

DIOCESE OF ITANAGAR

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Naharlagun – 791 110
Arunachal Pradesh – INDIA



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CIRCULAR

Dear Fathers, Brothers, Sisters, and faithful,

I pray for all of you as we conclude the month of May, dedicated to our Blessed Mother. May her intercession bring us closer to her Son, Jesus Christ. I also entrust you to the Sacred Heart, from whom we receive the fountain of mercy and blessings.

Recently, we bid farewell to Pope Francis, whose papacy was marked by his tireless efforts to spread love, compassion, and mercy. As the Bible reminds us, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud." (1 Corinthians 13:4). We give thanks for his legacy and pray that his soul rests in eternal peace.

We welcome Pope Leo XIV with open hearts and pray that he will guide the Church with wisdom and spiritual strength. As the Psalmist says, "Guide me, O Lord, in the way of your commandments, and I will walk in your truth." (Psalm 119:35).

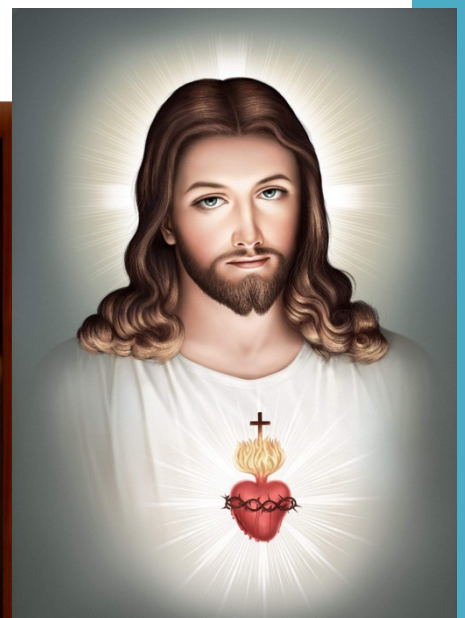
As we begin the academic sessions in our educational institutions, let us be reminded of our commitment to the integral development of the students who are placed in our care. "Education is an essential part of the Church's mission, and it is a fundamental aspect of the human person's development." (Gravissimum Educationis, 1).

Let us continue to pray for our diocese, its clergy, and the entire Catholic Church, that we may remain faithful to our Lord's call and serve with love and humility. May God bless us all.

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the intercession of our Blessed Mother guide and bless us all.

With paternal love and blessings,

+ Bishop Benny Varghese



“A TRIBUTE OF RESPECT TO OUR LATE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS”

Upon the passing of Pope Francis, we as a diocese had joined the global community in mourning the loss of a figure whose profound compassion and unwavering dedication to the human spirit have left an indelible mark on humanity. His departure creates a void not only within the Catholic Church but across the world, resonating deeply with people from all walks of life.

Pope Francis was above all a shepherd who walked among the poorest and weakest of his flock, understanding their struggles with rare and genuine empathy. His remarkable breadth of knowledge, encompassing theological scholarship, historical awareness, and a keen understanding of contemporary global issues, was never confined to academic circles. Instead, he translated complex realities into accessible truths, speaking directly to the hearts of the marginalized, the forgotten, and the dispossessed.

From the streets of Buenos Aires to the Vatican, Pope Francis's depth of experience, gleaned from a life lived in service, imbued his leadership with unique authenticity. He understood the pain of poverty, the fear of displacement, and the yearning for justice. He brought this lived experience to the forefront of his papacy, challenging the powerful and comforting the vulnerable.

It is striking that his final pastoral message on Easter Sunday was in defence of freedom of expression, freedom of religion, and human rights that are under threat in many authoritarian systems. On a weekend that speaks to the spirit of the resurrection of hope, Pope Francis left us a positive message of determination to stand up for the right and to resist the wrong. He championed dialogue and reconciliation, urging a world often fractured by division to embrace the common humanity that binds us.

Pope Francis's legacy will be remembered for his unwavering commitment to the poor and his relentless pursuit of a Church that reflects the mercy and love of Christ. He reminded us that faith is not a mere abstraction but a call to action, a mandate to build a more just and compassionate world.



