

TEA LEAVES

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
DIOCESE OF DARJEELING

2026

BISHOP'S HOUSE, DARJEELING - 734101, INDIA

SEPTEMBER



The Shepherd's Voice.....

September is here. We have another grace-filled month in which we thank God for the many blessings and reasons for which we are grateful. Just as we had a double celebration in the month of August, September too brings us two graceful occasions. The feast of St. Teresa of Kolkata, fondly remembered as Mother Teresa of Kolkata, is celebrated on 5th September. On the same day, India celebrates Teachers' Day, commemorating the birth anniversary of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, India's first Vice-President and second President, who was a distinguished teacher and philosopher.

When someone asked Dr. Radhakrishnan to celebrate his birthday, he replied, "Instead of celebrating my birthday, it would be my proud privilege if this day is observed as Teachers' Day." What a profound thought and deep respect for the teaching profession! The Guru is a holy person endowed with wisdom who illumines and guides the minds and hearts of his disciples (students). Here, we see the sacred relationship between the Guru and the Shishya.

A true teacher does not merely teach a particular subject in the classroom but also guides, inspires, shares knowledge, corrects, and encourages. Jesus Himself is the Greatest Teacher. His teaching was not only through words but also through His life, love, compassion, forgiveness, and service and ultimately, through his self-sacrifice on the Cross. He empowered human beings by giving Himself to His disciples.

Mother Teresa is remembered as a servant of love who saw the face of Jesus in every human being, especially in the poor, the sick, the abandoned, and the dying. Her life radiated the love of God, making God visibly present among the people with whom she lived. Her whole life is an example of a true teacher after the heart of the great Teacher, Jesus Christ.

As we celebrate the feast day of this great saint and Teachers' Day, let us ponder these profound spiritual aspects and examine our own lives.

Therefore, as we enter this blessed month, I extend to all my warmest greetings and heartfelt good wishes on the Feast of Mother Teresa and on Teachers' Day.



From Service to Eternity: Adieu, Dear Fr. Elias Pinto

KALIMPONG, AUGUST 18, 2026: The Roman Catholic Diocese of Darjeeling mourns the passing of Rev. Fr. Elias Pinto, a devoted priest, missionary and faithful servant of God, who went home to his Heavenly Father on 17 August 2026 at 8:30 a.m. at Navjeevan Hospital, Gayaganga, at the age of 81. His mortal remains were brought to St. Teresa's Church, Kalimpong, and the Funeral Mass was celebrated on 18 August, presided over by Bishop Stephen, in the presence of Coadjutor Bishop Edward, priests, religious, family members, faithful and well-wishers from various parishes.

Born on 2 January 1945 in Mangalore, Fr. Elias was ordained to the priesthood on 10 December 1975 for the Diocese of Darjeeling. He served at Sacred Heart Parish, Singamari; Bishop's House, Darjeeling; St. John Berchmans Parish, Kurseong; Cathedral Parish, Darjeeling; Navjeevan Hospital, Gayaganga; and Holy Family Parish, Rangpo-Mamring.

Remembered for his simplicity, compassion and pastoral dedication, Fr. Elias touched many lives through his faithful service and closeness to the people. He retired in 2018 and later resided at Gianora Home, Kalimpong. The Diocese gratefully remembers his life of prayer and service. May he rest eternally in the peace of Christ.

- Fr. Alexander Gurung



Requiescat in Pace, Father and Friend, Dear Fr. Giles SJ

DARJEELING, AUGUST 24, 2026: Some lives are measured not by the years they spend on earth, but by the lives they touch. Rev. Fr. Giles Goluckmu, SJ, was one such life. Born on 3 December 1939 at Maria Busty in Kagay GP, Kalimpong, he was the youngest of nine children. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1966 and, after making his Final Vows as a Jesuit Brother in 1978, felt called to the priesthood. He was ordained on 1 May 1990 at St. Teresa's Church, Kalimpong.

