



# BISHOP'S CIRCULAR DIBRUGARH



Bishop's House, Dibrugarh- 786 001, Assam

CIR/DOD/BAH/05/2022

**Dear Fathers/Sisters/Brothers and Christ Faithful,**

Greetings from Bishop's House, Dibrugarh!

The Ordinary Time has come to an end and the Season of Advent is upon us. Advent Season is a very special time of year that sometimes gets lost in the bright lights of the Christmas season it precedes. The first day of Advent is the first day of a new Liturgical (or church) calendar and begins a four week period of preparation in anticipation of the nativity of Jesus at Christmas.

It is a time of preparation and expectation. It's all about reflecting on how we can prepare our hearts and homes, parishes and institutions for Christ's birth in the world as it is today. It is a time for faith communities and families to remember, through prayer, reflections, special music, and good deeds what the true meaning of Jesus' birth is.

A symbol which is popular in Churches for this Season is the Advent Wreath. By tradition, it is often found either in the narthex (gathering area) or, as is more common, near the ambo of a Church. Having a wreath in the home can be a unifying symbol for families. The liturgical color of Advent is a particular shade of purple, a color which is most often associated with royalty. This color is used to symbolize the anticipation of the birth of Christ, who is our King and Savior.



Advent Season is also a great time to prepare one's soul for the birth of Christ by taking advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Many Parishes offer special times during Advent for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. May you all make Advent a worthy preparation for the coming again of Christ into the world.

## Important Papal Documents

Pope Francis continues to guide and reform the Church with his documents. Through these documents the Pope officially imparts instruction to the whole Church. It is important for all the faithful to know the contents of each document. The summary of some of the recent documents are given below for our information and reflection. The documents are:

1. Apostolic Letter *Antiquum ministerium*
2. Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*
3. Apostolic Letter *Desiderio Desideravi*
4. Apostolic Letter *Ad charisma tuendum*

### 1. Apostolic Letter *Antiquum ministerium* - The ministry of Catechist

With the new Apostolic Letter issued "motu proprio," Pope Francis establishes the lay ministry of catechist, intended to respond to an urgent need for the evangelization of the modern world, and undertaken in a "secular" manner, avoiding clericalisation. "Fidelity to the past and responsibility for the present are necessary conditions for the Church to carry out her mission in the world," writes Pope

Francis in the Apostolic Letter *Antiquum ministerium*, with which the Holy Father institutes the lay ministry of catechist.

In the context of evangelization in the contemporary world and in the face of “the rise of a globalised culture,” it is necessary to recognize “those lay men and women who feel called by virtue of their baptism to cooperate in the work of catechesis.” At the same time, Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of “genuine interaction with young people,” as well as “the need for creative methodologies and resources capable of adapting the proclamation of the Gospel to the missionary transformation that the Church has undertaken.”

### **A new ministry with ancient origins**

The new ministry has ancient origins, going back to the New Testament: it is mentioned, for example, in the Gospel of Luke and in St Paul’s Letters to the Corinthians and Galatians, albeit in a seminal form. But “the history of evangelization over the past two millennia,” writes Pope Francis, “clearly shows the effectiveness of the mission of catechists,” who have “devoted their lives to catechetical instruction so that the faith might be an effective support for the life of every human being,” — even to the point of sacrificing their own lives. Since the Second Vatican Council, there has been a growing awareness of the fact that “the role of catechists is of the highest importance” (*Ad gentes*, 17) for “the development of the Christian community.”

“In our own day too,” writes Pope Francis, “many competent and dedicated catechists... carry out a mission invaluable for the transmission and growth of the faith,” while a “long line of blessed, saints and martyrs who were catechists has significantly advanced the Church’s mission.” This “represents a rich resource not only for catechesis but also for the entire history of Christian spirituality.”

### **Transforming society through Christian values**

Without in any way detracting from the “the Bishop’s mission as the primary catechist in his Diocese,” nor from the “particular responsibility of parents for the Christian formation of their children,” the Pope recognizes the importance of lay men and women who collaborate in the service of catechesis, going out to “encounter all those who are waiting to discover the beauty, goodness, and truth of the Christian faith.” Pope Francis emphasizes that it is “the task of pastors to support them in this process and to enrich the life of the Christian community through the recognition of lay ministries capable of contributing to the transformation of society through the ‘penetration of Christian values into the social, political and economic sectors’.”

