

(For Private Circulation)



Fr. Louis Marie Léveil



Fr. Pedro Arrupe

JULY-AUGUST 2020

MNL Madurai Jesuits' Newsletter

FROM THE PROVINCIAL'S DESK

Dear friends in the Lord,

St. Ignatius, a Relentless Warrior of Christ:

The month of July fixes our gaze on and turns our hearts and minds to St. Ignatius of Loyola, our founder and father. The thought of this great saint evokes in us certain feelings of freshness, enthusiasm, joy and peace. We gear up for the Novena to St. Ignatius and the celebration of the feast day with all preparations and spiritual activities, seeking, through the intercession of St. Ignatius, God's abundant blessings upon us so as to serve Him and His people better wherever we are. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic has played havoc on all fronts all over the world trying to dismantle our hope and diminish our spirit, yet inspired by the example of St. Ignatius who served as a relentless and powerful warrior of Christ, we have been able to rise and stand united as friends in the Lord in the combat against the spread of the viral infection by strictly enforcing and adhering to various safety measures in all our communities and to reach out to those affected by the prolonged lockdown by distributing relief materials to them and by making our facilities available for their use. Moreover, our desire to serve more increases in us, thanks to our drawing inspiration from St. Ignatius who gifted us the much treasured principle of *Magis* and who left behind for us the great treasure of discernment, a prized heritage of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

The spirit of *Magis* and our charism of discernment beckon us, more particularly under the present COVID-19 circumstances, to a simple and meaningful celebration of the feast of our founder so that our expression of solidarity is made more visible both in spirit and in action. Let us keep the celebrations low-key and without compromising the safety norms in force. Let us also note the economic fallout of the pandemic everywhere and, more particularly, being sensitive to the plight of those afflicted by the pandemic, let us strictly avoid any grand celebrations with our collaborators and friends.

Formation Sector's Response to COVID-19:

In the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, I have sent to all the members of the Province different communications which focused on our outreach, financial management and safety measures. Formation is one of the sectors most affected by COVID-19 and yet it is one that has responded resiliently to the pandemic. In this MNL issue, let me focus on the efforts made stage wise by the Formation sector to respond to COVID-19.



1. Vocation Promotion

This year, under lockdown conditions, the vocation camps could not be conducted in the usual manner. Therefore, telephonic interviews were arranged to select suitable candidates. Fifty candidates drawn from our schools and Manresa Clubs and also from our regular contacts who had expressed their desire to join the Society were individually interviewed and assessed by four Jesuit priests on various quotients. Out of the 25 candidates selected for the pre-novitiate, 14 have safely arrived at VMI, Vilangudi, where they are in quarantine. A few more are expected to join VMI hopefully in the coming days.

2. Pre-novitiate

Our Pre-novitiate had to face several obstacles due to the lockdown. First, the Maxi Academy 2020 scheduled for April 18th had to be restricted to a community-level celebration. Second, the selection committee interviewed the pre-novices and one member of the committee had to conduct the interview online despite poor internet connectivity. Third, with great difficulty, E-passes were obtained and the pre-novices were taken to their homes safely – a herculean task indeed.

3. Novitiate

Our Novitiate at Beschi Illam, Dindigul, had its own difficulties due to COVID-19. Fr. Michael Panimaya Raj, the new Socius to the Novice Master, was quarantined on arrival on June 4th for 14 days. The second-year novices pronounced their First Vows on June 21st during a Mass with restricted attendance. Under the

overall coordination of Fr. Stephen L. Pragasam, PCF, and with the help of Frs. Paul Benedict, K. John Paul, and Selvaraj Soosaimanickam and the Jesuits in Kasthambadi, Harur, Vettavalam, Nagercoil, Devakottai, Thoothukudi and St. Mary's, Madurai, 10 first-year novices (four for CEN and six for MDU) were picked up from their homes and brought to Beschi Illam on July 4th and 6th. On arrival, they were quarantined in CIS building and will be there till July 19th. They are now in First Probation while being in quarantine.

4. Juniorate

Stranded in Vidyaniketan for 50 days after their final exams, the Juniors missed their maiden summer camps and Formation Meet. They spent their time usefully reading classical novels and poems, e-learning a foreign language, working on the Ignatian assignments as prescribed by the ADF's graded syllabus and making their annual retreat. After several attempts, they finally managed to reach Beschi Illam, Dindigul. They were kept in quarantine in the CIS building for two weeks. Among the juniors, those assigned to DNC have stayed on and started their online classes while the others left for the communities they were assigned to.

A policy decision has been taken by the South Zone Provincials to suspend for a year the South Indian Common Juniorate (SICJ) programme at Vidyaniketan, Thiruvananthapuram. Our would-be juniors have been at St. Mary's, Madurai, since June 23rd attending classes on computer skills and phonetics organized for them by Fr. Stephen L. Pragasam. They may be moving back to Beschi, Dindigul, and continue their formation in a CEN-MDU juniorate which will be adequately staffed.

5. College Studies

Our scholastics in Clive House, St. Joseph's, Arrupe Illam (AAC) and St. Xavier's with the support of their respective communities took part in the online retreat, attended lectures through Google Classroom, wrote assignments, did both certified online and non-certified on-site courses, participated in workshops, webinars and e-quizzes and helped in the distribution of groceries, masks, sanitizers and rice to the people of their neighbourhood and nearby villages.

Scholastics in Clive House were involved in creating a website for Clive House, herbal and rose gardening, vermicomposting, putting up stone benches and a new Badminton court, helping with the production of Fr. James Thamburaj's YouTube video series and WhatsApp audio retreats, and cooking and distributing food to the street dwellers. Kudos to Sch. Earnest Stalin and his team for the short film Naan which throws light on the problems of the youth today. Scholastics in St. Joseph's led both their community as well as the parish in adoration.

Scholastics in St. Xavier's, Palayamkottai, were engaged in Xaverian Relief and Rehabilitation Service. They made a significant contribution to the release of SXC's first ever e-magazine *EXACTs* (Every Xaverian Acts).

Scholastics in Arrupe Illam, AAC, Karumathur, assisted Br. S. Kulandairaj in the care of the Kannanur Farm. A special thanks to Frs. A. Jayaseelan (AND), James Thamburaj, Gilbert Camillus, V. Joseph Xavier and Br. Kulandairaj for engaging our scholastics fruitfully either through retreats, courses or manual labour.

6. DNC, Pune

The Philosophers from DNC, Pune, after reaching Beschi Illam and completing their quarantine, interviewed the veteran Jesuits in the infirmary and prepared notes on their life and mission. Also, they worked in the kitchen, infirmary and the farm and cleaned some areas of Beschi campus. They were guided by Fr. Stephen L. Pragasam and Fr. Swaminathan in making presentations on the Constitutions of the Society. They also spent their time in arranging the Maduralaya library.

The II Years who were asked to write and submit a paper in lieu of their B.Ph. comprehensive exam, stayed on to complete and send it to the Dean of Philosophy, JDV, before leaving Beschi for their respective regency places.

JDV inaugurated the academic year virtually with a short prayer service and President's address on June 8th. The online modules (virtual classes) started and have been going on quite efficiently since June 9th. Laptops, good internet connectivity and a hall with multi-media facilities have been provided by both Beschi Illam and Maduralaya communities to the I and II Year Philosophy students. Their companions elsewhere also do their B.Ph. online wherever they are until further notice.