His ministry took him to Gayaganga, Namchi, Damsang, 5th Mile, the Manresa Jesuit Novitiate and Kurseong, where he served as pastor, administrator, teacher, director, counsellor and companion. In his final years, he remained faithful to his vocation through a life of prayer at Inigo Bhawan, Matigara.

Fr. Giles is remembered for his simplicity, prayerfulness, generosity and jovial spirit. A lover of nature, he found joy in gardening and tending plants. His lively and engaging homilies often awakened hearts and minds.

He died on 23 August 2026 and was laid to rest at the Jesuit Cemetery, Gayaganga, on 24 August. The Diocese gratefully remembers his life, priesthood and faithful service.

- Deacon Reuell Paul SJ



POPE'S INTENTION FOR SEPTEMBER FOR THE CARE OF WATER

Let us pray for a just and sustainable management of water, a vital resource, so that everyone may have equal access to it.



Bishop Stephen's Pastoral Visit

St. Alphonsa's Church, Samthar



SAMTHAR, AUGUST 1, 2026: St Alphonsa Quasi Parish, Samthar, celebrated its Parish Feast with faith and gratitude on 1 August, marked by the pastoral visit of Most Rev. Bishop Stephen Lepcha. The Bishop presided over the solemn Eucharistic celebration, during which ten candidates received the Sacrament of Confirmation. His presence and pastoral encouragement brought renewed joy and strength to the parish community.

On behalf of the parish, Bishop Stephen was presented with a token of love and gratitude, particularly for his vision and support towards Don Bosco, Samthar, and his efforts to invite the Salesians to serve the people of the area. He also felicitated Dr Jenny Lepcha. The Eucharistic celebration was followed by a joyful Feast Day Agape, fostering fellowship and communion among the faithful.

During his stay, Bishop Stephen visited St John Mary Vianney BEC and St Maria Goretti BEC, meeting and encouraging the faithful. He also visited a grieving family, offering prayers, consolation, and pastoral support following the tragic loss of their young son.

The following day, the Bishop celebrated Sunday Eucharist and interacted with parishioners before visiting a few families and returning to Darjeeling. His pastoral visit was a grace-filled occasion that strengthened faith, communion, and the spirit of service within the parish community.

- Fr. Savio Rai, SDB

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Takdah

TAKDAH, AUGUST 9, 2026: On Sunday, 9 August 2026, the faithful of Immaculate Heart of Mary's Church, Takdah Cantonment, witnessed a grace-filled and historic occasion as Most Rev. Stephen Lepcha, Bishop of Darjeeling, visited the parish for the canonical installation of Rev. Fr. Anil Kerketta, OCD, as the new Parish Priest.

The Bishop presided over the solemn Holy Eucharist and, in his homily, reflected on the mission of a Parish Priest as a servant-leader, called to shepherd God's people with love, humility, and dedication. During the installation ceremony, Bishop Stephen handed over the keys of the Church and the Tabernacle to Fr. Anil as visible signs of his pastoral authority and responsibility entrusted to him.

Fr. Anil subsequently took the Oath of Fidelity and made the Profession of Faith before the Bishop and the assembled faithful. Bishop Stephen also expressed his appreciation for the valuable pastoral contribution and dedicated service of the Discalced Carmelite Fathers (OCD) in Takdah. The celebration concluded with a heartfelt Vote of Thanks proposed by Rev. Fr. Raphael, OCD.

- Fr. Raphael Tudu, OCD



Don Bosco Church, Mirik



MIRIK, AUGUST 23, 2026: Don Bosco Parish, Mirik, celebrated its Parish Day on 23 August 2026 with faith, joy and active participation. The celebration began with a Rosary procession carrying the statue of Blessed Mother Mary from Mother Teresa Lawn to the Parish Church, followed by the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The Holy Mass was presided over by Most Rev. Bishop Stephen Lepcha and concelebrated by Fr. Mathew Pulingathil SDB, Parish Priest, with Fr. Solomon Rai SDB and Fr. Ranjan Biswas SDB, Assistant Parish Priests. In his homily, Bishop Stephen encouraged the faithful to develop a personal relationship with God and live their missionary calling through love, service and Christian witness.