### **Avoiding clericalisation**

Every catechist says Pope Francis “must be a witness to the faith, a teacher and mystagogue, a companion and pedagogue, who teaches for the Church.” Catechists, he continues, “are called first to be expert in the pastoral service of transmitting the faith,” from the first proclamation of the *kerygma* to preparation for the sacraments of Christian initiation, and throughout the process of ongoing formation.

All this is possible, he says, “only through prayer, study, and direct participation in the life of the community,” so that catechists can grow in their identity and in “the integrity and responsibility” that identity entails. Receiving the lay ministry of catechist, in fact, “will emphasize even more the missionary commitment proper to every baptized person,” writes Pope Francis, “a commitment that must, however, be carried out in a fully “secular” manner, avoiding any form of clericalization.”

## **2. Apostolic constitution *Praedicate evangelium* (“Preach the Gospel”)**

Pope Francis reforms Roman Curia with launch of Vatican constitution. The Vatican published a long-awaited document implementing Pope Francis’ reform of the organization and structure of the Roman Curia.

The apostolic constitution, ***Praedicate evangelium*** (“Preach the Gospel”), was released initially only in Italian on March 19 after nine years in production by the Pope’s Council of Cardinal Advisers. The constitution underlines that “any member of the faithful” can lead one of newly constituted Vatican dicasteries or other bodies, “given their particular competence, power of governance and function.”

*Praedicate evangelium* replaces *Pastor bonus*, the **apostolic constitution** on the Roman Curia promulgated by Pope John Paul II on June 28, 1988, and later modified by both Popes Benedict and Francis.

With the publication of the new constitution, *Pastor bonus* is “fully abrogated and replaced.” The constitution was issued on the **Solemnity of St. Joseph**, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the ninth anniversary of the **inauguration** of Pope Francis’ pontificate. It will take full effect on June 5, the Solemnity of Pentecost.

### **No more congregations or pontifical councils**

Under the new constitution, all the Vatican’s main departments are now known as “dicasteries.” The powerful Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, for example, will now be called the “Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.” Along with removing the title “congregation” from Vatican departments, the new constitution renames pontifical councils as “dicasteries.” The constitution says: “The Roman Curia is composed of the Secretariat of State, the Dicasteries and other bodies, all juridically equal to each other.”

### **The 16 dicasteries are as follows:**

- Dicastery for Evangelization
- Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith
- Dicastery for the Service of Charity
- Dicastery for the Eastern Churches
- Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments
- Dicastery for the Causes of Saints
- Dicastery for Bishops
- Dicastery for the Clergy
- Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life
- Dicastery for the Laity, Family, and Life
- Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity
- Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue
- Dicastery for Culture and Education
- Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development
- Dicastery for Legislative Texts
- Dicastery for Communication

The document explains that “it became necessary to reduce the number of departments, joining together those whose purpose was very similar or complementary, and rationalize their functions with the aim of avoiding overlapping of competencies and making their work more effective.”

### **Evangelization at the center**

In a significant change, the **Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization** and the **Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples**, responsible for mission work, are merged into the Dicastery for Evangelization, presided over directly by the Pope. The Dicastery for Evangelization is listed first among the dicasteries in the document, indicating its centrality in the new structure of the Roman Curia.

The Dicastery will have two sections, one for “fundamental questions of evangelization in the world” and another “for the first evangelization and the new particular Churches in the territories of its competence.” Each section will be governed in the Pope’s name by a “pro-prefect.”

### **A Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith**

The document confirms changes to the former Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith unveiled by Pope Francis in February. The pope reorganized the internal structure of the Vatican’s doctrine office into two sections: a doctrinal section and a disciplinary section. Setting out the doctrinal section’s responsibilities, the new constitution says that it works in close contact with Church leaders around the world “in the exercise of their mission as authentic teachers and teachers of the faith, for which they are bound to safeguard and promote the integrity of that faith.” The section “examines writings and opinions that appear contrary or harmful to the right faith and morals; it seeks dialogue with their authors and presents suitable remedies to be made, in accordance with its own norms.” It also “endeavors to ensure that there is an adequate refutation of the dangerous errors and doctrines which are spread among the Christian people.”

