



TEA LEAVES

DARJEELING DIOCESE NEWSLETTER

visit us at : www.darjeelingdiocese.com

2025

Bishop's House, Darjeeling - 734101 INDIA

AUGUST

Bishop's Message



Independence Day in the jubilee year 2025, has a special significance in our life. Great freedom fighter, leaders of our Nation who brought Independence were indeed the Pilgrims of hope for the citizen of our country. What we Indians are enjoying today the Justice, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, enshrined in the Constitution of India is earned by those saints who live the life of holiness, truthfulness and integrity. We salute them with sincere gratitude and honour to all the freedom fighters not only on the day of Independence but pay respect in our hearts every day. As we journey through the month of August, we are reminded of the many blessings the Lord continues to pour into our lives especially through the dedicated service of our Leaders, sincere Civil servants, army personnel guarding day and night in difficult terrain of boarder to protect the citizen of our Nation, Scientist, Educationist, Doctors, Health Workers, Spiritual leaders, farmers, Social workers serving at the grassroot people and many others because of whom nation is sustaining as well as in progress. For us Catholic we celebrate August 15 a double grace-filled moments, independent day as citizen of our country and the feast of the Assumption of Mary the mother of Jesus. "Dogma of Assumption as gift of God granted to Mary for her radical fiat. Mary is sign of hope for all believers that if we imitate her heaven is assured. May our Blessed Mother Mary, Queen of Heaven and Patroness of our Diocese, intercede for us and lead us ever closer to her Son. Let us continue to pray for our country that peace and justice may prevail among the citizen of India. With my prayerful blessings and best wishes,

+ Stephen Lepcha
Bishop of Darjeeling

Grandparent's day and Jubilee of Priests celebrated at Liza Hill

Even to your old age and gray hairs I will sustain you...I have made you and carry you - Isaiah 46 :4 ..



ICYM (St Savio Sangh) Lizahill took the initiative of celebrating the Grandparents Day and Jubilee of Priests on 3rd August 2025.

Under the guidance of ICYM members the day started off with the candle procession by our grandparents followed by the Eucharistic celebration.

The Mass concluded with cake cutting ceremony for our grandparents to mark their day and also for Parish Priest to mark Jubilee of Priests...Thereafter all the grandparents were given special hampers and gifts which was prepared by the Youth of the ParishAfter that small fellowship snacks were distributed in the church premises which was the initiative of the Parish Youth themselves..After the celebration ,the Youth also went forth to meet the grandparents who couldn't come to the Church.

We thank Fr. Sanjok Rai , all contributors and everyone who helped us in making this celebration a grand success.

-Stella Rai.



Pilgrims of Hope: Planting Faith

St. Francis de Sales BEC of St. Peter's Church, Gaucharan Leads Intergenerational Plantation Drive as a Sign of Christian Responsibility and Hope

On 27th July 2025, the faithful members of St. Francis de Sales BEC of St. Peter's Church, Gaucharan, Assam Lingzey, Sikkim joyfully participated in a community plantation drive. The Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Sebastian Lepcha, elderly children, members of every age came together to plant saplings in and around their village—fruit-bearing trees, shade plants, and native species were all carefully placed into the soil by loving hands, watering not only the land, but sowing hope into the future.

This event beautifully reflects the spirit of the Jubilee Year 2025: Pilgrims of Hope. As followers of Christ, we are journeying together in faith and service—recognizing that our hope is not just for heaven, but also for a renewed and healed Earth.

Right from the beginning, Scripture tells us that the Earth is God's gift to humanity. In Genesis 1:31, we read: "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." Later, in Genesis 2:15, the Lord placed man in the Garden of Eden "to till it and to keep it." These verses lay the foundation for a deep Christian responsibility to care for creation with reverence and wisdom.

Planting trees is not just about beautifying the environment. It is an act of obedience to God's call to be faithful stewards of the Earth. It teaches respect, sustainability, and generosity—not just to humans, but to every living creature.

As Pope Francis affirms in *Laudato Si'*, "Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue." The members of St. Francis de Sales BEC have put this into practice.