7. Arul Kadal, Chennai

Scholastics participated in the lifeline retreat. The Holy week liturgy was conducted in Arul Kadal itself. On May 15, a faith-sharing on COVID-19 substituted the Recollection talk. They had a crash course on Financial Management (Tally) by Fr. Arockia Dass and also helped the Afghan mission by correcting assignments of JWL students. The first e-magazine, 'Arul Saaral' (அருள் சாரல்), which focuses on theological insights into socio-pastoral experiences was released on July 10th when they inaugurated the academic year. Presently, the II Year students of Theology are participating in the Pre-Ordination Programme (POP) held in Dhyana Ashram from July 1 to 31 under the guidance of Fr. Jerry Rosario who has divided this Arrupe Month into four thematic weeks – Inspiration Week, Invitation Week, Ignatian Week and Integration Week.

Community cooking, Community Sports Day and rearranging the library deepened the sense of one family. In this crisis situation, the community saved some money by reducing some expenditures and shared it with the deserving people living in the neighbourhood. The sanitary workers who work tirelessly around Arul Kadal area were honoured with a token of appreciation.

I would like to express my deepest sentiments of gratitude to the Superiors and members of formation houses and apostolic communities for their generous help in conducting various programmes for our formees in these trying times. My sincere thanks and appreciation go to Fr. Stephen L. Pragasam, PCF, who has been able to reorganize with an amazing degree of dynamism and hard work several formation related programmes and make preparatory arrangements in order to ensure the smooth conduct of all the programmes since March 2020. May the spirit of St. Ignatius continue to inspire us.

Danis Ponniah, S.J.

Provincial's Programme

Given below is Fr. Provincial's Programme (June-August 2020) incorporating the changes that had to be made owing to the COVID-19 total lockdown. As and when there is greater clarity regarding the evolving Coronavirus situation, programme changes may be made and communicated to you.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WRITERS AND RESEARCHERS FORUM OF MADURAI PROVINCE: There will be two Webinar sessions on August 5th and 6th (Wednesday-Thursday) from 6:00 to 7.00 p.m. related to WR Forum of Madurai Province. Details will be sent to you shortly through email by Fr. Vincent Sekhar, Coordinator of this programme.

New Email Addresses

P Francis Sales A. francissales2020@gmail.com
S Jones Vimal F jonesvimalsj@gmail.com
S Joseph Danial A joedansj@gmail.com
S Rajaselva Pangaraj rajaselvasj@gmail.com
S Rejoy Suresh srejoysj@gmail.com

Left the Novitiate

Augustus Sebasteen M., a second year novice on 29.05.2020.
Dinesh Rai M., a second year novice on 29.05.2020.

APPOINTMENTS BY FR. GENERAL

Fr. Christie P. Maria Joseph (MDU): Secretary for Higher Education (assumes charge in August 2021)

Fr. Jerome Cutinha: Provincial of Jamshedpur

Frs. Danis Ponniah (MDU), Melvil Pereira (KHM) and Santosh Minj (HAZ) as Consultors to POSA and JCSA Convenors and Chairs of South, North and Central Zones, respectively

Fr. Francis Gonsalves as President of Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, confirmed by the Congregation of Catholic Education

APPOINTMENTS BY FR. PROVINCIAL (with Fr. General's approval)

Fr. Stephen Martin A., Superior, St. Mary's, Dindigul
Fr. John Joseph B. Pragasam, Superior, Arul Anandar College, Karumathur

APPOINTMENT AND TRANSFER

NAME	FROM	DESIGNATION
Fr. Arockiasamy Antony	Loyola College, Meghalaya	Staff, St. Xavier's University, Kolkata
Fr. John Peter Arulanandam L.	St. Joseph's College, Tiruchi	Coordinator, Commission for Ecology

Fr. Joseph Karunaidass D. (AND) moves from Vailankanni to Poondi Shrine to do spiritual ministry. He will be attached to the community of St. Joseph's College, Tiruchirappalli.

Provincial's Programme

JUNE 2020

01-30 Province Office (National lockdown)
21 First Vows, Beschi Illam, Dindigul
29 Province Consult (Online)

JULY 2020

01-31 Province Office (National lockdown)
08 Province Consult (Online)
18 Province Consult (Online)
31 Feast of St. Ignatius, Maduralaya, Dindigul

AUGUST 2020

01 Contact Visit: St. Mary's, Dindigul
02-03 Contact Visit: SJC and Clive House, Tiruchi
04-05 Visitation: VMI, Vilangudi
06-07 Visitation: Kalangarai, Nagapattinam
08 Consult (Online)
10-12 Visitation: SHC, Shembaganur
13-14 Visitation: Estates in Kodai Hills
15 Visitation: Ayyampalayam
16 Province Office
17 Contact Visit: DACA, Madurai
18-19 Visitation: LTI, Madurai
20 Contact Visit: St. Mary's, Madurai
21 Contact Visit: AAC, Karumathur
22-23 Visitation: IDEAS-LAAS, Madurai
24-26 Contact Visit: SXC, Palayamkottai
27-31 Province Office

Health Update

Fr. S. Marianathan was admitted in Mithra Hospital, Madurai, on June 7th night. He had his kidney stones removed noninvasively at 11:00 a.m. on the following day and he got back to St. Mary's by 4:00 p.m. on June 9th.

Fr. Babu Vincent Raja got wet in the rain on June 30th. Since July 2nd, he was having fever and was under treatment. As he was not getting better, he was taken from De Britto, Devakottai, to Sarugani Hospital on July 6th. He almost recovered and was about to be discharged from the hospital on July 11th but in the morning he vomited. After examining him the doctor found phlegm in his chest and advised him to take a CT Scan in Madurai. The scan results indicated that he might be mildly Corona Positive. On July 12th, he was admitted in Apollo Hospital, Madurai, and a swab test taken there confirmed that he was indeed mildly Corona Positive. On July 14th, he was shifted to a local hotel to continue his quarantine for five more days after which he would be discharged. The other members of De Britto community are also in quarantine as a precautionary measure.

Fr. Arul Ravi successfully underwent Craniotomy and tumor excision at Apollo Specialty Hospital in Madurai and is now convalescing at St. Mary's, Madurai. Meanwhile, to prevent further growth of the atypical meningioma Grade II tumor, he is undergoing regular focused radiation treatment at Apollo.

St. Joseph Hospital, Dindigul, and Leonard Hospital, Batlagundu, have set up COVID-19 Isolation Wards. Mildly COVID-19 Positive patients could opt to be admitted in them after completing the registration formalities at the GH.

Social Action Commission

GIAN Migration Network and JRH coordinated a virtual Zoom consultation on 10 July 2020. There were around 22 participants. From Chennai, both Frs. Arul Henry William and G. Henry Albert (JAM) took part. Fr. A. Santhanam represented MDU. The whole sharing focused on setting up a migrant desk at the national level and creating a Migrant Helpline like the Childline. Fr. Santhanam shared how they were able to house around 25 migrants in IDEAS, Madurai, at the request of Jharkhand Jesuits and get relief for them through police and revenue officials. He welcomed the setting up of a Migrant Helpline like the Childline in collaboration with the government and other NGOs. He stressed the setup to be like the

Childline, because for investigation and taking action on violators, the police and revenue officials have to extend their full cooperation to our efforts. He also advocated a move from service mode of working to a rights-based approach and lobbying for amendments to the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act 1979, forming separate Ministries in the Centre and States for dealing with the issues and welfare of migrants and translating the laws related to migrant laborers into local languages and making them known to migrants to claim their entitlements. There were suggestions to develop a clear perspective on migrant issues, human and financial resources, infrastructure and a national level migrant resource centre. Fr. George Pattery, POSA, at the end summed up the salient points and welcomed the idea of forming a Conference level team as a next step to take forward certain key recommendations.

