

FR. AGNEL'S

A mission and youth magazine

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CALL

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Hope Incarnated

God in solidarity with us gives hope

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Fr. Manohar, Fr. Damaciano,
Fr. Raymond, Fr. Nelson

►► **Fr. Manohar blessing children**
after installation of the Little Angels group

►► **Easter blessing of families by Fr. Nelson,**
accompanied by children.

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Many have trusted Him in the Society of Pilar
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Hope Incarnated



When life is fraught with never-ending problems, it is 'HOPE' that champions the person, even in the bleakest of times. 'Hope' is the actual belief that things will get better. It is the knowledge that one will endure and overcome everything that comes one's way. 'Hope' is the only thing between man and the abyss of stress and tensions that comes from all sorts of directions. If 'hope' is the elixir of life, can we find a way of packaging and dispensing 'hope'?

The Gospel according to John tells us that Jesus is 'hope incarnated'. Jesus, the eternal son of God humbled himself and took on flesh like ours. This act of 'God becoming flesh' is a supreme act of identification and solidarity with the human race.

Soren Kierkegaard the great Danish thinker explains the meaning of incarnation through a simple parable about a prince who was in search of a suitable maiden to be his queen. One day as he passed through a poor locality his eyes fell upon a gorgeous peasant woman. Enamored by her beauty, during the days that followed, he often passed by her house and soon fell in love. But the predicament was, how would he marry her? He had several options coming to his mind. He thought that being a prince he could order her to marry him. But this would go against her free-will. Next, he thought that he could go to her place in his royal horse carriage wearing his most grand attire and propose to her. But he would be unsure if she loved him or his riches. At last a superb idea struck him. He decided to give up his royal robes and don the garb of a peasant. He lived among the people, adapted their lifestyle and immersed in their culture. In the course of time the peasant woman grew in her love for the prince and became his queen. This simple yet profound anecdote provides a glimpse of God's solidarity with us which manifests his unconditional love and brings hope. God assuming human nature and becoming human in the person of Jesus gives humanity hope amidst the chaos around the world.

It's been a year, since last December, that Covid-19 has left the world reeling in tatters.

The coronavirus pandemic has brought chaos in the lives of people and has left the economies around the world in shambles. The Great Lockdown recession has soared unemployment, multiplied inequities and led to social strife. Moreover, under the smokescreen of the raging pandemic, secret inroads are being made by 'disaster capitalists' to fast-track major projects detrimental to people and the environment which under normal circumstances would attract significant opposition. Chaos has become an avenue to implement unpopular policies in a hurried manner.

In the midst of such chaos people have turned towards solidarity. This shared desire for global togetherness brings a glimmer of hope. It energizes people to push back against social injustice and inequality. The birth of Jesus became a moment of hope. It lit the dark and lonely lives of the poor shepherds. During his adult life he went to the Samaritans, the lepers, the gentiles and dared to set right the malady of exclusion in the Jewish society. What he said and did brought 'hope' to humanity.

"Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam"

Elvis Fernandes

Elvis Fernandes, SFX

Editor

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"Christmas is about contemplating the visit of God to his people"

-Pope Francis



LIVE JESUS IN OUR HEARTS, FOREVER!



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SACRED SPACE



With the conquest of my mind, I
have conquered the whole world.

(Sikhism. Adi Granth, Japuji 28, M.1, p.6)



Though one should conquer a
million men on the battlefield, yet
he, indeed, is the noblest victor
who has conquered himself.

(Buddhism. Dhammapada 103)



Though a man should conquer
thousands and thousands of
valiant foes, greater will be his
victory if he conquers nobody but
himself. Fight with yourself; why
fight with external foes? He who
conquers himself through himself
will obtain happiness.... Difficult
to conquer is oneself; but when
that is conquered, everything is
conquered.

(Jainism. Uttaradhyayana Sutra 9.34-36)



O David! ...do not follow the
whims of your own soul for they
will lead you astray from God's
path.

(Quran 38:26)



It is true that the mind is restless
and difficult to control. But it
can be conquered, like Arjuna,
through regular practice and
detachment. Those who lack
self-control will find it difficult to
progress in meditation; but those
who are self-controlled, striving
earnestly through the right means,
will attain the goal.

(Hinduism. Bhagavad Gita 6.35-36) (Katha
Upanishad:15)



He who is slow to anger is better
than the mighty, and he who rules
his spirit than he who takes a city.

(Christianity. The Bible, Proverbs 16.32)

Need of the hour: young social activist leaders like Jesus



To follow Jesus, does not imply that all young men and women who are rich, should sell what they have and become priests and nuns. But it certainly means, that more young people, rich or not so rich, should live strong spiritual lives and be eager to reach out to those in need.



BY BASIL
D'CUNHA

In these difficult times, we need strong youth Activist Leaders. When the pandemic broke out in March, our Government decided to literally shut the Nation down, with minimal notice. Among the many problems that ensued, probably the biggest disaster was

our poor migrant labour. They were forced to return to their villages far away, as they lost their jobs and were thrown out of their shanty homes, as they could not pay the rent. Where were all the good Samaritans? If we had some strong Activist Youth Leaders, we would probably have handled the problem differently.

There is a beautiful story in Scripture about a young rich man who asked Jesus how he could gain eternal life. Jesus said, "Keep the commandments." The man persisted, "I have kept all these, what do I lack?" Jesus' response was, "If you wish to be perfect, sell what you have and give to the Poor

and come and follow me and you shall have treasure in Heaven." In today's world, Jesus' instruction remains the same. To follow Jesus, does not imply that all young men and women who are rich, should sell what they have and become priests and nuns. But it certainly means, that more young people, rich or not so rich, should live strong spiritual lives and be eager to reach out to those in need. Then we can be sure of a good crop of Young Social Activist Leaders and some Priests and nuns too.

Passion to Reach out, does not just happen. It comes from deep INSIGHT within. This deep within-ness comes from God. His

Vision prompts us to make it our Vision. What is His Vision? Simply put, LOVE. Jesus said, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hurt you, reach out to those in need." The most telling message, Jesus gave us from the Cross after that horrendous scourging, nailing on the cross, he said "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

To begin with, youth must know and understand, who this God of Love is. So, Scriptures must become our food – to be chewed and well digested. Once that happens the next step will follow through prayer. We will come to know Jesus personally. As Jeremiah puts it so succinctly in 29:11-13 Come, pray, and I will show you the plans I have for you - to give you a future and hope. Also pl. read Jeremiah 1:5-10. You will know God' plan for you and you will then burn with **Passion and experience**, just like what St Francis of Assisi experienced.

Let's recall lessons from the resurrected Jesus. He told the frightened, demotivated Apostles that he would send HIS Holy Spirit. We all know how the Apostles changed their lives over night after the Holy Spirit came upon them during Pentecost.

This done, let's learn from our local Social activists - stalwarts like Dr. Claude Alvares and his wife Norma Alvares, Dr. Albertina Almeida, Dr. Sabina Martins. These people fought the Mining Mafia, the Casino Mafia, the Drug Mafia and till date continue to fight on our behalf to save Goa for our future generations.

So clearly, being thoroughly knowledgeable is a MUST. We cannot protest or go to Court with half -baked knowledge. Jesus said "See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their

Let's learn from our local Social activists - stalwarts like Dr. Claude Alvares and his wife Norma Alvares, Dr. Albertina Almeida, Dr. Sabina Martins.

synagogues" (Mathew 10:16-17). Yes, there will be some suffering and pain but, like Dr. Claude Alvares, you will win because God is with you.

Garner experience. Start with smaller Projects, like educating migrant children, especially now - with no connectivity in some places, no Smart Phones or PC's - they are missing out on online classes. The challenge is to **Innovate and Create**. While doing all this, build strong **communication skills (JESUS spoke with Authority)** and learn all aspects of Social Media. Public Speaking and writing skills are a MUST in modern times. These skills can help during Protest gatherings and Social Media to give a great advantage. Our current Prime Minister is a master when it comes to speaking at major Political Melas.

Another area to help out is unemployment. Thousands of our seamen and others have lost jobs. Can we perhaps guide them to change their mind-set and consider entrepreneurship viz. Agriculture, Piggery, Fast foods, or any business that they may be inclined towards? Our people may not be aware of various Government Schemes like CMRY Scheme or Entrepreneur training facilities at CIBA (Padre Agnel at Verna & Assagao) and

FiiRE at Don Bosco College of Engineering at Margao. If you are keen to know more about this, join a Group called the 'Lights of the World' Movement, that facilitates the unemployed at Padre Arupe Center at Raia.

Getting your hands dirty can lead you into controversies. Therefore, the need for **Critical thinking and Problem solving**. In John 8:1-11 we have the story of the Pharisees wanting to stone a woman to death due to adultery. What was Jesus' reaction? "Let him who is without sin throw the first stone." But when they heard this, they threw away their stones and went away.

Finally, let's not ever forget what Jesus did at the last supper. Jesus took a towel, tied it around his waist, poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet. (John 13:4). **Humility** is Key. The world concept to-day is **I, ME and MYSELF**. Instead, let's go the Jesus way. It will make you successful activist leaders.

Jesus was himself a great Social Activist. He reached out to whosoever was in need -irrespective of caste, creed or disease. He made sure that corruption was unacceptable (Give to Caesar things that are Caesar's). He fed the hungry, healed the sick, forgave sinners. He was a teacher par excellence, through his thought-provoking parables. He was principled, as He was not afraid of being critical of the High Priests and the life style of the Pharisees. He literally threw away sellers/buyers who were making His temple into a trading place.

Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Light. Let's follow our Leader. There will never be regrets.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

He is a career guidance counsellor and has worked for over 3 decades as HR professional in various companies.



Courtesy: www.mashreqbank.com



BY MARIA IRENE
MIRANDA



BY SELZA CARMEL
NORONHA

Teaching Young People about Financial Independence

Every person desires to live a 'fulfilled life' and yet everyone is caught up with financial responsibilities, well into old age. Why are a majority of us caught up in this wheel of financial insecurity?

Each of us has only a finite amount of time on this planet. And it is therefore wise, to live life to the fullest – one, in which you have the time and resources to focus on the things, that add meaning and essence to your life. Every person desires to live a 'fulfilled life' and yet everyone is caught up with financial responsibilities, well into old age. Why are a majority of us caught up in this wheel of financial insecurity?

Lao Tzu, the famous ancient philosopher says, "He who knows he has enough, is rich." To always want something better, is a recipe for perpetual unhappiness. The dilemma, many young people face today is - whether to 'live modest' or whether to 'live large'. What is the right choice? In this article we aim to share with you a few

principles that can be practiced, to achieve **Financial Independence**.

To build financial independence, money has to be managed effectively. Just bear these points in mind:

- Monthly income must be equal to or greater than the monthly expenditure.
- Monthly income must be guaranteed till the end of your life.
- Create multiple sources of steady monthly income to guarantee a financial safety net.

Let's start with the basics. The first step is to ensure you don't overshoot your monthly earnings. Begin, by making a list of all the necessary expenses. Include expenses that are quarterly and annual in nature as well. Calculate the average monthly expense. Here

is a list to guide you:

- Food and household consumables
- Utilities (water, electricity, gas, fuel)
- Clothing, Shelter (Rent/EMI), Healthcare
- Education (fees, books, uniform, transport)
- Others (e.g. entertainment expenditure)

These expenses should be addressed foremost, in your financial plan. The average monthly expense should not exceed your monthly income. If monthly expenses are greater than monthly earnings, then relook at each expense carefully and trim down your expenses. Many a time, this calls for discipline and sacrifice. The goal is to be disciplined about spending on only what is absolutely

The goal is to be disciplined about spending on only what is absolutely essential and also setting aside money to create a retirement fund.

essential and also setting aside money to create a retirement fund.
A 'Need' versus a 'Want'

Examine every expense as a 'Need' versus a 'Want'. A 'Need' is an absolute necessity. It is that which adds value to yourself, family, health, or day-to-day living. A 'Want', on the other hand, is not a necessity. It does not serve any meaningful purpose. It could be a frivolous expense that is either a 'good to have' or an expense that helps you show off. When spending on a 'Need', look at it as an investment. Be vigilant and avoid investing in frills and fancy items. The amount you spend on any purchase is equal to the hours or years you will have to spend working, to compensate for that purchase.

Once you have an effective control on your monthly budget, it is time to focus on building long term assets. Here we have created a blueprint to help you move to the next level in your journey towards financial independence:

1. Savings / Retirement Fund: Ideally, this has to be the first step when planning the monthly outflow. Start a savings fund by setting aside a percentage of your monthly salary or income. This fund has no cap. You are saving towards your retirement, an emergency, a significant investment or a safety net in case of job loss. The normal guideline now is 70%



saving and 30% towards monthly expenses. Do your best, to try and meet this.

The retirement fund should be re-invested, so that it earns a healthy interest and grows; so that it beats inflation over time.

2. Emergency fund: This fund is for unexpected expenses such as a sudden hospitalization, medical care, vehicle maintenance, home repair etc. You may cap this fund to a desired amount. Normally, a six-month salary is considered sufficient for emergency fund. This fund is best set aside as liquid fund, for example a Fixed Deposit in a reputed bank.

3. Corpus fund: This fund is to help you in case you do not have a steady source of income for a long period of time. This could be due to job loss or dip in business earnings. The fund will help you stay afloat, until you find a job again. This fund should be equivalent to 1-2 years (12-24 months) of recurring monthly expenses. After the corpus fund is created, start focusing on saving for a significant investment.