“POPE LEO XIV: A NEW ERA FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH”

On May 8, 2025, the Catholic Church welcomed a new leader, Pope Leo XIV, in a conclave that lasted just one day. Born Robert Francis Prevost on September 14, 1955, in Chicago, Illinois, he is the first pope to hail from North America. Prevost's journey to the papacy is marked by his dedication to missionary work, social justice, and human rights.

Prevost joined the Order of Saint Augustine in 1977 and was ordained as a priest in 1982. His extensive experience in Peru, where he served as a parish pastor, diocesan official, seminary teacher, and administrator, significantly shaped his perspective on social justice and human rights.

As Bishop of Chiclayo in Peru from 2015 to 2023, Prevost demonstrated his commitment to serving the people. His appointment as prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops and president of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America by Pope Francis in 2023 further solidified his role in the Church.

Pope Leo XIV's papacy is characterized by his emphasis on synodality, missionary dialogue, and engagement with social and technological challenges. His episcopal motto, "In illo Uno unum" ("In the One, we are one"), reflects his dedication to unity and communion. He is committed to ecumenism, prudence in social media, and addressing the impact of artificial intelligence on human dignity.

As the Catholic Church embarks on this new chapter, Pope Leo XIV's leadership promises to bring fresh perspectives and renewed energy to the global community of faithful. Let us support him with our prayers and strive to be closer to the Church and one another.

“DIOCESE OF ITANAGAR CONGRATULATES SR. RAKHE ALIK ON HER PROFESSION CEREMONY”

The Diocese of Itanagar extends heartfelt congratulations to Sr. Rakhe Alik from Bogra village, under Boasimla parish, on her solemn profession as a religious sister of the Sacred Heart Congregation, Amala Province, Assam. This significant milestone marks a new chapter in Sr. Rakhe's journey of faith and service.

On October 10, 2024, Sr. Rakhe, along with six companions, dedicated her life to the Sacred Heart Congregation in a beautiful ceremony. Notably, this profession ceremony also marked several other significant events: the first profession of seven new sisters, the final profession of two sisters, and the silver jubilee celebration of five sisters from the same province.

The ceremony was graced by the presence of esteemed dignitaries, including Most Rev. Benny Varghese, Bishop of Itanagar, who officiated the profession. Other notable attendees included Most Rev. Michael Akasius, Bishop of Tezpur Diocese, and Most Rev. Dominic Lumon, Archbishop Emeritus of Imphal. The congregation was also blessed with the presence of numerous priests, religious, family members, and well-wishers who gathered to celebrate this joyous occasion.

The Diocese of Itanagar rejoices in Sr. Rakhe's commitment to her vocation and prays for her continued growth in faith, love, and service. May her dedication inspire many, and may her journey be filled with God's blessings and guidance.

“ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH RADUM CELEBRATES SILVER JUBILEE”

St. Mary's Catholic Church Radum, under Boasimla Parish, marked a significant milestone with its Silver Jubilee celebration from May 8-11, 2025. The church's remarkable journey began in 2000, sparked by a miraculous healing in 1999. Today, the church stands as a witness to the power of faith and community.

The community extends heartfelt gratitude to pioneers like Fr. Sebastian CMF, Shri Tatung Talin, Mrs. Tatung Nayu, and many others who played a crucial role in establishing and growing the church. Special thanks to Shri Lomra Taka (Robert) and his family for generously donating land for the church campus.

Bishop Benny Varghese of Itanagar congratulated the community, emphasizing the church's journey as evidence to faith and community. He wished the church continued growth and blessings, guided by love, compassion, and service.

Heartfelt congratulations to Rev. Fr. Roshan Kindo CMF, Parish Priest, and the entire community on this momentous occasion. Boasimla parish is blessed with 18 village communities. The community gratefully remembered the initiatives of Fr. Mathew CMF the former parish priest in building the church and constant visit he made which led the community to strive in their faith. May the Silver Jubilee celebration strengthen the bonds of faith and community, inspiring many more to follow the path of love and service.

