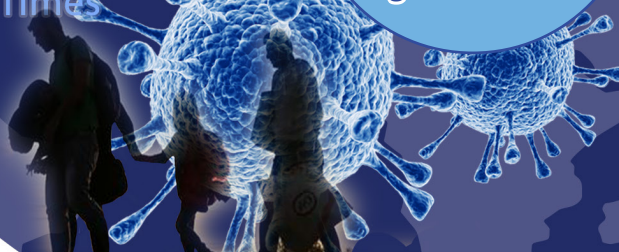




Vidyajyoti Today

Pilgrimaging Theologically in Corona Times



**A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT
ON PRIESTHOOD
Page 42 onwards**

VJ Today -12

January - April 2021/01

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Doctorate in Theology & DEPTH

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Fr. P.R. John SJ

Dear Staff and Students,

We are at the end of an academic year (2020-2021) in the Corona Pandemic times. I thank the Trinitarian God for His 'faithfulness' in our theological journey "online" along with mobile phones and computers. I immensely appreciate the flexibility and the accountability shown by the academic staff in carrying out their commitment to teach and guide our students. We acknowledge the services of Fr. Anthony Raj, the Registrar, and the Student Council members: Bros. Suresh, Prabakar, Vivien, Mark, Pawan and Nilesch for coordinating the daily functioning of the academic year online. We gratefully appreciate the expertise of Bro. Antony Robert for creating and organizing efficiently the Vidyajyoti College of Theology Google Classroom Portal.

Dear friends this is our story. At the same time, we also witnessed many narratives of "staff and students in poorer localities," who are deprived of the opportunities (culturally and economically) to position themselves in the digital world of teaching and learning.

Allow me to place on record the services of VJ Today editorial board (Dn. Rajeev Ranjan, Nikhil George, Tinto, Parciush, Jaya Prakash and Louis Lobo) for bringing out three issues of VJ today during the current academic year. The present issue of VJ Today apart from its regular staff and student activities, carries a VJ Supplement with interviews from priests, religious nuns and laity. We are thankful to all of them for their views on priesthood in the Catholic Church. VJ wishes the choicest blessings on all the final year students as they appear for their B.Th. Comprehensive Viva and thereafter for their


three-fold office entrusted to them by Jesus Christ: teaching, sanctifying and governing of the faithful.

Dear students, as priests you will “share in the ministerial priesthood by which Jesus Christ, through the gifts of the Spirit, unceasingly builds up his Church, guides his people through the pastoral office and leads them into the Kingdom of his Father.” Priesthood is a gift and task from God for the universal mission and it is for all of us to be in union with Christ the High Priest who has gone before us as the pioneer and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2). Pope Francis calls the Universal Church to emulate St. Joseph (Patris Corde). He is a creatively courageous ‘priest of his High Priest.’ St. Joseph and Mother Mary are the first ones who took, blessed, broke and gave the body and blood of Jesus to the entire humanity through the mystery of incarnation. St. Ignatius of Loyola (1534 onwards) presented the members of the ‘Holy Family’ to his spiritual sons as exemplars of paternal/maternal love, thanksgiving and sharing. In Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius introduced St. Joseph into the gospel meditations on the early life of the Lord. In the year of St. Joseph, “if you want to be close to Christ, ‘Ite ad Josef’ - Go to Joseph.”

Currently, Vidyajyoti is experiencing many changes in terms of personnel: Fr. Arturo Sosa, the Superior General of the Society appointed Fr. Nirmal Raj SJ (DUM) as the Rector of Vidyajyoti. Fr. Stanislaus D’Souza SJ, Vice-chancellor made the following appointments in Vidyajyoti: Frs. Hector Pinto SJ (GUJ), Registrar and Treasurer; Antony D’Souza SJ (KAR), Tutor in Moral Theology, Edwin Rodrigues SJ (BOM), Lecturer in Scripture, with an additional responsibility as the Librarian and Sr. Prabina Rudum IBVM, Tutor in Systematic Theology. VJ welcomes all of them! At the same time, I place on record that Vidyajyoti will remember the services rendered by the outgoing members Frs. Michael Thanaraj SJ, Rector, MI Raj SJ, Professor of Scripture, Anthony Raj SJ, Registrar, and K. T. Chandy SJ, Librarian. We wish all of them God’s blessings as they are missioned to new places.