### **Powers of the Secretariat of State**

Early drafts of the constitution were said to have given wide powers to the **Vatican Secretariat of State**, which already occupied a central position within the Roman Curia. In the final version, the Secretariat of State is listed before the 16 dicasteries. The published document says that the institution, overseen by Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, “closely assists the Roman Pontiff in the exercise of his supreme mission.”

It describes the tasks of the Secretariat’s three sections: the Section for General Affairs; the Section for Relations with States and International Organizations; and the Section for Diplomatic Personnel of the Holy See. The first section has broad responsibilities, including “attending to the handling of affairs concerning the daily service of the Roman Pontiff,” coordinating the work of dicasteries “without prejudice to their autonomy,” drafting papal documents such as apostolic letters, and giving “indications to the Dicastery for Communication regarding official communications concerning both the acts of the Roman Pontiff and the activity of the Holy See.”

### **Goals of the reform**

The goals of the reform are set out in a section of the new constitution called “Principles and criteria for the service of the Roman Curia.” It sets out 11 guiding principles: “Service to the Pope’s mission,” “Co-responsibility in the *communio*,” “Service to the mission of the Bishops,” “Support for the particular Churches and their Episcopal Conferences and Eastern hierarchical structures,” “The vicarious nature of the Roman Curia,” “Spirituality,” “Personal integrity and professionalism,” “Collaboration between the Dicasteries,” “Interdicasterial and intradicasterial meetings,” “Expression of catholicity,” and “Reduction of Dicasteries.”

As well as defining the competencies of the 16 dicasteries, the 54-page constitution outlines the role of other Vatican institutions, including judicial bodies such as the **Apostolic Penitentiary**, economic organizations such as the **Office of the Auditor General**, and other offices such as the **Prefecture of the Papal Household**. It lists the duties of the Camerlengo of the Holy Roman Church, currently **Cardinal Kevin Farrell**, who oversees the functioning of the Vatican during a papal interregnum.

It also defines the qualities expected of lawyers working for the Holy See, who are required “to lead an integral and exemplary Christian life and to carry out the duties entrusted to them with the utmost conscience and for the good of the Church.”



For Pope Francis, the provisions in the new constitution serve to undermine careerism, unlinking the chains of power formed when people remain in dicasteries for a long time. But there could be some unintended consequences.

With *Praedicate evangelium*, everything becomes very bureaucratic. The reform changes little at the structural level, and many changes have already been made, but the philosophy underlying the Curia is altered.

The Curia is an organism at the service of the Church which, however, focuses on the role of the pope. As a result, some historical positions are lost that served to define the philosophy of the Curia. Decisions will, in future, be more bureaucratic, and ultimately the role of the pope is emphasized.

Finally, regarding personnel, there will not be an actual reduction: the heads of departments will be fewer, but the number of employees will remain the same.

### 3. The Apostolic Letter “*Desiderio Desideravi*”

The Holy Father issued an Apostolic Letter to the People of God on the Liturgy, to recall the profound meaning of the Eucharistic Celebration that arose from the Council and to invite to liturgical formation. On June 29 Pope Francis published “*Desiderio Desideravi*,” which develops in 65 paragraphs the results of the February 2019 Plenary Assembly of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and follows the Motu Proprio “*Traditionis Custodes*,” reaffirming the importance of ecclesial communion regarding the Rite that arose from the Post-Conciliar Liturgical Reform.



It's not a new instruction or a directory with specific norms, but a meditation to understand the beauty of the Liturgical Celebration and its role in evangelization. And the Pontiff ends with an appeal: “Let us abandon controversy to listen together to what the Spirit says to the Church; let us preserve communion, and continue to be amazed by the beauty of the Liturgy” (65).

Pope Francis writes, the Christian faith is either an encounter with Jesus alive or it is not. And “the Liturgy guarantees us the possibility of that encounter and it is encountering the living Jesus in the community that celebrates. We do not need a vague remembrance of the Last Supper: we need to be present in that Supper.” Recalling the importance of Vatican II's Constitution “*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, which led to the rediscovery of the theological understanding of the Liturgy, the Pontiff adds: “I would like the beauty of the Christian Celebration, and its necessary consequences in the life of the Church, not to be disfigured by a superficial and reductive understanding of its value or, still worse, by its instrumentalization at the service of an ideological vision, no matter what it is” (16).