“ST. MARY'S PARISH GANGTE: A GROWING COMMUNITY OF FAITH”

Established in 2015, St. Mary's Parish Gangte has experienced remarkable growth, becoming a beacon of hope and spirituality for the surrounding villages. Today, the parish encompasses several villages, including: Gangte: 26 households, Guchi: 12 households, Tungmer: 14 households, Gangba: 6 households, Maui: 3 households, Raibalo: 11 households, Raiga: 4 households, Tali village: 61 households

Bishop Benny Varghese visited the community on 13.05.2025, celebrating Holy Mass in the presence of a large gathering of faithful from neighbouring villages. This significant event underscored the parish's growing influence and the bishop's commitment to nurturing the spiritual growth of its members.

The construction of the church is currently halfway through, and preparations for the presbytery is over. Despite the progress, there are still many villages that remain to be reached and ministered to, presenting an opportunity for further growth and service.

The parish would like to extend a special note of thanks and appreciation to Rev. Fr. Mathew CMF, who took a special interest in the pastoral care of these communities. His dedication and commitment have been instrumental in nurturing the faith and spiritual growth of the parish members.

As St. Mary's Parish Gangte continues to grow and expand its reach, it remains committed to spreading the message of love, hope, and faith to all those it serves. Community is eagerly waiting for the arrival of The Order of Friars Minor Conventual (OFM Conv) in June. We pray for the community that they may remain steadfast in their faith.

“YOUTH OF THE CHURCH: HOPE FOR THE WORLD”

The 3rd Sangram Deanery Mega Youth Convention was held at St. Andre Parish, Nyapin, from May 7th to 11th, 2025. The theme of the convention was "Youth of the Church; Hope for the World." The event brought together 405 participants from nine parishes under the Sangram Deanery, including youths, Fathers, Brothers, and Sisters.

The convention featured a variety of input sessions on topics relevant to the youth, including:

- The Sacrament of the Eucharist
- The Impact of Social Media on the Lives of the Youth
- The Sacrament of Marriage
- Drug Addiction and its Consequences
- Vocation to Priesthood and Religious Life
- Career Guidance

In addition to the educational and spiritual sessions, the convention included cultural competitions, games, and sports, such as volleyball, football, and tug of war. These activities fostered a spirit of friendly competition and unity among the participants.

The Mega Youth Convention was a memorable and transformative experience for all involved. It fostered spiritual and personal growth in the lives of the youth, promoting a sense of unity and celebration. The event was a testimony to the power of faith and community in shaping the lives of young people.

“ST. ANTONY PARISH RAGA: A JOURNEY OF FAITH AND GROWTH”

St. Antony Parish Raga, under the spiritual guidance of the Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (MCBS) fathers, has been witnessing remarkable growth and dedication. The parish's journey began in 1992 with Mrs. Godak Martha embracing the Catholic faith, marking the start of a vibrant community.

In March 2022, the pastoral care of Raga was entrusted to the MCBS, with Fr. Anoop MCBS serving as the first parish priest. Under his guidance, the community has flourished, comprising 67 Catholic households and extending its care to the village of Pungum with 5 houses. The MCBS fathers established a primary school in 2023, further strengthening the community's foundation.

On May 13, 2025, the community celebrated a significant milestone with the establishment of St. Clare FC convent. This new convent is home to three sisters from the Alphonse Jyoti Province of Bharanangam, who will enrich the parish's spiritual and social fabric through their dedicated service. Diocese thank Rev. Sr. Jessy Maria FCC: Provincial Superior of Alphonse Jyoti Province of Bharanangam, for sending Sr. Beena FCC, Sr. Remya FCC, and Sr. Alphonse FCC to Raga.

The day's celebration was marked by two significant events: First Holy Communion: 13 children received their first holy communion, marking an important milestone in their spiritual journey. Sacrament of Confirmation: 19 adults received the sacrament of confirmation, deepening their commitment to their faith.

