



Prabhu Jisu Residence, Post Box 3, Matigara – 734 010, Dt Darjeeling, West Bengal

No 6

Newsletter of Darjeeling Jesuits

July ~ 2020

From the Provincial's Desk

July 31 is the Feast Day of St Ignatius of Loyola. It is an occasion for us to pause and reflect on all the efforts we have made in addressing the social issues that affect us and our people in the given situation of Covid-19. Ignatius has taught us that our ongoing search for the presence of God's love in our world cannot be separated from the harsh realities, the challenges that people in our own country face as the economic reality continue to cause great distress for the poor and the vulnerable. The spirituality of St Ignatius calls us to seek God's love through our response to these realities. Ignatius said that love consists in sharing what one has and what one is with those whom they love, for "Love ought to show itself more by deeds than by words." The support we received from many donors, the relief work undertaken and advocacy efforts made by many of ours in this region for the wounded lying on the side of the road, the elderly, the suffering children, the poor and others excluded from the mainstream of modern society demonstrate the love that Jesus and St Ignatius describe. Such deeds call us into a deeper understanding of God's love and see the ripples of that love in the lives of those we have reached out to. In the process we might have contracted the disease, a reflection of one's courage to take risks. Let us be grateful to the Lord for "teaching us to be generous, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to ask for reward knowing that we do His will." This is Ignatian Spirituality. Many blessings to one and all on the Feast Day of St Ignatius of Loyola!



PROVINCIAL'S PROGRAM

July 2020

- 01 Vocation Promotion visit to Binaguri
- 03 Visit to Manresa/Sakyong
- 04 Visit to Gandhi Ashram/5th Mile
- 06 Arrupe House - Community Meeting
- 08-09 Visitation - Hatighisa
- 13-16 Visitation - Gayaganga
- 20-23 Visitation - JA/Premanjali
- 24-25 Visitation - PT/LPC/PJG
- 28-29 Visit to Kankebond

APPOINTMENT BY FR GENERAL

Fr Jerome Cutinha: Provincial of Jamshedpur.

LEFT THE SOCIETY

- Sch. Rajasekharan Pilendran on 15 June
- Sch. William Tirkey on 15 June
- Novice Parmenous Subba on 30 March
- Novice Mohit Kerketta on 9 June
- Novice Anup Kerketta on 9 June

MANRESA JESUIT NOVITIATE, KALIMPONG

Fr Frank Subba directed an eight-day retreat for the novices in preparation for first vows from May 26 to June 4. Fr John Wilfred Lobo made his annual visitation to the Novitiate community on June 8th and 9th. Fr Shaji Joseph attended a meeting of the Superiors and Directors of Works at Matigara on June 12.



On June 21, the feast day of St Aloysius Gonzaga, three novices **Samson Basumatary**, **Binod Toppo** and **Justin Kashung** (KMH) pronounced their first vows in the Society of Jesus. **Br Gabriel**, the minister, prepared a sumptuous lunch for all. While looking back at two years of Novitiate, **Samson** said, "Change is all-important for one's growth. The Novitiate, besides helping me verify my vocation to the Society through discernment in and through various experiences and probations, has given me opportunities to bring many fruitful changes in my life." Similar sentiments were expressed by **Binod**, "All of us make a journey. Sometimes it is a mixture of both difficult and wonderful situations. In spite of this I carry on because I have a destination. It gives me courage and hope to face all realities on the way." **Justin** shared his experience



of the Novitiate as “a moment of self-introspection and self-realization with many spiritual and other activities. I came to know who I am, what I am and what God wants me to be.”

On June 21, Manresa Jesuit Novitiate warmly welcomed eleven young and energetic first year



novices, eight for Darjeeling and three for Nepal. The first probation is being facilitated by **Fr Roshan Kiro**, the Socius.

Novices Ashish, Sauchilit and Sushant



PRABHU JISU RESIDENCE

There were many meetings at PJR, Matigara in the month of June, of superiors and directors of works on 12 June, consult on 13 June, of college and school principals and headmasters on 20 June and of formation commission on 28 June. **Fr Dennis Soosai** managed to come back to India from Nepal on 24 June. He and **Fr Nicholas** are staying at PJR, Matigara.

AN UPDATE FROM THE PCF...

Most of our scholastics could not come back to the Province for summer vacation due to Covid-19 and the abrupt lockdown. At the request of some superiors, we had made travel arrangements to bring our scholastics back to the province by air, and had prepared Loyola pastoral centre for home quarantine, but unfortunately all the flights heading towards Bagdogra were cancelled due to lack of passengers and unsteady policies of the government. Some scholastics

had to forego their home visit as well. However the lockdown did not make them inactive. They have been using



this break productively by spending time in learning foreign languages, attending webinars and online classes, distributing

provisions to the needy, reading books, composing devotional songs, familiarizing soft skills, participating in spiritual activities, or spending more time in prayer. All of them made their annual retreat. Every summer, our scholastics gather for two or three days



for group sharing. This could not take place due to the lockdown. Our scholastics at Satyanilayam thought of a novel way of coming together with the help of advanced technology. On 14 June, the scholastics with the PCF had an online faith sharing session. The sharing helped each one to have an optimistic approach towards this crisis and look forward to the possibilities and potentialities for the future. Returning from Delhi, **Sch. Antony** had to spend seven days of institutional quarantine at ITI, Phasideva.