A. Santhanam

Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network (PWPN) Our Families

In July 2020, we pray that today's families may be accompanied with love, respect and guidance.

NEWS DIGEST

Eleven Jesuits Ordained Deacons in St. Ignatius Church, Paris

On the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on 20 June 2020, Bishop Philippe Marsset, Auxiliary Bishop of Paris, ordained me Deacon in the Church of St. Ignatius along with 10 other Jesuit companions from 10 different Jesuit provinces. It was a graceful and joyful moment for us, the ordained, to dedicate ourselves to the service of the Gospel, the service of the altar and the service of the poor. I, on behalf of our Province, sincerely thank the Europe Occidentale Francophone (EOF) Jesuit Province and Centre Sèvres for the formation I received during the last three years in France and especially for



the meticulous planning and excellent execution of this joyful celebration amidst COVID-19 restrictions. The live streaming of the Mass through YouTube and Facebook and the presence of many of you and lay friends assured us of your blessings and your prayerful accompaniment. The concluding words of the ordaining prelate were touching and will remain a treasured resource for my future ministry. He said, “We don’t know where we will reach in the mission entrusted to us but we are very sure of who walks with us in this path”.

Raphael Alexander

Devakottai: De Britto

De Britto community was happy to welcome the new community members, Br. Victor and Sch. Joe Praveen. They arrived on 3 June 2020. Fr. A. Cyril submitted his Ph.D. thesis on National Human Rights Commission of India and Child Rights in Tamil Nadu on June 2nd in Chennai. Br. Arockiaraj moved to St. Mary’s, Madurai, to take charge there as Minister on June 3rd. Sch. Sudherson, our outgoing regent, left on June 6th to do his second year regency at JESIM. The Supamites, Frs. Gladwin and Fr. Mag Bay, were in our community till June 15th. On June 16th, we planted some trees in our campus. Our community members Frs. Cyril, P. Arockiasamy and Babu Vincent were the resource persons for our community orientation which we had on June 27th. The whole De Britto campus looks clean and green because we had three good showers in the month of June.

In the school, teachers are giving online COVID-19 awareness to our students. Online classes for our students (from 6th to 12th Stds) are also going on. With their innovative ideas and techniques, teachers are making their online classes interesting. The campus looks deserted without its lively and hyperactive student population.

Salamon Joseph Praveen

Dindigul: Beschi Illam

On June 12th, the renovated restrooms of the novices were blessed. Fr. Michael Panimaya Raj took over as Socius to the Novice Master on June 18th. We sincerely thank Fr. Swaminathan for his labour-intensive and much appreciated contributions to the Novitiate and the Beschi community. Br. A. Santiago reached Beschi on June 20th and took charge of his responsibilities as Minister and Treasurer. After the Vows retreat directed by Fr. Dhanaraj, eight II Year novices, (four each for Chennai and Madurai Provinces) pronounced their First Vows on June 21st. We whole heartedly thank Fr. Danis, our Provincial, for his grace-filled presence, homily, and



Eucharist that made the occasion memorable. The motto the vovents had chosen was “As the light of Jesus, a dawn to the downtrodden”. LUMINA, Novices’ Magazine 2020 on PAP and UAP, and a home-recorded DVD of the songs composed by the Novices were released by Fr. Stephen L. Pragasam, PCF. Soft copies were sent to the members of both the Provinces.

Br. Aloysius Arulraj underwent cataract operation on his right eye at Aravind Eye Hospital, Dindigul and is now recuperating. All our seniors in the Infirmary are hale and hearty thanks to the devoted services of our co-workers ably guided by the PDDM sisters. CIS became quarantine quarters for Philosophers and Juniors. DNC Philosophers who continue their stay here create a serious and robust academic ambiance as they have begun their online courses. Fr. Pugazhendhi looks after them as per the instructions of Frs. Superior and PCF.

JRS: A midst this confinement situation due to the COVID-19 Lockdown, JRS adopted innovative ways of training its Complementary Education (CE) teachers to effectively support the education of the children in the refugee camps of Tamil Nadu. It organized a quasi-online two-day training program for the Complementary



Education Teachers in groups of 5 to 10 from 2 to 15 June 2020.

JRS-TN has distributed face masks, soap, and towels to 4,200 children in 90 camps; it has also distributed

3,300 blankets to the most vulnerable refugees in 31 camps in the first week of June 2020. Considering the struggles of the refugees due to COVID-19, JRS-TN also had given dry ration for 656 vulnerable families living in 11 different camps across the State in the middle of the month. On June 20th, the observance of the World Refugee Day was held in different ways and forms in almost all the Sri Lankan refugee camps with the support and participation of different sections of the refugee community. On that day, JRS-TN released a short video highlighting the need for standing with the refugees and finding durable solutions to the problems they have been and are facing.

Michael Panimaya Raj

Dindigul: Maduralaya

AMUTHU (Aduthirupoor Munnera Thunaisei) bid farewell to Fr. Devasagayam on 16 June 2020 at its staff meeting held at Oddanchatram which strictly adhered to the norms of the nationwide COVID-19 lockdown. The staff gratefully acknowledged the committed and people-centred work of Fr. Devasagayam for the past nine years as the Director of AMUTHU. The staff, while sharing about Fr. Devasagayam's contribution, emphasized that it was he who gave direction to AMUTHU empowering the children, youth, widows and the abandoned women and conservancy workers to the extent of reaching out to 60 villages. Thanks a million, dear Fr. Devasagayam!



Fr. Jeya Baskaran took charge as the new Director of AMUTHU on the same day in the presence of Frs. A. Maria Joseph, R. Gunasekaran, John Peter Bellarmine, S. Aruldoss and the Parish Priest of Oddanchatram. On 27 June 2020, the youth of our target villages gathered at Oddanchatram Parish to bid goodbye to Fr. Devasagayam. In his talk, he insisted that, if used effectively and innovatively, the extended period of the nationwide lockdown could become a God-given opportunity for them to equip themselves with the knowledge and skills needed for leading a meaningful life.

S. Jeya Baskaran

Dindigul: St. Mary's

We had a farewell Mass celebrated by Fr. Devasagayam, in which Fr. Stephen Martin, our Superior, thanked the outgoing community members, Fr. Devasagayam, Br. Joseph M. Arockiam and Sch. Joe Marsh and highlighted the services that they rendered to the community. St. Mary's Community, Dindigul, is delighted to receive Br. Stephen Raj, our new Campus Treasurer, Fr. S. Aruldoss, our new Correspondent and Sch. Arockia Amalan, the LASAC regent. The Higher Secondary and Primary staff community gave a grand welcome to Br. Stephen and Fr. Aruldoss, as they assumed their new offices. On the same occasion, the services rendered by Br. Joseph and Fr. Devasagayam was gratefully acknowledged. Marian Disaster Management Committee (MDMC) has reached out to poor people in our neighbourhood with the support of the various units viz., Primary School, Higher Secondary School, AMUTHU, Alumni Association, Retired Staff Association, VAIGARAI, Dindigul CRI Unit and Porulur Parish through generous assistance to the tune of Rs.13,60,430/-. The school premises are being used as the centre of consolidation of grades for X Standard exams. The community usually joins Beschi Illam for its monthly recollection. With the outbreak of COVID-19 and lockdown, it had its own recollection within St. Mary's.