"They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor." –



Isaiah 61:3

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it." – Genesis 2:15

Jesus came so that all may have life—"life in abundance" (John 10:10). His ministry was full of healing, renewal, and compassion. By caring for the Earth and making it fruitful again, Christians participate in this same mission—giving life, restoring creation, and offering hope.

This plantation drive is not just an environmental action; it is a Gospel proclamation. It silently preaches love for creation, unity in action, and faith that tomorrow can be

better.

As we journey through the Jubilee as Pilgrims of Hope, this act of planting trees becomes a sign of faith—faith that small acts today will bear fruit tomorrow. It teaches our children to love the Earth as God does and reminds the elders that their wisdom is still planting seeds.

Through the unity of young and old, the soil of Gaucharan has received both plants and prayers. And in this, the mission of Jesus continues to grow.

"Care for Creation, Live the Gospel, Be a Light."

-Ashim Stanislaus Rai
St. Peter's Church, Gaucharan
Assam Lingzey, Sikkim

For a latest videos visit us at :
 youtube : darjeeling divyavani prastuti
 For all publications, videos & Media
 visit us at :
<https://www.darjeelingdiocese.com/media/>

CLEANLINESS DRIVE

Organized by St. Mary's Church Managing Committee Rangeli, East Sikkim

12th July 2025 : A cleanliness drive was successfully conducted under the initiative of the St. Mary's Church Managing Committee, located at Rangeli Soongdoong, under Pakyong District. The faithful — members of the church — enthusiastically cleaned the premises of the Rangeli Primary Health Centre. Activities included uprooting and cutting overgrown weeds, sweeping, cleaning drains, and planting saplings around the hospital compound.

This program was part of the committee's annual action plan, and it was led directly by the executive members of the managing committee.

Dr. Suvarna Rizal, an official from the hospital, expressed her happiness and gratitude for the initiative. She offered a traditional scarf (khada) to Mr. K.D. Rai, the committee president, as a token of appreciation and thanked all participants. Refreshments were also arranged by the hospital authorities.

The St. Mary's Church Managing Committee is a government-registered body under the Government of Sikkim, which regularly organizes such social outreach programs from time to time.

On the blessed occasion of the "Year of Pilgrims of Hope 2025", the members of St. Mary's BEC, Lingsey carried out their weekly pastoral activity on Saturday, 2nd August 2025, by visiting the "Mayalmu Shelter Home", located in Danda Gaon under the Assam Lingsey Gram Panchayat Unit.

During their visit, they shared a moment of heartfelt fellowship with the elderly fathers and mothers residing there. As a gesture of love and respect, they served a lovingly prepared delicious meal to the senior citizens and expressed their affection and care.

As written in the Bible:

"I was sick and you visited me..." (Matthew 25:36)

We deeply appreciate this compassionate act by the members of St. Mary's BEC, and we hope that such inspiring works of mercy will continue in the days to come.

-Severine Rai



Loreto Generalate at the JCoR

Ms. Prasansha Caroline Rai from Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Lizahill represented the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary - Loreto Generalate at the JCoR. JCoR (Justice Coalition of Religious) is an organization that works with religious groups to promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and participates in the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). The HLPF is the UN's central platform for reviewing progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. JCoR provides resources and facilitates participation for religious NGOs at the HLPF. JCoR and HLPF: The HLPF is a UN platform where governments and civil society report on their progress towards achieving the SDGs. JCoR's Role: JCoR actively engages with the HLPF by organizing events, providing guides for participation, and offering perspectives from Catholic religious orders and their partners. JCoR SDG Lab: JCoR hosts the "JCoR SDG Lab," a series of virtual conversations that showcase the perspectives of Catholic Religious and their partners on the SDGs. Ms. Rai presented a critique of India's Voluntary National Review on the Sustainable Development Goals with reference to SDG 4 and 5. (Quality Education and Gender Equality respectively)

*Wishing you all
a feast of
Assumption*



HISTORY OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH SALGHARI SIKKIM.



In the beautiful lap of Namchi District lies the peaceful and most blessed place called Salghari. It's name has been derived from the Sal tree as we can find lots of Sal trees here. Apart from the name of the place the people here were a very staunch Hindu believers late on the end of 70's the man Late Mr. Patrick Lepcha arrived here as the Committee Teacher in the school. From then the mission of our Lord started. From zero percent of chance to preach the gospel to the people and now at least ninety-nine percent of people are converted to Catholicism has a very interesting story to tell.

