is a place for everyone. Thank you for showing us the joy of the Gospel.

May God bless you abundantly, Holy Father.

May Our Lady of Immaculate Conception, Patroness of our Diocese, watch over you always.

And may your life continue to inspire the Church for generations to come.

With filial love and gratitude,
The Catholic Diocese of Darjeeling.



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RESTORE HOPE IN FAGU TEA GARDEN KALIMPONG DISTRICT

Love in Action - Jubilee 2025



Reality



Visionm



Cost of building - ₹6,17,000/house

Kindly Donate to

**Account Name- Roman Catholic Diocese
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Ordination of Seven Priests for the Diocese of Darjeeling Kalimpong – 9th May 2025



In a momentous and grace-filled celebration, the Diocese of Darjeeling witnessed the ordination of seven new priests on Friday, 9th May 2025, at St. Augustine's School hall in Kalimpong. The sacred ceremony was presided over by His Excellency Most Rev. Stephen Lepcha, Bishop of Darjeeling, and was concelebrated by a large number of priests from across the diocese and neighboring regions.

The seven ordinands—Rev. Alphonse Ghimirey, Benai Chettri, Clinton Rock Lepcha, Joachim Tamang, Marcus Lepcha, Silas Lepcha and Sion Rai were solemnly presented before the congregation of religious, laity, and well-wishers who had gathered in large numbers to witness and bless this sacred milestone in the lives of the young men dedicating themselves to the service of God and the Church.

The liturgy was marked by deep spiritual fervor, traditional rites, and a profound sense of community. The bishop, in his homily, reflected on the priestly vocation as a call to selfless service, humility, and pastoral dedication, especially within the unique cultural and spiritual context of the hills.

The atmosphere was one of joy and thanksgiving, with devotional hymns led by the wonderful choir of St Teresa's Church, enhancing the solemnity of the occasion. The participation of the faithful, representatives from various parishes, and family members of the newly ordained made the event truly communal and celebratory.



Following the ordination rite, a felicitation program was held, during which the newly ordained priests were congratulated. The event concluded with a fellowship meal, reflecting the unity and joy of the diocesan family.

The ordination of these seven young men marks a significant chapter in the history of the Diocese of Darjeeling, symbolizing hope, renewal, and the continued growth of the church.

3rd May 2025

**DARJEELING-SIKKIM DIOCESE.
25 Years of Silver Jubilee Celebration of
St. Joseph's Church, 5th Mile, Kalimpong.**



The day started with paying homage with the prayer and lighting a candle to the departed soul of Pope Francis, in the auspicious presence of Bishop Stephen Lepcha accompanied by the (Parish Priest) Fr.

John Bannarjee. There was holy mass Presided over by Bishop Stephen, felicitation with the token of love for the Father's Sisters & Belivers who had contributed during the foundation of the Church.

Church History in Brief

The vision for St. Joseph's Church began with Late Bishop Eric Benjamin, the first Bishop of Darjeeling Diocese. During his pastoral visits, he noticed the hardship faced by Catholic families walking 4 kilometers from 3rd Mile to St. Teresa's Church at 8th Mile for Sunday Mass. Moved by their dedication, he envisioned a new church closer to them.

Around the same time, Fr. Joseph Hoppstetter C.R., the then Parish Priest of St. Teresa's, also dreamt of establishing a church between the 5th and 6th Mile areas. In 1995, Rev. Fr. Thomas D'Souza (now Archbishop of Calcutta) authorized the purchase of land for the church and presbytery. Fr. Jerome Singh, then Parish Priest, was tasked with finding suitable land.