Arockia Amalan

Karumathur: AAC

It is the time of transfers, COVID-19 lockdown, notwithstanding! On 30 May 2020, in a Thanksgiving Mass, Fr. John Pragasam, Superior of AAC, expressed his gratitude to all the Jesuits on transfer, Frs. Basil Xavier, Paul Pragash, Maria Augustine, Jeyaseelan of Andhra Province, and the two scholastics Vinoj and Rex. As AAC's community members and Golden Jubilee organizers, they were honoured and given a fitting send-off. On June 1st, Fr. John Innaci took charge as the new Minister of Arrupe Illam freeing Br. Kulandairaj to focus attention on AAC's farm work. On June 5th, Fr. Gilbert Camillus took charge as the new Secretary of AAC. The Superior welcomed him and thanked Fr. Mani Valan, the outgoing Secretary, for his unique services to the Campus. On June 29th, the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, Fr. Godwin Rufus took charge as the new Principal of AAC and Br. Joseph as the new Treasurer. The Superior thanked Fr. Basil Xavier and Fr. Maria Augustine for their generous services to the campus, staff, and students. On the same day, Fr. Basil Xavier blessed and Fr. Maria Augustine opened the new extension to the Office of the Controller of Examinations. Fr. Godwin Rufus blessed and Br. Joseph opened the newly renovated Shift-II Office.

During this trying time of lockdown, AAC continued to lend its helping hand to the needy in the neighboring villages. Many of our college staff stayed vibrant in knowledge management through personal work, participation in webinars, and other network services. Roughly, during this time, four have finalized and submitted their Ph.D. theses and 80 research papers were published in reputed journals and magazines. The staff's fruitful participation and e-engagement were great – 250 webinars, including 10 as resource persons, 410 online quizzes and tests, 55 online classes to students, 55 lessons through WhatsApp exchange, 180 online tests and assignments evaluation, and 165 learning materials prepared.... The efforts go on.

Sekar B. Vincent

Madurai: IDEAS and LAAS

LAAS and ISI Bangalore made a study on the vulnerabilities of the advocates in Tamil Nadu during the prolonged COVID-19 lockdown. We have found that the advocates, especially the junior advocates are among the groups in Tamil Nadu, even throughout India, facing tough livelihood challenges. We could discover this during our conversations with many advocates in our network. Therefore we were inspired to do this study. We did it online through Google Form. There was an encouraging response to this attempt. Now we have come out with a report both in English and Tamil. We plan to submit a charter of demands to the Bar Council of Tamil Nadu (a statutory body), the Government of Tamil Nadu and the advocate fraternity. We hope that this study report would create some ripples among the authorities and the needed assistance would be made available to the vulnerable advocates in Tamil Nadu. This study is the first of its kind about the advocates in India. We have planned to release it on 18 July 2020 at 11:00 a.m. through Zoom video conferencing.

A. Santhanam

Madurai: Loyola Technical Institute

Frs. John Bosco, Francis Thamburaj and Mani Valan joined our LTI community as new members. There was a deep faith-sharing session by them during the welcoming Eucharistic celebration.

Madurai zone, being badly affected by COVID-19, all the community members remained indoors for 14 days. However, even after taking a series of precautionary measures, Fr. Xavier Antony tested positive for COVID-19. He spent 10 days in isolation at Apollo Hospital and was back at LTI on 30 June 2020. Not so lucky was a fellow community member, Fr. J.L. Pragasam, who after consultations as outpatient at Sahaya Annai Hospital, Koodalnagar, and Apollo Hospital, Madurai, ended up

in the ICU of Saravana Hospital. The intensive care he received there was to no avail and he breathed his last at 12:30 p.m. on 3 July 2020. As he died of COVID-19 infection, his body was taken on the same day at 6.30 p.m. to St. Mary's cemetery where it was interred in a grave that was specially prepared and filled with lime, bleaching powder etc. (Fr. J.L. Pragasam's obituary appears on Page 15 of this issue of MNL.)

Arrangements were made for other resident members of LTI Jesuit community (Frs. Antony Arockiam, Antony Pappuraj, George Raja and John Bosco, Sch. Amith Shajan and domestic worker Mr. Peter) to undergo COVID-19 swab test. Test results, thankfully, were all negative and the community members are strictly following the directions given by Dr. Rosy Vennila to protect themselves against the insidious Coronavirus.

LENS: Loyola TV Tamil has reached 1,000 subscribers and every video is viewed by nearly one thousand virtual viewers. The following are the six video uploads in June.

1. "உலக நீதிச்சிந்தனைகள் பகுதி மூன்று" was delivered by Mr. Nirmal Jeyakumar, a staff of St. Mary's H.S.S., Madurai.

2. "அம்மா... முச்சு விடமுடியவில்லை!... George Floyd" was scripted and delivered by Dr. Philomin Raj, S.J.

3. "ஆனால்.. அவர்கள் எதுவும் செய்யவில்லை!..ஜார்ஜ் பிளாய்டு படுகொலை was scripted and delivered by Dr. Xavier Antony, S.J.

4. "என்னோட செருப்புங்குட ஊரடங்குலகெடக்கு!... கற்றுக்கொடுத்த கொரோனா... was released as the third episode of the series "சிறார் சில்லுகருப்படிகள். It was delivered by Mohammed Arzath, a student of St. Mary's, Dindigul.

5. "உலக நீதிச்சிந்தனைகள் பகுதி நான்கு" was delivered by Mr. Prabu, a teacher of St. Mary's, Madurai.

6. "எது கெடும்? அறநெறி ஆளுமைகள் பகுதி 003" was scripted and rendered by Dr. Xavier Antony, S.J. for youth and children empowerment.

Amith Shajan

Nagapattinam: Kalangarai

We distributed rice and groceries to 2,400 widows, abandoned women and single women in Nagapattinam District. We lessened the sufferings of 700 widows who were not getting any monthly pension from the government by giving Rs. 800 each; 16 gypsy families living near Nagoor were given dry ration packets in the presence of Ivanallur Panchayat President. Further, we are taking measures to get widows' pension to all the widows. On 19 June 2020, Mr. Praveen P. Nair, the



District Collector of Nagapattinam, motivated 50 of our widow entrepreneurs selected for cultivating mushroom during the training organized by the Agricultural Department in collaboration with Kalangarai. Each selected member gets a shed worth Rs. 2,00,000 completely subsidized by the government.

John Silvester

Nagercoil: Carmel

The top priority for this academic year due to COVID-19 is the hygiene and cleanliness related work in the campus.

With this focus, we have erected two water stations at the main entrance with water and soap facilities to wash hands for those entering the campus. Our security personnel make sure that all those who enter our campus wash their hands and wear a mask even by providing masks for those who happen to come without it.

The urinals in the school have been completely renovated, all the hygiene measures are in place and a proper shed is erected. All the toilets and water stations in the school and the hostel are completely painted and polished and kept neat and clean. The water canals and drainage systems are in perfect working condition with some renovation and reconstruction. The grounds are fully cleaned and rainwater channels are remodelled to ensure proper rainwater harvesting.

We are lucky to have an additional temporary hall partly sponsored by our alumni which can be used for small meetings with the proper social distancing.

Our community chapel and dining hall seating arrangements are also made in conformity with social distancing norms. All visitors, domestic staff and others are allowed to enter the community premises only with a mask and after washing/sanitizing their hands.