The Provincial and the PCF would like to thank all the Superiors and Rectors of the study houses for taking care of Darjeeling scholastics during this critical situation.

Fr Xavier Alangaram, SJ

ST PETER'S, GAYAGANGA

Life in Gayaganga seems to be gradually getting back on track with increased activities on the premises. This, however, does not leave us with absolute certainty that things will get better here in the coming days due to the constant change in the guidelines of the government and the rumours of COVID-19 cases in the vicinity of Gayaganga.

Some Fathers had been spiritually nourishing the parishioners through their Sunday reflections that were shared on WhatsApp. After the lockdown restrictions were loosened, the pastors started attending to the spiritual needs of the faithful in a better way by administering the sacraments in the church with certain restrictions. There was a one-week marriage course attended by eight couples.

Fr Roshan and **Br Denis** conducted a one-month spoken English course for the teaching staff of the primary school.

Pope Francis' call for a special Year of *Laudato Si'* is being implemented by **Fr Simon** and **Fr Roshan**. They planted a good number of saplings in the school and hostel premises. **Fr Simon** is looking after the reconstruction of the broken boundary walls for better care and protection of the property.

Sch. David and **Fr Nicholas** left the community for their new assignments. **Sch. Deepak Jans** (NEP) is staying at the hostel. As the cases of COVID-19 are escalating, the community continues to be united with the world through prayers, particularly through Mass and adoration.

Fr Augustus Ekka

HLDRC

HLDRC extended its covid-19 relief work to remote locations in Dooars such as Nagrakata, Madarihut and Dhupguri. **Fr Amid Kujur** joined the community on 9 June. His presence is already having a positive effect on HLDRC programs. His background of sociological studies certainly helps in the community development programs of HLDRC.

HLDRC initiated clearing of silt in ponds used for fish cultivation in Khairkata gram panchayat of Nagrakata block and Ambadipa and Mela busy in Dhupguri block. With the help of local Self Help Groups (SHG), we have so far cleaned twelve such ponds. Women SHGs are given charge of the fish farms. This venture has united the village communities as they seek ways and means of livelihood affected by covid-19 epidemic and economic lockdown in the country.



The persistent efforts of **Fr Pascal Xalxo** in empowering community leaders through *lok manch* are now bearing fruit. Community leaders of Dharnipur tea estate managed to obtain twenty-five acres of vacant land from the BDO of Nagrakata for vegetable cultivation. This unique model of sustainable livelihood program for eradicating hunger and food shortage was funded by **Canadian Jesuit International (CJI)**.

HLDRC took the lead in putting up twenty HELP DESKS in the Terai and the Dooars regions for health and hygiene awareness, filling forms for ration card and other welfare programs of the government and a help line for migrant labourers. Twelve thousand pamphlets were printed and distributed for creating awareness on right to food and other welfare schemes of the government.

Fr Pascal Xalxo

MIGRANT LABOURERS AT LPC, MATIGARA

During the lockdown in the country, **Fr Tommy** took the initiative of helping sixty-seven stranded migrant labourers from Silchar in Assam,



Purnea, Howrah, Hooghly and Murshidabad. They were given cash, ranging between ₹ 500 and ₹ 1000 per head for food and travel. A total of ₹ 33500 was spent, thanks to **Mrs Patrizia Biaconi**

SCH. SAWAN RAI WRITES FROM MANGALORE...

On 16 June two new scholastics joined our community after having gone through fourteen days of quarantine. During the feast day of St Aloysius Gonzaga we had a quiz competition among ourselves on the life of the saint.

ST JOSEPH'S SCHOOL, DARJEELING

The online classes were suspended for a week during the semester break in the third week of June. Online classes resumed on 22nd June. The School Managing Committee and the Administration held separate meetings to chalk out future procedural matters. The School Community had its monthly recollection during the last week of June.

Fr K. L. George

LOYOLA SCHOOL, UTTAR SALBARI

Loyola school was requisitioned on 24 May as one of the covid-19 quarantine centres under Dhupguri Block. Of the sixty-one migrant workers quarantined there, two were diagnosed positive. The management of Mogalkaa tea garden also requested us to convert the school premises as a quarantine centre for their garden because their facilities were full. We used the opportunity to improve our PR with the BDO, the village Pradhan and the tea garden management. Our school remains closed. The teachers conduct online classes. The parents, students and teachers and the Headmaster all are looking forward to the re-opening of the school!!! Since the number of people for attending Mass is restricted, we celebrate two masses in the parish church and Masses in the village chapels every Sunday. However, the Catholics residing at Mogalkata tea garden are privileged to have three Masses on Wednesdays, their weekly off-day. **Fr Provincial** came for visitation on 17 June. The community was happy that he spent two full days with us. At the beginning of the pandemic the community distributed food kits to the needy including a Hindu Sanyasi who was stranded during lockdown in our neighbouring village. We plan to provide face masks and soap to the needy.

