Message from the Bishop’s Desk:

As we look back at the past year we realize that 2017 was an eventful year for us all. There were no doubt many ups and downs, smiles and tears, triumphs and trials yet at the end each experience moulded us into better human beings. For us in Darjeeling and Kailimpong districts the 104 days of strike was a huge challenge but one that united us all in prayer and service.

Now as we have entered the new year it is God's unfailing goodness that fills us with renewed hope. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come; the old has passed away; behold, the new is here!” My dear brothers and sisters, as St. Paul writes we are indeed a new creation in Christ, so let us leave behind the old self and proceed through the new year renewed by the Holy Spirit.

Each one of us is called to proclaim the Good News and to share the love of Christ. This year let us be the Good News, in our homes, our workplaces, our parishes, our communities and our neighbourhoods. In the words of St. Teresa of Kolkata, “let us touch the dying, the poor, the lonely and the unwanted according to the graces we have received and let us not be ashamed or slow to do the humble work.”

God loves us unconditionally. According to Lamentations 3:22-23 “the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning;” So let us also love each other and in doing so reflect the eternal love of Christ to others. Love begins at home, a family that prays together stays together. I have shared before that Jesus in the family means a happy family. This year let us continue to give Christ the first place in our homes. Let our family life centre around the Word of God and may our children learn to love God and His Church. Let each one of us feel fruitful and be fruitful in our lives as Catholics for we are chosen to bear fruits in plenty.

I wish you a blessed New Year and I pray that “the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7). God bless you!

+Stephen Lepcha

Jubilee Celebrations!

Don bosco parish Malbasey celebrated the Silver Jubilee of the parish along with the silver jubilee of Fr. Martin Lakra Sdb, the parish priest. More than 300 parishioners coming from Dentam, Rinchenburg, Mabong, Khanisirbong and few other substations had gathered for the occasion. the thanksgiving Eucharistic celebration was the main focus point followed by felicitation of Father T. V. George Sdb who had come all the way from Nepal and few Cluny sisters. Tea leaves wishes all a blessed Silver jubilee.

The Golden jubilee of Sr. Christine SJC and Silver jubilee of Sr. Ermina Lepcha SJC was celebrated on 8th January 2018, at St. Joseph convent chapel followed by a reception at Kenny hall near Ashadeep Cluny provincialate. Tea leaves congratulates them and extends gratitude for being great missionary heroines of Darjeeling diocese.

From the Cross, Christ teaches us to love. Even those who do not love us.

Pope Francis

Darjeeling ‘Hailstoned’

PIX of the month
Radio Journalists Initiate Indo-Nepal Friendship

Darjeeling How can a community radio take initiatives toward building people to people friendship between neighbouring countries? A college community radio in Darjeeling hills has shown how a small gesture at promoting understanding and fellowship through people to people initiative can go a long way to establish rapport and gain people’s goodwill.

Radio Salesian 90.8 FM, set out on a historic “Indo-Nepal Friendship Tour” with a team of Radio Journalists (RJ) under the patronage of Bishop Paul Simlick of Kathmandu, Nepal and principal of Salesian College Sonada (SCS) Darjeeling, India Dr George Thadathil.

The roadshow team consisted of station director and SCS Vice-principal Fr C.M. Paul along with Programme Coordinator RJ Samir Chhetri, senior RJ Sagar Rai and driver Kabir Tamang.

The tour on Radio Salesian 2005 model Maruti Omni Van was flagged off on Sunday 7th January at 7.07 am from Sonada passing through indo-Nepal Kakravita border near Siliguri and proceeded to Dharan from where Don Bosco Centre Nepal started and reached Kathmandu in Central Nepal.

The roadshow covered 1,606 kms in eight days visiting 7 Don Bosco institutions in Nepal managed by SCS alumni. The tour also marked 80th year celebrations of Salesian College as well as 25th year of Don Bosco Society Nepal (DBSN).

DBSN marked its 25th year of service to the people of Nepal by handing over five earthquake resilient school to villagers.

A total of ten schools in remote and inaccessible areas affected by the 2015 earthquake in Nepal are being got ready to be handed over.

The radio team covered the handing over ceremony of fifth school which took place on January 11 at Kallery Basic School in Sindhupalchowk district in central Nepal some 90 kilometers east of Kathmandu.

The week-long programme consisted of visiting Community Radio stations in Dharan (Radio Vijayapur 98.8 FM estd in April 2010), Biratnagar (Radio Purbanchal FM 101.3 estd in 2013) women operated first radio of Nepal, and Kathmandu (Radio Sagarbatha FM 102.4 estd in May 1997) community radio station with earthquake resilient studio facility.