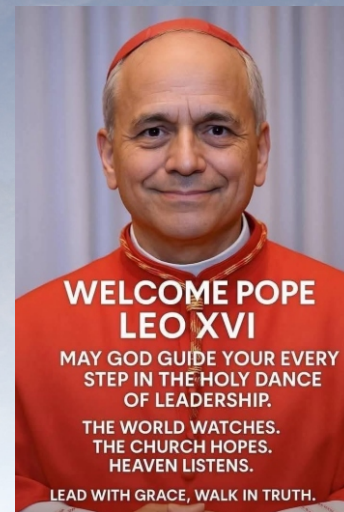
After initial setbacks in Tashiding Busty, a plot in Ngassey Busty, 5th Mile, was found. However, the land being tribal made acquisition challenging. A complaint was filed in July 1995 against building on tribal land. Eventually, in July 1997, the land was legally purchased in the name of Fr. Gregory Lepcha, and the deed and mutation were completed the same year.

Despite community opposition and even incidents of stone-pelting at night, Fr. Jerome Singh courageously continued the construction. By late 1999, the Church of St. Joseph was completed and stood as a testament to perseverance and faith.

On 18th November 2000, the church was officially dedicated by Bishop Stephen Lepcha, who initiated monthly Eucharistic celebrations there. In 2002, upon recommendation from Fr. Pius Marcus, the church was declared a Quasi-Parish, and Late Rev. Fr. Andrew Sada was appointed its first Parish Priest on 7th July 2002, serving 52 families.

On 26th June 2009, Bishop Stephen Lepcha handed over the church to the Society of Jesus (Darjeeling Province). Fr. Andrew Sada celebrated his last Mass there on 28th June 2009.

**Congratulatory Note to Pope Leo XIV
from the Diocese of Darjeeling**



Your Holiness,

Pope Leo XIV

With profound joy and deep reverence, the Diocese of Darjeeling extends its heartfelt congratulations on your elevation to the Chair of St. Peter as the Supreme Pontiff of the Holy Catholic Church.

We rejoice with the universal Church in welcoming your papacy, and we assure you of our filial obedience, fervent prayers, and unwavering support as you begin this sacred mission of shepherding God's people with wisdom, compassion, and truth.

May the Holy Spirit continue to guide and strengthen you as you lead the Church into a future rooted in faith, unity, and love. May your pontificate be a beacon of hope, especially for the poor, the marginalized, and those in search of peace.

With prayers and blessings from the faithful, clergy, and religious of Darjeeling,

**+ Stephen Lepcha
Bishop of Darjeeling
On behalf of the Diocese of Darjeeling**

Homecoming

In memory of the Holy Father, Pope Francis

I see Heaven's gate open wide,
Trumpets blow and banners fly.

I feel in the air, a fragrance sweet
Soft Rays of celestial light,
And paths adorned with petals white;
Trumpets blow and banners fly
And Choirs of angels sing,
Cherubims and Seraphims.

I hear a whisper, "he's here,
A humble soul, chaste and pure,
There he stands at the door;"
Trumpets blow and banners fly
And Choirs of angels sing,
Cherubims and Seraphims.

Amidst exultation, praise and cheer
Comes to his Father, a son, so Dear;
A wondrous calm, a joyous feast;
A race well run, a victory won,
A faith well kept, a work well done,
The crown of glory earned.

I see Heaven rejoice today,
For the Father's will is done;
As the Saints greet him Home
I hear Trumpets blow and banners fly,
And Choirs of Angels sing,
Cherubims and Seraphims.

- Prasansha Caroline Rai

Stand by Me

Where are the crowds of Galilee ?
Thousands feed with bread disappeared
All are deserters !

Where are the crowds of Jerusalem ?
Disappeared with their flippant song and dance
All are deserters!

Where are my friends ?
Slumbering in the sleep of fear
All are deserters

All alone He charges into the valley of death
A scapegoat for all We could not be
Can I stand by Him?

All alone He carries the burden of entire humanity
An innocent lamb slaughtered in God's name to defend
Can I stand by Him?

All alone in silence He stands serenely
It will be the story for His followers to follow
Can I stand by Him?

-Fr. Kinley SJ



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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