

MERRY CHRISTMAS

# Tea Leaves

DARJEELING DIOCESE NEWSLETTER

visit us at : [www.darjeelingdiocese.org](http://www.darjeelingdiocese.org)

2017

Bishop House, Darjeeling - 734101, INDIA

December

## Message from the Bishop's Desk:



The year has almost come to the end and here we are all set to celebrate the most awaited season of the year, that is Christmas. Most of us perhaps may have already done with our preparations. The Christmas tree is all decked with tinsels, the lights are out, the Star is up, the Crib is ready, poinsettias are in full bloom adding to the decor, presents have been bought and Christmas parties may have already begun. But as the saying goes, "one who has not Christmas in the heart will never find it under the tree." My dear brothers and sisters this year let us ask ourselves do we really have Christmas in our hearts or have we lost it amidst the festivities?

The greatest message of Christmas is Love ,for St. John in his Gospel writes, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son ,that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."(John 3:16).Christmas is the testimony of God's love towards us and Love is incomplete without Forgiveness. There is a short poem by Roy Lessin which I want to share with you,

*"If our greatest need had been information,  
God would have sent us an educator.  
If our greatest need had been technology,  
God would have sent us a scientist."*

*"If our greatest need had been money,  
God would have sent us an economist.  
If our greatest need had been pleasure,  
God would have sent us an entertainer.  
But our greatest need was Forgiveness  
So God sent us a Saviour."*

Forgiveness is a fundamental Christian virtue. When we pray the Lord's Prayer we say "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." But how can we seek forgiveness if we ourselves are not willing to forgive. It is true that forgiving isn't easy. we are all humans and none of us is perfect but we have the Perfect Father who is ever forgiving and merciful. Made in His image and likeness we too must strive to emulate His teachings in our lives. Forgiveness is one of them. Without forgiveness there is no love and without love the spirit of Christmas loses all its meaning.

There may be discord amongst our friends and families, in our communities, our SCCs, our workplaces etc. There may be forgiveness to be given and forgiveness to be sought. This Christmas let us humble ourselves and go to the manger, let us take the present of a forgiving heart and leaving behind all ill feelings let us come together to adore the newborn King. "Each of us is an innkeeper who decides if there is room for Jesus." We can never make room for Jesus if our hearts are filled with anger and disharmony, if there is no forgiveness in us. This Christmas is there room for Jesus in our hearts?



**+Stephen Lepcha**

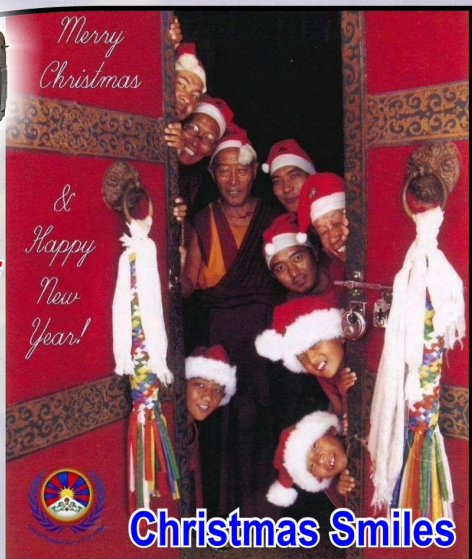


The Diocese of Darjeeling expresses heartfelt gratitude to Rev. Fr. Kinley Tshering SJ for his benevolent services toward the Diocese and wishes him the very best in all his future endeavours.

The Diocese also congratulates Rev. Fr. John. W. Lobo SJ, the new Jesuit Provincial as he takes charge.



PIX of the month



Christmas Smiles

## Quasiquincentennial Celebration of the Cathedral



The 8<sup>th</sup> of December 2017, the feast of the Immaculate Conception marked the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first stone of the church laid by Archbishop Goethals and the formal beginning of the parish of Darjeeling. This Quasiquincentennial Celebration of the said event will be held throughout the year, the Inaugural Mass was celebrated on the 9<sup>th</sup> December by the

Bishop along with a large number of Priests, Religious and the faithful who had come to join in the celebration with their mother church of the diocese. Fr. Samuel, the Pro-Vicar and his parishioners left no stones unturned to make this event a successful one. It would be very befitting to look back on the brief history of Darjeeling Parish (1892-2017)

Darjeeling was discovered in 1828 by Captain Lloyed and Mr. T. W. Grant. The natural beauty, then, must have been obviously more splendid than what it is today. Untouched by the callous hands of the man-the rugged hills, the deep valleys, the sparkling torrents, the dense forests and in the background the magnificent range of the Himalayan eternal snows must have been a glorious sight to behold indeed. Blessed with salubrious climate, a perfect settling to rejuvenate the weary bodies wilted by the Indian summer heat and dust. No wonder, by 1835, the British had acquired it along with 135 square miles of the surrounding district. Darjeeling was, in that year a very modest place with one hotel and about thirty houses. The whole district was still covered by dense forests, only here and there a tea garden was being opened out. The native population was scanty: the old records show that in the whole district it grew, between 1939 and 1849, from a small number of a hundred to above ten thousand.