At the core of Francis' Apostolic Letter is the desire for the entire people of God, starting with the celebrants, to rediscover beauty and wonder before the liturgy, letting the liturgy itself “form” those who participate in it, immersing them in what the Pope calls “the ocean of grace that floods every celebration.”

In the Apostolic Letter, Pope Francis takes us through a path that goes to the heart of the liturgical celebration, which is both “the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed” and “the source from which all its energy flows,” as the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council teaches.

Every paragraph of the new document is imbued with the awareness that the liturgy is first and foremost about leaving space for the other. We may not even be aware of it, but every time we go to Mass, the first reason is that we are drawn there by His desire for us. For our part, the possible

response — which is also the most demanding asceticism — is, as always, that surrender to this love, that letting ourselves be drawn by Him.” I exhort everyone to read Apostolic The Holy Father issued an Apostolic Letter to the People of God on the Liturgy

#### 4. APOSTOLIC LETTER, “*AD CHARISMA TUENDUM*”

In order to safeguard the charism, Saint John Paul II, in the Apostolic Constitution *Ut sit* of 28 November 1982, erected the Prelature of *Opus Dei*, entrusting it with the pastoral task of contributing in a special way to the evangelizing mission of the Church. Indeed, in accordance with the gift of the Spirit received by Saint Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, the Prelature of *Opus Dei*, with the guidance of its Prelate, carries out the task of spreading the call to holiness in the world, through the sanctification of work and family and social commitments by means of the clerics incardinated therein and with the organic cooperation of the laity who devote themselves to apostolic works (cf. cann. 294-296, *CIC*).

His venerable Predecessor stated that: “With very great hope, the Church directs its attention and maternal care to *Opus Dei* ...so that it may always be a valid and effective instrument of the saving mission that the Church fulfils for the life of the world” [1].

This Motu Proprio is intended to confirm the Prelature of *Opus Dei* in the authentically charismatic sphere of the Church, specifying its organization in keeping with the witness of the Founder, Saint Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, and with the teachings of Conciliar ecclesiology on personal Prelatures.

By means of the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* of 19 March 2022, which reforms the structure of the Roman Curia in order to better promote its service in favour of evangelization, his Holiness considered it appropriate to entrust to the Dicastery for the Clergy the competence for all that pertains to the Apostolic See regarding personal Prelatures, of which the only one erected so far is that of *Opus Dei*, considering the pre-eminent task carried out in it, according to the norm of law, by clerics (cf. can. 294, *CIC*).

Wishing, therefore, to protect the charism of *Opus Dei* and to promote the evangelizing action carried out by its members in the world, and at the same time having to adapt the provisions relating to the Prelature to the new organization of the Roman Curia, Pope Francis orders the following norms be observed.

**Art. 1.** The text of Art. 5 of the Apostolic Constitution *Ut sit* shall henceforth be replaced by the following text: “*In accordance with Art. 117 of the Apostolic Constitution Praedicate Evangelium, the Prelature depends on the Dicastery for the Clergy, which, according to the subject matter, shall evaluate the relative questions with the other Dicasteries of the Roman Curia. The Dicastery for the Clergy, in dealing with the various questions, shall make use of the competencies of the other Dicasteries through appropriate consultation or transfer of files*”.

**Art. 2.** The text of Article 6 of the Apostolic Constitution *Ut sit* shall henceforth be replaced by the following text: “Each year the Prelate shall submit to the Dicastery for the Clergy a report on the state of the Prelature and on the fulfillment of its apostolic work”.

**Art. 3.** By reason of the amendments to the Apostolic Constitution *Ut sit* brought about by this Apostolic Letter; the proper Statutes of the Prelature of *Opus Dei* shall be suitably adapted upon the proposal of the Prelature itself, to be approved by the competent bodies of the Apostolic See.

**Art. 4.** While fully respecting the nature of the specific Charism described in the above-mentioned Apostolic Constitution, it is intended to strengthen the conviction that, for the protection of the particular gift of the Spirit, a form of governance based on Charism more than on hierarchical authority is needed. Therefore, the Prelate shall not be honoured with the Episcopal order.