One of the most successful learning interaction during the trip was with the founder director of the first community radio set up in South Asia, Radio Sagarbatha Nepal, Dr Raghuram Mainali. After an extensive exchange of community radio programming, planning and strategizing toward a sustainability model, Dr Mainali gifted the visitors with 13 books on community radio, among them 4 books are in Nepali language.

Dr Mainali also gave the visitors a guided tour of the recently constructed earthquake resilient studio and granted permission to use their Nepali language radio serials on health, disaster preparedness, and radio plays.

The team also visited plus two (senior secondary) schools along the way 7 schools in Dharan, 6 in Biratnagar and 2 in Kathmandu) to promote higher education in Salesian College Darjeeling and Siliguri campus.

Radio Journalist Mr Chhetri adds, “We also made radio programs on 25 years of NDBS and interact with mission pioneers and Church leaders.”

Time spent with tour patron Bishop Paul Simlick of Kathmandu, Nepal, a priest from Indian diocese of Darjeeling, too was most fruitful as the team interviewed him for a radio program on experiences of living in a foreign country and working for people of similar culture and language.

The history of NDBS began in 1992 with Dharan centre, in eastern Nepal, initiated by late Fr George Alakulam who ventured out from Don Bosco School Mirik then under the care of SCS.

The Salesians then reached Sirsa (1996), followed by the capital, Kathmandu, with two centers in Lubhu, established in 1996, and Thecho in 2001 after which came Baraul and Chakarkhatty (2014) East Nepal and, finally, Biratnagar in 2017 for a total of seven houses, managed today by 18 Salesians from various states around India. END

Workshop on Child Rights and Protection (POCSO) with the Police Department

Child abuse and neglect occur across all socioeconomic, religions and ethnic groups. However, no single source can be identified because many occurrences of child abuse and neglect go unreported or undetected, official figures do not necessarily state the true incidence. In today’s society, the police play many roles. They are the peacekeepers, law enforcement agency and many other jobs and one such is protection of children against any crimes that tend to detriment them. Keeping in view that the police department plays an important role in keeping the children safe from the law offenders, a workshop was organized by Anugyalaya on 19th January, 2018 at Gorubathan with 40 people participating.

Mr. Pranay Rai, Special Public Prosecutor in Darjeeling District POCSO Court as a resource person explained the POCSO Act in detail. Sub Divisional Police Officer Shri. M. Rehman made a strong statement by saying “Proper care and attention should be given to POCSO cases, our negligence and ignorance should not be the reason of injustice to the child.”

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Bishop’s Pastoral Visits

It was a joyful moment for Bishop Stephen Lepcha to visit the Sacred Heart of Jesus parish Loilay on 7th January 2018 at the kind invitation of Fr. George V. V the parish priest. It was also a nostalgic visit for the Bishop as he has seen this parish since 1983 when he was a young priest. With the passage of time it is indeed a blessing that today Loilay has many educated and economically stable families. Coffee plantation is another new venture that’s being undertaken.

Spirituality the faithful are becoming stronger because of the introduction of 24 hours of Eucharist Vigil by Fr. George V. V. Thanks to parishioners of Loilay for praying for the diocese.

St. Anthony parish Kilitar celebrated their parish day on 14 January 2018. Bishop Stephen Lepcha conferred the sacrament of confirmation to Children.

The Parish day celebration was concluded with Prembhoj followed by pastoral sharing meeting.

In February Bishop Stephen went to visit the families of the priests from Kerala. He reached Fr. Abraham’s house by 8.30pm on 9th February. He visited Fr. Abrahams relatives and neighbours on the following day and offered mass for them in the parish church. After lunch he left for Fr. George’s house along with Fr. Abraham, George and his brother.

Bishop visited Fr. George’s relatives and celebrated mass in Nepal for the people of Sonada, Darjeeling working in Kerala. 18 faithful had gathered in Fr. George’s house.

On the evening of 11th February the Bishop went to Fr. Jacob’s house. He is 91 years and now almost bed ridden. He spent one night in the house. With this he concluded his Trip to South India and on 13the he left for Bagdogra.

On the invitation of Fr. Lawrence Monterio the parish priest Bishop Stephen was present at Mary Mother of God Church, Relli Road on New year’s day. 1st January is the parish feast of Reili road church Kailimpong. It was a lovely and joyful celebration The church was packed with the faithful.

11 children and 14 adult Received confirmation on that day. Eucharistic celebration was followed by New year ageape meal. Bishop wished every one of them a fruitful year.