Maria Singarayar

Oriyur: St. Arulanandar

The Oriyur community is immensely happy to welcome Fr. M. Anthony Samy as the new Assistant Parish Priest of the Shrine of St. John de Britto. He is making use of this lockdown period to plant saplings to green our campus. Fr. Amalraj, the Assistant Headmaster of the school, has gone for paper correction to Ramnad, taking every precaution to ward off COVID-19. The



community sat together for a full day to evaluate the past year and plan for the new academic year, as per the directions of Fr. Provincial.

J. Jackson

Palayamkottai: St. Xavier's

In view of helping out people to cope with the trauma and depression caused by COVID-19 lockdown, SXC Jesuits have initiated 'Jesuit Healing Service' (JHS) in which some of our men are available on a 24x7 basis via mobile phone to guide and counsel those in need, particularly, our own students and staff.



As per the guidance of UGC, COVID-19 cell was constituted in SXC for handling students grievances related to examinations and academic activities during this pandemic. The cell is expected to bring the grievances to the attention of the administration to solve the issues. To engage our students and staff in academic activities, IQAC and many departments of our college organized a good number of webinars on various topics. Our staff and

students responded well to this initiative. Frs. Casimir Raj, Ignacimuthu and Henry Jerome were the resource persons in some of these webinars.

Making use of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, SXCE organized eighteen online programmes through ZOOM and GOTO platforms. The programmes included one FDP (Faculty Development Programme) for our staff, a talent quiz for students, fourteen open webinars, one three-day online workshop and a one-day research colloquium. There were two programmes conducted in collaboration with JCERT and another two with St. Ignatius College of Education, Palayamkottai. A lot of appreciative responses are pouring in from different parts of the country for our online webinars as many have found them to be very interactive and useful.

JCERT organized two Zoom webinars in collaboration with St. Xavier's College of Education on June 25th and 26th. The first one was on "The ten global identifiers of Jesuit education." The resource person was Fr. Norbert Menezes (PAT). The second webinar was on 'From teachers to educators', by Dr. Albert P. Rayan, an ELT expert from Chennai. The participants have rated both the seminars to be excellent. Participants included Jesuit schoolmen, our school staff and teachers and administrators from schools of other congregations.

Maria Albin Raja

Thoothukudi: Xaveriana

Domestic employees and workers who are connected with the institute were given Rs.60,000, by way of COVID-19 relief by the community. Mr. Herman, President of our Alumni Association, helped people who are in Corona containment zone, Toovipuram. Fr. Ignacy blessed a vehicle-load of vegetables, rice and groceries to be distributed to the affected people. Mr. Hartman, Treasurer of our Alumni Association, gave lunch for 200 people. Mr. Henry and Mr. Edwin Pandian helped the families of 40 poor students by distributing rice and groceries.

The Jesuits, teaching and non-teaching staff, retired teachers and alumni organized themselves to reach out to the affected families. About 225 families of our students who are economically poor were selected and each given Rs.700/- worth of rice, dhal, oil, groceries and vegetables.

Fr. Rector of Our Lady of Snows Basilica invited the Jesuits for an adoration on the theme of COVID-19 followed by supper. Fr. Rector appreciated the spiritual ministry rendered by Fr. Xavier Rajan to the parish and honoured him with a shawl.

Partially Online Classes to the Students of Our School: Since our students have indefinite COVID-19 holidays, our school thought of engaging them especially

both TM and EM 10th Std students. We started to motivate and guide them to make use of the ample time they had to prepare for their public examination. Also, we decided to prepare the 9th Std EM students to become more eligible by learning and mastering the English language. Seeing the impact it had created with 9th and 10th students, the parents of our 6th to 8th Std students also started asking us to provide the same opportunity to their children. Hence from Easter till today, every day our teachers have been very active in giving our students work to do (mainly language skill training and also various soft skills, quiz programmes, general knowledge, handwriting practice, etc.) through WhatsApp and Google Classroom at 9:00 a.m., monitoring them, correcting them and encouraging them to grow in improving their language skills. Fr. Simonraj, our Headmaster prepares and sends to students from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. the work they are expected to do. Two or three teachers are in charge for each Standard. The students have to practice well (not simply memorize, reproduce and get marks) and once satisfied they have to make a video and send it to their respective class WhatsApp group from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Only when the students complete the assignment/work they have been given, they will be given the next assignment. Initially, we had to go after the students to make them work but now most of them show much interest in doing their work on their own.

We were the first ones to give Corona relief to the families of very poor students in this area and also get the students to spend their time usefully through WhatsApp and Google Classroom.

Francis Sales

Tiruchi: Clive House

All the Clive House community members are safe and sound. Of course, this Corona lockdown has brought many uneasy situations and as well some meaningful ventures in our community. Mr. Joseph, a friend of Fr. James Thamburaj, has rendered his generous help to feed the poor. Hence, under the guidance of our Superior Fr. Arul Oli, our scholastics distributed food packets and food materials to 500 hungry people in the streets. With the contributions of generous persons, we also distributed



food materials worth Rs. 35,000 to 50 people .

Our special thanks to Fr. James Thamburaj who offered us two courses on “Introduction to the Bible” and “Art Appreciation” for two weeks and Fr. Joseph Xavier, Executive Director, JIM, SJC, who spent his valuable time giving us a course on “Personality Development”. These courses have really made a positive impact on our spiritual life and mental growth. We had an affectionate farewell function for Fr. Sahayaraj Vijayan, who was like a mother, especially when the community members were unwell. And we joyfully welcomed our young and dynamic House Minister in the person of Fr. Antony Inico.

Fr. James Thamburaj has been busy these days, delivering 70 talks through WhatsApp on “Retreat in Daily Life” (19th Annotation) that deepen the spiritual life of the people from different parts of the world. Besides our academic studies and intellectual programs, many of our scholastics have come up with their creative and inspiring productions such as songs, videos, short films, creating a website for Clive house, etc. and uploading them on YouTube. Though we are locked inside, our eyes and hearts are open wide that induce us to work meticulously in beautifying our garden and the campus as one community. Team Spirit and the sense of Caring for our Common Home are the immediate fruits.

J. Arockia Pradeep

Tiruchi: St. Joseph's

The nationwide Lockdown 5.0 spanning over 30 days from June 1st to 30th declared by the Government of India affected the academic calendar of the College and School in an unprecedented manner. No call for applications – no admissions – no sign of the start of the academic year! The campus, which should have an inflow of over 7,000 students both in its Higher Secondary School and University College lies barren eagerly awaiting their return. The Jesuit community has reached out with relief materials to over 3,000 needy people in its neighbourhood. As a goodwill gesture, it has extended one of its playgrounds to be utilized as a makeshift vegetable market for the safe buying of vegetables by the public from 6.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.

SJC ranked 31st among the top 50 Arts and Science colleges in India as per the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. This recognition is the result of continuous improvement achieved during the academic year 2018-2019 on the five ranking parameters, namely, ‘Teaching, Learning and Resources,’ ‘Research and Professional Practices,’ ‘Graduation Outcomes,’ ‘Outreach and Inclusivity,’ and ‘Peer Perception.’