Late Mr. Patrick Lepcha who had come from Pakyong as the Committee teacher was working in the village committee school without anyone knowing that he was a catholic. He was a very faithful devotee of Mother Mary and used to do "Rosary" every day. Slowly he came closer to the people and every one was fond of him. Whenever he got the chance he used to pray for the sick in the village and the sick person used to get well too. The people started knowing him as the "Jhakri" (Witch Doctor). The villagers used to call upon him whenever their children used to get sick. Many Miracles occurred during those days not only the people but through his prayers the cows and their calves also got cured as told by the believers.

The people were tired of practicing the traditional religion where they have to offer the different kind of offerings to their deities and not only that every time they themselves or their children used to get sick their only reliance was Patrick Sir and his prayers. Later Mr. Patrick Lepcha came close to Mrs Priscilla Lepcha and wanted to be bonded together in a marriage sacrament. Fr. Elias Pinto, The Then, parish priest of Sacred Heart Church Singamari along with Mr. Sebastian Thapa (Gurubabu) came to visit Mr. Patrick Lepcha and later gave the catechism on marriage and baptism and was baptised on 17th July 1977 and was given the marriage sacrament too.

18-04-1981 The "Holy Easter" became a mile-long milestone for the spiritual region of our village. Many social obstacles came to the fore, but no one shied away from them. On the same day of the Holy Easter on 18-04-1981, a total of 16 people from nine families from this village took a baptism at the Jorhang Saint Francis Assissi Church. Before the bathing ceremony of these 16 people, 20 children had taken the baptismal rite. There was a lot of movement in the village and society, but this movement could not last for many days.

The entire 9 families the one who took the baptism was boycotted from the society. These families were treated as the menials and were not allowed to their kitchen or their special places. The village totally depend upon the farming but even the villagers never supported the catholic families. As told by one of the catholic he had called for the "Khetala" (labour) to plough the field as the news spread that the catholics were boycotted the labour left the field in the middle of his work and never came back.

This kind of movement did not have any negative effect on the devotees. Here they found another joy in living together in Christ. Mr. R.B. Banifas Rai, bought a bull from Gom-Bhandikhola by keeping the gold of his house as a mortgage. The six families farming was run by the same bull. It was within these nine families that farmland work was exchanged. For some time, a different environment was created here.

The upheaval in the village society gradually subsided, and with the activism of the then parish priest late Charles Mukhiya, a prayer house was built in this village and was named "Infant Jesus Church" by the revered Sister Teresa Anthony. The land for constructing the prayer house was donated by late Kaziman Charles Rai. The construction of this church was supported by all the devotees of the village to the best of their ability and it was formally inaugurated in June 1983.



2001-04 Revered priest Francis Yonjan was the parish father of St. Francis Parish. During his service, he completed many of the unfinished tasks. It was during his service that the churches and school lands of Jorhang and Salghari were registered. At the same time, the "Infant Jesus Church" replaced the raw church in Salghari with a firm church, and the old name was replaced by the new name "Saint John's Church." The Holy Church was formally inaugurated on 13 March 2004.

On 17-07-1977, Lord Jesus had selected his devotees in our Salghari Bhaialgaon village. On this day, Priscilla Rai was baptized and married to Mr. Patrick Lepcha by Fr. Elias Pinto, revered priest of Darjeeling Singamari "Sacred Heart Church". Today's church is the sons and daughters born by the wedding rites of the same day. In this way, the seed planted by the revered priest as Fr. Elias Pinto was watered and flowered and fruited by the revered priest, the late Charles Mukhiya.

There is no greater enemy than ignorance in the development process of human society. The same empire of ignorance and poverty had spread in our village society at that time. The revered parish priest, late Charles Mukhiya, tried his best to remove the reign of darkness. Mr. Sebastian Thapa, a resident of Darjeeling Singamari "Sacred Heart Church", was given basic training in adult education at Hayden Hall, Darjeeling, from Bhaialgaon village; Adult education was conducted by providing night schools on education and health for mothers. The gathered mothers were given basic education by Mr. Sebastian Thapa, and his wife Regina Rai, she was nominated for giving advice on health issues. Through this night school's adult education system, mothers here began to understand the importance and meaning of education, and gradually began to read psalms, prayer books, and the Holy Bible. This was in 1982-83, and that is where the ideological revolution in this village society began.