Bishop Stephen Lepcha and Bishop Paul Simick were present for the concluding of the Silver jubilee of Our lady of Lourdes Parish Tandrubang on 21st January 2018. On the occasion 12 children received the sacrament of confirmation and first Eucharist minister was also installed. Even SCN sister Councillor was present for the moment. Bishop thanked all the pioneer fathers, Cluny sisters and present SCN sisters along with lay faithful for their great contribution in building up the parish to this level.

It was marked by bishop that SCN congregation has always given a professionally trained B. Sc, nurse and MSW social worker from the beginning and now also there are well qualified sisters both in Sangsay and Tandrubang.

Bishop Stephen was invited by Fr. Robin Kailkotey the Vice principal and the bursar of St. Xavier’s School Pakyong who is also the priest in charge of Sangkhola the substation of St. Joseph parish Martam East Sikkim.

13 Children received the sacrament of confirmation and other 15 children received First holy communion. Tea leaves thanks fr. Robin Kailkotey for taking care of the faithful there in spite of his busy schedule.

NABARD Tribal Development Fund-Wadli Project

Wadi Development for tribal farmers of Gorubathan Block in Kailimpong District under Tribal Development Fund (TDF) of NABARD. The term ‘wadi’ has been derived from a Gujarati word meaning orchard. This project first started in Gujarat as a model for developing orchards by NABARD, as it proved successful it has gradually spread over the country. Kiwi has been selected has one of the fruits for plantation, which no other place have practiced under this project and is to commence for the first time in Kailimpong District by Anugyalaya in collaboration with NABARD and Caritas India with 70:30 ratio.

The key objective of wadi programme is to improve the quality of life of 500 tribal households in Block-III of Kailimpong district by enhancing their income and employment potential through land based alternate livelihood options (horticulture) and by supporting social development of participating families including women’s empowerment process and to create a suitable replicable model in the region for scaling up in future.

Fruit crops are not seen as potential livelihood option and therefore not practised by farmers however they strongly believe that agro-climatic condition of the region and proper irrigation arrangement could pave the way for establishing commercial orchards and could be an important avenue for livelihood support in a big way for farmers in the area in future.

Anugyalaya an NGO operating in Darjeeling and Kailimpong Districts of West Bengal and Sikkim state and a very proactive partner of Caritas India has been identified by NABARD as the Project Implementing Agency. The 3 commercially valued fruits namely Kiwi, Mandarin Orange and Guava (Allahabad Safeda) have been sanctioned for developing orchard in the above said area covering 15 villages under 3 Gram Panchayats falling under 3 Revenue Villages (Khasims).
“Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile.”

~ Albert Einstein

Miss Helen Daniel is a woman who made so much of difference in so many lives, she was known as Bari (maternal aunt), Boju (grandmother), Chhema (maternal aunt), Phupu (paternal aunt), Didi (elder sister), and Bahini (younger sister) to so many people in so many fond and great ways.

Among her siblings, she was known as Kalo Pothy (the black hen) because she would protect all her siblings with all her might. At the age of 15, she claimed to be of 18 and started her career as part of the British army in colonial India. At the age of 85, she still received a stipend from the East India Company!

She opted to work with the West Bengal Government Health Services as a TB health visitor. At that time, with the stigma associated with a disease such as TB and the risks of working as a health service professional, people wouldn’t easily take up such a job. But Bari did.

She worked and earned and supported families...not only her own, but of people known and unknown. It’s no great wonder that even today, she is remembered, adored, loved and respected by multitude of people all across the globe. In her own words, “I never married...but see...I still have so many children!”

Being a single woman, she brought up more children than two mothers of that era could put together. She shaped more lives than she can ever remember; she stood by the known and the unknown in their times of need, sickness and desolation; she showed her inner strength and courage at times when the strongest of the strong would have crumbled. Her love and affection is still remembered in her radiant smile and gestures. One would find her busy all the time on her mobile phone...talking to someone or the other. When asked she’d say, “There are so many lonely and old people...if I call, they feel happy. Is there something wrong with that?” Miss Helen Daniel...the savior still of lonely hearts, if not in person but then with the help of technology.

It is true that with age, she lost some of her physical might. But she remained the same angelic person to the core trying to live a life for people... if in no other possible ways, then in her prayers.

A woman of substance, she was probably one of those rare women who is called “ama” (mother) without ever giving birth.

She went home to be with her Father in Heaven, having joyfully using her talents in the service of others and indeed she led a worthwhile life! Rest in Peace!

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BIRTHDAYS in Feb. & March 2018

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Devca Fredrick</td>
<td>02 February</td>
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<td>Fr. Singh Sebastian</td>
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<td>Fr. Chettri Joseph</td>
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<td>Fr. Sagnes Edward</td>
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<td>Fr. Sada Andrew</td>
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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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