Message from the Bishop’s Desk:

T h e H o l y Father, Pope Francis has declared October 2019 as the “Extraordinary Missionary Month”. Very practical steps have been suggested to celebrate this Extraordinary Missionary Month. One such step is to share the testimony of one’s encounter with Christ. We have several saints who have had the experience of their encounter with Christ such as Mother Teresa of Kolkata, St. Francis Xavier and St. John Marie Vianney. As I was reading a small booklet on the ‘Cure of Ars’ 1786-1859 by Fr. Bartholomew O’Brien, I found a passage where Antoine Mandy, Mayor of Ars, has described St. John Marie Vianney in these words, “we have a poor church, but a holy parish priest.” Indeed what a powerful testimony! In the same booklet I also found a very enlightening message in the words of St. John Marie Vianney, when he was going to Ars as a new parish priest, he asked some children where Ars was, one of them pointed the way and St. John Marie Vianney told the boy “my young friend, you have shown me the way to Ars; I shall show you the way to heaven.” - another powerful word of testimony coming from the mind of a priest.

St. John Marie Vianney is the patron saint of priests, so let us follow in him a perfect example of holiness in our day to day life. As St. Paul writes in Colossians 3:17,23 “and whatever you do or say do it in the name of Jesus, the Lord, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, whatever you do, do it wholeheartedly, working for the Lord, and not for humans. We know it well that the Lord will reward us with inheritance. We are the children of a generous Father, serving our Lord who is overflowing with goodness. On the occasion of celebrating the Extraordinary Missionary Month let us attune ourselves to proclaim Christ in our words and deeds.

+Stephen Lepcha
ONE DAY: RECOLLECTION AND MEETING OF THE CLERGY OF DARJEELING-KURSEONG DEANERY AUGUST, 2019

Venue: Divyavani Pastoral Centre
Date: 5th August 2019

Total number of the Clergies present: 10

On 5th August, 2019 Darjeeling-Kurseong Deanery Fathers had their Monthly Recollection cum Meeting at Divyavani Pastoral Centre, Darjeeling. As per the schedule the Recollection began at 10:30am. Rev. Fr. Solomon Rai SDB, the associate pastor of Sacred Heart Parish, Sonada was kind enough to guide us on the journey of New Evangelization in the diocese. In his expertise Fr. Solomon summarized the entire Encyclical “Evangelii Gaudium” The Joy of the Gospel within a short time of 50 minutes. Began with the distinction between happiness verses Joy [materialism verses encounter with persona-Christi], he explained all the seven chapters of the book in gist. We ever remain grateful to Fr. Solomon for helping us to understand the book better. At 11:30am we had Adoration in which Fathers took part in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This was followed by lunch.

In the afternoon at 1:00pm we gathered together for Sharing Session. The questionnaire consisting of six different questions were prepared by the preacher. Each question was taken for discussion. Everyone gave his opinion. Since some questions were pertaining to the New Evangelization the group decided to make a note out of them. Some of the outcomes of the discussion were as follows:

1. In the context of New Evangelization the need is felt by the group that the diocese could send some priests for the Catechetical Training.
2. With regard to Spiritual Transformation of the Parish and Institutions the initiative to be taken by the Clergy. In other words, Personal Encounter with the person of Christ in order to lead people of God.
3. The group also felt that at present scenario Catholic Families are not growing and as a result no transmission of Catholic Faith. Due to excessive use of contracepts and artificial Family Planning the birth rate is decreasing every year. Thus, Family Commission of the Diocese must come forward with genuine suggestions and action plans.
4. For the Priests, while breaking the Word of God, it should be the outcome of deep contemplation and meditation on the Word.
5. House Visit has always been proved to the effective means of evangelization and our priests are encouraged to carry on the task of family visit at parish level.
6. One of the Parish Priests in the group gave living example as to how Catholic Community could be effective in preaching the Gospel by way of rendering social service in a local level.
7. Finally all our mission works are to be directed towards the evangelization of the Good News. In this regard let Jesus himself be the model for us all.

FR. Alexius Lepcha

New Quasi Parish Formed

Inauguration of St. Augustine Quasi parish Kankebong was held on July 14, 2019. Fr. Patrick Golay was appointed as the first Parish priest of the newly erected Quasi parish with effect from 14.9.2019. It is bifurcated from St. Patrick Church Primtam which was established in 1963. Kankebong church was built in 1976, by Edward Gressort C. R. The Quasi Parish is named St. Augustine after the Augustinian Monks. There are in total 61 catholic families.

Food for thought
After the successful implementation of the Phase 1 at Tanderbong and Phase 2 at Tanyang under the able leadership of Frs. Patrick Golay and Fr. Boniface Myron Rai, Phase III of the G1 Abhiyan Program was successfully conducted at Vijaya Rani Girja (Church of the Queen of Victories) compound, Maria Busty, Kalimpong District, West Bengal, India on Saturday, 22 June 2019. It is the final phase of the program for this year. More than 200 children and parents took part in the tree planting event in gratitude and fond memories of the friends and godparents of Luxembourg. Besides Maria Busty, children from St. George School and Hostel, Pedong, Kashyong, Sakyong, Mirik, Tandrabong and Munsong were present for the memorable event. Besides Bishop Stephen Lepcha, Fr. Edward Baretto, IP Coordinator, Fr. Joseph Chettiri, dean, Fr. Benny, SJ from Sakyong, Fr. Gilbert Chettiri, Mirik, Fr. Paul Siting, Tandrabong and Fr. Norbert Sada from Munsong were present. Mr. John Tamang, IP Secretary and people from the electronic and print media were present too. Fr. Don Bosco Lucksom, parish priest, Cluny Sisters and a large number of parishioners of Maria Busty were also present for the program.