4. Significant investment fund: The money set aside in this fund will help you make a significant investment like a house, land, higher education, college etc. These are investments that will make life a little easier for you. It could be your own home versus a rented place. It could be a vehicle that would help you commute faster or it could be an education or a diploma course that will enhance your career.

When investing in these significant purchases, do remember to evaluate the return on investment over a period of time.

And finally let's understand, why it is prudent to create multiple sources of steady monthly income. The objective here is to accumulate assets that will earn passive income. Passive income is earnings from a rental property or a business investment in which a person is not actively involved. It is a way to get remuneration, for work that was done earlier.

One important aspect to be aware of, is that the retirement years of our generation will be very different from our parent's generation. Not just financially, but also in a cultural sense. Plan to live on your own, so that you do not hold your children responsible for your living expenses during your retirement years.

Work hard. Save harder. Retire early. Enjoy life. And remember...those seeking financial independence, need to find ways to decrease expenses and increase savings.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maria Irene Miranda is an engineer and has worked as a software engineer for Hughes and Qualcomm Inc. USA. She has picked up financial planning ideas as part of her training at her work and has benefited from the same.

Selza Carmel Noronha is an engineer and has worked with MNCs such as Oracle and Microsoft. She is passionate about causes related to women and girls and is a member of Soroptimist International. She also started her first entrepreneurial venture at the age of 25.

Know the bigger picture of your life



Courtesy: www.media.lidn.com

As you attune to your Soul or Higher Self you will learn more about the bigger picture of your life and the part you will play in the grand scheme of things. Those who perceive this bigger picture are often called “visionaries” because they have broader visions than most people.



BY IBONIO
D'SOUZA

Knowing the bigger picture of our lives, involves putting everything into a larger framework, where its true meaning

can be understood. You may have already discovered that seemingly unimportant things you learned, jobs you took, and experiences you had - all fit together in a way you couldn't have anticipated at the time. It was only later, when you saw a bigger picture, that you realized the importance of certain things. God has a larger plan for your life, and every experience you have will fit together and give you value in some way, even if you don't yet know how.

As you attune to your Soul or Higher Self you will learn more

about the bigger picture of your life and the part you will play in the grand scheme of things. Those who perceive this bigger picture are often called “visionaries” because they have broader visions than most people. As you see the larger picture of what is happening to humanity, you will know more clearly how you can serve and what contribution you can make.

Imagine you are standing surrounded by a heavy fog. It is so heavy: all you can see is a few trees near you. The fog begins to lift, and you can see that you are on a hill.

As the fog continues to lift, you can see more hills in the distance, and you soon have a complete picture of all the surrounding areas. This is what it means, to see the bigger picture; you have an increasingly clear view of the world, as seen through the eyes of your Higher Self. With this larger vision, much of your spiritual growth will come from within and be self-directed.

Gaining insights: The knowledge and wisdom of your Higher Self comes through a series of insights. Insights are those moments when the veils lift and you have a revelation, breakthrough or new understanding. As the veils lift, you will see beyond this reality and receive many insights into things you might not have even thought about before. Revelations are a stripping away of the temporary not-knowing and a gaining of the knowledge of your Higher Self. Revelations provide you with information about the greater reality - you are a part of the higher plan for humanity and your higher purpose. Through a series of insights, you will gradually learn more about your path, your mission, and your next steps.

Seeing the bigger picture will show you the perfection of the universe. You will understand cause and effect. You will begin to know at a deep level that everything you are doing is perfect. You may realize that your discomfort in some area is moving you toward a goal. You may recognize that feeling off-balance and off-course is part of learning how to feel balanced and on course. You might have an insight that your illness is simply your body's way of balancing and bringing itself to a higher vibration or helping you move to a new level of self-love. Seeing the bigger picture will give you the inner peace and confidence that comes from knowing the universe works in perfect ways to bring you your higher good. You

Seeing the bigger picture will give you the inner peace and confidence that comes from knowing the universe works in perfect ways to bring you your higher good.

can increase your ability to see the bigger picture and receive insights by asking yourself questions such as, "Where do I come from? What happens to me after I die? What is the right way to live? What do I owe to myself, to others and to society?"

You can receive insights in moments of reflection, through meditation, while taking a walk, or even in the shower. Thomas Edison got many of his best ideas when he took his small "naps" during the day, relaxing his body and turning off his normal awareness. For years Albert Einstein asked questions about the nature of time and space that led to his discovery of the theory of relativity. This breakthrough came to him in a dream, in which he saw himself riding a beam of light to the end of the universe. So, nurture your ability to receive insights and revelations by believing in them. When an idea that is new or different comes into your mind, you might think of it as a tiny seedling that is just breaking through the soil. You can be the gardener of new ideas, nurturing them and encouraging them to develop.

Trust, and follow up your insights: Revelations usually

appear first as unformed and fragmented thoughts. Let new ideas flow through you, without trying to make sense of them or have them perfect in your first attempt. Play with your insights. You will understand more about them as you receive gradual and steady additional insights that build into a complete picture. At first, you may not see ways to carry them out, but as you play with them a pathway will appear. You begin to draw to yourself the circumstances, coincidences, and people to bring them into your life.

Putting your insights into action may require you to do new things, learn new skills, take risks, and venture into the unknown. When combined with action, insights and revelations create powerful results. Ideas alone are not enough to create your success in this world; you need to trust your ideas, apply them, and persist in carrying them out. Do not look to other people for validation, for these insights are yours. Believe in yourself and your own insights. Do things as you see best, not as others tell you.

When the bigger picture of your life and the meaning of the universe become known to you, life becomes easy and rewarding. You have a guiding vision. When you see the bigger picture, you can do much in a short period of time, for you will know what actions to take -that create the greatest results. You will know where your energy and time can do the best. Seeing the larger picture will make the daily, practical things you do, more joyful, for they will have greater meaning as you know how they contribute to the bigger picture of your life.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The writer is the author of the widely read motivational book "Rise and Shine... the Lotus way", and a social activist.

What is legal? What is illegal? Protest can be legal!



Courtesy: www.thelogicalindian.com



BY DR. ALBERTINA
ALMEIDA

People are often law-abiding and do resort to remedies available in the law. But, in some cases, no remedies are available in the law, while in other cases, those remedies are just not working. In that case, what options do people have to but to protest, to create a civil disobedience movement, or to counter illegality with Constitutionally valid acts and performances such as performance of our fundamental duties?

The Constitution is the ultimate touchstone of what is right and wrong. Citizens have a right to protest because, as we see in recent times, the most unlawful behaviour has emerged from the Government. Because the Government abandons all procedures, and proceeds in an arbitrary manner to promote its schemes, the citizens have no option but to protest!

October and November 2020 have seen a series of protests across Goa against the coal hub, against the marinas, against the (mis) appropriation of decision-making by the Government and the crony capitalists it aligns with. It is in the end a struggle for identity, rights,

and real decolonization. Within the struggle are many struggles – struggles for environmental justice, struggles for climate justice, struggles for rule of law, struggles for gender justice, struggles for labour rights, struggles for decentralization of power, struggles against crony capitalism, struggles for power-with as against power-over, and anti-caste struggles as well.

People are often law-abiding and do resort to remedies available in the law. But, in some cases, no remedies are available in the law, while in other cases, those remedies are just not working. In that case, what options do people have to but to protest, to create a civil disobedience movement,

or to counter illegality with Constitutionally valid acts and performances such as performance of our fundamental duties?

This is precisely how citizens of Goa have been exercising their right to freedom of speech and expression, and also fearlessly expressing their views, within permissibility of Article 19 of the Constitution of India, which guarantees freedom of speech and expression, apart from performing their fundamental duties, under Article 51 A, namely to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture, and to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to

have compassion for living creatures.

Representations have been made to every conceivable authority to complain about the railway double tracking, the declaration of six waterways of Goa as national waterways, the three linear projects through Collem and Mollem and other parts of Goa. All of these are projects that will destroy the environment of Goa, as well as take away the right of the peoples to self-determination and democratic participation in decision-making. No public hearings have been held. While Gram Sabhas are not being convened, the Power Minister calls a meeting to speak to the villagers and brings the Government's partner in the project for the power transmission line, i.e. Adani's Goa Tamnar Transmission Project Ltd. to that meeting. Whither the 73rd Constitutional amendment then?

Approval for two of the three linear projects was given by the National Wildlife Board via video conference, with little regard for the fact that the COVID 19 restrictions to this date are not permitting people to gather, discuss, or express their opinion jointly.

At another level, some of those objecting the acquisition of land for the double tracking of the South Western Railway track received notices under the Railways Act for hearing their objections. Different people received notices to appear on different days before the Deputy Collector of Mormugao at Vasco. The notices also said that failing their appearance, the matter would proceed ex parte, which means that if they did not appear, they would not have a chance to be heard after that. Obviously, these notices provoked a furore.

There has been a direction to the quasi-judicial authorities, that no adverse decision can be taken against a party who is absent in proceedings before them. Why was an exception being made



in this matter? Objectors and protesters asked how is it that the State administration is proceeding with the hearings, when the Chief Minister was reported to have stated to a delegation of Goencho Ekvott that he was not aware of the nature of impact it would have and would be studying the matter. After tremendous resistance, the hearings were finally deferred with no fresh dates given, implying that if at all they were still going ahead, they would have to issue fresh notices to the objectors.

To add to this, the Collector-cum-District Magistrate of South Goa granted permissions for blocking roads towards carrying out the railway doubling work between Chandor to Margao. Is there no coordination between the different sections of governance? Do not these permissions for blocking of road require application of mind from the District Magistrate?

Goencho Ekvott and Goyant Kollso Naka had made representations to the Collector-cum-District Magistrate objecting to these permissions. Should not the District Magistrate have given parties a fair hearing? By the time people came to know of the Order of permission for blocking of the roads for road cutting, for the purpose of enabling double tracking, one segment was done and two segments of this permission still remained.

Therefore, what option did the people have but to arrive at the site and register their protest on the night of 31st October with candle lights, and through song, dance and

slogans? What option did people have other than this kind of protest to call attention of the Indian people, given that in the name of national interest, mega projects are being thrust, as if Goa is now a colony, oops corridor, of India with no say for its people? What option did so many people have but to say #ArrestMeToo after an FIR was registered against six named and other 'unknown' protesters some days later?

The legitimacy of the State's actions is itself on shaky ground. The rule of law is sacred when it is imbued with a rights based approach. But the rule of law which was meant to ensure order, cannot be reduced to arbitrary procedures that are pliant to a powerful mafia of corporates. The rule of law cannot be made a weapon to control democratic movements and to buttress the undemocratic practices of today.

The point is that - when protests occur, we need to see who was acting in a Constitutionally valid way, and who wasn't. Unfortunately, illegality is very microscopically construed these days, and every democratic activity is sought to be criminalised. The highest standard of legality is the Constitution of India and the human rights standards that India has committed to. If laws fail to provide an appropriate and adequate remedy, the people of India must uphold the Constitution of India, which is the core document against which legality has to be tested. Nothing more, nothing less. That is what would be legal, whether through protest acts or any which way.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

She is a lawyer, human rights activist and independent researcher. She has co-founded several rights initiatives and groups interrogating 'development'. She holds a Ph.D in law, has taught at the local Law college and at the Goa University, and is a member of the Board of Studies of the Department of Women's Studies.

The Prophetic Voice of Fr. Stan Swamy: The Kairos Moment



The 83-year-old Fr. Stan Swamy, originally from Trichy, a member of the Jamshedpur Jesuit Province, has waged a long battle against the promoters of the lopsided developmental paradigm, which is at the cost of environment and the indigenous community.



BY FR. SIMON FERNANDES, SJ

“Does raising questions on the rights of adivasis make me a ‘deshdrohi’?” This is the title of an article written by Fr. Stan LourduSwamy, which was re-published in *The Wire.in* on 9th October, 2020 after his arrest by the National Investigating Agency (NIA) on charges of sedition, in connection with the *Elgar Parishad* event that preceded the caste-based violence at Bhima Koregaon near Pune on December 31, 2017. How

can someone fighting for the rights of Adivasis or for that matter Dalits and marginalised of this country be an anti-nationalist (*deshdrohi*)? Is it about Stan alone? Fr. Stan is the latest one, among the 16 people arrested, including well known human rights defenders, writers and academicians. In fact, in a video message, he released days before his arrest, he said “What is happening to me is not something unique happening to me alone. It is a broader process that is taking place all over the country. We are all aware how prominent intellectuals, lawyers, writers, poets, activists, student leaders- they are all put into jail just because they have expressed their dissent or raised questions about the ruling powers in India. So, we are part of the process. In a way, I am happy, to be part of this process because I am not a silent spectator but a part of it, part of the game and ready to pay the price -

whatever it be”. Anyone expressing an opinion contrary to the narrative issued by the ruling dispensation is branded as an anti-national. This pernicious narrative swirled by the present regime is further stoking the flames of sectarianism and divisiveness, that is tearing apart the democratic and secular fabric of this country.