Following Mass, Mr. Denis Lepcha released his Nepali translation of St. Thérèse of Lisieux's *Story of a Soul*, titled "Ek Atma Ko Katha." A cultural programme by the Baba Samaj, Ama Samaj, Youth Group and the Holy Childhood added colour to the celebration. The day concluded with fellowship lunch, strengthening unity and fraternity among parishioners.

- Fr. Ranjan Biswas, SDB

St. Augustine's Church, Kankebong

KANKEBONG, AUGUST 30, 2026: The faithful of St. Augustine Church, Kankebong, joyfully celebrated their Parish Feast on 30 August 2026, with Most Rev. Stephen Lepcha, Bishop of Darjeeling, making his pastoral visit to the parish. The visit began on 29 August with Bishop Stephen's first pastoral encounter with the faithful of St. Teresa of Kolkata Church, Lametar, the mission station of Kankebong.

Bishop Stephen received a warm welcome and celebrated Holy Mass at Lametar. After Mass, he encouraged families to use available land and resources for economic stability through poultry, piggery, horticulture, floriculture and other farming activities. The day concluded with a Prem Bhoj.

On Sunday, Bishop Stephen celebrated the parish feast at Kankebong and conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation on five candidates. He prayed for the deceased ancestors, late Fr. E. Gressott, and former parish priests. The faithful expressed their gratitude through khadas, bouquets and flowers. Cake cutting, a group photograph and fellowship meal marked the joyful celebration.

- Fr. Clement Lepcha



211th Bosco Jayanti Celebration at Samthar

SAMTHAR, AUGUST 16, 2026: Don Bosco School Samthar celebrated Bosco Jayanti 2026 with enthusiasm on 16 August, commemorating the 211th birth anniversary of St. John Bosco. The celebration brought together students, teachers, invited guests, participating schools, football teams and well-wishers in an expression of faith, culture, sports and fellowship.

The programme began with a grand procession led by the school band. Rev. Fr. Florence Demta, Rector and Principal of Don Bosco Malbasey, West Sikkim, carried the statue of Don Bosco to the venue. The programme included Bible reading, garlanding of the statue, felicitation of guests and a prayer dance by the Bosconians.

The Inter-School Cultural Dance Competition showcased the talents of participating schools, with certificates, trophies, medals and cash prizes awarded to the winners. Football finals added excitement to the celebration. Don Bosco School Smathar won the Inter-School Football Final against St. Maurice Suruk, while SHARE FC won the Women's Final against Sisters By Heart. Gitd-baling FC emerged victorious in the Veterans' Final.

The Bosco Jayanti Cup 2026 Senior Division Final concluded with Bosco Driver Union defeating Kabi FC by a single goal. Individual awards were presented across the competitions.

Fr. Florence inspired the gathering to dream boldly, drawing from Don Bosco's vision and mission. The celebration concluded as a memorable tribute to Don Bosco, fostering faith, talent, sportsmanship, community spirit and shared dreams.

- Fr. Savio Rai, SDB

Parish Youth felicitates Core Prayer Team

KURSEONG, AUGUST 15, 2026: St. John Berchmans Parish, Kurseong, joyfully celebrated Independence Day and the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on 15 August.

The celebration began with Holy Mass, followed by an afternoon programme organised by the parish youth and Naari. Rev. Fr. Silash Lepcha graced the occasion as Chief Guest.

A highlight of the programme was the felicitation of the Core Prayer Team members for their dedicated service. Mrs. Sarita Brahmin and Mrs. Agnes Tamang of the Women's Commission, and Ms. Sandra Chettri, PPC Secretary, were also honoured for their commitment to the parish.

The Core Prayer Team strengthens the parish's spiritual life through regular prayer, visits to the sick, Thursday Adoration, charismatic prayer services, and participation in deanery and diocesan recollections.

The programme featured patriotic songs, prayers, games and thanksgiving. The celebration beautifully expressed the community's love for the nation and devotion to Mary. The parish prayed for peace, unity and blessings upon India and the parish family.