We are happy to inform you that VJ is blessed with an audio-visual digital facility – Arrupe - Nicolas Video Conference Hall. I sincerely thank the donors: Jesuit Conference of South Asia, New Delhi; Global Theology Initiative (Santa Clara University, California, USA); Jesuiten Weltweit, Vienna, Austria and Jesuitenkolleg, Innsbruck, Austria. I express my heartfelt gratitude to the Tekton Studio, Gaurav Chandiwalla and K. Chandiwalla the Architects, Raju the contractor and Mr. Sanjay and Ajay, the Clear One Audio/Video system suppliers.

Finally, I wish the staff and students a healthy summer. The Comprehensive Exams for the final year students will be held from June 21 to 26, 2021 and the new academic year will commence on July 8, 2021.



VIDYAJYOTI
INSTITUTE OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
FACULTY OF THEOLOGY
4-A, Raj Niwas Marg, New Delhi

OUR PILGRIMAGE AND DREAMS

VIDYAJYOTI, Institute of Religious Studies, Delhi, as a Faculty of Theology is the continuation of St. Mary's Theological College, Kurseong, Darjeeling District, West Bengal. It grew out of a house of Philosophy and Theology for the young members of the then Bengal Mission of the Society of Jesus in India, started in 1879 at Asansol (West Bengal).

In 1889 the institution was shifted to Kurseong in Darjeeling (First Journey), and from 1914, the house was officially designated as St. Mary's College. In 1963, it was made the joint responsibility of all the Provinces of the Society of Jesus in India and Ceylon.


In 1972 the College was transferred from its abode in the foothills of the Himalayas to the historic city of Delhi (Second Journey). It was renamed as Vidyajyoti (i.e., "Light of Knowledge"), Institute of Religious Studies. Pedro Arrupe, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus then had this to say:

In historic Delhi, capital of the nation, home of the Union legislature, executive and judiciary, teeming with a cosmopolitan population, you will have many opportunities for cooperation with other academic centers and religious organizations, Catholic and non-Catholic, such as the Indian Social Institute, the All-India Association for Christian Higher Education, and the Delhi and Nehru Universities, to mention just a few. It is my hope that these contacts will be of benefit to all parties concerned (1971).

The transfer of St. Mary's to Delhi implies the Institute's desire for a greater openness towards different cultures [religions], and the hope of giving a more effective witness to the "Light that comes into the world," (*ram eva bhatamanubhati sarvam*) the motto of the Institute: "everything reflects the one who alone shines" (*Katha Upanishad*, 5.15). Adolfo Nicolas, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus (2008-2016), underscored such a perspective:

Religion is basically a sensitivity to the dimensions of transcendence, depth, gratuity and beauty... We are not in education for proselytism but for transformation. We want to form a new kind of humanity that is musical, that retains this sensitivity to beauty, to goodness, to the suffering of others, to compassion (2016).

In 2022, Vidyajyoti College celebrates 50 years of her Second Journey (1972-2022) and looks forward to yet another grace-filled *Third Journey* in context and content. To mark this *Kairos* moment, a much felt need to have an audio-visual digital facility - Arrupe-Nicolas Video Conference Hall - is actualized to create "spaces" and "processes" aimed at "networking" together nationally and internationally to face the challenges of the present times with the Ignatian Magis, AMDG.



Arrupe - Nicolas
VIDEO CONFERENCE HALL

Our special thanks to...

Jesuit Conference of South Asia,
New Delhi

Global Theology Initiative
(Santa Clara University, California, USA)

Jesuiten Weltweit, Vienna, Austria

Jesuitenkolleg, Innsbruck, Austria

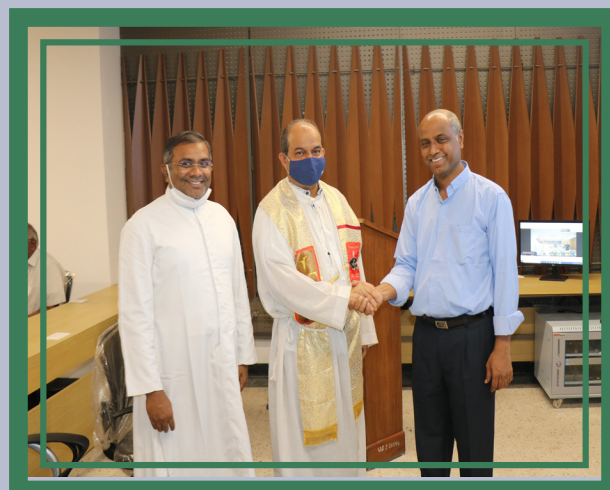
08 April, 2021

Blessing at 11.45 AM



Inaguration of Arrupe - Nicolas Video Conference Hall

Photo Album





CALLED AND COMMISSIONED TO SERVE

Every year during the month of February, the third-year brothers studying theology at Vidyajyoti receive the diaconate ordination at Delhi. However, this year due to the situation of the pandemic and the academic year being conducted online, we were advised to receive our diaconate ordination in our respective provinces itself. For the Bombay province of Jesuits, we were two scholastics, Br. Wesley D'Costa SJ and Br. Wellington Patil SJ, who were due to receive diaconate ordination during this year.