The day’s program began with a short awareness program in the parish hall. Fr. Edward introduced the concept of G1 Abhiyan and explained it's meaning. He also explained that the main purpose of this exercise was to show gratitude to our godparents and benefactors in a tangible way. Bishop Stephen then explained why it was necessary to inculcate an attitude of gratitude. He also said that G1 (jeevan) means life. Life has to be given. Hence one must not just know how to receive all the time but also should learn to give to others. The children of Kashyong presented a beautiful dance on the theme of saving the earth by saving trees. They also presented a song on environment. There was a song and dance also from Maria Busty children.

After the program in the hall children moved out to the field already prepared for planting. They purchased plants at the rate of 15 rupees per unit and carried out the planting. Altogether 2000 saplings were planted. Fr. Norbert had made arrangement for 4000 saplings. The remaining saplings were bought by some priests and local people. Bishop Stephen Lepcha had camped in Maria Busty two days prior to the event. He personally supervised the demarcation of the land and also digging of 2000 holes in the hot sun. It was indeed touching to see the Bishop leading by example. He showed everyone what it means to be a servant-leader. He also created a Tree Protection Committee whose job it will be to follow up the survival and healthy growth of the trees.

Fr. Don Bosco Lucksom, parish priest of Maria Busty, who is undergoing treatment for cancer was with the Bishop and his parishioners for three consecutive days in the field working hand in hand with them. He truly set an example for what it means to give life to others. He deserves our applause and gratitude. He also organized breakfast and delicious lunch for all. When the number of participants turned out to be more than double of what was expected he did not panic but quietly made arrangements for all. The Cluny Sister of Maria Busty lent their full support to the program by being there in the field working hand in hand with others. The parishioners need to be commended for their wholehearted support and collaboration to the parish priest and to the entire program. Without their active participation the program could not have been a success. On behalf of Indesch Patenschaften I thank all of them. My thanks also to all the priests who came personally bringing with them the sponsored children from various centres. They all made many sacrifices to attend the program. The event was covered by local and regional newspapers. The program was also filmed and can be watched in YouTube under the title "G1 Abhiyan" Divya Vani Prastuti.

Fr. Edward Baretto
IP Coordinator
MS. PHILOMENA NAMCHU (1933 -2019)

“The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away;
May the name of the Lord be praised.” Job 1:20

On 6th August 2019 God called home one of His very faithful and committed daughters, Ms. Philomena Namchu to be with Him in eternal peace. Fondly called Juma Guruama or namchu Guruama by her near and dear ones, there are very few people across the Diocese who does not know her. No doubt her death has left a big void in the hearts of many but it also calls for a celebration of a life well lived in the service of God and humanity. She was born in Darjeeling on 13th December 1933 to Late Patrick Namchu and Late Margaret Namchu. Theirs was a devout Christian family and nurtured with such Christian virtues she grew up with a deep faith in Christianity and in the Church. Her elder siblings, Late Fr. Anthony Namchu and Late Sr. Dr. Celina Namchu also played a pivotal role in instilling her ardent faith in Christ.

Guruama did her schooling from the then Boarding school (now Nepali Girls' H.S. School) and went on to do her Honours in History from St. Joseph's College. Her love for education and teaching led her to join St. Teresa’s girls' H.S. School as a teacher in 1955 and in 1961 she became the first Nepali Assistant Headmistress of a school as renowned as St. Teresa’s. During her tenure in the school, St. Teresa’s reached great heights in all fields. At a time when English phonetics was unheard of specially in Madhyamik schools, she took the initiative of training the students in phonetics, under the guidance of Late Mother Rosario IBVM and in collaboration with St. Alphonsus School, Kurseong. She was always a proactive teacher who involved her students actively in the teaching-learning process.

A strict disciplinarian, she always ensured the adherence to discipline at home, in the school and the society. She was very vocal and lucid in her expressions but an equally soft hearted person who never thought twice before rendering help in times of need. A kind gesture, a word of concern, a faith unflinching, a candid and pure soul summed up her personality.

Her love for the Church was seen in her active participation in Church activities. Her faith in the Eucharist was so deep that even in her old age, despite her physical problems she never missed the Mass. When walking to Church became difficult for her, she used to hire a vehicle that brought her to and fro the Church but she never missed the Mass. She was one of the first to spread the Marian devotion amongst the faithful. She was an active member of the Sodality that was begun by Late Bishop Eric Benjamin. Looking back at her life one can undoubtedly say that she was one of the pillars of our Church.

For her life was a gift from God so she lived her life fully, be it personal, professional, social or spiritual. And having led a life so meaningful she breathed her last on 6th August 2019. She “fought the good fight”, she “ran the race” and then went Home to receive her “Crown of Glory”.

May she rest in eternal peace.