- Shruti Chettri



Fr. Florence carrying the statue of St. John Bosco during the procession.

NPS Girls Triumph in Inter-School Band Competition

NAMCHI, AUGUST 17, 2026: A Namchi Public School (NPS) Girls Pipe Band has scripted a remarkable achievement by winning the 80th Independence Day Inter-School Band Competition held at Mela Ground, Kalimpong, competing against 18 schools from across the region.

The victory is particularly significant as it marks the band's maiden competitive appearance, barely a year after its introduction at NPS. Their triumph is therefore more than a trophy—it is a testimony to discipline, perseverance, teamwork and relentless dedication.

Every note and every beat reflects the commitment of the young musicians, the tireless training and mentorship of Band Master Prashant Bisunkay, and the constant encouragement of the school and parents.

This proud achievement brings honour to Namchi Public School and Sikkim, demonstrating that excellence is not measured by how long one has been on the journey, but by how wholeheartedly one pursues it.

From a humble beginning to a historic victory, the NPS Girls Pipe Band has shown that when determination becomes discipline and teamwork becomes strength, excellence follows.

- Fr. Chrispin Tamang



The Victorious Band with the Principal, Vice-Principal and the Band Master

Sacred Heart Church Marks 35th 'Bhasha Manyata Diwas'

SINGAMARI, AUGUST 20, 2026: Sacred Heart Church, Singamari, Darjeeling, marked the 35th Bhasha Manyata Diwas with a distinctive celebration bringing together language, faith, history and culture. It was the first church in the Darjeeling-Sikkim Diocese to formally commemorate the occasion in this format.

Centred on the theme "God spoke to us," the celebration recalled the long struggle for constitutional recognition of Nepali and the journey of the Word of God into the language of the people. The contributions of scholars, writers and activists, including Parasmani Pradhan, Indra Bahadur Rai, Hari Prasad Gorkha Rai and Dil Kumari Bhandari, were remembered. The struggle culminated in the 71st Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, which included Nepali in the Eighth Schedule.

The event also honoured Jesuit priests Fr. Francis Farrell SJ and Fr. William Bourke SJ for their contribution to translating the Catholic Bible into Nepali. Coadjutor Bishop Rt. Rev. Edward Baretto, Jesuit Provincial Fr. Shajumon Chakkalal and other resource persons and judges enriched the programme.

Scripture-based elocution, spelling bee, storytelling, folk songs, Kaura dance, Nepali calligraphy, traditional food and a language exhibition showcased Nepali heritage.

The day ultimately affirmed a profound truth for the Catholic community: *we speak because God spoke to us first*. The parish wishes to thank Mr. Denis Lepcha and Mr. Prakash Thapa for their guidance and expert steering of the organising committee.

- Deacon Reuell Paul SJ



St. John Berchman's Parish Core Prayer Team



Children actively participating in Spell Bee Competition

National Youth Day Celebration 2026

KALIMPONG, AUGUST 8, 2026: The Diocesan Youth Commission, under the banner of the Indian Catholic Youth Movement (ICYM), celebrated National Youth Day 2026 on 8 August at St. Augustine's School, 8th Mile, Kalimpong, with the theme, "Take Courage! I have overcome the World" (John 16:33). The celebration brought together approximately 800 young people from the five deaneries of the Diocese.

The day began with registration, followed by the Holy Mass at 10:00 a.m., presided over by Most Rev. Bishop Stephen Lepcha, in the presence of Coadjutor Bishop Edward Barretto, priests, religious and the gathered youth.



Christ is alive and He wants us to be alive! The joyful Youths making it happen.

The felicitation programme commenced with a welcome address and the lighting of the ceremonial lamp. The celebration featured an opening prayer dance, felicitation of the two Bishops, and a Gospel Concert by Miss Simran Marlyn Tamang and her team. A major highlight was the launch of the new ICYM Theme Song, with contributors felicitated for their creative service.

Young achievers who had successfully cleared NEET, MBBS and PhD were also honoured for their accomplishments. The Coadjutor Bishop offered words of blessing, followed by an energetic animation dance by the DEXCO Team.