“SACRED HEART PARISH LIKABALI IS BLESSED WITH RANI MARIA CONVENT”

The parish's journey began on December 24, 1999, with the baptism of nine individuals from Bali village at SFS Church, Silapathar. Lt. Kardu Taipodia, a believer donated a plot of land for the Catholic Church and a makeshift church was constructed.

After nine years, St. Mary's Church, Bali village, gained independence and Sacred Heart Parish, Likabali, was established in 2009 with Fr. Stephen Pou MSFS as the first Parish Priest. The parish church was blessed by Bishop John Thomas in 2010. Presently Rev Fr. Simon Thaikh MSFS serves as the Parish Priest. On May 14, 2025, the community welcomed Sr. Carmela FCC, Sr. Pauline FCC, and Sr. Mary Kim FCC to collaborate in the mission at Likabali. Most Rev. Benny Varghese, Bishop of Itanagar Inaugurated Rani Maria Convent in the presents of fathers, sisters, and large gathering of faithful.

The Sacred Heart Parish, Likabali, currently consists of: 12 Catholic villages, 154 households with 820 catholic faithful taken care by 2 priests and 3 sisters. Diocese of Itanagar expresses gratitude to Rev. Fr. Tomson Aerathedathu MSFS for the yeoman service of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales to the faithful in the whole of Siyang districts and Leparda district of Itanagar. Diocese also thank Rev. Sr. Lilly Maria FCC Provincial of St. Clare Province Imphal for their support in sending the sisters to Likabali.

“VISIT OF BISHOP BENNY VARGHESE TO PIPU CIRCLE UNDER ST. JOSEPH PARISH SEPPA”:

The Catholic faith was introduced to Pipu Circle under St. Joseph Parish Seppa in 1992, thanks to the instrumental efforts of Mr. Atung Doka. As the Bible says, "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19), Bro. Prem Bhai visited Pipu and baptized the first group of Catholics, leading to the whole town embracing the Catholic faith. This remarkable event reflects the power of faith and community, as seen in Acts 2:41-47, where the early Christians came together in devotion and fellowship.

Today, Pipu Circle has grown to include seven villages with a Catholic presence: Bakar, Ropo, Flego, Doka, Cheda, Lozi, and Pipu. The visit of Bishop Benny Varghese on May 16, 2025, was a historic occasion that brought together leaders from all the villages. As the Bible says, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another" (Hebrews 10:25). The gathering was a witness to the community's commitment to their faith and to supporting one another.

During the visit, the community came together to commit their support for the Catholic Church and donated more than 25000 square meters of land for further development. This generous act reflects the biblical principle of giving and sharing, as seen in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, where it says, "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously."

The Catholic Church expresses its gratitude to Shri Hayeng Mangfi, the Honourable MLA of 9-Chayang Tajo A/C, for his support. Special thanks are also extended to Mr. Niya Doka, Chairman PGCSO, and Shri Arjun Flago Taniyang, ZPM Pipu, who openly professed their faith in the Catholic Church. As the Bible says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story" (Psalm 107:2), their testimonies are a powerful reminder of the impact of faith.

The Catholic community of St. Joseph Parish Seppa is also grateful to Shri Joro Doka and all the APCA office bearers of East Kameng District for their unwavering support. Rev. Fr. Avinash, the parish priest, and the youth from Seppa are needs a special note of thanks for their logistical support, which helped to make the event a success. As the community celebrated the Holy Eucharist, they thanked God for the wonderful blessings they have received, reflecting the biblical principle of gratitude and worship. Mr. Sunil Rigom, chairman Pipu Town Development Committee has expressed the support of the area to the Catholic Church. May God bless you all.

“ST. JOSEPH CHURCH LAPANG VILLAGE UNDER HOLY CROSS PARISH BAMENG BLESSED”

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches" (Matthew 13:31-32). This parable is very much applicable for Holy Cross Parish Bameng. Just as a seed needs time, care, and nourishment to flourish, a church community requires patience, prayer, and dedication to grow and thrive.