**Art. 5.** Considering that the pontifical insignia are reserved for those who are conferred the Episcopal order, the Prelate of *Opus Dei* is granted, by reason of his office, the use of the title of Supernumerary Apostolic Protonotary with the title of Reverend Monsignor and therefore may use the insignia corresponding to this title.

**Art. 6.** As from the entry into force of the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*, all matters pending at the Congregation for Bishops concerning the Prelature of Opus Dei shall continue to be dealt with and decided by the Dicastery for the Clergy.

He decrees that this Apostolic Letter in the form of a *Motu Proprio* be promulgated by publication in *L'Osservatore Romano*, entering into force on 4 August 2022, and then published in the official commentary of the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 14 July 2022, the tenth year of the Pontificate by Pope FRANCIS

## **Pastoral Letter on Climate Change**

The NEIRBC (North East India Regional Bishops Council) had organized the annual Pastoral Conference from 12 to 15 September 2022, after two years of interruption. The Bishops chose "Climate Change in North East India and Care for God's Creation," based on the celebrated Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* (LS) of 2015. After the serious study and reflection, the Bishops conference has come up with useful deliberations.

The **Joint Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops of North East India** is to be **read and explained** in all the Churches, Chapels and Institutions in our Diocese, at all Holy Masses and prayer services on a convenient Sunday during the Advent Season of 2022. **May I request all the Parish Priest/Priests/Rectors/ Superiors/ Directors /In-charges to see that the Joint Pastoral Letter is read and explained in your Parish/Convent/Institution and the same is taken up for study and discussion in the coming months.**

## **Seminar on Evangelization**

A seminar on Evangelization was held on 26 & 27 August 2022 at Christashram- Pastoral Centre, Mancotta. The Theme of the seminar was "Evangelization: Sharing of the Gospel in a multicultural Context in the Diocese of Dibrugarh" His Grace Emeritus Thomas Menampampil, Most Rev. P. K. George, Fr. Kuriakose Poovathumkudy were the resource persons for the seminar. After two full days of Seminar some action plans were suggested. I have chosen four Action Plans from among the suggested Action Plans to be implemented in our pastoral ministry in the Diocese of Dibrugarh.

### **Action Plan for the Diocese of Dibrugarh:**

1. Social Communication (Media)
2. SCC formation in every parish
3. Assamese Liturgy from 2023
4. Creation of Missionary Teams in the Parishes

#### **1. Social Communication (Media)**

The way we used to communicate has changed and the whole world has migrated to social media communication. If we do not upgrade ourselves, we will not be able to communicate to the present generation. We need our Priests, Nuns and Leaders to get updated on the modern means of communication.

We need to use social communication (Media) to build human communities with our communication based on love, equality and mutual respect. We have to use the modern way of communication, social

media to tell the story of Jesus, and hands-on training on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

## 2. SCC Formation in Every Parish

Small Christian Communities (SCC) are a way of being Church to each other, not just on Sundays but every day. This is not a new concept: early Christians met in small groups in each other's homes to share faith and break bread. "Where two or three come together in my name, I am there with them." Matthew 18:20.

Development of small Christian communities is part of the overall pastoral direction set by the Pastoral plan of the Diocese. Small Christian Communities emphasize social change by the power of Christ's Gospel. SCC is focused on "Christians coming together for prayer, Scripture reading, catechesis and discussion on human and ecclesial problems with a view to a common commitment.

Life in a SCC is simply our baptismal brotherhood and sisterhood lived out practically with a few people. Together, we share God's word, the Eucharist, prayer, our possessions, our gifts, time and meals. In SCCs, we share our daily life by living the Gospel values. Under the Directorship of Fr. Robert Kachua many SCCs exist in our Diocese, gathering of parishioners together to share faith and support each other.

I want to have SCC formation in every Parish of our Diocese. May I exhort all the Parish Priests/Priests/Incharges/Rectors/Superiors to work in collaboration with Parish priests and SCC Director of the Diocese for the formation of SCC in our Parishes and centres.

## 3. Assamese Liturgy from 2023

Assamese language is the language of the state of Assam and so Assamese will be introduced from now as Liturgical language in the Diocese of Dibrugarh. In 2023 all the Parishes must introduce Assamese Mass in the Parish Churches. Fr. Timothy Saldanha, the Director of Christashram- Pastoral Centre at Mancotta, has taken the initiative for Printing Sunday Lectionary in Assamese and make available to the diocese of Dibrugarh.