Revered Late Charles Mukhiya's campaign of intellectual revolution has been greatly contributed by the revered sisters of the Jorhang F. C. Convent, especially Sr. Mary Teresa (Bishnu) Rai, Sr. Teresa Anthony and Divya Kishori. They frequently met with each family in the congregation to share their sorrows and joys. They not only provided basic knowledge to the poor families, helped them in common needs, but also inspired them to live with advice, zeal, and enthusiasm. With the constant service and advice of the Sisters, new ideas emerged in the mothers of each family here.

Before the St. John's Church was a sub-station of St. Francis Church Jorhang Now it has been selected as the Quasi Parish and shortly might be the parish too. The people now not only strong in their faith but a bit stronger in finance also as the result of the faithfulness towards the church they contributed the monetary fund and constructed the presbytery for the church. As the church is heading towards its Golden jubilee we pray that the Lord's Blessing and Mercy may be showered in our Parish.

During this long period many priests have served our church as the parish priest. namely: Fr. Alias Pinto, Fr. Charles Mukhiya, Fr. Abraham K, Fr. Francis Yonzon, Fr. Gyan Stephen Rai, Fr. Benzamin, Fr. Alphonse Lingdamoo, Fr. Stany Sequera, Fr. Ronie Trikhatri, Fr. Francis Xavier Lepcha, Fr. Gerard Lepcha.

They simply did not remain as the priest only but they helped in growing in faith towards Jesus and also helped in knowing the saviour closely. Many came and helped in transforming the believers life and now we can see the humangous change in their life. None of the priest left the needy alone they were there to help in every situation. till date each and every parish priest of St. John's Church Salghari has nurtured the plant of faith that was planted in the year 1977.

-Daniel Lepcha

Change of Guards at St. John Berchmans Parish –Kurseong.



On July 13, Reverend Father Pradeep Rai was officially installed as the new parish priest of St. John Berchman's Parish in St. Mary's Hill, Kurseong. This historic event marks the beginning of a new chapter for the parish community as Reverend

Father Pradeep Rai takes over from Reverend Father Andrew Lama, who has since been transferred to another location. The official installation and ceremonial dedication was performed by the Reverend Father Edward Baretto, the Judicial Vicar of the Diocese of Darjeeling during the Eucharistic celebration presided by Rev. Fr. Edward Baretto assisted by Rev. Fr. Andrew, Rev. Fr. Pradeep Chettri and Rev. Fr. Silas Lepcha. The entire proceedings of the installation ceremony was telecasted live, with the support of Shri Bryan Kerr and his team Sushri. Shruti Chettri and Shri. Prayas Chettri. The symbolic event was witnessed the world over.

After the installation Eucharistic celebration, the parishioners paid their gratitude to Reverend Father Andrew Lama, whose tenure as the parish priest for (past seven years) was filled with invaluable contributions towards the parish. During his tenure, Father Andrew played a major role in the beautification and renovation of the century old "Our Lady of Lourdes." (St. Mary's Hill) Grotto, which was renovated, designed, with beautiful artwork, including a series of religious murals of the "Joyful Mysteries" making this century-old site more beautiful, well-preserved and more secure for the pilgrims. The fruits of his blood, sweat, tears and hard labour made this herculean project a great success Due to the persistency of Fr. Andrew a motorable road right up to the parish cemetery was constructed, providing much relief and convenience to the community. Fr. Andrew's invaluable service in various fields of spirituality and social development will be remembered by the parish community for many years to come. In his farewell speech Fr. Andrew thanked all the lay organisation and members of the parish for their support and also apologised for his short comings during his tenure as the parish priest. Reverend Father Pradeep Rai and



Reverend Father Silas Lepcha (Assistant – Parish-Priest) were given a warm and cordial welcome on the same day. The welcome was organized in the Auxullium convent, where lay leaders and community members gathered to witness the event. Rev. Fr. Andrews family members were also present for the occasion.