The story of the Catholic community was the same. The seeds of faith planted in 1990 grew to a big tree and it bears fruits. Today Bameng parish is blessed with 26 village communities. In the 1990s, Prem Bhai visited this area. In 1994, a man named Tamar Lapung was struggling with illness. When the local healers' efforts failed, Prem Bhai arrived and decided to take him to Seppa for medical treatment. Initially hesitant, Tamar agreed to go on the condition that he wouldn't be converted. Although they couldn't proceed further due to some issues in Seppa, Tamar was miraculously healed and returned to his village.

Later that year, during Christmas celebrations, Tamar and his wife, Meya, accepted Christ as their Savior and Lord, inspired by Bishop Robert Kerketta. Over the next two years, they would often travel 14 kilometres to attend Sunday services at Bameng Church. Many from Rasang and Poube villages joined them, and Prem Bhai encouraged Tamar to build a church in his village.

On April 12, 1996, Fr. K Jose SVD blessed the first church, which was a thatched hut. About 72 families had joined by then. Small churches were later built in Poube and Rasang. However, in 2006, some members left to build another church in a nearby village, as they wanted their own place of worship.

In 2012, Bameng parish was formed, and the priests tried to reunite the two groups, but they were unwilling. However, in 2022, they agreed to come together and build a new church. Construction began in October 2024, and currently, about 25 families are part of this church. On special feast days, people from nearby villages gather here for worship.

The community's journey reflects their faith and perseverance, and the new church is a witness to their unity and devotion. A special note of Thanks to Fr. Biju Philip MCBS and all the fathers at Bameng for the initiative taken to unite and build this beautiful church. Thanks to the generosity of well-wishers and benefactors who were instrumental for the construction of the church.

“RENEWING OUR SPIRIT, REVITALIZING OUR MINISTRY”

The diocesan priests of Itanagar recently gathered from May 19-24 for their annual spiritual retreat, a vital opportunity for spiritual rejuvenation and reflection. This year's retreat was led by the renowned scholar and preacher, Rev. Fr. Arockiasamy SJ, from Trichy who guided the priests through the Ignatian method of retreat.

The Ignatian method, inspired by St. Ignatius of Loyola, emphasizes prayer, reflection, and discernment. It's a powerful way to deepen one's relationship with God and discern God's will in their lives. As Scripture says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

During the retreat, the priests had a chance to reflect on their ministry and service to the Lord and the community. They were able to rejuvenate their spirits and gain a new perspective on their vocation. As the Bible says, "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

“CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL: ULTIMATE DESTINATION FOR ACADEMIC FUTURE “

I am writing to share with you the exciting news about the recent results of our children who have completed their Higher Secondary School education. I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to all our students who have passed with flying colours! Their hard work and dedication are truly commendable. I also thank all the depicted teachers and the support given by our committed parents supporting our young people.

As we move forward, admissions to our colleges have begun, and we are blessed to have three esteemed higher educational institutions under our Catholic umbrella: SFS College Aalo, Don Bosco College Itanagar, and Claret College Ziro. These colleges offer a nurturing environment that fosters academic excellence and spiritual growth.

I earnestly request our parents to consider admitting their children to one of these Catholic colleges. By doing so, we can provide our children with a solid foundation in their faith, guiding them to become compassionate, responsible, and faith-filled individuals. As Jesus said, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

Let us work together to bring our children closer to the teachings of Christ and the Catholic faith. I pray that God blesses our children as they embark on this new chapter in their educational journey.

“LITURGICAL MATTERS: A CALL TO REFLECTION”

I am writing to address a matter of great importance regarding the celebration of our liturgy. During the liturgy, some fathers have been observed moving around, taking photos and videos while wearing liturgical dress. This behaviour is not proper and can be distracting.

Therefore, I kindly exhort you to refrain from taking photos and videos while wearing liturgical dress during the liturgy. Our primary focus during the liturgy should be on worshiping God and serving the faithful.

Regarding the hymns in our liturgy, it is essential that we teach the people to choose the right hymns for the right occasion. This will help to enhance the worship experience and ensure that our liturgical celebrations are reverent and meaningful.