The Loreto nuns arrived in 1846. How they undertook the arduous journey has become a part of Darjeeling folklore. They had brought with them their own chaplain, the Rev. John McGirr, an Irish Priest who had been working in Calcutta for some years. He had the honour of conferring the first Baptism in Darjeeling on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 1846. Two years later, in June 1848, the exact date is not recorded, Dr. Athanasius Hartmann O.F.M. Capuchin, the Vicar Apostolic of Patna came personally to Darjeeling to install the first Parish Priest, the chaplain as he was then termed. The first incumbent was Fr. Ignatius Persico, a priest of the Franciscan Capuchin order, who later on his return to Italy became a Cardinal. Fr. Ignatius was followed by nine other Capuchin priests.

He Capuchin priests served Darjeeling for the first 39 formative years. They catered to the spiritual needs of the Catholic population, with the exception of the Loreto nuns and their students, a handful of pensioners, tea planters, boarding house proprietors was made up of casual visitors, the British

soldiers, tourists and holiday makers escaping from the oppressive summer for a few months. For thirty seven years from 1848 to 1885. The parishioners and the visitors attended Mass at the convent chapel. It was only in 1885, that a separate Chapel was erected for the parishioners and the visitors. The chapel was built by Fr. Accursio Inzermini. It stood on the hillside halfway between the Bishop's House and St. Robert's School. On the completion of the Church (Now the Cathedral since 1962) the chapel was dismantled and reerected with old materials and in its original proportions at Jalapahar, where it still stands.

The Belgian Jesuits took over from the Capuchins in 1887. If the Capuchins laid the foundation of the Darjeeling Parish, the Oonus of consolidation fell upon the Jesuits. Fr. Henry Depelchin, the founder of St. Joseph's College (School Department) North Point was the first Belgian Parish Priest/Chaplain of Darjeeling. It was during the Mission of Belgian Jesuits, the Church of Immaculate Conception was built. Dr. Paul Goethals, the Archbishop of Calcutta was instrumental in negotiating with the authorities of the Loreto Sisters and reached an agreement for the construction of the Church. The excerpt of the agreement contained in the legal document runs thus:

"And whereas in or about the year one thousand eight hundred and ninety two, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Calcutta agreed with the then authorities of the Loreto Convent in Darjeeling to build a church on the land appertaining to and being a portion of the said convent, location No.2 in Darjeeling on the understanding and arrangement that the said church would belong to and be looked after and Managed by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Calcutta although the same was built on the land belonging to the convent and that the convent authorities would not sell, mortgage or in anyway deal with the same...."

On the basis of this agreement, Archbishop Goethals laid the foundation of the church on the 8<sup>th</sup> December 1892, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, to whom the sacred edifice was dedicated. The church of the Immaculate Conception was built by Brother Eugene Rotsaet S. J. The church is small but well proportioned. The total length is 112 feet, the nave is 28 feet and on both sides of the sanctuary, there are oratories in the earlier days to accommodate the nun and their pupils. The stained glass windows, nearly all donated by Mr. A. Forbes, added a colourful and pleasant light in the church. The pipe organ is also a gift of Mr. Forbes. Above the altar an imposing group of statues representing the Calvary strikes the visitor with awe and reverence. It was presented to the church by Mrs. P. Fielman. Some visitors to Darjeeling have said that, in their journey around the world, they have rarely seen a church as beautifully kept as the Darjeeling Church. For this, the credit must be given to the nuns of the convent, who, from the beginning, have looked after the cleanliness and decoration of the altars. Nowadays, this credit for the upkeep of the church is being shared by the laity through small Christian communities who turn up every Saturday to clean and prepare the altars for the Sunday Mass. It has also been said that much of the charm and devotion connected with our church service is also due to the artistic singing of the Loreto Convent choir in the earlier years. This situation has not diminished. The church still reverberates with melodious sound of the hymns sung with joyous reverence not only by the Parish Choir but by the whole congregation.

(Compiled by : Mr. C. B. Rai, CIC, Darjeeling)




<b>BIRTHDAYS in January 2018</b>	
 Fr. Veigas Valerian	- 01 January
Fr. Moktan Fintan	- 02 January
Fr. Pinto Elias	- 02 January
Fr. Baretto Edward	- 05 January
Fr. Rai Marcel	- 10 January

**Bottom Line**

*I asked SANTA CLAUS : Are you a Nepali?*

*He replied : Ho! Ho!!Ho!!!*

*Happy New Year*




## Silver jubilee celebrations at Missionaries of Charity

Twenty five years ago a young girl from Kerala answered God's call and chose to consecrate her life to the service of God by serving His people by joining the Missionaries of Charity. This young woman was Sr. Thereserose MC. Led by the Word of God, inspired by the example of her Foundress St. Teresa of Kolkata she has been since then working spiritually and physically for the downtrodden. On 16th December 2017 the Congregation celebrated her silver jubilee commemorating 25 years of her religious life. The jubilee celebration commenced with the Holy Mass celebrated by Bishop Stephen Lepcha. Various priests and religious from other congregations were present at the event. Sr. Thereserose's family, her mother and sisters too had come all the way from Kerala to join her in thanking the Lord for His divine graces upon her. The LMC members led by Mr. Bharat Francis Mothey conducted the choir which added a silent melody to the Eucharistic Celebration. This was following felicitation and Agape. TeaLeaves congratulates Sr. Thereserose and wishes her the best in all her endeavours!