The presence of head coach of the Indian Women's Football team Shri Crispin Chettri made the event historic. Shri Crispin Chettri was felicitated by various dignitaries of the village community. Shri Bruno Subba, general secretary of St. John Berchmans Catholic Welfare Association) presented the certificate of appreciation to Shri Crispin Chettri on behalf of the parish community and the Association. Shri. Crispin Chettri in his brief speech attributed his destiny in becoming the Indian Woman's Football Team coach to the Holy Mother Mary.

Shri Paul Chettri (Member, P.F.C), Shri Bobby Sandra Chettri (Secretary- P.F.C./P.P.C) Shri. Gareth Kerr (President- St. John Berchmans Catholic Association, Mrs. Cecilia Lama (President- Nari-Sangh), Ms. Neha Chettri (Animator-YCIM) Mrs. Reshmi. Subba (Animator-Holy-Child Hood), Gurubabu, Shri Bruno Pariyar, Shri Thomas Lepcha, Shri. Thomas Subba and Shri Prajesh Lepcha (W.B.M. B.E.M.) were also present. The program was skill fully conducted by Mr. Robin Pokhrel (P.F.C), and was organized by Parish Finance Committee with the co-operation of St. John Berchmans Catholic Welfare Association, Nari-Sangh, ICYM Youth, Holy Childhood and all the B.C.C group .The bittersweet event concluded with an agape meal at the Parish community hall. We wish Rev. Fr. Andrew, Fr. Pradeep And Fr Silias all the best and may the Holy Spirit guide you all in divine mission as the servant of God.

*We wish you all
78th Independence Day*



God – Ever So Close

by Fr. Kinley Tshering, SJ



God—who defied the unthinkable.

No lofty philosophies,

No complex theologies,

Not the Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent.

Nor the new-age “Energy,”

The Force of Star Wars,

Cosmic Powers or Life Force,

Not even the Divine or the One.

Not found in the elements of Mother Nature—
Fire, Wind, Water, or Good Earth.

Not the Lilā of Divine Play or Cosmic Dance,
Watching from above at humanity's folly.

This God walked among us:

Truly Human, truly Divine.

In time, He was born, lived, and died.

In time, He defeated death and rose again.

And wonder of wonders—

He is closer now than ever.

He becomes Bread and Wine;

Those who receive, become Divine.

He is closest in what is ordinary,

Closest to those who need Him most.

In simple bread—

A tryst between heaven and earth—

A love story until the end of time.

Priest Day at St. Teresa's Church, Kalimpong

On this day, 03/08/2025, the parishioners of St. Teresa's Parish, 8th Mile, Kalimpong, joyfully celebrated Priests' Day in honor of Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Derek D'Souza, Assistant Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Edward Sangnes, and visiting priest Rev. Fr. Andrew Lama.



At the beginning of the Holy Eucharistic Celebration, a lamp was lit by the Parish Priest in front of the image of St. John Mary Vianney, the model of all priests. Following this, Mr. Suman Gajmer, an active member of the Parish Care Committee, shared a short reflection on the life of St. John Mary Vianney.

After the Eucharistic celebration, during a brief program, the three priests — Fr. Derrick, Fr. Edward, and Fr. Andrew Lama — were each honored on behalf of the parishioners with bouquets and tokens of love and appreciation.

Today, in honor of the priests, only one Mass was offered in the parish. The short felicitation program was conducted by Mr. Nooran

Rai, General Secretary of the Parish Care Committee. During the program, each of the three priests gave a brief message. Fr. Andrew Lama, sharing from his own life, highlighted the importance of family, stating that though he is a priest, he comes from a family and understands its value. Fr. Edward, in his short speech, expressed his heartfelt thanks for the gift of time shared with him, saying that time is more precious than any material gift. Fr. Derrick, the Parish Priest, also expressed his sincere gratitude to all the parishioners.



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:

Fr. Alex Gurung,
Darjeeling Diocese Communication Commission, Bishop's House, Darjeeling
E-mail : alecgurung@gmail.com, Mobile : 96418 72925