We began our diaconate retreat on the 25th of December 2020, in the evening. The retreat was held at the Shrine of the Infant Jesus at Nashik. We were guided by Fr. Pravin Severekeer SJ. He is well known for his spiritual direction and programs held at Sadhana Institute, Lonavla. Due to last minute complications, he was unable to travel to Nashik due to which he guided the retreat via the internet. He would give us sessions and guide us through personal direction using the online platform of google meet. It was a grace filled retreat and it helped us prepare ourselves for this significant moment where we present ourselves to be commissioned at the service of the church and the bishop.



The retreat ended on the 2nd of January and the diaconate ordination was scheduled to be held on the 3rd of January, at the Shrine of the Infant Jesus at Nashik. The ordaining bishop was Bishop Lourdes Daniel, the bishop of the diocese of Nashik. The mass was at 10 am in the morning. Our immediate family members were invited to participate in the celebration. The Jesuits and other religious in and around Nashik also joined us. There were around 50 people in all. The diaconate ordination was also live streamed on the YouTube channel of the Shrine of the Infant Jesus. We assisted the bishop during the liturgical celebration. This was then followed by a short felicitation program and fellowship meal together. We feel very privileged to receive this wonderful gift by the church to be able to break the word of God and assist at the Eucharistic table. It was a day of great joy and rejoicing. We have now begun our diaconate ministry by engaging in preaching and assisting in the liturgical celebrations in the neighbouring parish, Holy Cross Church and also at the Shrine of the Infant Jesus at Nashik.

Wesley D'Costa SJ

III B.Th.



DRAWN TO FATHER'S HEART

We, Saji George and Bulla Peter along with the scholastics of Karnataka and Kerala were drawn to the Father's Heart during our Diaconate retreat at Mount Saint Joseph, Bangalore from 26th to 2 of January 2021. As the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola placed before us the two value systems, values of Christ (Poverty, Insults and Humiliations) and the opposite values of the world (Riches, Honour and Pride), our hearts were drawn to the Father's Heart with inner freedom to choose the values of Christ. Having cho-



sen the values of Christ there is a deeper understanding of our vocation and to say yes to the invitation of Jesus Christ especially to be playable instruments to serve, to love and to praise the almighty God. It was a great joy to relish the signs of our spiritual growth like readiness to do God's will, responsible commitment to the life we chose, Enthusiasm to follow the way of the Lord, Simplicity, Peace, Love, Gratitude and growing in the compassion of the Lord. It was a beautiful spiritual journey to know Jesus more intimately, to love Jesus more ardently and to follow Jesus more closely. We thank Fr Prasanth Wesley D'Souza SJ(KAR), the director of PRERANA Ignatian Spirituality Centre for guiding us in this retreat.

Bulla Peter SJ
III B.Th.



SERVICE MYSTICISM

Socrates, one of the edified philosophers of the world, once said, "The unexamined life is not worth living". The Society of Jesus is our mother who accompanies us in every formation stage, in our sincere search for truth. It gives ample opportunities for us to stop and retrospect ourselves before starting a sail

for a long voyage, in every stage of formation. Such as a stoppage that we received now before our diaconate ordination. This stoppage succored us to relax a bit and to know ourselves a little more closely. It enriched us to start a renewed journey with our Lord Jesus Christ. We started our eight days' retreat on Jan 8th at 8.45 pm, in Atma Darshan, Patna. The Patna province was generous enough to accommodate the Delhi Schs. Dev and Denis along with Patna Schs. Jeevan and Rajeev. Rev. Fr. Soosai, SJ directed us in our spiritual journey. Our prime focus in the retreat was 'Service Mysticism'. Fr. Soosai awakened in us the assurance of God's call to partake in His Mission as His companion. The fruits of the retreat are as follows.