Reports from the Diocesan Youth Commission and the ZEXCOs of the five deaneries highlighted the various youth activities and initiatives undertaken across the Diocese. The results of the Environment Month Online Video Competition were also announced, with five churches emerging as winners: St. Mary's Church, Rongli; MMGC, Kalimpong; Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Darjeeling; St. Margaret Mary Church, Nimbong; and St. Joseph's Church, Kashyong.

The gathering also expressed appreciation to the Deans, Coordinators and priests for their continued support. Fr. Silas Lepcha and Fr. Binay Chettri were formally welcomed as the newly appointed ICYM Youth Deanery Coordinators for Kalimpong and Pedong respectively.

The day's celebration was a joyful expression of faith, fellowship, talent, achievement and service, inspiring the youth to live courageously and embrace their mission with renewed commitment.

- Catherine Koirala

Parish Priests Attend Family Ministry Workshop

KALIMPONG, AUGUST 11, 2026: A one-day workshop on the Family Commission was held at Pushpika, Kalimpong, on 11 August 2026, bringing together bishops and 71 priests from across the Diocese for reflection and formation in family ministry.

Rev. Fr. Arul Raj Gali, Executive Secretary of the Family Commission, CCBI, served as the resource person for the workshop. Highlighting on Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), Fr. Arul focused on three key areas essential to strengthening family ministry at the parish level: the Parish as a Family, the Parish Family Cell, and the Formation of Ministers for Family Ministry.

The programme provided an enriching opportunity for the priests to deepen their understanding of family ministry and to explore practical ways of strengthening family pastoral care.

- Fr. Silash Lepcha

St Monica's Feast Day Celebration at Lolay

LOLAY, AUGUST 29, 2026:

Deanery Cluster 2 celebrated the Feast of St. Monica together with members of Cathedral Parish, Darjeeling, on 29 August 2026.



The day began

with the Eucharistic Celebration. In his homily, Fr. Andrew highlighted St. Monica's unwavering faith, patience, and deep love for her family, inspiring mothers to follow her example. After Mass, the mothers of Lolay presented a short programme for the guests. Members of both parishes then shared about their various activities and experiences, fostering a spirit of fellowship, learning, and mutual encouragement.

The programme was enriched by an encouraging message from Fr. Andrew, who expressed appreciation for the gathering and encouraged the mothers to continue their valuable service to the Church and society.

- Sr. Barbara Rudum CJ

A Fruitful One-Day Seminar on CCC-III

DARJEELING, AUGUST 29, 2026: The Darjeeling-Kurseong Deanery conducted a fruitful one-day seminar on Part Three of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC-III) on 29 August 2026 at Divyavani Pastoral Centre, Darjeeling. The seminar was attended by around 121 animators and catechists, including two priests and a religious sister.

The programme began with a hymn invoking the Holy Spirit, followed by prayer and the proclamation of John 14:15. Rev. Fr. Arun Francis delivered the welcome address.

The resource person, Bishop Edward Barretto, explained key themes of Christian moral life, including Human Dignity, the Beatitudes, Freedom, Conscience, the Cardinal Virtues, Sin and its Gravity, and the Five Precepts of the Church. His reflections helped participants deepen their understanding of Catholic moral teaching and its practical application in catechetical ministry.

An interactive question-and-answer session enriched the seminar. The programme concluded with a Marian hymn, bringing the day to a prayerful close.

- Fr. Gabriel Rai



**HAPPY BIRTHDAY
SEPTEMBER**



04	Fr. Jerad Lepcha (Sr)	17	Fr. George Lepcha
10	Fr. Peter Lingdamoo	18	Fr. Prakash Rai
15	Fr. Sebastian Lepcha	21	Fr. Abraham K.

Wish you a very Happy Birthday Dear Fathers



**REMEMBERING THE DIOCESAN
FATHERS GONE BEFORE US**



14 Sept

Fr. Michael Lepcha (Sr)

17 Sept

Fr. Jacob M. Pallivathukal

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