The growing sectarianism and suppression of the voices of dissent is choking and suffocating the democratic functioning of the State. The world’s largest democracy is on ventilator, as dissent - the soul of democracy, is being suppressed and draconian seditious laws such as Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 are invoked against the law-abiding human-rights defenders. The institutions that are meant to uphold the rights of citizens and society at large have been co-opted or subverted. Against this backdrop, it will be sensible

to have a sneak peek into the life and mission of Fr. Stan Swamy. His own words offer insights into his mission. "Over the last two decades, I have identified myself with the *Adivasi* people and their struggle for a life of dignity and self-respect. In this process, I have clearly expressed my dissent over several policies and laws enacted by the government in the light of the Indian Constitution. I have questioned the validity, legality and justness of several steps taken by the government and the ruling class".

The 83-year-old Fr. Stan Swamy, originally from Trichy, a member of the Jamshedpur Jesuit Province, has waged a long battle against the promoters of the lopsided developmental paradigm, which is at the cost of environment and the indigenous community. He lent his full-hearted support to many struggles of *Adivasi* communities trying to protect their land, water and forest resources. For more than four decades, Stan has accompanied the tribals closely by defending, propagating and protecting their rights and advocating for the special status enshrined in the Constitution of India and asserting the Supreme Court Judgements that favour the causes of the *Adivasis*. He worked to revive JOHAR- the *Jharkhandi* Organization for Human Rights, and JOAR- the *Jharkhandi* Organization Against Uranium Radiation – which protested the environmental destruction and community impoverishment. He was instrumental in setting up the *Bagaicha* a Jesuit training centre for *Adivasis*, which was also a space for research and collaboration on action plans regarding marginalized populations. He was a vociferous supporter of the *Pathalgadi* movement in Jharkand – a movement of self-assertion by the *Adivasi* community, which sought to exert *Adivasi* control over their



villages.

Stan has professed his commitment through peaceful means of expressing dissent, while advocating against any form of injustice done to the vulnerable *Adivasis* by State and police under the banner of the *Visthapan Virodhi Jan Vikas Andolan*, a people's movement against displacement. He spoke in no uncertain terms, against the abuse of power, the use of anti-terror and sedition laws and land grabbing without due process of consultation and seeking people's opinion. He opposed the previous BJP government's attempts to amend land laws and the Land Acquisition Act. He documented and published the untold sufferings of hundreds of *Adivasi* youth who were falsely implicated and imprisoned for exercising their rights to their resources. His arrest on fictitious charges of Maoist involvement, is steeped in irony - given his endeavours to seek justice for others similarly incarcerated.

His interventions and arguments did comfort the disturbed (the poor Indigenous people) but disturbed the comfortable and rich capitalist class, along with the corrupt politicians wielding the reins of power. There is no doubt that the real reasons for Stan's arrest have more to do with his steadfast and principled opposition to the pro-corporate and anti-people politics espoused by the

ruling dispensation. Though Stan and all those who are incarcerated are getting overwhelming support from various quarters - through sustained protests, condemning their arrests and demanding their release - it is important to realize that being Christians, by vocation we are called to be prophets. Standing with Stan has definitely become a 'Stan moment' but it needs to be converted into a 'Kairos moment', where we march ahead with deeper convictions and commitment, becoming the prophetic voices; much like Stan himself. Going beyond the narrow confines of our religious and ethnic affiliations, it is the time to walk with each other, as citizens of this great nation and establish the prophetic communities to preserve and promote the democratic and secular fabric of the rich, pluralistic cultural heritage of our country, so that there is no more exploitation of land with its resources and dehumanizing of its people based on class, caste, creed, gender and ethnicity.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

He is the Founder-Director of SWADES, a social unit of the Goa Jesuit Province, working for a 'Child Focused Community Development programme' in Sattari, Goa from 2007. He has been engaged in advocacy on issues of Justice with others, especially for the rehabilitation of the Vanarmari tribe, fight against SEZs, and land grab by the corporates, the illegal mining and environmental issues.

Christmas in the Philippines amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic



BY FR. REYNALDO R. CAPILI, SSS

For most, Christmas starts in December. But for Filipinos, Christmas starts in September. It's no wonder, that the Philippines is known for celebrating the longest Christmas season in the world.

The iconic Filipino Christmas season starts as soon as the '-ber months' arrive. If you look up for the "longest Christmas season in the world," the Philippines will come up as a result. For most, Christmas starts in December. But for Filipinos, Christmas starts in September. It's no wonder, that the Philippines is known for celebrating the longest Christmas season in the world. Filipinos welcome the season uniquely with different flavours and traditions that make Christmas extra special.

We start with displaying the "Parol" (from farol - the Spanish term for lantern). It was used to light the way to church when no electricity was available yet. Today, the iconic parol lights up every street and window during

Christmas time – in homes, offices, churches, and Supermalls. The place of Pampanga is known for "giant Parols" festival.

The setting up of a "Belen." In most countries, nativity scenes – also known as the Belen – are only set up in churches or other religious spaces. But in the Philippines, it's common to find it everywhere. In fact, every Filipino household will have one set up during the festive season. A complete set is comprised of baby Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, the Three Wise Men of the East, as well as every barn animal you can think of. Whether it's made of the original porcelain or recycled materials, you'll see one in schools, building lobbies, and homes. Some schools and barangays even hold competitions for the best Belen,

making for some lavish displays.

For most countries, **Christmas carolling** means a whole production of good vocals, coordinated outfits, instruments, and well-practiced Christmas tunes. For us, it's become a humorous affair. Filipino kids and adults alike go from house to house, starting from early December. Lyric books and Christmas costumes are ditched for recycled instruments and made up lyrics. From the a-brim-bram-brooms to the jinggom bells, carolling is a sure mark that Christmas is coming.

Christmas in the Philippines is all about **families** also. It is time for reunions – catching up with family members that you may not have seen for so long. It is also a time to celebrate growing families – may it be a new-born's first Christmas or

the union of the respective families of newlyweds, celebrating instead as one big family. Whatever the scenario, Filipino families make it a point to spend the season with their loved ones in gratitude of their presence and in celebration of their shared love. Strikingly, almost every Filipino family makes it a point to come home for Christmas. Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) brave the crowded airports as clans, office colleagues, and barkadas (friends) come together to celebrate. The Filipino's strong sense of family and preserving ties, make Christmas the perfect time to share love and blessings with each other.

Indulging in Christmas **food**, like in other cultures, is a much awaited part. Our “bibingka” and “puto bumbong,” both are variations of rice cakes – bibingka is baked in clay pots and leaves, while puto bumbong is steamed in bamboo tubes, are best sellers. Then, we have “tablea” (local chocolate drink), “hamon,” “keso de bola” and “kesong puti” (carabao milk cheese), fruit salad, spaghetti, leche flan, lechon (roasted pig) and many more.

And to top it all, attending “**Simbang Gabi**” (Night Mass) or “**Misa de Gallo**” (Rooster's Mass) is surely Filipino. Filipinos attend mass either late at night or in the wee hours of the morning, say 3 o'clock in the morning, for all nine days before Christmas. We try to complete all 9 days, both as a religious practice and because of the belief that attending all 9 masses will grant you a wish. Most often, during the Simbang Gabi, Churches are filled up mostly of the youth. And to go with the season, Churches are lavishly decorated to add a Christmas feel, and vendors, often sell local Christmas goods like bibingka and puto bumbong, outside after Mass.

Our Christmas may not involve making snow angels or

Christmas in the Philippines is all about families also. It is time for reunions – catching up with family members that you may not have seen for so long.

being bundled up in thick coats and scarves, but the youthful atmosphere pervades the town. Though Yuletide is well-known for its snowy and winter celebrations, our sunny, tropical country and our Christmas traditions makes the holiday season warm and bright.

This is the picture of a typical Filipino celebration of Christmas from the preparation to the celebration, until the end of the season. However, due to the reality of the pandemic, surely this scenario will be altered for a while.

With the restrictions and lockdowns, with loss of jobs and lives due to Covid-19, with uncertainties and fears, with hungers and frustrations – our festivities and movements are calculated. We would like to celebrate and at the same time, we don't want to be infected.

It may sound low-spirited, but this present reality teaches us to cherish what is essential in life – family bonding, quality moment with your loved ones, praying together, out-doing the commercialization of Christmas.

Filipinos will carry on with displaying and decorating their houses with Parol, Belen and Christmas lights, though, I believe it will be very limited to the basic level, because of economic crisis



brought about by our present situation. The gathering of families and friends surely will not be full and extravagant - considering the threat to health, as well as the imposed health protocol of the government.

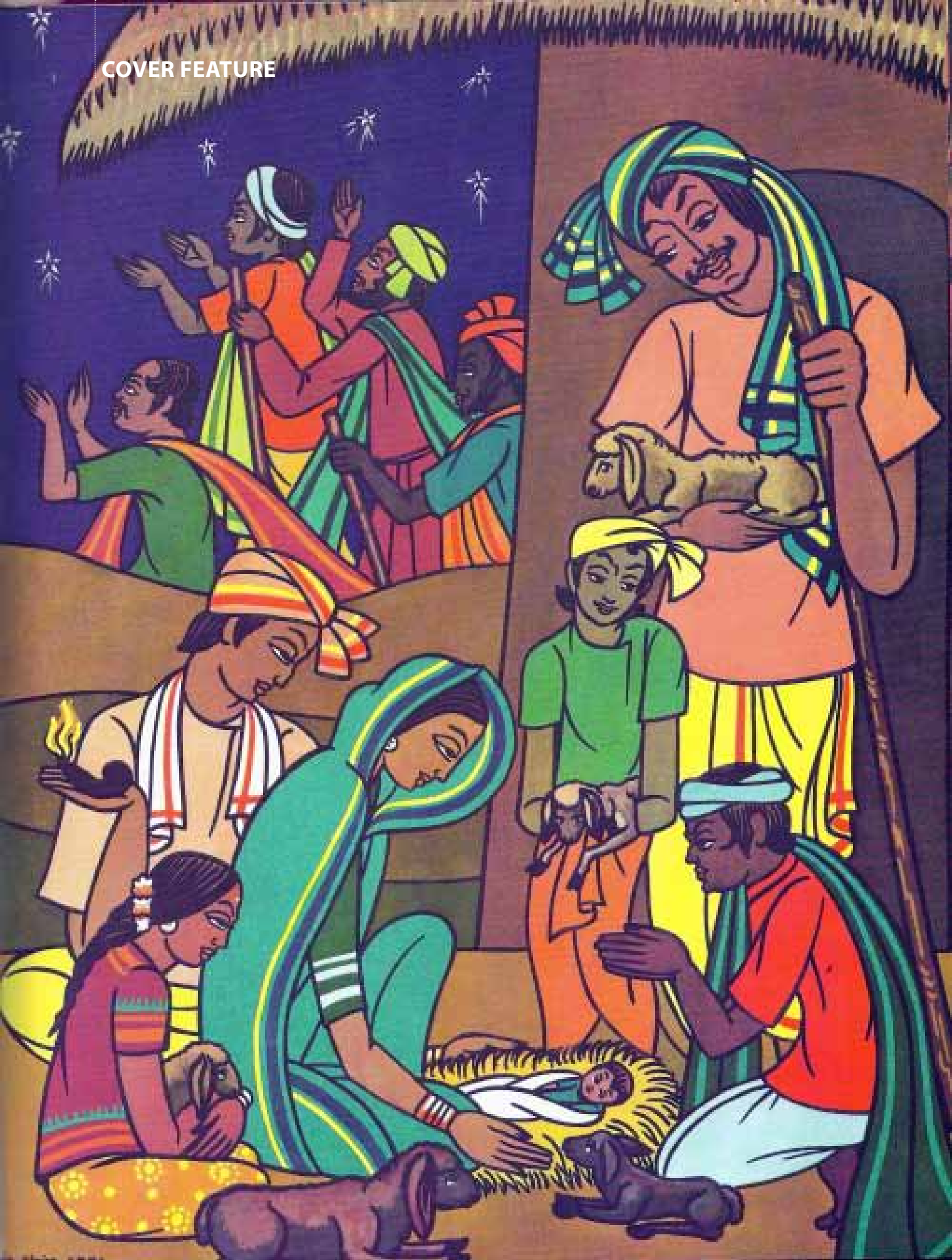
While there is the easing up of the restrictions in almost all sectors of the society, one can still sense fear of contamination. That is why, the health protocol is a must for all, in public and private places as well as in our Churches. The Philippine Church is bracing herself up in the forthcoming Misa de Gallo celebration, indeed, an alternative platform to celebrate it, like “live-streaming Masses,” is being set forth. The traditional Christmas carolling, to greet and gather funds for a noble cause, is somehow being taken over too by a live-streaming one.

Finally, my reflection is that, this pandemic helps us to realize that we are usually going overboard in the celebration of Christmas – too commercialized. At the same time, it reminds us about what is essential - that, indeed, the Incarnation, Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ necessarily needs to be the centre of our lives and celebration. For truly, Jesus, our Bread of Life, is the reason for the season.

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COVER FEATURE



Hope: eternal and tangible, viable through God's solidarity with us.

Jesus' incarnation is completely different. In Jesus, God intervenes in favour of his erring children; he has removed judgment from us, and this is the source of hope for humankind.