Service Mysticism requires single-hearted/ minded devotion to the Lord. Jesus himself shepherds his disciples, listening to them, reflecting with them, and guiding them to a deeper level. God can make a straight line out of all the crooked lines that we can ever draw. Recollecting our resources for service mysticism in the form of our parents' service to us, gave a novel outlook on our purpose of being here. Questions like 'What are your dreams for your province, the human family, and creation? and Are you going to tread the beaten path or break new grounds?' provoked our thoughts. To put it in a nutshell, this retreat invited us to practice 'Nishkaama Karma', in which every sincere servant longs to hear from God, "Well done my good servant! You've done a good job".

Devadoss SJ
III B.Th.



SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT

"What Jesus wants is a follower, not ad-mirer." said Kierkegaard. A purposeful and rejuvenat-ing diaconate retreat for Kohima Jesuits Region was commenced on 26 December, 2020 and ended on 2 January 2021, under the edifying guidance of Fr Paulraj SJ, at St Paul Retreat House, Phesama, Nagaland. The exercitants included Schs. Biji, James, Stephen and Thomas. Though the climatic condition was not the best (Cold), yet the apt spiritual atmosphere that was being provided and created enabled us to spend quality time for prayers and reflections. Themes for prayers and reflections were culled keeping in mind the dynamic of the retreat and



were indeed contextual and life oriented. The daily sharing during adoration was a sacred moment where one nourished the other spiritual quest through their powerful life events. The retreat geared towards finding our own identity especially in relation with the person of Jesus, who becomes my companion on His mission. Today's social reality demands us to be different missionary disciples without compromising the values of Christ. At this juncture we are invited to approach life and faith maturely and in return becomes a wounded healer. The choices that one made determined the kind of version that one becomes. It was a moment set aside to revisit our sacred moments and sacred persons, who consciously or unconsciously shaped, reshaped and continue to shape us in this spiritual journey of our religious formation. The joyful and festive atmosphere of Christmas octave which happened to occur during retreat added extra favour for reflection and spiritual nourishment as all are called to be men of the incarnation.

Stephen Lalruatsaka SJ
III B.Th.



GOD JOURNEYED WITH US

With immense joy, we the eleven scholastics of central zone provinces began our diaconate retreat on 26 December 2020 at Upasana Retreat Center Mango, Jamshedpur and finished on 3 of January 2021. Our



dearest Father Fabian Bhuinyan, S.J, (JAM) preached the retreat and helped us to experience the love of God. For all of us this retreat was very special and unique one. It was a time for us to introspect our life in the Society of Jesus. How Jesus has been walking with us in our journey. It was a moment for us to recall back the gifts and graces, the love and care, joys and happiness we have experienced throughout our lives. While sharing our experiences we all shared that each one of us have gone through tremendous spiritual

changes and have deepened in our relationship with Him. We also felt that each one of us are strengthened in our vocation. This retreat has helped us be strong in our day to day lives and have trust in Jesus more and more and to seek his help always. At the end of retreat all of us experienced newness in our lives, and concluded the retreat with much vigour and zeal to work in the vineyard of Jesus and ready to face the challenges that would come in our lives. At the end all of us were grateful to God for journeying with us. After concluding our retreat, on 4 January we had short visit to close by Jesuit Communities of Jamshedpur province. After lunch all of us dispersed to our respective provinces and began our last semester with new zeal.

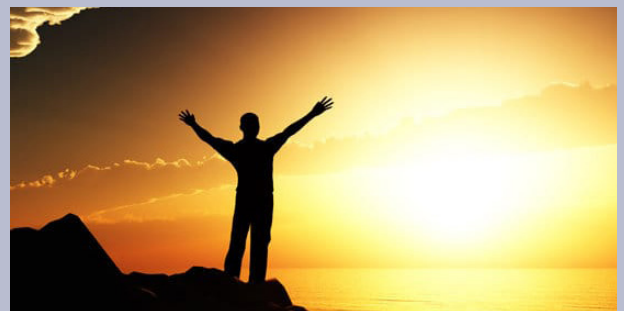
Tobias Tigga SJ
III B.Th.



“EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT FOR THE LIFE OF LOVE AND SERVICE.”

Retreat is a time for strengthening our personal relationship with God and experience His presence in our lives. Our diaconate retreat at SpiritualityCentre, Di Nobili College Pune was indeed a grace filled moment for me and my companion Sch. Francis Lobo.