- **Hindi Mass** must be said in the **First Sunday, Third Sunday and Fifth Sunday of the Month.**
- **Assamese Mass** must be said in the **Second Sunday and Fourth Sunday of the Month.**
- **On Weekdays** - Assamese Mass should be said at least once in a week.

May I request all the Parish Priests, Rectors, Superiors, Incharges, working in the diocese of Dibrugarh to facilitate the local church with Assamese prayer books, hymns, Assamese Missal, Sunday Lectionary in order that Sunday Assamese mass can be said in the Parishes and Religious communities from 2023.

## 4. Creation of Missionary Teams in the Parishes

A Missionary Team in every Parish is to be formed with priests, religious, catechists and lay faithful of the Parish. Such teams are necessitated for the creative pastoral and mission activities among the faithful as well as to make break through among new groups and territories. A missionary team in the Parish will be of great help for the Parish Priest in planning out to tell the story of Jesus to everyone under the jurisdiction of the Parish.

## Pastoral Issues Regarding Marriage

The Diocese of Dibrugarh will follow common marriage policies in the entire Diocese. By 2023 we are going to follow uniform **Pre-nuptial enquiry** forms throughout the Diocese. Following rules



concerning the rectification of marriage should be common in all the Parishes in the Diocese of Dibrugarh.

1. When a non-Christian girl comes to the Catholic partner their marriage can be rectified only after six months of her arrival. This time is counted from the day the entire matter is officially communicated to the Parish Priest.
2. After the engagement or *Lotapani* there must be at least 3-6 months gap before marriage.
3. For engagement or *Lotapani*, the family is free to conduct the *Lotapani* ceremony either in the house or village church.
4. When couples rectify their marriage, fine at village level will be Rs. 1500 (750 +750) to be collected from both the parties) and the money will remain with the village community. Fine at Parish level will be Rs. 500 (250+250 from both the parties). Beside this no other fine is to be imposed. The Parish Priest should issue a receipt after taking a fine of Rs. 500 only.
5. There are two places of marriage preparatory course; Pastoral centre Mancotta (6 days) and Parishes (15 day).
6. Rectification of Marriage can be in Parish or village Church.
7. When rectification of marriage takes place; a letter should be given by the Parish Priest of concerned parties.
8. If the village catechist is unwilling to give a letter (*Sipharis Letter*), the Parish Priest has precedence over the catechist.
9. The bride should be taken by the bridegroom on the same day of marriage blessing. After the marriage blessing the boy and the girl should not stay separately.
10. The parish priest is responsible for the maintenance of following documents:
  - Baptism Register
  - Marriage Register
  - Death Register
  - Chronicle

The bishop will make a canonical visit to inspect all these documents.

### **Dominican Sisters of the Holy Trinity (OP)**

Dominican Sisters of the Holy Trinity (OP) is an international congregation founded in Germany during the 14th century. The congregation came to India in 1975 and started working for the poor and downtrodden in different parts of the country. At present, Rev. Sr. Tessy Kachappilly OP is the superior general and the General Head Office is located at Palakkad, Kerala. The main apostolate that the sisters are involved is Pastoral, health, education, and development work. Their main approach is to work from grass root to main phase with right based approach. They feel proud to bring up a just society where all enjoy quality and freedom without any discrimination.

At my invitation the Dominican Sisters of the Holy Trinity (OP) have initiated their mission work at St. Peter's Parish and St. Peter's School at Mezenga- Nazira, Assam. The main objective of in inviting them in the Diocese is to collaborate with the pastoral and educative mission of the Diocese at St. Peter's Church and St. Peter's school, Nazira by taking care of the pastoral works and teaching in the School. As arranged by the diocese two of them (Dominican Sisters) are already working in the parish dedicated to St. Peter at Mezenga- Nazira and two of them collaborate and work in St. Peter's School of the Parish. We wish them God's blessing as they begin their pastoral work in Mezenga- Nazira parish.



## Ordinations 2023

The Diocese is blessed with six ordinations. Of the six, one is for Salesian province of Dimapur, two for the Salesian province of Guwahati and three for the Diocese of Dibrugarh. They will all be ordained in the months of January – February 2023. We accompany them with our prayers as they prepare themselves for that great day of anointing.