Fr Basil Toppo

GANDHI ASHRAM SCHOOL, KALIMPONG

On the occasion of the World Environment Day on 5 June, our school asked the students to work on an interdisciplinary project, "Pandemics: the world and us". On 10 June there was a meeting of parents and teachers. They shared personal experiences, evaluated success and challenges of online classes and planned ways of mentoring the students better during the ongoing lockdown. It was decided that the teachers residing in different villages would take up the responsibility of guiding and helping the students of the village. The construction work in the campus resumed after a long break due to the lockdown.

Fr Binod Kerketta, SJ

NORTH BENGAL ST XAVIER'S COLLEGE

In the month of June, we continued covid-19 related relief work at Kheripara (our adopted village) and Pubnikheri village. We would like to place on record our gratitude to **Mrs Patrizia** who generously sponsored the entire cost of materials distributed for those



villages. As the suspension of classes continued indefinitely, online teaching was temporarily stopped in order to conduct internal assessment using Google apps. In the meanwhile, the department of microbiology with the help of DNA Labs, Dehradun conducted a seven-day online internship for biology students. The department of commerce & management organised a webinar on "Revival of Economy and Tourism in North Bengal Region and Road Ahead". The speakers were **Prof Govind Choudhury** from North Bengal University and **Mr Raju Basu**, advisor to the WB tourism industry. Our group D/conservancy staff have been regularly attending their duties while clerical/office and library staff come to the college once a week. We also persuaded all the department heads to be physically present at the college on 15 June, when NAAC preparation and academic related matters were discussed.

In the community, responsibilities of **Fr Xavier** went up threefold. As the minister of the house he ensured sufficient supply of food provisions, taking online lectures for psychology students and keeping in touch with our scholastics in various study houses in India and booking their flight tickets back to the Province. **Fr Provincial** came for annual visitation to the community from 26-27 June. The first day of the visitation coincided with his birthday. **Fr**



Shajumon, Fr Victor, Fr Dennis Soosai and Fr Nicholas joined the community for the birthday celebrations.

Fr Lalit

HAYDEN HALL

As the country prepares to enter the next phase of its fight against Covid-19 pandemic, 'Unlock 1' has provided some relief towards

restarting economic activities. Hayden Hall has been working silently yet continuously throughout the various phases of the lockdown and is now slowly trying to move towards normalcy following necessary precautions.

The Hayden Hall team under the very able guidance of our Director has been responding to genuine requests and trying to bridge the gap with the needy by helping households living in the remotest areas of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Jalpaiguri districts. Recently the Hayden Hall team responding to one such request, reached out to 205 families in Pulundung Tea Estate and Busty with necessary food and medical assistance.

The Livelihood and Entrepreneurship team and the Community Development Workers along with their normal work have now started making 'Sattu'. The 'Sattu' which is locally called 'Satwa' is a mixture of ground pulses and cereals. It is considered to be very healthy and is selling rapidly from our store.

The herbal team is busy preparing medicines. The Hayden Hall staff also volunteered in keeping Darjeeling clean by clearing litter from various parts of the town. Our Development Consultant, **Virgil Vihaan Sequeira** attended an online orientation through CAP India, calling NGOs and CBOs who were looking for professional consultancy in the areas of Communication and Reporting, Board Governance, Legal Compliance, Human Resource, Fundraising and CSR.

In a recent meeting of the core group to respond to the needs emerging from the pandemic and the lockdown we discussed the following to strategize our approach to the new challenges:

1. Unemployment caused by the economic recession, displacement
2. Reskilling the migrant workers / youth
3. Mental health issues on the increase
4. The emerging patterns: life style; physical/social distancing; health, hygiene and cleanliness; need of paying serious attention to environmental issues
5. Strengthening the Agriculture base: moving more towards organized agriculture and food production
6. Sharing the pandemic and lockdown experience of different age groups: problems and issues, coping mechanisms, fears and anxieties

Hayden Hall DB Tech is on the verge of starting a three-month online tea plantation course for individuals between 18-30 years of age along with job placement. Some of our staff members who were stuck outside due to the lockdown have started to return. We plan to reopen the institute with new hopes and aspirations towards a normal life soon.

Mrs Dipika Sharma

REST IN PEACE

Fr SA Alphonse, SJ (AND) 69/51 10 June 2020

Fr S.M. Xavier Irudayaraj, SJ (MDU) 79/61 16 June 2020

Fr Marcus Murmu, SJ (DUM) 63/38 20 June 2020