The Research departments of the college have been conducting Ph.D. synopsis presentations and Ph.D. viva voce examinations online as approved by the Bharathidasan University and thus the research tempo is kept up. In view of the International Yoga Day, an online yoga practice session was conducted by the college. To initiate the session, a demo of yoga exercises performed by about 20 participants was live-streamed. A total of 300 participants have posted videotapes of yoga practice as done by them from their home. The college issued certificates of appreciation for the same. In order to impart knowledge on the cross-cutting issues in the process of Accreditation and Assessment by NAAC and to enhance the capabilities of the colleges in this field, under the leadership of Fr. Arockiasamy Xavier, the Principal, the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) of our college organized a five-day national level online FDP on “Inclusive Procedures and Processes for Assessment and Accreditation by NAAC” from June 30th to July 4th. The resource persons for this well-planned online programme were NAAC advisors, retired vice-chancellors, experienced NAAC assessors from universities and colleges and the members of the IQAC team of our college. Nearly 700 participants from 86 institutions of higher education in India (including Andaman Nicobar Islands) registered for the programme. The participants were mostly Principals, IQAC Coordinators, Deans, officials, senior faculty members of various colleges and universities. The whole programme was professionally organized and the participants found it very useful. The experiences we gained during our NAAC accreditation process last year helped us a lot in the organization of the programme.

St. Joseph's H.S. School conducted a month-long training programme on the technical knowhow of online teaching for its staff. Simultaneously, online classes have been organized for students of 10th and 12th Standards in view of the public exams. Fr. Jayaraj Elankeswaran has scripted a soul-elevating Marian song titled as ‘Annai Mariye, Azhakin Thaaye’ for which Fr. Rajarathinam (CEN) has composed music. The song has been widely circulated in social media.

The Lourdes and Mullaikudi parishes, too, had to stop their regular Mass services and other pastoral activities due to the lockdown restrictions. However, two private Masses on the Feasts of Visitation of Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus celebrated by Fr. Leo Fernando, Rector and concelebrated by Fr. Marivalan, Parish Priest, and others were televised by STV, a local channel operating in Tiruchirappalli, in order to reach out to the faithful. Weddings and funeral services are conducted

as per the COVID-19 protocols in force. Besides, both the parishes have distributed relief materials to the needy people.

Leolin Arockiadass

Chennai: Arul Kadal

The deacons completed their comprehensive exams and came out with flying colours. Probably Arul Kadal is the first theologate to conduct comprehensive exams in the Assintancy. They now await the lockdown to be over so they can involve themselves in diaconate ministry in their respective parishes.

The academic year has started and classes have resumed for the second year students from June 22nd. The reorganisation of the library still continues, thanks to the generous service rendered by the final year students and the deacons.



During the COVID-19 lockdown days, scholastics have made use of their personal time fruitfully engaging themselves in various useful activities like learning through online courses, offering online counselling and extending assistance to the Afghan JRS English Team.

Edward Lenin

COVID-19 AS EXPERIENCED BY MDU JESUITS ABROAD

FR. CYRIL SURESH FROM BRAZIL

Brazil is the 5th biggest nation sharing 5.6% of the world's landmass and holds the 6th place for sharing almost 3% of the total world population. In COVID-19 pandemic suffering, it stands 2nd in the world next to the USA. As on July 6th, it had an infected population of more than 1.6 million of whom 65,000 have died. COVID-19 cases, especially in the Amazon region, are undercounted. The lockdown restrictions and social distancing measures are applied less seriously here. It is due to the political collapse, the lack of right leadership, and the complex health system which stifles access to the affected population on time.

Jesuits are trying their best to cater to the needy people, especially the refugees, the migrants and the indigenous people, in collaboration and networking with the government, the church leaders and the lay people. There is a Himalayan solidarity all over in generous sponsorships, donations and fundraising for distributing relief materials and the grocery items to the people who need assistance.

People find it hard to adopt the required hygiene measures like wearing facemasks, applying sanitizers and standing in a long queue and waiting their turn in the market, in the bank, in the hospital, etc. It is a herculean task for most of the Jesuits who have opted for online-preaching, online-teaching, online-celebration of the Eucharist and accompaniment of the persons.

Right now, I am safe and I engage myself in distributing relief materials, taking online-classes, giving webinars about interreligious dialogue, biblical narratives and journey with St. Ignatius. Carefully we are allowed to celebrate the sacraments with a

limited number of participants. I continue celebrating the Eucharist for the religious sisters and offering spiritual accompaniment to the parishioners. Recently, three Jesuits who tested positive for COVID-19 have recovered fully. The Jesuits from Brazil, along with the people of Amazonia, remembered and prayed for Fr. Joseph L. Pragasam who passed away on 3rd July. He was a missionary here for 10 years.

FR. PAVULRAJ MICHAEL FROM ROME

Italy is not experiencing a second wave of COVID-19, it never got over the first! Till the end of June 2020, about 35,000 people including priests and religious have died in Italy. It is painful to see the bereaved relatives not to be able to bid a decent religious farewell to their near and dear ones. The Italian Government was very strict for three months making lockdown mandatory to bring COVID-19 under control to a large extent. The Jesuits in Italy in general and Jesuits in Gregorian in particular are safe from the pandemic. It's all because of a motto: "PROTECTING ONESELF IS FOR PROTECTING OUR COMPANIONS." COVID-19 has changed topsy-turvy our community life and life in Gregorian University. Wearing facemasks, frequent hand washing, using sanitizer, social distancing of 1-2 meters, checking the temperature every day in the entrance, taking classes via Zoom, confining to one's room and office have become our way of life in the community and university. Teaching and non-teaching staff of both Jesuits and non-Jesuits do smart working with results of high efficiency. Without disturbing the Second Semester of the Academic Year 2019-20, we finished our classes and comprehensive exams with great success. In a way, Gregorian University became a role model for other

Pontifical Universities in Rome and this was affirmed by the Congregation for the Catholic Education, Vatican. For the next Academic Year, we will continue the mixed mode of teaching and learning, i.e., students in the classroom of Gregorian and faraway places from the whole world attending the classes via Moodle. We are sure that there will be a slight decrease in the enrolment of new students for 2020-21 but we will face the situation as an opportunity to reach the unreachable stars.

FR. C. AMALRAJ FROM MYANMAR

The searing metaphor of Myanmar is “a blind beggar begging with a golden bowl”. For a country prodigiously blessed with mineral wealth – the biggest Jade mine in the world is in Myanmar – poverty affects 30-40 percent of the population. Millions of its citizens are languishing as migrants abroad. COVID-19 attack compounded the agony - but with some mercy. There are only 300 infected cases and the death toll has been under 10.

The government enforced a strict lockdown. Most of the infections came from two sources : (1) From a pastor who challenged the virus and went ahead with the healing session which sadly resulted in the participants getting infected and (2) from the return of thousands of migrants from Thailand.

In a country where 70 percent of the people are in the informal sector and daily wage earners, there cannot be a lockdown to stomach and hunger.

The people of Myanmar responded with generosity to their less fortunate compatriots. We Jesuits are small in number and spread out in four areas. Yet we responded at various levels. We facilitated the first planning meeting of the Church and Caritas network. This resulted in the formation of a central committee that is overseeing a major response at preventive measures and feeding. A huge number of the population are IDPs in this country huddled together in crowded camps. Timely intervention by Caritas and others has prevented an outbreak so far.

Jesuits have been working in the slums. There are huge slums around Yangon. COVID was a disaster of loss of livelihood. We reached out to two major slums here, Thingangyun and North Okklappa. In the company of Buddhist monks and using the monastery as the distribution centre, more than 1,200 families were provided food. Elsewhere in Taunggyi and two places in Kachins, we reached out to another 600 families. We will be distributing in the next few days food to another 300 families.

War is churning in the western frontier of Rakhine State, where the festering wound of Rakhine Muslims issue continues. A new war, merciless and mutilating, between a ferocious Arakan army and the government military, Tatmadaw, has already made more than 100,000 new IDPs. With access blocked, Catholic parishes had to host thousands in their compounds. Despite all constraints, we reached out with food



support to around 350 families. A rainbow nation of 7 major tribes and 135 subtribes has forgotten peace and the chronic wars have outlived seven decades and turbocharged with more violence.

Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, the Archbishop of Yangon and President of Federation of Bishops Conference of Asia, is a seasoned campaigner for human rights. He has confronted the government of China on the COVID disaster. At present, he is the only churchman raising his prophetic voice against the restrictive laws inflicted on Hong Kong. In Myanmar, his voice is raised against the unending wars. In May, he released a statement, affirming the statements of UN Secretary General and Pope Francis on the need for ceasefire to fight the pandemic. The Bishops Conference is one of the civil society organizations to boldly ask the army to seek peace. Last week, hundreds of youth died in an inhuman accident perishing under the landslide in the Jade mountain. Once again, the Cardinal has castigated those responsible for this disaster.

The Cardinal is the voice of the voiceless and articulates the faith in his persistent pursuit of economic and environmental justice for the poor. We Jesuits accompany him with *discreta caritas*.

The Society of Jesus has good news here; seven local priests and more than 20 scholastics. Young priests are taking over responsibilities and doing well. A bright future awaits this mission.

FR. MOUNT JOE FROM ALPINE, TEXAS, USA

As of now, 2.99 million cases have been detected in the USA of which 9,01,000 cases recovered and 1,32,000 deaths have been reported.

In Texas where I am, 2,01,000 cases have been detected. In my Brewster's County, 145 cases have been detected.

Alpine is a small town. People are well disciplined. They put on masks and are taking steps to protect themselves. Yet there are some who don't care. They go for family gatherings and have dinners.

There are confusing signals from the national leadership. Governments across the world are engaging in ideological struggles and war posturings. These things make one to think that something is fishy about this "virus". My hope is that humanity can and will eventually overcome this virus.

**FR. STEPHEN SELVANATHAN
FROM GUYANA**

The impact of COVID-19 began to be felt on March 15th when the bishops of all denominations decided to close down the churches in Guyana after the first case was recorded on 11 March 2020. The Government first announced the closure of the airports and imposed curfew from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. from April 2nd with lots of restrictions. The region, where I am, has recorded only one case so far and there are no cases recorded for more than two months. In the beginning, the capital city was the hotspot. At present, the borders of Venezuela and Brazil have become the hotspots of COVID-19 in Guyana. There are only 273 cases recorded so far. Guyana is in a way lucky to have a small population (80,000 approximately) and, as a result, there is a natural physical distancing in the country which keeps away the virus.

All the Jesuits working in Guyana are helping the poor in whatever way possible and the situation

is not so serious as compared to other countries since there was no complete lockdown throughout the pandemic. People are going for their regular work with all restrictions and precautions. There is a complete closure only of schools, universities, places of worship, bars, restaurants etc.

More than COVID-19, people are concerned about Guyana's current political scenario. The country went for its general election on 2 March 2020 and still the election results are not declared even after a re-count of ballots. The caretaker government is not willing to accept defeat. The international community has raised concerns for democracy to prevail in Guyana. The ruling/caretaker government turns a deaf ear to all the voices raised against it and, as a result, petitions have been filed by different political parties in the Caribbean Court of Justice. The people of Guyana are very much worried that they may face the same crisis as in Venezuela. In that case, the political situation in Guyana will very soon deteriorate and it will be worse than COVID-19. May I request your prayers for Guyana.

**FR. JAMES SURESH KUMAR FROM SRI
LANKA**

I am fine and keeping well. Sri Lanka is able to control the spread of the pandemic. At present, there is no lockdown. There is no curfew for the past four weeks. The country is getting ready for the election. People could freely travel anywhere across the country. The schools have reopened from Monday, July 6th onwards. The situation is becoming more normal with every passing day.

Abide with the Lord

Fr. Alphonse Susai Asirvadam (AND, 69/51) on 10.06.2020 at Secunderabad.

Fr. Marcus Murmu (DUM 63/38) passed away on 20.06.2020 at Dumka, Jharkhand.

Fr. Paul Jackson (HAZ-PAT 83/64) passed away on 05.06.2020 in Patna.

Mr. M. Yagoo (78), father of Fr. Alex Yagoo, passed away on 21.06.2020 at Keelauchani, in Sivagangai.

Mrs. Antoniammal (90), sister-in-law of Br. M. Amalraj, passed away on 16.06.2020 at Devakottai.

Mrs. Adaikala Mary (82), mother of Fr. Jerome Kulandaisamy, passed away on 29.06.2020 at Dindigul.

Mr. S. Anthonysamy (77), father of Fr. Arockiasamy Antony, passed away on 29.06.2020 at Irugaiur, Ariyalur Dt.

Mr. William (66), Fr. Joe Antony's brother-in-law, passed away on 08.07.2020 at Chennai.

Mr. Sebastian (94), paternal uncle of Fr. Andrew Francis, passed away on 10 July 2020 at Kanakkankuppam.

Mr. Santiago (69) brother of Fr. A. Anthonysamy, passed away on 12.07.2020 at Devakottai.

Mrs. Priya Chinnammal (38), niece of Fr. A. Soosai Raj passed away on 12.07.2020 at Nagalur, Erode Dt.



FR. XAVIER IRUDAYARAJ, S.J. (1941 – 2020)

Fr. Xavier Irudayaraj (as we all fondly called him “Fr. X”) was born on 27 February 1941 at Michaelpatnam – known as ‘Chinna Romapuri’ (Little Rome) – of the Diocese of Sivagangai. The parish has been a cradle of vocations and the long list includes two Bishops, 30 Jesuits (Fathers and Brothers), 19 Religious Priests, 20 Diocesan Priests, 13 Religious Brothers and 63 Nuns. As a child born of pious Catholic parents Mr. Susaimanickam and Mrs. Susai Sinnammal, Fr. X had two brothers and three sisters.

At age 12, he had a very serious attack of typhoid; his mother’s prayer at that time was to offer him to priesthood if he recovered from that illness. As the desire of the mother and son blended harmoniously, he joined the Society in 1958. His formation was fast-tracked and he was ordained a priest in 1968. This resulted in a happy coincidence years later in 2018 when he was the only one of his batch to celebrate both his Diamond Jubilee in Religious Life and the Golden Jubilee in Priestly Life. With Licentiate in Philosophy and Theology, he was sent to Paris for his doctoral Studies in Theology in 1971. After his return from Paris, he served as Professor of Theology at St. Paul’s Seminary (1974–1984) and Arul Kadal, Chennai (1974–1992).

Fr. X made significant contributions to MITS (Madras Inter-Theologate Sharing) regularly organised at the initiative of Arul Kadal in collaboration with Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamallee, Madras Bible College and Seminary, Department of Christian Studies, and Gurukul Theological Centre. During the visit of Pope St. John Paul II to Chennai in 1986, Fr. X organised a grand Interreligious Dialogue Meet at Gandhi Mandapam.

Fr. Xavier Irudayaraj was a multifaceted personality: A writer, speaker, teacher, good companion and friend. He served the Church in various capacities as the Asst. Director of NBCLC- Bangalore (1992–1994),

the Secretary of the Interreligious Dialogue Commissions of the CBCI and TNBC (2001–2005) and as the Director of the Laity Centre of the Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore (2005–2006). He did the pioneering work of launching *Marai Aruvi* - the Tamil Theological Quarterly and *Andrada Arul Vakku* - the reflections on the daily Mass readings as a joint venture with the laity, the religious and the clergy. “Harmony through Dialogue – Renewal through the Laity” was the goal of his life.