## Appointments and Transfers

S/ N	Name	Appointed	Parish/School
1	Fr Oscar Panna	Principal & Co-Pastor	St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Rajabari
2	Fr Christopher Sandiguria	Assistant Parish Priest	St. Paul Majuli, Parish
3	Fr. Bartholomew Tete	Parish Priest	St. Joseph's Parish, Naharkatia
4	Fr. Joachim Baghwar	Assistant Parish Priest	Christ King Parish, Nilmoni
5	Fr. Thomas Surin	Assistant Parish Priest	St. Patrick Parish, Philobari

## In Christmas; God becomes one of us – in order to save us

There is a story about a man who looked upon Christmas as a lot of false piety. He didn't believe all that about Incarnation (God taking on our flesh) which the Church proclaims at Christmas. And he was too honest to pretend that he did. "I am truly sorry to distress you," he told his wife, who was a sincere churchgoing faithful. "But I simply cannot understand this claim that God becomes man. It doesn't make any sense to me."

On Christmas Eve, his wife and children went to Church. He declined to accompany them, saying, "I'd feel like a hypocrite. I'd rather stay at home. But I'll wait up for you." Shortly after his family drove away in the car, heavy snow began to fall. He went to the window and watched the snowfall getting heavier and heavier. "If we must have Christmas," he thought, "it's nice to have a white one." He went back to his chair by the fireside and began to read his newspaper. A few minutes later, he was startled by a thudding sound. It was quickly followed by another, then another. He thought that someone must be throwing snowballs at his living room window. When he went to the front door to investigate, he found a flock of birds huddled miserably in the storm. They had been caught in the storm and, in a desperate search for shelter; they had tried to fly through his window. "I can't let these poor creatures lie there and freeze," he thought. "But how can I help them?" Then he remembered the barn where the children's pony was stabled. It would provide a warm shelter.

He put on his warm clothes and moves through the deepening snow to the barn. He opened the door wide and turned on a light. But the birds didn't come in. "Food will lure them in," he thought. So he hurried back to the house for bread crumbs, which he sprinkled on the snow to make a trail into the barn. To his dismay, the birds ignored the bread crumbs and continued to flop around helplessly in the snow. He tried shooing them into the barn by walking around and waving his arms. They scattered in every direction – except into the warm, lighted barn.

"They find me a strange and terrifying creature," he said to himself, "and I can't seem to think of any way to let them know they can trust me. If only I could be a bird myself for a few minutes, perhaps I could lead them to safety. . . ."

Just at that moment the church bells began to ring. He stood silent for a while, listening to the bells pealing the glad tidings of Christmas. Then he sank to his knees in the snow. "Now I do understand," he whispered. "Now I see why God chose to do it, why He became one of us – in order to save us."

Think of the many ways God has reached out to us to communicate with us since the beginning. The height of God communicating with us in the Old Testament was when God formed the covenant with Moses on Mt. Sinai. God joined Himself to us in a covenant and we were joined to God.


Christmas helps us celebrate that God chose to make a new and unbreakable covenant with us; it is a bond which can never be broken. For this new covenant, God would become flesh and bones like us, and shed His blood in the person of Jesus to convince us, once and for all, to accept His invitation to be His people.

No matter what people say about the Christians who are the followers of Christ, the message of Christmas remains the same that God became man to save us from our human self to his glorious body. No matter what people understand from the Christmas (God becoming man) his incarnation is the reason for our salvation.

St. John shows us that Creation is not an event of the past, but the ongoing life of God with his people. The Christmas raises the story of Christ's birth to the level of symbol and the meaning behind the Incarnation, the becoming human, of Jesus. That is the truth of Christmas for us. It is also the Christmas truth for the person living next door, for those we love, for those who are like us and those who are different, for the stranger, and for our enemies. "And the Word became flesh and lived among us." It is a celebration of God with us: Emmanuel! God is always with us, in our parishes, houses, communities, institutions and in our homes. May you all experience his indwelling presence through your prayers and worthy Christian living.

*Happy Christmas and a grace filled New Year 2023!*

Yours Cordially in the Risen Lord,

  
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