BY FR. HERALD
MATHIAS, SFX

India is home for a number of religions and has well-known pilgrim centres allied with these religions. Lakhs of pilgrims, who visit these centres, believe in very interesting stories often revolving around incarnation of gods. In comparison to some of these popular stories, Jesus' incarnation is completely different. In Jesus, God intervenes in favour of his erring children; he has removed judgment from us, and this is the source of hope for humankind. "God so loved the world, that he sent his own Son into the world that those who believe in him may have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but so the world would be saved through him" [Jn. 3:16-17]; these two verses from John's gospel resound, as Pascal says, all the greatness and the misery of man. St. Paul articulates this hope very well [1 Tim 1: 1-20]. Having experienced the saving mercy of God through faith in

Christ, Paul gives thanks. He, once an ardent defender of the law, was still a sinner, but only Christ brought him salvation, so that his example may be of benefit to others. Just as Paul became the proclaimer of Christ's salvation, he urges Timothy and us, his readers, to be true to their calling and preach Hope both in season and out of season. This clarion call should ring aloud in our ears during Christmas, wherein we recall in a special way, God's solidarity with us. In what is seemingly a consumerist and materialist society we live in, we are called to witness to the fact that Jesus is there in Christmas as well as in all situations of life.

"Hope" is a key word in Biblical faith. Its prominence can be gauged by the fact that, in several passages the words "faith" and "hope" seem interchangeable [Heb. 10:22-23, 1 Pet.3:15, Eph. 3:12]. St. Paul writing to the Thessalonians says, you must not "grieve as others do, who have no hope" [1 Th. 4:13]. The distinguishing mark of Christians, is the fact that they have a future: not that they know the details of what awaits them, but they know in general terms, that their life will not end in emptiness. Our encounter with the God - who in Christ has shown us his face and opened his heart - can change our lives; we are redeemed through the hope that it expresses. Christian

faith for us today is life-changing and life sustaining hope. It is "performative" – it is a message which shapes our life in a new way and not just "information" says Pope Benedict in his encyclical *Spe Salvi* (S.S.). Unfortunately, this type of hope has been subjected to harsh critique in modern times. It is being dismissed as pure individualism, a way of abandoning the world to its misery and taking refuge in a private form of eternal salvation. But the truth is that salvation has always been considered as a "social" reality. While it is certainly directed beyond the present world, it also has to do with the building of this world in very different ways, according to the historical context and the possibilities offered [Cf. S.S. # 3, 13, 14].

It is a fact that, many a greater or lesser hope grips us, at some point of our lives. These, in turn, make us feel comfortable for a while. Yet it becomes evident that humankind is in need of a hope that goes further; only something infinite will suffice for them, something that will always be more than we can ever attain! Our contemporary age has developed the hope of creating a perfect world; scientific knowledge and scientifically based politics make it seemingly achievable. In the process, the Biblical hope in



Courtesy: www.cdn.palmbeachillustrated.com

the kingdom of God, has been displaced by hope in the kingdom of man, the hope of a better world which would be the real “kingdom of God”. In the course of time, however, it is becoming clear that this hope is constantly receding [cf. S.S. #30]. Among the other reasons, suffering is one of the primary factors responsible for the recession. Adding to the long list of suffering in the world, Covid-19 stares at humankind with all alacrity today.

“Hope is a renewable option. If you run out of it at the end of the day, you get to start over in the morning” says Barbara Kingsolver. We wonder at times, looking at the resilience that human beings show, in the face of suffering. It indeed surprises one to read and see people who live in extreme deprivation, imprisoned for years, still hoping for deliverance sometime in the future. Amazingly, some of them live their lives after all that they have gone through without bitterness or thoughts of revenge. If we listen attentively to the daily conversation of ordinary people, they enumerate all ills that plague their lives and suddenly intersperse their conversation with the word “but...” referring to one or two events that have happened recently to ascertain that things are going to be alright! There is always something that alleviates the picture of gloom, darkness and evil. This human behaviour is described well by poet Suganthakumari when she

wrote: “On seeing a star/it forgets the night, on seeing the new rain/ it forgets the drought, on seeing the baby’s milky smile/it forgets death and enjoys life/ the poor human heart...”

Covid-19 has caused unexplainable, immeasurable and unimaginable pain and suffering, loss of lives, loss of jobs, loss of income, loss of business, the list goes on. What is needed today; at a time of calamity of huge proportion, where the world has changed and everything seems uncertain, is hope in life. We could understand the assurance of God’s promise of mercy and protection, that everyone needs today when we are mindful of various emotions and feelings, which people go through. We are expected to be bearers of hope and confidence in the future, so that the present becomes liveable. Pope Francis recently told the Christian journalists: “be bearers of hope” – “sowers of hope in a better tomorrow.” This is possible, only when we see suffering and positive actions to lessen the importance of suffering, as settings for learning and living hope [cf. S.S. # 35-40].

This sense that things will improve, that the cruelties will end, that justice will prevail - keeps human beings sane and hopeful. Amidst all not-so-pleasing things, we have been reading inspiring stories of hope, the stories of people caring for others, of people trying to make other’s lives more bearable, and being faithful to the mission, even in most trying situations. We indeed draw hope from actions of individual goodness, that are making the world a better place, in small ways. These actions are probably more sustainable and admirable; because they come from the innate goodness of some individual, that is not likely to fail. They serve as tangible expressions

Christian faith for us today is life-changing and life sustaining hope. It is “performative” – it is a message which shapes our life in a new way and not just “information”

of hope for all.

The world is united today for a common problem and solution, like never before. This pandemic

has proved that all countries can collaborate and work together, towards a common solution for any problem. As the entire scientific community is working hard for solutions, we ought to be patient and hopeful. As we wait in hope, it is good to keep four beautiful thoughts of life before us: **Look back and get experience** – for a life of suffering and trials, has taught us many wonderful lessons, **Look forward and see hope** - whatever might have been the negative experiences, we look forward with hope; for the Lord has a wonderful plan for us. **Look around and find reality** – grow in awareness of stark realities around us, without ever turning blind eyes to them. **Look within and find confidence** - for with God-given talents and abilities, we will withstand all storms. Looking at the past with faith, fills us with gratitude and that in turn, induces in us a passion for the present and hope for the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The writer is a member of the Society of Pilar. He is the Rector of Pilar Niketan, Nagpur-Maharashtra. He holds an MA in Philosophy from Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium.

Jesus the Anchor of our Hope



Courtesy: www.assayingsofipseity.files.wordpress.com

Hope is the Theological Virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven, placing our trust in the promises of Jesus, and relying on the Holy Spirit. We all remember having learnt these precepts, in our Catechism classes during our childhood days.



BY BISHOP ALEX
DIAS, SFX

The Emperor Solomon had a majestic and magnificent temple built for God. People came from far and wide to see its beauty, and to know the splendour of the Lord, for whom it was erected.

Now, God wants something more splendid than that temple

from us. He wants our lives to be Spiritual temples, worthy of the children of God, edifices that would reflect God's image and Splendour in us. He was well aware that we could not do it, and so He did it for us.

God wishes our spiritual lives to be like that resplendent temple,

COVER FEATURE

which would forever speak of and reflect God Himself in us. And so, He has done it.

A Temple On Three Pillars

This majestic temple is raised on 3 magnificent pillars. These pillars are the Three Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope and Charity, virtues on which our Christian lives need to be erected.

The Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to enable them to live as God's children, and to merit Eternal Life. These Virtues relate directly to God. They dispose Christians to live in relationship with the Holy Trinity. They have the One Triune God for their origin, motive and object.

The Theological Virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activities; they animate them, and give them their special character. They inform and give life to all the other moral virtues. They are the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit, in the faculties of human beings.

Whereas Faith is the theological Virtue by which we believe in God and in all that He has taught and revealed to us, Charity is the Theological virtue by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbours as ourselves for the love of God. Hope is the Theological Virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven, placing our trust in the promises of Jesus, and relying on the Holy Spirit. We all remember having learnt these precepts, in our Catechism classes during our childhood days.

HOPE, The Second Theological Virtue.

From my early childhood Catechism, I remember that, while Faith and Charity posed no difficulty in understanding them, the Second Theological Virtue,

Pope Benedict has recourse to the life of St. Josephine Bakhita, the Saint from Darfur in Sudan, to explain how important it is for people to have a trustworthy hope.

namely, Hope, did prove a little difficult to understand. And today I would go on to say that it proves difficult, not only to the young minds, but even to the minds of teachers and Theologians.

In his Encyclical "SPE SALVI", (In Hope we are saved) Pope Benedict XVI points out that these difficulties arise already in the Sacred Scriptures. He points out that the Letter to the Hebrews closely links "the fullness of faith (10:22), to "the confession of our hope without wavering"(10:23). Pope Benedict XVI goes on to say that in several passages the words "faith" and "hope" seem to be interchangeable. (cf. "SPE SALVI" No.2), thereby making it difficult to understand Hope.

Quoting St. Paul in Romans, Pope Benedict tells us that "redemption" is not simply given to us, but is offered to us as Hope (cf. Rom.8:24/SPE SALVI n.1).

When we say that Redemption is given to us, we need to understand it that we have been given a Hope. Hence the title of the Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, "SPE SALVI FACTI SUMUS" i.e. "In Hope we are saved."

Very obviously, we are not talking about 'A PIE IN THE SKY', but a trustworthy Hope, by virtue

of which we can face our present: the present even if it is arduous, knowing that it can lead us to the goal, which is our salvation. It is in this sense that we can even say that FAITH is HOPE.

Furthermore, we may say that this HOPE is nothing else but Jesus Himself. In his letter to the Ephesians, Chapter 2:12, Paul reminds the Ephesians that before their encounter with Christ, they were "without hope and without God in the world". It was Jesus who gave them HOPE, and became their HOPE and Salvation Himself.

Pope Benedict has recourse to the life of St. Josephine Bakhita, the Saint from Darfur in Sudan, to explain how important it is for people to have a trustworthy hope. Bakhita was a poor slave-girl persecuted, beaten up and tortured by her masters. Pope Benedict mentions that the poor girl bore 144 scars on her body throughout her life. There could be no hope for a girl like that who lived among tortures and sufferings. But then Hope dawned on Bakhita when her sufferings came to an end, when she was finally sold to an Italian merchant, who treated her differently. Thus Bakhita came to know a different master, the God the Father of Jesus Christ. She came to know that there was another Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was good, kind and who loved her. She also came to know that this Master had Himself been flogged, and was now waiting to receive her in His Kingdom. This Hope meant a new life for Bakhita. She became a new person altogether.

Explaining Hope, I myself have often used the story, known to many, of the child that remained trapped in the fire, smoke and flames, in a high-rise building, while the father managed to find his way out. Realizing that the child was still trapped in the fire, the father was frantically calling



Courtesy: il.wp.com/santamaritagroup.com

With the coming of Jesus, a new era has been inaugurated for us. It is an Era of Hope. The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that “Christian Hope unfolds from the beginning of Jesus’ preaching in the proclamation of the Beatitudes.

out to the child. To his good luck and the child’s, in the midst of that fire and confusion, they both saw each other. The father called out to the child, and said: “Son, I can see you from outside, you jump out, and I will hold you in my arms. “The child responded and said: “But, Daddy, I cannot see you”. The

father said to the child: “Son, it does not matter if you cannot see me, I can see you. You jump out, and I will catch you in my arms. In a supreme act of Faith and Hope--- the kind of Hope that we are talking about--- the child jumped out, and was safely caught by the father, unscathed from the fire and flames. In a simple explanation, I will say that the child believed the father’s word in Faith, and did what the father was saying, namely, jumped because of his Hope. It was a leap in the dark, but his Hope in the father showed him light and gave him the courage to jump.

Jesus, the Anchor of our Hope.

What a difference the knowledge of Jesus, her Redeemer, made in St. Bakhita’s life. It filled her with a new life. Her new-found Hope, Jesus, had taken over her life, and made it new. All the tortures she had endured were a thing of the past, now that she had her Anchor in Jesus. The 144 scars on her body were all forgotten, once she realized that there was a New Someone loving her, and waiting for her to receive her in His arms. Her Hope was now in Jesus and Jesus alone.

With the coming of Jesus, a new era has been inaugurated for us. It

is an Era of Hope. The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that “Christian Hope unfolds from the beginning of Jesus’ preaching in the proclamation of the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes raise our Hope toward Heaven, as the New Promised Land; they trace the path that leads through the trials that await us (CCC.1820.). Through thick and thin, Jesus walks with those, who have pinned their Hope in Him. He walks with them as their forerunner (Heb.6:19-20). Jesus is a Hope that will never disappoint us (Rom.5:5). This Hope then also becomes our weapon, our helmet. This is what happened to St. Bakhita, once she found and got to know her New Master.

The same Hope filled the child, giving him the courage to take that leap in the dark, and jump - knowing that the father was there.

With the Three Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, may we be able to give our God what He deserves. May these virtues shine in our lives, and reflect Him in us.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

He is a member of the Society of Pilar. He is the Bishop Emeritus, Diocese of Port Blair, Andaman & Nicobar Islands

In the Abode of Clouds



It was in the year 2000, when Fr. Jerry Fernandes SFX took up the challenge and became the forerunner of taking our society into Meghalaya.



BY FR. NELSON PEREIRA, SFX

Nongkhlaw Mission is situated in a place described as 'the Abode of Clouds'. One of the Seven sister-states of North Eastern India, Meghalaya is a beautiful state decked with ever-green mountains and white fluffy clouds dotting the azure blue sky, as the sun beams through them. The strong standing pine trees and mesmerizing blooms of orchids beautify the forests. Moreover, the water cascading down a series of rocky cliffs, creating the breath-taking view of the waterfalls, are truly captivating. It has one of India's longest cave system. Meghalaya is divided into three prominent mountain ranges; Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills. These mountains comprise of their own tribes; Khasis, Jaintias and Garos. The Pilar Fathers are privileged to work among the Khasi people who are fun loving, hospitable, cheerful, friendly and very jovial in nature.