Fr. X was a heart patient and had also other ailments. In 2016, he moved out of Chennai and has been taking care of his health and doing spiritual ministry alternatively between Beschi, Dindigul, and St. Mary’s Madurai. He returned for good to Beschi in September 2019.

On 16th June morning, he complained of indigestion and uneasiness; turning down the suggestion of Sr. Infirmarian to be admitted in the hospital, he took his supper and went to bed. At 9:00 p.m., when the Infirmarian and attender entered his room to check how he was, he had already surrendered his life to the Lord.

The next day, June 17th, duly noting the COVID-19 lockdown rules governing funerals, with his sister and very few relatives, we celebrated a simple and meaningful funeral Mass at 10.30 a.m. Fr. Provincial presided over the Holy Mass and reminded us that Fr. X entered the Society on the same day in 1958.

During the past few months, Fr. X was talking to all including visitors like Bishop Emeritus Jude Paulraj about his imminent going to meet his Maker. Mentioning this in his homily and singing *Asatoma Sadgamaya, Tamaso maa jyotir-gamaya, Mrityorma amritam-gamaya* that Fr. X taught him at Shembag in 1969, Fr. Devadoss said that for Fr. X has been praying God persistently to lead him from ignorance to truth, from darkness to light, from death to immortality (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1.3.28). Bishop Jude in his message highly commended him for having completed his Ph.D. very successfully (PHD--Preparation for a Happy Death).

L. Michael Doss



FR. JOSEPH L. PRAGASAM, S.J. (1937- 2020)



Fr. J.L. Pragasam who used to refer to himself, like Tagore in his *Gitanjali*, as “A Reed in God’s Hand” was born in Madurai on 21 April 1937. His parents were Mr. Lourdasamy and Mrs. Irudayammal. He was the eldest son and had four younger siblings, three brothers and a sister. He had his schooling at St. Mary’s, Madurai, and he was also a member of St. Mary’s Cathedral choir. Inspired by the Jesuits, he joined the Society of Jesus in 1956. He was ordained a Priest in 1971 at St. Mary’s Cathedral, Madurai, and he was proud to say that he was the first parishioner of the Cathedral Parish and the first day scholar of St. Mary’s to become a priest. In 1973, he began his teaching ministry at St. Francis Xavier’s, Thoothukudi, followed by St. Joseph’s, Tiruchi, St. Mary’s, Madurai, Arulanandar School, Oriyur and St. Xavier’s, Palayamkottai.

Fr. Pragasam shone as an admirable teacher and a revered headmaster. Students thronged to his classes attracted especially by his novel methods of teaching English without using Tamil in the classroom. His maxims were LOYALTY to the Institution, DEDICATION to the teaching ministry, IMPARTIALITY and PUNCTUALITY.

Of his students, he would say: “Always I approached them as their father, mother, friend and guide. They crowded my working days as much as they crowded my praying heart.”

His personal contact inspired quite a few of his students to become diocesan priests, religious in different congregations and some of them became Jesuits. One of his talents that captivated his young students was his God-given gift of music (reed flute through which God has breathed eternally new melodies). He also had an extraordinary memory to remember hundreds of names. He was totally impartial, sincere and honest in his school administration.

Retiring from school teaching after 21 years, he volunteered to be sent on mission

to Brazil. As a missionary, he engaged himself in pastoral ministry with much love and great generosity in Marabá in the Jesuit Region of Amazonia, Brazil, from 1996 to 2006. He even inspired a young man there (Silvio) to become a Jesuit priest.

He returned to work in our educational institutions from 2006 to 2020. Of these 14 years he served for three years as a chaplain to Boys’ Town, Pulloothu, Madurai.

Fr. Pragasam had been suffering from cold and cough for the past few weeks. After consultations as outpatient at Sahaya Annai Hospital, Koodalnagar, and Apollo Hospital, Madurai, with all the leading hospitals in Madurai overflowing, he was admitted in Saravana Hospital with the help of his old boys, Dr. Balamurugan and Dr. Sundara Pandian, on 30 June 2020. The COVID-19 Swab test was taken and he was put on Oxygen support.

The intensive care he received at Saravana Hospital was of no avail and he passed away at 12:30 p.m. on 3 July 2020. As the swab test result that had come the previous day confirmed that he was COVID-19 positive, immediate arrangements for his burial were made. His body which had been properly wrapped in disinfectant-packed cover was taken to St. Mary’s cemetery. Mr. Regis, his surviving brother and a few family members were present during the funeral rites. With a short introduction by Fr. Xavier Antony and homages by Mr. Regis, Frs. S. Marianathan and Antony Arockiam, the funeral prayers were led by Fr. Paul Michael Raj, and Fr. Joseph L. Pragasam was laid to rest in a specially prepared grave.

People in Marabá, Brazil, used to fondly call Fr. J.L. Pragasam “Padre Jô” and no sooner had they come to know of his death than they started pouring out their sentiments of prayerful condolences in the social media. As AMT is 9:30 hours behind IST, on July 3rd itself, they organized a Eucharistic celebration in the parish church at 7.30 p.m. with the necessary social distancing measures. May God grant Padre Jô eternal rest!

Antony Inico and George Raja

KNOWING ST. IGNATIUS WITH 5-Ds

Jesus asks his disciples two questions: 'What do people say about me?' and 'What do you think of me?' (Lk 9:18-20). What have we to say about St. Ignatius?

Discernment: He was a man of discernment – He would listen to the inner voice where God speaks in silence and he would allow others to resonate with his thinking and feeling. Once someone asked him: “What would you do, if the Pope suppresses the Jesuit Order?” St. Ignatius very calmly replied: “I would go to the chapel and sit in front of the Blessed Sacrament for 15 minutes. Then I would be serene and happy again.”

Determination: He was a man of determination – He would get what he wanted, rain or shine. After the painful surgery when his knee was shattered, St. Ignatius felt that the operated leg was a bit shorter than the other one. He insisted on another operation. In many of his decision making processes, one could see his spirit of determination.

Decision: He was a man of right decision – Decision follows determination to do something beautiful for God and for the people. He made a distinction between ‘making’ the decision and ‘taking’ the decision. In any major decision-taking process, the leader listens to the stakeholders and then he/she takes the final decision to be implemented.

Direction: He was a man of direction – God’s will was the compass that guided him. He has written in the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus that one should be driven by the spirit of Jesus, powered by one’s desire to serve the unserved, the underserved, and the unreached. It was his custom to get his direction from God. He writes in his Autobiography that “he had always grown in devotion, that is, ease in finding God; and now more than ever in his whole life. Every time, any hour, that he wished to find God, he found him.”

Distinction: He was a man after distinction. Whatever he said and did, it should be for the greater glory of God in the service of the needy; and this ‘greater’ should be better than the best. He would do things ever more and ever better for God by serving the people at the margin. The spirit of his *magis* has become the hallmark of Jesuits and Jesuit works. St. Ignatius would not settle down for mediocrity but excellence in whatever one does, even giving the best to the least.

In this spirit of his *magis*, the Society of Jesus discerned with determination and decided to work in the direction of Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAP) for 10 years with distinction and the mission is four-fold:

1. Showing the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment.
2. Walking with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice.
3. Accompanying young people in the creation of a hope-filled future.
4. Collaborating in the care of our common home.

Let us continue to be inspired by this man of God, who lived for others, and who found the glory of God in the service of his fellow human beings.

Francis P. Xavier