## The Holy Father's reflection on Christmas



"Christmas is usually a noisy party; we could use a bit of silence, to hear the voice of Love."

Christmas is you, when you decide to be born again each day and let God into your soul. The Christmas pine is you,

when you resist vigorous winds and difficulties of life. The Christmas decorations are you, when your virtues are colors that adorn your life. The Christmas bell is you, when you call, gather and seek to unite. You are also a Christmas light, when you illuminate with your life the path of others with kindness, patience, joy and generosity. The Christmas angels are you, when you sing to the world a message of peace, justice and love. The Christmas star is you, when you lead someone to meet the Lord. You are also the wise men, when you give the best you have no matter who. Christmas music is you when you conquer the harmony within you. The Christmas gift is you, when you are truly friend and brother of every human being. The Christmas card is you, when kindness is written in your hands. The Christmas greeting is you, when you forgive and reestablish peace, even when you suffer. The Christmas dinner is you, when you sated bread and hope to the poor man who is by your side. You are, yes, Christmas night, when humble and conscious, you receive in the silence of the night the Savior of the world without noise or great celebrations; you are a smile of trust and tenderness, in the inner peace of a perennial Christmas that establishes the Kingdom within you. A very Merry Christmas for all those who look like Christmas.

Pope Francisco



## OBITUARY

*"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."*

- Emerson



A week before Christmas as the entire world was preparing for the Birth of Jesus, God called one of His beloved sons home. Fr. Xavier Rai went to be with the Father Almighty on 18th December 2017 after a prolonged sickness which he endured with great fortitude.

Fr. Xavier was born on 8th September 1958 and brought up in St. Margaret's Home at Kurseong. He studied at St. Alphonsus and found his inspiration in Late Rev. Fr. Abraham Murray SJ who became his role model in life. Fr. Xavier answered his call to Vocation and joined the Minor seminary JTI but he preferred to remain a Lay brother. As a Lay brother he worked zealously in different distant parishes especially of Kalimpong and Pedong deaneries. A simple yet straightforward person Fr. Xavier was thorough with the lives of Saints and he put in a great deal of passion in teaching Catechism to the children. Later as per the decision of the Bishop and the Diocesan Curia, he along with Fr. Gilbert Chettri and Late. Fr. Paulus Namchu were sent for a three years' Theology course at Morning Star College, Barrackpore. The three of them were ordained on 20th December 2011.

Born on 8th September, the birth of Our Lady, Fr. Xavier had a profound reverence for the Blessed Virgin Mary. He was a devout Catholic and an enthusiastic missionary who served the Diocese with all his might.

His brother priests fondly remember Fr. Xavier as a down to earth person who was a passionate

photographer, an avid reader and a master chef. He was a guileless soul who found repose in giving praises to his Creator even at the roughest moments. His prolonged illness weakened his body no doubt but it could not shake his ardent faith in God. He showed great courage and serenity inspite of his ailments. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8)

Fr. Xavier had a heart as pure as that of a child so today God has taken him to be with Him in His heavenly abode and in eternal peace.

Dear Fr. Xavier, in life you taught us to count our blessings, henceforth each time we count our blessings we shall count you twice. We'll always remember that special smile, that caring heart, that warm embrace you always have us. Pray for us from heaven that we may live a life worthy of entering His kingdom and joining you in the New Jerusalem.

**Rest in Peace!**



*If you look for Me at Christmas*

*you won't need a special star -  
I'm no longer just in Bethlehem,  
I'm right there where you are,  
You may not be aware of Me  
amid the celebrations -  
You'll have to look beyond the stores  
and all the decorations,  
But if you take a moment  
from your list of things to do  
And listen to your heart, you'll find  
I'm waiting there for you.  
You're the one I went to be with,  
you're the reason that I came,  
And you'll find Me in the stillness  
as I'm whispering your name.*

*Love, Jesus*



### 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 : tealeavesdarjeling@gmail.com / alecgurung@gmail.com, Mobile : 9641872925**

Published by Darjeeling Diocese Communication Centre on behalf of Diocese of Darjeeling. Edited by Fr. Alex Gurung and  
Printed & Designed at PEETSAR GRAPHICS, Darjeeling - 734101 [998320-33006]