A brief history of the mission

It was in the year 2000, when

Fr. Jerry Fernandes SFX took up the challenge and became the forerunner of taking our society into Meghalaya. He arrived at Shillong Bishop's house on 6th Oct 2000 with the perspective of taking up a mission for our society. The then Diocesan Administrator Fr. Victor Lyngdoh (now a Bishop) took him to a place named Barato in the Jaintia hills. This was the place which Late Archbishop Dominic Jala had decided to give to the Pilar Fathers. After completing three months in this place Fr. Jerry found it difficult to cope up with the panar dialect of the place. Soon he requested Late Archbishop to send him to a place where he could understand and learn the language. He was then sent to Wahlang as an assistant to Fr. Sylvanus Nongkynri who was the Parish Priest and the Youth Director of the diocese. Fr. Jerry was a great musician and an energizer for the youth in and around the diocese. Hence Pilar Fathers gained a lot of recognition. Fr. Damaciano Fernandes sfx joined Fr. Jerry in the year 2003 and they both worked to establish a mission of our own. It was then, that Late Bishop Dominic Jala requested us to move to St. Thomas Parish Mairang, to start the spade work of beginning a new parish in Nongkhaw. This is how St. Francis Xavier Parish was founded and established on 19th December 2004.

Nongkhaw is a historic place where the Khasi chief Tirot Sing once bravely fought against the British attempts, to conquer the Khasi Hills. Moreover, starting up a mission in a place surrounded by the Presbyterian sect was not an easy task. The Pilar Fathers, not being natives of this place, were not very welcomed and were treated with contempt. Their residence was frequently stoned, robbed and they received continuous threats, but the roots of the Pilar fathers only grew deeper and stronger.

Presently, Fr. Raymond

Fernandes, Fr. Damaciano Fernandes, Fr. Manohar Kata and Fr. Nelson Pereira make up the Pilar Fathers community at Nongkhaw. Some of the ministries carried out in this place comprise of taking care of the pastoral needs of the people, imparting education to the children and the exercise of the healing ministry.

Pastoral Ministry

St. Francis Xavier Parish Nongkhaw, is overseen by Fr. Raymond Fernandes as the Parish priest. This parish has a vast territory, which includes nearly 52 villages. Among these villages, there are only 25 villages where we have our Catholic population, the rest are dominated by the Presbyterians. This gives us ample opportunity for evangelization among other ecclesial communities and those following the indigenous tribal religion known as "Ka Niam Khasi or Niamtre". The parish is sub-divided into four sub-districts, for the purpose of better functioning and each member is allotted one sub-district, to cater to the needs of the faithful. This system helps the Fathers to know their faithful well and give proper attention to their needs. The pastoral ministry includes celebration of the sacraments, visiting the people in their families and sharing in their joys and sorrows, reaching out to the poor and helping them in ways we can, and making ourselves available to cater to the needs the faithful.

School Ministry

Fr. Manohar Kata is in-charge of the St. Xavier School Nongkhaw. This school provides education to around 600 students. Though there are other schools in the vicinity, people choose to educate their children with the quality education imparted by this school. It also provides free education for the impoverished children, who cannot afford to meet the cost.

Furthermore, the parish has 16 mini schools in the far off villages to cater to the educational needs of the children. These schools not only provide general education but also nurture the students with Christ's values and strong faith. These schools also serve as little hubs to encourage and inspire youngsters to follow the religious path.

Healing Ministry

A call within a call was heard by Fr. Damaciano Fernandes when he felt the plight of the suffering people in this mission. He began with providing simple medicines to people who approached him with different sicknesses. Gradually, he started with mobile medical ministry by reaching out to the far off villages where people don't have medical facilities or transport to receive treatment. I would rather call it a healing ministry than a medical one because prayer is the first instrument that he uses to treat people. Hence physical and spiritual healing functions go hand-in-hand and the good news of Christ is spread in this land.

The Pilar Fathers have completed almost 18 years of serving the diocese of Nongstoin and are well known for their dedicated and devoted ministry. Along these years the Nongkhaw mission has inspired young boys and girls to join different congregations. People still treasure the memories of Fr. Jerry Fernandes, Fr. Alfred Almeida and Fr. Stevan D'souza who have worked tirelessly for the growth of this mission. We pray for God's blessings and his graces to guide and lead us all to work with more vigour and zeal, to establish his kingdom on earth.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

He is a member of the Society of Pilar. He is a missionary working in Meghalaya as Assistant to the Parish Priest in St. Xavier Church, Nongkhaw, West Khasi Hillss.



Bandel of Ugolim: a remnant of padroado mission in Bengal (Part V)

The term Our Lady of Bandel is a popular term for the official one: Our Lady of Happy Voyage or Our Lady of Rosary. The change of names does not matter to the natives of Bengal – Christians, Hindus, and Muslims – whom they flock to simply as Mother Mary or Guru-Ma in Bengali.



BY DR. FR. FRANCIS
CARVALHO, SFX

Today the towering *Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Bandel* stands out on the banks of river Hooghly as the lone remnant of the Padroado mission in Bengal. The term *Our Lady of Bandel* is a popular term for the official one: *Our Lady of Happy Voyage* or *Our Lady of Rosary*. The change of names does not matter to the natives of Bengal – Christians, Hindus, and Muslims – whom they flock to simply as *Mother Mary* or *Guru-Ma* in Bengali.

1. Re-building of Bandel of Ugolim

It could be recalled as how the Mogul Emperor, Shah Jahan had a change of heart on seeing the 'obeisance' paid by the wild elephants to the remaining prisoners of war, especially to the Augustinian *Padre João da Cruz*.

This change of heart prompted Shah Jahan to set free all the prisoners of war from Bandel of Ugolim. He endowed them with gifts and privileges for the re-building of Bandel of Ugolim. In a special way, the Emperor gifted 777 bighas of land to the Augustinian *Padre João da Cruz* for the re-building of the mission of Bandel of Ugolim, and for the rehabilitation of its Christians.

With thankful hearts to God and the Mogul Emperor for their *miraculous freedom* and with a prayer for the safety of those who

could not join them, a sizeable number of *remnants* of Bandel of Ugolim set sail down the river Ganges (cf. A.S. Carvalho, pg. 96-97).

1.1 Re-building of the Church of O.L. of Happy Voyage (1640)

On their arrival at Bandel of Ugolim, the *remnants*, under the leadership of the Augustinian *Padre João da Cruz*, immediately began to re-build the Church of Our Lady of Happy Voyage on its ruins in 1633 and completed it in 1640.

The Christians abandoned their old sites and built their new houses all around this re-constructed church. Those who had escaped during the war – some Portuguese traders and Christians - came back to Bandel of Ugolim and built their houses around this church. Thus, the Bandel of Ugolim once again became the centre of *Christian life*

in Bengal.

On obtaining his freedom from Agra prison, the Jesuit *Padre* Antonio Rodrigues too returned to Bandel of Ugolim in 1640. He soon began to re-build the Jesuit church and completed it in 1663 (cf. A.S. Carvalho, pg. 96, 105).

1.2. *Miraculous Statue of O.L. of Bandel – A Remnant of Marian Devotion*

The Augustinian *Padre* João da Cruz was not satisfied with the re-construction of the church – because it was devoid of the *statute* of Our Lady of Happy Voyage. He knew as how the statue had sunk in the river Hooghly along with *Tiago* – a Portuguese trader – who was shot dead while ferrying it across the river to safety during the war. In his reveries, the old *Padre* João da Cruz used to recall as how the *devotion to Mother Mary* attracted hordes of *Hindus* of Bengal to Jesus, and how they used to invoke her as their *Guru Ma*.

In one such reverie, *Padre* João da Cruz heard shouts asking him to wake up and see the statue of Our Lady of Happy Voyage lying on the banks of the river Hooghly. All the people of Bandel of Ugolim – Christians, Hindus and Muslims – brought the statue with great devotion in a procession to the church and placed it in a niche on the façade of the church.

2. Closure of Portuguese Chapter in Bengal

The war of 1662 had brought the *Portuguese chapter* in Bengal to a close. The re-built Bandel of

On their arrival at Bandel of Ugolim, the remnants, under the leadership of the Augustinian *Padre* João da Cruz, immediately began to re-build the Church of Our Lady of Happy Voyage on its ruins in 1633 and completed it in 1640.

Ugolim – with a church and a small commercial centre – could never reach its former prominence as the *flourishing commercial port town* in the Mogul empire. Besides, by this time, British *East India Company* had already established itself, in West coast of India (1600) and later in its East coast (1651).

Gradually, the activities of the *Padroado* missionaries too seemed to dwindle – as the Christian population of Bandel of Ugolim too began to migrate to greener pastures, viz., Howrah and Calcutta, the up-coming port city of *East India Company*.

2.1. *Waning Presence of Augustinians and Jesuits at Bandel*

The old and feeble Augustinian *Padre* João da Cruz was transferred to Goa. He died soon after his arrival in Goa in 1638 and was buried there in the church of *Nossa Senhora da Graça*.

The Jesuit mission in Bandel of Ugolim lasted till 1740, when *Padre* George Deistermann died as the

last Jesuit in that place.

The Augustinians – who witnessed the pillaging of their monastery by *Siraj-ud- Doulla* in 1756 – handed over charge of the church of Our Lady of Bandel, only in 1876, to the *priests* of the *Padroado* diocese of Madras-Mylapore (cf. A.S. Carvalho, pg. 104-105).

2.2. *Salesians of Don Bosco at Bandel (1928)*

Salesians of Don Bosco took charge of the church of Our Lady of Bandel on May 24, 1928 from the *priests* of the *Padroado* diocese of Madras-Mylapore. In 1935, they undertook *major repairs* of the church. In 1959, they built a new chapel on the roof of the church, attached to the balcony with the *miraculous* statue of Our Lady of Bandel. On November 25, 1995, the church was elevated to the status of a *Minor Basilica*. On November 14, 1999, they concluded the year-long *4th Centenary* of the Church of Our Lady of Bandel.

3. Conclusion

Even as Bandel of Ugolim was reduced to ashes by the Mogul Emperor, Shah Jahan the *devotion to Mother Mary* – the *Guru Ma* for a native Bengali – remained like '*live coals*' in cold ashes. Today, Bandel of Ugolim which is part of the *Howrah Deanery* of the Archdiocese of Kolkata attracts thousands of pilgrims – especially former Christians of Bandel now settled in different parts of Bengal – who stoke these '*live coals*' of devotion to Our Lady of Bandel – the *Star of Sea* – who guides them safely to their *port of salvation*: Jesus!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

He is a member of the Society of Pilar. He is a visiting professor at Pilar Theological College, Goa.



Francis Xavier – An enduring inspiration for Pilgrims in today's difficult times

Francis braved long and dangerous journeys, opposition from kings and rulers, various types of illnesses, including the dreaded plague and many other risks and dangers - to spread the Good news to various parts of the world.



BY DR. FR. SAVIO
ABREU SJ

St. Francis Xavier is widely regarded as the greatest missionary that Christianity has ever produced, since apostolic times. Francis braved long and dangerous journeys, opposition from kings and rulers, various types of illnesses, including the dreaded plague and many other risks and dangers - to spread the Good news to various parts of the world. His never-say-die spirit, that helped him to overcome all obstacles, is an inspiration to all of us today as we battle the Covid pandemic, gross human rights violations and increasing fundamentalism and



polarization of society.

To portray a correct and factual picture of Francis is a herculean task as there are so many stories and legends written about him. It is said that he converted over a million people, the actual figure is closer to 10,000; he is called the “Apostle of Goa”, “the apostle of Japan”, “the patron saint of the Indies” but he spent only a few months in all these places; he is revered in Goa as *Goencho Saib*, but he was against the recruitment of Goans as priests for the Society of Jesus. But, the tremendous global influence that this famous missionary has had and continues to have on Christians and people of all faiths, is seen by the fact that more than two million people, which is more than the total population of Goa, visit the shrine of Bom Jesus in Old Goa every

year, to offer homage to his relics, Is there some special inspiration or some holy or spiritual aroma about the persona of Xavier that attracts so many devotees from all the ends of the earth? And if so, how can that inspire us and provide succour and comfort for all of us in these difficult Covid times?

Relevance of the 16th century Saint to modern pilgrims

In the 1970s, the then Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, in an interview to a team from Spanish public television, summed up the legacy left in the Indian subcontinent by the most famous Christian missionary, in the following words: “When someone falls ill in India, whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim, we invoke the name of St. Francis Xavier.”