The altar holds a central place in our liturgical celebrations as the sacred space where the sacrifice of the Mass is offered. Given its significance, it is essential to maintain the altar's dignity and reverence. Keeping the Altar Free from clutter. To preserve the sanctity of the altar, we should refrain from using it as a storage space for different items. Instead, let us ensure that only items directly related to the liturgy are placed on or near the altar.

“THE SACRED HEART DEVOTION: A JUNE TRADITION OF LOVE AND MERCY”

As we concluded the month of May, where we reflected on the importance of devotion to our Blessed Mother, we now turn our attention to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in June. Mary, the Mother of God, stands as a model of faith, hope, and love, and her intercession is a powerful aid to us in our journey of faith. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is a symbol of God's infinite love for humanity. It represents the heart of Jesus, filled with love, compassion, and mercy for all people. The devotion to the Sacred Heart emphasizes the importance of responding to God's love and mercy in our lives.

The Bible reminds us that "God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in them" (1 John 4:16). This scripture underscores the significance of the Sacred Heart devotion, which is rooted in the biblical understanding of God's love and mercy.

As we reflect on the Sacred Heart devotion in June, let us entrust ourselves to the Sacred Heart, that we may receive the mercy and blessings we need to serve our Lord and our community. By doing so, we can deepen our relationship with God and grow in our faith, hope, and love.

The Sacred Heart devotion is not just a personal devotion, but also a call to service. As we reflect on the love and mercy of the Sacred Heart, let us be inspired to serve others with compassion, kindness, and generosity. By serving others, we can manifest the love of the Sacred Heart in our lives and bring hope and joy to those around us.

“HEARTY WELCOME SISTERS”

We are happy to welcome the Sisters of St. John the Baptist and Mary the Queen (SJB), a congregation founded by Fr. John Maira Haw in Germany in 1919. The SJB sisters arrived in India in 1963 and currently serve in Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam and Chhattisgarh with 149 members. We warmly welcome Sr. Rupa Antony SJB who will be my secretary and Sr. Rani SJB who will be assisting in the bishop's house from the month of June 2025.

TRANSFERS AND APPOINTMENT

1. Rev. Fr. Elexius Kerketta, the assistant Parish Priest, St. Joseph Parish, Seppa
2. Rev. Fr. Suresh Sebastian MCBS, Parish Priest Corpus Christi Parish Mengio
3. Rev. Fr. Deepak Oswald D'Souza, Parish Priest St. Joseph Parish Sejjosa
4. Rev. Fr. Yesubabu Duggirala SAC, Parish Priest Good Shepherd Parish Daporijo
5. Rev. Fr. Tigga Stephen SDB, Parish Priest, St. Mary's Itanagar
6. Rev. Fr. Kharumnuid Wanlambor MSFS, Parish Priest, Holy Rosary Parish Basar
7. Rev. Fr. Charles Ekka CMF, Administrator, St. Claret College Ziro
8. Rev. Fr. Rocky Kulangara MCBS, Assistant Priest, Corpus Christi Parish Mengio
9. Rev. Fr. Neil Armstrong R Marak SAC, Assistant Priest, Mary Queen of the Apostles Parish Kimin
10. Rev. Fr. Nazarius Lakra SDB, Assistant Priest, St. Mary's Parish Itanagar
11. Rev. Fr. Martin Munda, Principal of St. Jospheh School and Assistant, St. Joseph Parish Seppa
12. Rev. Fr. Joison Jospheh Edakkalathur, Assistant Priest, Mary Help of Christinas Parish Yachuli
13. Rev. Fr. Manu Mathew MCBS, Assistant Priest, St. Antony's Parish Raga

NECROLOGY

1. Mrs. Thressiamma Joseph (93) grandmother of Fr. Benedict MST, Parish Priest of Pakkekesang on April 30, 2025.
2. Fr. Jose Parampukattil MSFS (72) younger brother of Fr. George Parampukatil MSFS on 9th May 2025