Francis walked the length and breadth of this part of the planet nearly five centuries ago, when transportation was very primitive, but what is fascinating is that in today's fast-paced, globalized and communication world, where often people don't have time for their own family members and neighbours, many of these pilgrims throng to Old Goa every year walking miles and miles to attend the feast of Francis Xavier or the exposition of his relics which occurs once a decade. Every year, among this massive *mela* of devotees that attends the feast of Francis, are groups of pilgrims from different parts of Maharashtra and Karnataka comprising of young and old, men and women, farmers and college students, who devotedly walk along the Western Ghats for nearly a week. Some of the pilgrims attend the entire period of the nine-day novena, sleeping in the corridors of the Basilica and managing with minimum boarding and lodging facilities and returning back to their homes only after attending the Feast mass. Through their pilgrimages, the pilgrims are able to identify with and connect with the fearless and restless pilgrim that Francis was, and the deep faith that he had in the Lord. I had a taste of this when I walked to Old Goa with the villagers of Sangargalli, Belgaum in December 2017. I really felt my faith in the Lord being tested as I walked for four days, sometimes in deep forest, crossing rocky and steep terrain with streams in-between, having bath in the open, using open air toilets under the trees and sleeping on the floor, in cramped spaces. In the recent past, the poignant images on television, of thousands of migrant workers walking for days and days in the blazing summer heat due to the Covid lockdown stirred our hearts and made us question why it is always the poor who have

Is there some special inspiration or some holy or spiritual aroma about the persona of Xavier that attracts so many devotees from all the ends of the earth?

to bear the brunt of any disaster or calamity. Francis' perilous sea voyages with danger from storms and pirates and his numerous trips on foot with the threat of robbers and of attack by wild beasts could never really diminish his zeal for souls. He would passionately thunder, "what blame would be mine if, for the love of my God, I were afraid to undertake what merchants and traders undergo for a handful of perishable gold?" and this unshakeable trust in divine providence provides hope and succour for all of us in these difficult times.

St. Francis Xavier and Fr. Stan Swamy

The spirit of Francis is very much relevant today, when we find so many human rights activists being targeted by the government for taking the side of the common people. One among them is 83-year-old Jharkhand Jesuit activist and former director of the Indian Social Institute, Fr. Stan Swamy. Fr. Swamy, known as "the ally of the oppressed, from the streets to the courts" has spent several decades in the erstwhile state of Bihar, now Jharkhand, fighting on issues related to Adivasi and Dalit rights, land and forest

rights, forced displacement due to mining and industrial projects, the right to food, and death from hunger. His inspiration to fight for the rights of the Adivasi and Dalits comes from his Jesuit brother, Francis who had special affection for the lepers, prisoners, slaves and the poor inhabitants of the Fishery Coast, all of them belonging to the Church of the poor. Francis served the sick day and night, distributed his portion of food to them and also gave his cabin to them, for rest on board the *Santiago* en route to Goa, when scurvy broke out on a large scale - an example imitated by human rights activists like Fr. Swamy and others, who have devoted their entire life to fight for the outcasts and destitute of society.

Majority of the pilgrims who belong to the working and poor classes, people with blue collared jobs, struggling to eke out an existence and human rights activists like Fr. Swamy are able to identify with the spirit of St. Francis, found in his letter addressed to his superior general, Ignatius in Rome: "The necessities for life are scarce in Maluco, Socotra and Cape Comorin; and the toils of body and spirit are surprisingly great in dealing with people of this type. The languages in these regions are hard to learn and the dangers to body and soul are moreover great and difficult to avoid." Francis' simplicity of life, humility and integrity attract modern day Christians, providing them with a message of hope and compassion in a world that is getting increasingly fragmented and polarized.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

He is a member of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). His PhD from Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai was a sociological study on New Christian movements in contemporary Goa. At present he is the Principal of St. Paul's School, Belgaum.

The Need of Religious Brothers in the Church Today

Interview with
Brother Eusebio
Miranda, SFX



In today's world also, the Brothers are very much needed to carry on the missionary apostolate, because the Brothers can easily go where the priests cannot go.



BY SCHOLASTIC JOVITO
VAZ, SFX

Q: is the vocation of Religious Brothers relevant today?

Brother: The vocation of Religious Brothers (not Lay Brothers) is very relevant in today's world. It is of prime importance, but we have failed to assess its importance. Always in the past and also today, we have considered it as a second – class vocation.

Even the Church leaders have done this mistake. As Saint Pope John Paul II accepted this mistake during the beatification ceremony of a Religious Brother. While preaching the homily, he spoke very highly about the vocation of religious brothers.

The vocation of Brothers dates back to the time of Jesus himself before he sent his 12 Apostles to proclaim his mission, Jesus sent 72 disciples to prepare the ground to proclaim the Gospel. That is exactly the role of Religious Brothers. In today's world also, the Brothers are very much needed to carry on the missionary apostolate, because the Brothers can easily go where the priests cannot go.

Q: When were the Brothers accepted in the Society of Pilar?

Brother: The Society of Missionaries of St Francis Xavier, Pilar was founded in 1887 by Fr. Bento Martins. At that time, the Society had only priests. On February 4, 1890 the Patriarch Dom Antonio Sebastião Valente handed over this Monastery to the Missionaries and since then they are called "Pilar Fathers". Although at that time, there were Religious Institutes with the priests as well as Brothers. Even at Pilar the Franciscan Capuchos missionaries had priests and brothers, according to some documents that I have read. In the Pilar Monastery, there was a saintly Franciscan Capuchos negro brother. The

Jesuits Society had also brothers who were architects, artists and others were specialized in different fields. Some churches were built according to the plans prepared by the Brothers.

The Society of Pilar was reorganized in 1939. In its first batch there were 6 Priests and 2 Brothers, Br. Peter Mascarenhas (Siolim) and Br. Paixão Lacerda (Chinchinim). In 1942, Br. Henry de Souza, Br. Sebastião Barnetto and Br. Albert Fernandes joined the Society, each one very outstanding in the tasks entrusted to them. Br. Henry became so famous as the preacher of the word of God, that there was not a single church in Goa in his time, where he had not been invited to proclaim the gospel. Many other brothers also followed them and did wonderful work. Today the Society of Pilar has only 9 Brothers. The Religious Brothers are like a pinch of salt in the food that cannot be seen, yet makes the food tasty. So also, the Religious Brothers give strength to the Religious Society to be vibrant.

Question: Brother how did you get your vocation for Brotherhood?

Brother: I got my vocation from my childhood. My grandmother was a very pious woman and she always took me for daily mass. I used to serve mass and also took other boys to be mass servers. Secondly, there were priests in our family since 1773. Two of them went to Macau – Timor, Mozambique, and my grand uncle who was ordained at Pilar in 1885, served in the Archdiocese of Madras – Mylapore. This family background was also a further inspiration for me to get my vocation.

As I finished my studies in 1975, I applied to Pilar for admission; a few difficulties

The Religious Brothers are like a pinch of salt in the food that cannot be seen, yet makes the food tasty.

arose but my vocation remained firm. The Fransalians priests of my school (Aldona) were inviting me to join their Society but I was more inclined towards the Society of Pilar. At one stage, I got a job in the Electricity Department, but I could not apply my mind to that job. Then the doors of the Society of Pilar were opened to me.

Question: What sort of work did you do as a Brother?

Brother: Soon after my Novitiate, I was appointed to take care of old priests and sick members; I was also asked to be an Assistant to the Editors of V. Ixtt and worked under Fr. Lino Florindo, Fr. Kyriel D'Souza, Fr. Andrew Fernandes, Fr. Sergio Mascarenhas, Fr. Peter Raposo, Fr. Ubaldo Fernandes, Fr. Feroz Fernandes and Fr. Euebio Gomes who were the editors of V. Ixtt and then the Superior General appointed me the Editor of V. Ixtt. It was my joy to take care of sick priests and brothers. At that time, there were no people to look after the sick members as there are now. I also served as a Bursar of the Monastery for three and half years. Occasionally I also worked as a Sacristan in the Monastery Church. All this work, I did as a missionary.

Question: Are you happy as a Religious Brother?

Brother: Yes, I am very happy. I have done and am joyfully carrying out the duties entrusted to me by my Superiors. I have shared the lives of many of our elderly priests and brothers. By sitting with them and listening to them, I have learnt a lot and got a lot of information too. I feel that through me, many good things have happened. I was in danger when I was born. Nobody thought that I would survive, but God allowed me to reach the age of 70 + today. I thank God. For the rest of my life, I hope to serve people and my community happily. If you fulfill joyfully the duties entrusted to you by the superiors, even today, I don't feel tired but feel even more enthusiastic. My motto is: "A generous heart, in the service of Jesus".

Question: Brother, what do you think about the decreasing number of vocations for Brotherhood?

Brother: The vocations for Religious Brothers have decreased in all Religious Societies. I think the unique role of Religious Brothers has not been projected in the right perspective.

We urgently need Religious Brothers and we urgently need to promote the vocations for Brotherhood. St Benedict was not a priest; St Francis of Assisi was not a priest. St Alphonsus Rodrigues, a Jesuit was not a priest but these Brothers became world famous models of Religious and Christian life by remaining Brothers. The vocation for Brotherhood is a great need of the present world.

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Courtesy: www.i0.wp.com/magazine-pr.com

Ushering in Hope



BY FR. SANTOSH
MENDONCA, SFX

God, through Jesus, stands in solidarity with us, to usher in hope and joy.

Lectio: Matthew 2, 1-12:

There is no doubt that *words from the Bible* provide us with hope and consolation.

Moreover, it is the *biblical personages* that inspire and instill hope and courage in our direst times. Among many, Jesus is the one that stands out. The passage for reflection gives us a glimpse of how God, through Jesus, stands in solidarity with us, to usher in hope and joy. To unearth this message, we need to unravel an OT personage - Moses, whose story shares important parallels with Jesus: first, Pharaoh ordered that all Hebrew baby boys should be killed (Exodus 1,16, 22), just as Herod does (2,16-18). The baby Moses was at risk, just as is the baby Jesus. Second, Moses was saved by the intervention of Pharaoh's daughter (Exodus 2,1-10), just as Jesus is saved by a dream warning Joseph and Mary to flee (v. 11). Third, the Lord told Moses, "Go back to Egypt; for all those who were seeking your life are dead" (Exodus 4,19), just as an angel will say to Joseph, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead" (Matthew 2,19-20). Matthew clearly intends for us to notice these parallels—and

to see Jesus, as a Moses-like figure. However, we need to remember this significant difference: while Moses (at God's direction) saved Israel from its slavery, Jesus will save the world from its sins. Just as Moses arose as a beacon of hope for the Israelites awaiting salvation/freedom from the Egyptians, Jesus - the King of the Jews was born as a ruler, who would govern the people of Israel, to attain for them a spiritual salvation.

Meditatio:

Jesus' humble birth, teaches us that one need not be with great power and wealth, to offer hope to the oppressed, needy, and downtrodden. We can see the obvious differences between Jesus and Herod: Jesus was born in a stable; Herod lives in a palace. Jesus is a helpless infant; Herod possesses great power. Jesus will prove to be a man of great compassion; Herod is cruel and violent. And yet, "Herod was troubled." Remember, the one who offers hope seems to be of lesser significance, but the gift that he brings along, is of greater significance than any earthly authority or security can provide. We need to assure ourselves, that divine hope and assistance is "in no way least" among the worldly

wealth and power. As prophet Isaiah assures us, "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" (40,31). God offers us hope, through insignificant persons and events. We need to be in sync with these divine vibes, to understand and accept the message offered by the messenger. Let us remind ourselves of the words of prophet Jeremiah, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future' (29,11).

Oratio:

Let our prayer be in sync with the words of St. Paul to the Romans (15,13): "May the God of hope, fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Actio: Be a messenger of hope by sharing consoling words to someone who is lonely, in distress, or with someone who needs a shoulder to lean on.

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St. Frances Xavier Cabrini

(Patroness of Immigrants)

1850-1917



BY SCHOLASTIC SAVIO
DE SOUZA, SFX

Courtesy: www.biology.com



Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini was born on July 15, 1850, as Maria Francesca Cabrini in Sant' Angelo Lodigiano, Lombardy, Italy. She was born two months premature and the youngest of thirteen children; most of the time in frail health. Frances Cabrini showed the signs of her dedication to living the religious life from an early age and she received her education at a school run by the Daughters of the Sacred Heart. She graduated with high honours and a teaching certificate.

When Frances was 18, she applied for admission to the religious congregation of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart but was turned down because of her poor health. Instead, her parish priest asked her to teach at the House of Providence Orphanage in Cadagono, Italy. She taught at the girls' school for six years and gathered a team to help her, but this group did not survive, due to the lack of funds. When the House of Providence Orphanage closed, her bishop asked her to found a congregation. She drew in a community of seven women, to live the religious way of life devoted to the foreign missions, especially in the East - with the main aim to care for the poor children, in both schools and hospitals. For this, she

came across with resistance in the church, to the idea of women being missionaries.

Frances founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus which was approved in 1880, with statutes balancing hard work and spirituality. In 1877, she went to Rome, where she came across a lot of opposition, but later she was able to establish a house there. She finally made her vows and took the religious habit, also adding Xavier to her name in honour of St. Francis Xavier, as she was deeply impressed by his heroic work and missionary zeal.

In its first five years, the congregation established seven homes and a free school and nursery. Frances wanted to continue her mission in China, to follow the footsteps of her Patron, but Pope Leo XIII urged her to go to the United States, a nation that was becoming flooded with Italian immigrants who needed her help. On March 31, 1889, Frances arrived in New York City along with six other sisters ready to begin her new journey, undergoing a stormy voyage from La Havre. However, right from the beginning, she encountered many discontents and adversities. They had to find a slum dwelling in which to live and to beg for everything. Somehow they won

through and began teaching and looking after the sick and orphans. Frances did not give up, even though the Archbishop did not give his assistance and insisted she return to Italy.

In 1907, she became the citizen of USA to have legal claim over all the properties. In 1916, she awarded herself six months of spiritual retreat. The following year, back at her ministry, she suddenly collapsed when wrapping sweets to give children for Christmas. She breathed her last on the next day, i.e., December 22, 1917. She was canonized by Pope Pius in 1946 with the title of "Patroness of Immigrants." In USA, she is known as the "first citizen saint."

In this time of pandemic of Covid-19, St. Frances Xavier Cabrini becomes a model to each one of us, to reach out to those who are in dire need. Those who have lost meaning in life: the hopeless and depressed, those who are in need of satisfying their hunger and so many things that one is called to look into minutely. Let this Christmas be a time of reaching out to the people - as she did!

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Love like a Child

EACH ONE of us is a CHILD OF GOD; we are created exactly in the way, which He designed us to be - that is our TRUE SELF. God is LOVE; being HIS CHILD, means that LOVE IS OUR NATURE.



BY **CHRISTINA
FERNANDES**



BY **MARINA
FERNANDES**

In January 2020, if we were told that we would have lockdowns and restrictions that would continue for months, it would have seemed unthinkable and quite impossible. Yet, here we are - living through it, while facing challenges that are making us stronger.

We adapt and change to life situations, because we are inherently driven to enjoy life, to love and be happy. This is how God created us and what He continually wants for us...

We can learn from each other, even though we may follow different religions, with teachings

and different beliefs. Some may not even believe in God, but have beautiful insights. The TRUTH is - we are bound together in LOVE, that makes us ONE.

On that First Christmas, God sent us His ONLY Begotten SON. Through His life and death, Jesus reconciled us to GOD, so that we could call Him "ABBA, Father". Yes, EACH ONE of us is a CHILD OF GOD; we are created exactly in the way, which He designed us to be - that is our TRUE SELF. God is LOVE; being HIS CHILD, means that LOVE IS OUR NATURE.

Jesus often said 'BE LIKE A CHILD'. What He meant is: for us to have a mind like that of a CHILD - with no prejudice, bias, unaware of hatred and emotional hurt - one who forgets the past, easily forgives, loves without expectations and conditions - like Jesus did.

To start with, we were all like this child. So, what happened to this child in us? As we grew from being a young child, we were shaped

by the teachings of those around us; our parents, teachers. etc. We learned behaviour, which was considered appropriate by them.

Now, as we become teens and young adults, we look beyond our parents and teachers. It can be a time, when we tend to create an image of ourselves, according to what the world considers important. This 'False Self' that we create, with the intention of being recognized by this world, moves us away from our own TRUE self (who we were really meant to be).

We strive to possess status, wealth, titles, rewards, lifestyle, fame, etc. God is not against all these, but we get stressed out trying to gain all this and then, are anxious about losing what we have gained. Also, once we gain these, we secretly believe, that we are superior to those who don't have what we have. This gives us a false sense of power and glory, which becomes evident when we criticize or humiliate others.

As we put baby Jesus in the manger this Christmas, let us begin the journey back to our TRUE SELF -the child-like unconditional love.

Unfortunately, the world often makes us feel that we are not good enough. We are called a 'failure' when we don't pass a test or an interview. We are labelled 'uncool', when we do not want to join our friends in smoking, drinking or other vices. We follow strict diets and workout plans - not so much for our own health or wellbeing, but more to 'look good', according to the beauty ideals and standards set by others. We continue our struggle, to obtain what the world considers appropriate or successful; this causes us stress and unhappiness.

Yet, God says, "I have created you in My image - the highest honour I give you. I have created you for a purpose only YOU can fulfil. So, go ahead - discover your talents and skills. ENJOY what you are supposed to do, and more importantly, delight in who YOU are; STOP comparing yourself with others. All of you are my children; without discrimination." Believing in this, would give us peace.

In our relationships, we create expectations and needs, which we want others to fulfil. We feel that, we will be happy and feel loved only when those expectations are met. When they are not fulfilled, we experience the disturbing feelings of anger, hurt, disappointment,

resentment, sadness, etc.

Let's say, you want to try a punk hairstyle in this pandemic. You would feel better, if your best friend agrees to have one too, but he flatly refuses. You are so angry with him. But, is he the cause of your anger? NO! You EXPECTED your friend to comply; when he didn't, your expectation was not met, so you were angry.

Let's take another example: you have some feelings towards a member of the opposite sex, but she or he is not interested in you. You feel so hurt when rejected; should you blame this person for your hurt or dejection? NO! Again, simply because YOU had created the NEED to be accepted.

We put conditions to be Loved, but GOD just loves us WITHOUT ANY CONDITIONS.

With introspection and a firm resolve, we too can let go of our expectations and accept others for who they are, remembering that they are created as they are, for a reason - by God. By letting go of our expectations, we are further enabled to accept ourselves - knowing that we do not need to meet another person's expectations. This gives us the strength to say NO to people who think they can

bully us, to satisfy their needs or to do things, which go against our conscience.

As we put baby Jesus in the manger this Christmas, let us begin the journey back to our TRUE SELF -the child-like unconditional love.

We have the power to change our mind set, which is made up of attitudes, expectations, needs and thoughts. These give rise to feelings, which in turn, dictate our words and actions - unconsciously. There are three main areas we need to INTROSPECT on and DECIDE to CHANGE; these will help us discover Joy in loving.

1) Attitudes that divide and give us a feeling of superiority.

2) Our expectations and needs that cause unhappiness in our relationships.

3) The stress caused by our attachments to the world.

Your journey within, will fill your days with Peace, Love and Joy - Christmas blessings, always.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christina Fernandes is a family & youth Counsellor and Life Skills coach..

Marina Fernandes is a HR Professional in Learning & Development, Coaching and People Management skills.



Courtesy: www.osepark10thwardyouth.files.wordpress.com



Courtesy: www.images.indianexpress.com

Attitudinal Change



BY CURIE PEREIRA

Shantanu is not the same, he is much composed, calm and much happier. You have made the difference.

Shantanu's mother's words came to me just like celestial dewdrops on newly opened rosebuds.

Shantanu is one of my students with special needs. He had joined the school just three months ago. When I saw him for the first time, I wondered if anything was really wrong with him. He greeted everyone with a very cheerful smile and in a short time, had mixed with everyone else.

But teaching him was an uphill task. He just looked at everyone and laughed aloud. I tried my best to get his attention, but nothing affected him. He just scribbled anything on papers and scattered them around. Kind word, stern words – they didn't make any sense to him. Every small gesture, every instruction made him laugh even all the more. It was not him, but me, who felt totally helpless; I just didn't know how to change the situation.

After a fortnight, his mother came to school to find out how her son was doing. "I don't think Shantanu has any interest in learning something, it must be just the compulsion that makes him come to school", I said "No teacher, he likes to come to school, and he is very fond of you," she replied.

"Fond of me" - I just couldn't

But teaching him was an uphill task. He just looked at everyone and laughed aloud.

believe it; I was just dumbfounded as I had not done anything special.

"Then, why doesn't he listen to anything I tell him? He just keeps on laughing all the time".

"Teacher, that's the disorder he is suffering from. He does it at home too. We have enrolled him here so that he may get over this problem," the mother said. I was so shocked to hear this; his laughing was his only mental disability. I didn't know what to say. "I am so sorry"

I knew the situation might have not changed, but my attitude and outlook could definitely change. 'My grace is all you need, my power works best in weakness', said the Lord and I believed him.

The next day Shantanu entered the class with the same giggling and laughing. The same classroom, the same atmosphere, my same Shantanu. Nothing had absolutely changed. But I had to.

"Good afternoon, Shantanu!"

It took a lot of efforts, to show that his behaviour didn't disturb me any longer. He laughed again looking at everyone. I knew I had to keep my calm and accept him just the way he was. It was a real test of my patience and endurance.

It wasn't easy. I had to constantly remind myself of the task before me and assure myself of God's grace upon me to face the situation. "Faith doesn't change the situations; it makes them possible", I realized how true this was.

He told everyone, that he was my favourite student and I was very fond of him. I never made an attempt to deny it. Somewhere deep down in my heart, I too felt the same.

The days passed by. Shantanu became more and more calm and responsible. He slowly started taking interest in the little tasks given to him and he never laughed without a reason. I don't remember ever having such a big reason, to rejoice in my achievement.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

She is a former teacher at Pilar Junior College, Goa. She has been working with a non-profit organization for children with special needs. She has many short stories and articles published in magazines, bulletins, and periodicals and has been a part of radio broadcast on All India Radio.

Rebuild the wounded world



BY FR. ANTONY
JERALD, MMI

‘The wounded world’, here I don’t highlight the severity of Corona Virus but I would like to mention the attitude of the government and the citizens of the nation who ignore the weak and the marginalized, who are caught up with their own needs, who favoured the rich, who neglected their own workers, etc.

Pope Francis in his recent encyclical ‘*Fratelli Tutti*’, emphasized on Fraternity and social friendship, where he expressed the essence of a fraternal openness, that allows us to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person, without division or discrimination. From the beginning of Covid – 19 curfew, a section of humanity received better service and acceptance while another section saw its own dignity denied, scorned or trampled upon and its fundamental rights discarded or violated. The picture and struggles are clear before our eyes even today. I still sadly remember the pain of those poor people who (with their kids) walked along the National Highways of India, towards their native place - uncared for, by the leaders in their crucial time of need. We are constantly tempted to ignore others, especially the weak. We are in a wounded world, created by an unexpected pandemic and it’s our duty to rebuild.

The Wounded world

‘The wounded world’, here

I don’t highlight the severity of Corona Virus but I would like to mention the attitude of the government and the citizens of the nation who ignore the weak and the marginalized, who are caught up with their own needs, who favoured the rich, who neglected their own workers, etc. The digital and technological world of today exposed people to the risk of addiction, isolation and loss of contact with concrete reality; thus, the struggle and need of the other didn’t touch the heart of the opulent.

Time to Learn

It is the right time, to learn the essentials to rebuild the wounded world. We need the following things to be carefully attended to:

- Shift in consciousness about human life and the dignity of all
- Promote equality in the society
- Spending quality time with family and others
- Role in contributing to the common good of the society
- Care for self/ health and fitness
- Learn to save money and invest

in medical fund

- Follow good habits
- Health insurance for workers
- Creating and monitoring unorganized workers

Pope Francis in, no. 33 of ‘*Fratelli Tutti*’, rightly states that we became prisoners of a virtual reality and we also lost the taste and flavour of the truly real. Covid – 19 pandemic revived the sense that we are a global community, where one person’s problem is the problem of all. Here, I would like to remind everyone the solemn resolve of our constitution, which talks of justice, equality and assuring the dignity of the individual. We neglected and failed to act on this resolve, during this pandemic. So, it is time that we promote justice, equality and fraternity, to rebuild our wounded world together - preserving ourselves in love and care by restoring the dignity of all.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The writer is a member of the Missionaries of Mary Immaculate, Chennai- Tamil Nadu. He is a professor at MMI college of Theology in Chennai.

Fr. Agnelo's life . . . A life of poverty

Fr. Agnelo lived like an Indian sanyasi. He possessed very few things which he required for his day today life. His life was a living example and inspiration for others to emulate.



BY BR. EUSEBIO
MIRANDA, SFX

Fr. Agnelo willingly embraced a life of simplicity and poverty. It is true that he did not come from an affluent family, nevertheless his family did not lack anything. They had inherited enough from their forefathers. But Agnelo, from his childhood, kept himself away from life of pomp and luxury. And as he grew, the virtues of humility and poverty deepened their roots in him. From his simple living, we can conclude that he lived a life of complete detachment. Fr. Agnelo lived like an Indian sanyasi. He possessed very few things which he required for his day today life. His life was a living example and inspiration for others to emulate. And by his exemplary living, he paved the way for others to emulate him.

Once, Fr. Agnelo was called to preach sermons during novena days in Assagao. Unlike present times, those days there was no proper transport facility nor did the priests have their own vehicles (bike or car). So the president (the person who celebrated feast that

year) made necessary arrangements for the priest to stay either in his own house or the church. That year, the president requested Fr. Agnelo to put up in his house. And Fr. Agnelo stayed there for nine days. The family of the president wanted to serve him delicious food. But our pious and simple Fr. Agnelo beforehand only informed them that he would like to have only canjie and nothing more. The family was taken aback to hear these words, but they could do nothing. He lived such an austere life . . . a life of penance and sacrifices.

On the last day of the novena, after finishing his sermon, Fr. Agnelo was about to leave to return to Pilar. As a token of appreciation, the president presented him an envelope with some cash. But Fr. Agnelo gently declined it and requested him to give it to Msgr. Lucio Vaz, who was his and Pilar Society's Superior. Msgr. Lucio Vaz was supposed to come to preach the sermon on the feast day. The president replied: "This is not payment for your sermon, but it is a small token of gratitude from my family and me". But Fr. Agnelo humbly answered: "I don't accept any gifts". The president insisted and said: "If so, then you can give it to the poor". To this Fr. Agnelo responded "It is much better if you only donate it to the poor". Many people confirmed the fact that Fr. Agnelo never accepted any gifts or contributions. And one of



them is none other than Fr. Sergio Mascarenhas, who would proudly speak about it.

Fr. Agnelo lived his life like an Indian sanyasi, a hermit. He led a life of complete detachment. He was a member of the Pilar Missionary Society. It was not in the society's constitution, not to accept any donations or gifts. But Fr. Agnelo sincerely remained faithful to the vow of poverty and set an example to all the members of the missionary society. He firmly believed, that it is of utmost importance that all the members abide by this noble vow. Let's make him our role model and follow his footprints.

Translation credit: Golda Gracias

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The writer is a member of the Society of Pilar. He is the Editor of Vauradeancholxtt, a weekly Konkani Newspaper, Pilar-Goa.



Venerable Agnelo

Our great intercessor before God

Mickey Sequeira (*Camurlim, Salcete, presently living in London*): I was tested Covid positive. Last Thursday, at Pilar, a priest prayed for my recovery through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnelo. He also asked the devotees to pray for me. After thirteen days, I recovered completely and was discharged from the hospital. I thank my family who are devout devotees of Ven. Fr. Agnelo for their prayers. I am also very much indebted to Mr. Simplicio who informed the Pilar fathers and asked them to pray for me. I thank the Almighty God for working this miracle through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnelo and pray for his early sainthood.

Anna Gonsalves (*Reading, U.K.*): Last Thursday, Anna requested to pray for her son as he was having fever, cold and throat pain. She was gripped with fear because of these symptoms like everyone else. But her faith was unwavering and she tirelessly prayed through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnelo. And indeed! Ven. Fr. Agnelo worked a miracle for her. By the same Thursday evening, Fabiano, her son, felt better; he neither had cold nor fever. He was completely alright. What a relief it was! She is extremely grateful to God and Ven. Fr. Agnelo. May he soon attain sainthood.

Rita Vaz (*Ilha de Rachol*): When I was pregnant, I tirelessly prayed for the safety of the baby in my womb and me through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnelo. I was very anxious as the doctor had informed me that if I had a normal delivery, child's life would be in danger; and if I underwent a caesarean, my life would be at risk. Such a grave situation it was! And in these difficult times, we prayed continuously. We knew Ven. Fr. Agnelo would intercede for us. And on last death anniversary of Ven. Fr. Agnelo, we were blessed with an adorable baby boy. I too had no problems. It was a real miracle! Our joy had no bounds. I am extremely thankful to God for His benevolence. I also thank Ven. Fr. Agnelo and pray for his early sainthood.

Maria do Ceu Countino (*Navelim*): We were blessed with a baby girl. But soon after her birth, doctors told us that she was having hernia and a surgery was needed. We were upset. A day was fixed for the operation. We were very stressed as she was too small. During these times of great anguish, we prayed through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnelo and applied his relic mud to her. However, a day before the surgery, our daughter had high fever and the operation was postponed.

Surprisingly, same thing happened when dates for operation were fixed for second and third time. She would get high fever on the previous day of the operation. This way two months rolled by. Sometime later, doctor examined her again. And what a pleasant surprise it was! Doctor informed us that our daughter did not suffer from hernia anymore and there wasn't any need of surgery. What a relief it was! We thank Almighty God and Ven. Fr. Agnelo. May he soon attain sainthood.

Translation credit: Golda Gracias

Prayer to obtain favours through Ven. Fr. Agnelo

Almighty God, Our Heavenly Father, we gratefully acknowledge your plan for our salvation, even by working miracles through your chosen servant. We thank you for giving us your faithful servant, Fr. Agnelo, as an example of how to follow in the steps of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ. With our whole heart, we pray that you may lead us through your Spirit to imitate his saintly life. Grant us also the favour we ask (mention the favour) as a sign that he now shares in the glory of our Risen Lord.

Prayer for the Canonization of Ven. Fr. Agnelo

O God of infinite mercy, we humbly prostrate at Your feet, we beg of You, with whole hearted trust, that if it be Your Holy Will, and if it serves our salvation, grant Fr. Agnelo the honours of the Altar through the solemn declaration of Our Provident Mother, the Church. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Miraculous favours obtained through his intercession may kindly be reported to:

Vice-Postulator, Cause of Fr. Agnelo,

Pilar Monastery,

Pilar, Goa - India. 403 203

Mob.: 9322038791

Email: vpagnel@rediffmail.com

Archbishop Filipe Ordains 11 to the diaconate

Amidst the Covid 19 pandemic, 11 scholastics belonging to the Society of the Missionaries of St. Francis Xavier, (Society of Pilar) were ordained deacons on 24th October 2020 in the chapel of the Mission Seminary, Pilar Goa, by Archbishop Filipe Neri Ferrão, the Archbishop of Goa and Daman.

“You are Called for joyful, humble, selfless, service” said Most Rev. Archbishop Patriarch of Goa and Daman, preaching on the occasion of the Diaconate Ordination.

Reflecting on the Word of God, he said that Jesus calls his disciples to serve. The desire for greatness is there in the human heart, but Jesus invites



us to go beyond and serve others in all humility. Just as the Apostles chose 7 men filled with the Holy Spirit, as deacons to serve, the 11 deacons have a special ministry of service of the Word, Altar and Charity.

Speaking on the occasion, Rev. Fr. Sebastiao Mascarenhas sfx, Superior General called upon the Deacons to be true and genuine, self-sacrificing and compassionate Servants in the mission of Christ.



Venerable Agnelo-a beacon of Hope



The 93rd death anniversary of Venerable Agnelo, was celebrated on 20th November. This year it was very simple and spiritual with the novena masses being webcast live. During the Eucharist, Rev. Fr. Aleixo Menezes, Rector of the Patriarchal Seminary of Rachol, in his homily, brought out how Venerable Agnelo was a beacon of hope to his flock. Through his prayer, simplicity, anointed peaching of the Word of God and administering the sacrament

of reconciliation he witnessed the hope. Rev. Fr. Sebastiao Mascarenhas SFX, Superior General of the Society of Pilar celebrated the Eucharist in the evening. Eucharistic celebrations in various languages were also held. Observing all the social distancing norms and restrictions, many devotees climbed the hillock of Pilar to pay a visit to the tomb of Venerable Agnelo and pray to seek his blessings. Let us pray fervently for the canonisation of Venerable Agnelo.

Pilar Media released 'Fr. Agnelo'



A song video 'Fr. Agnelo' was released on 20 November at the hands of Rev. Fr. Aleixo Menezes, the main celebrant of the Festive Eucharist. The song is written and composed by Fr. Dominic Alvares, a member of the Society of Pilar. It was an exciting international collaboration of musicians based in different parts of the world. The video is truly cinematic and captures the aerial beauty of the churches in Old Goa and the Pilar hillock in Pilar. The song begins with Friz Love setting the mood for a spiritual journey, Lulu Fortes draws everyone into a prayerful contemplation and Fr. Carson Dourado sums up the personality of Fr. Agnelo, and raises a prayer to God for his sainthood.

Mother Mary inspires people of all faith

On the last day of the Marian month, St. John's Catholic Church, Bakshinagar, Jammu, had a procession with the statue of Mother Mary through the street passing in front of the entrance of every house of the parishioners. During the procession people of other faiths also assembled to venerate the statue of Mother Mary who inspires everyone and becomes a source of unity.

During the entire month of October, the parishioners gathered in the evenings to pray the rosary. This year after the rosary, were several competitions were organised,

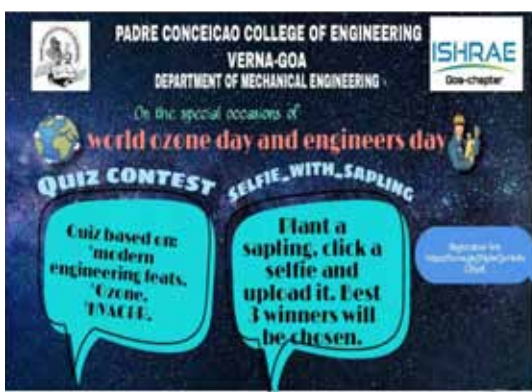


such as Quiz on the life of Mary, Marian hymns and painting on the life of Mother Mary. The objective

was to increase their devotion to the Virgin Mary and through her learn about the life of Jesus.



"International Ozone Day"



Padre Conceicao College of Engineering, Verna, Goa, observed "International Ozone Day" with a State-level Online Quiz and Selfie Contest. The event was organised by the Students Chapter of Indian Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers (ISHRAE), Mechanical Engineering department. The topic for the Quiz was "Ozone". The quiz highlighted the importance of Ozone and its impact on human



health. The Selfie Contest also aimed at creating awareness about climate change and protection of the Ozone layer.



Funeral Service under COVID-19 protocol in Guwahati

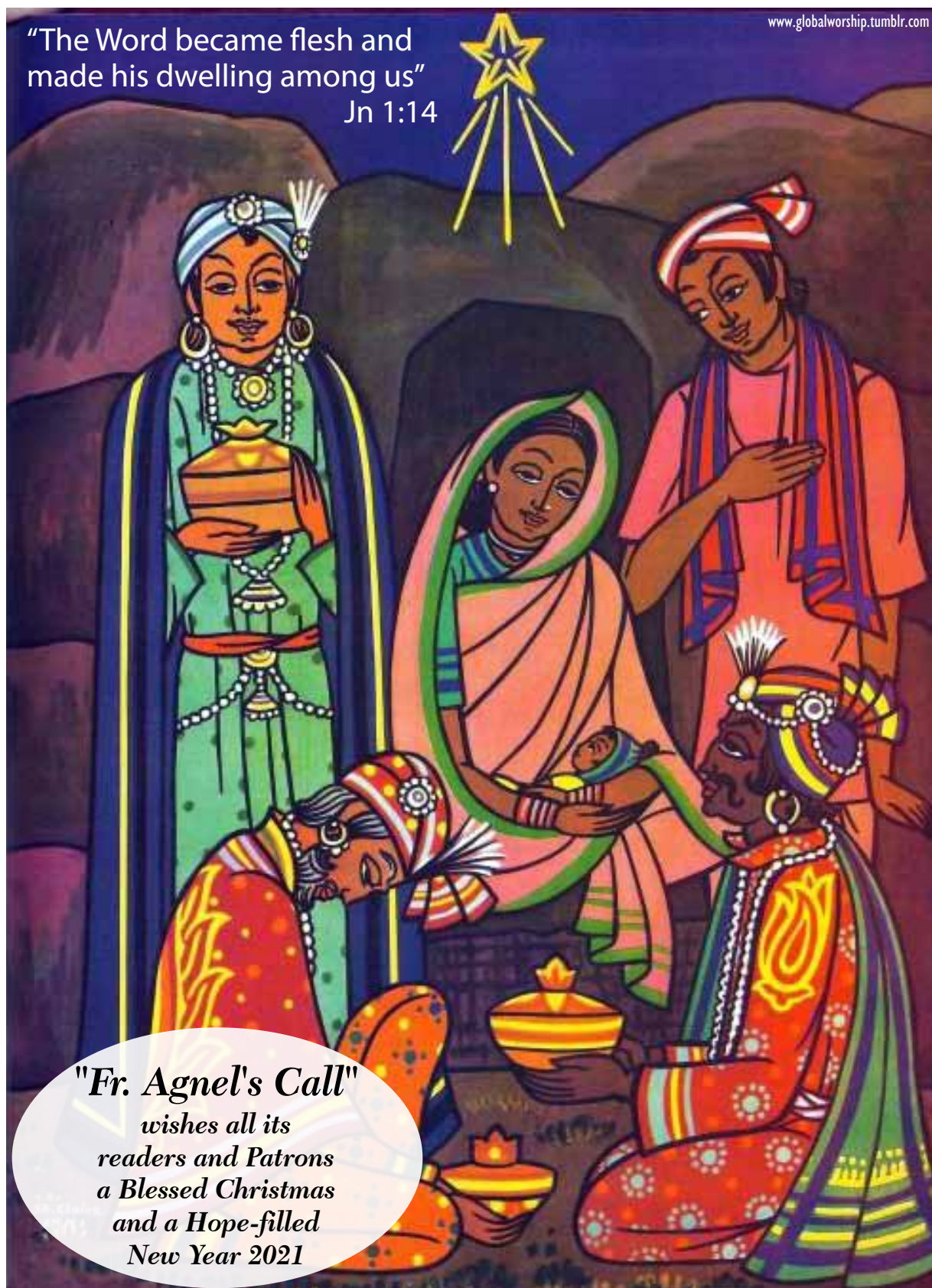
A Catholic funeral service is a blend of Church tradition and ritual, times of commemoration of the deceased, and comfort for those grieving the loss. But with the COVID-19, pandemic that has affected every possible spear of life, it has also affected the customary celebrations of our Church sacraments - in a very special way, the sacred funeral services. Fr. John Crasto sfx, the Local Superior in Guwahati, shares his unique experience of conducting a



COVID-19 funeral, in the common cemetery for Diocese and Religious in Guwahati. According to him, as a Priest, it was his sacred duty to bury the dead, thus he was not scared to bury a COVID victim, but was amazed with the protocol used for the burial. Though he had gone with his cassock, he had to put everything inside the COVID special burial attire. Even though he was sweating under fully impermeable attire, he was indeed delighted to give a decent burial.

"The Word became flesh and
made his dwelling among us"
Jn 1:14

www.globalworship.tumblr.com



"Fr. Agnel's Call"
wishes all its
readers and Patrons
a Blessed Christmas
and a Hope-filled
New Year 2021

*The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.*



28th December 2019

Vendley & Faybun

With Best Wishes From

Dada: Nascimento Antao

Mama: Maria Rosada Antao,

Brothers: Reygon & Noran Antao

Sucaldem, Chinchinim-Goa



A very Happy Wedding Anniversary to you.

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