This retreat was a doorway for our commitment which we are going to make at our diaconate ordination. I entered into this retreat with the positive mind to seriously spend time with the Lord and wholeheartedly respond to his invitation to work with Him in His kingdom. It was a time to reflect upon God's personal and unconditional love for me. During this time, I realized how God was actively present in my life and has been constantly working so that I may have better life. The ups and downs I had, the challenges I faced, and the happy moments I shared with everyone around me were directed according to His will. I also revisited the foundational experiences



and the well-springs of my life where I had personal experience of God. This retreat also helped me to realize that I am weak and fragile. Even after having experienced God's unconditional love for me, I fall into temptations; I 'miss the mark' but as compassionate Father God forgives me and leads on His path. During this retreat I experienced the strong urge for the life of love and service. I affirmed my commitment to follow Christ wholeheartedly with having full trust in Him that as He has been with me till today, He will certainly guide me in the life ahead.

This diaconate retreat has brought me more and more close to Christ and affirmed my vocation to the Priesthood. I am grateful to Fr. Francis Puducherry SJ for guiding me in this retreat and journeying with me. The verse which really touched me during this retreat is: "I have just given you an example so that you also should do as I have done."

Prashant Shaharao SJ

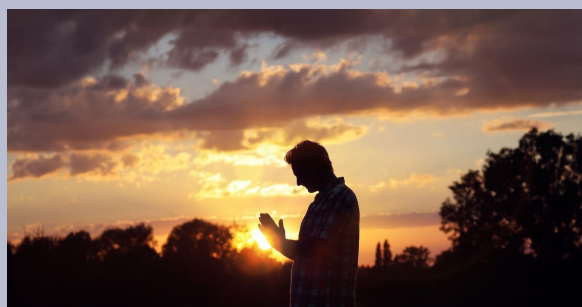
III B.Th.



DIACONATE RETREAT

We, the Scholastics of Madurai and Chennai provinces began our diaconate retreat on 23rd of December under the guidance of Fr. Michael Amaladoss SJ. The entire retreat was focused on Priestly life and its significance in the modern era.

First day we began with the question who is a priest, we also focused on our call and our response to this



priestly vocation on the same day. Second day our focus of reflection was on Jesuit Priesthood. Having GC 34 D 6 as the reference point, we asked a very personal question to ourselves that is where we are at present as priests? On the third day we moved deeper into the priestly life and focused on Being Mystics, on this day we focused on Prayer life. We reflected on different kinds of prayers and how Jesus as a model helping us to be men of prayer. As we reached the mid-way of our retreat, on day four, we reflected over the

theme Being Prophets. This day was a very important one in our diaconate retreat because all of us were able to place ourselves in the modern times and were able to understand how we need to be as priests in the future. We understood the real meaning of being symbols and servant of the reign of God. On day five we had a theme called Priest as Leader. Fr. Michael Amaladoss focused on two important elements namely being leaders and being apostles. We received a deeper knowledge of Leadership when we were able to reflect on four different characteristics that was narrated by Fr. Amaladoss. On day six our focus was on the sacraments and on day seven we reflected on the world today. On this day we were able to pray over the challenges in the mission and our need of discernment. On the final day we had a good reflection on making harmony, reconciling all things.

Throughout our retreat we had personal accompaniment of our guide Fr. Amaladoss and were able to reflect deeply and personally in all the areas of priestly life. We were told many personal life experiences and those experiences really inspired us and challenged us at times. We gratefully remember Fr. Amaladoss for his Guidance and personal accompaniment. It was really a meaningful journey praying along with Fr. Amaladoss. Our special thanks to Berchmans Illam community for their co-operation.

William Charles SJ

III B.Th.



"CHRIST WHO GIVES ME STRENGTH"

Retreats are always a time for intense prayer. I always nourish each moment of my retreats to understand the will of Jesus Christ and draw spiritual energy to follow the footsteps of the Lord more ardently. For me the diaconate retreat was a very special one as this was a preparation to my journey to be a deacon. Diaconate is a pivotal step towards the priestly ordination. For me, eight days of retreat were a time to

reflect over the graces I received in my long fourteen years in the Society of Jesus. It was a miracle for me how Jesus nourished my vocation through various and diverse experiences. I found time during my retreat



to thank God for inviting me to the life of a deacon. Though I had some fears regarding the thought that I was going to be a priest very fast, Lord's loving care helped me to feel worthy in this way of life. Few questions really made my diaconate retreat meaningful. Am I worthy to be a deacon? Do I have an altruistic heart to do selfless service to the people? Do I have the sufficient passion to break the word of God? Am I ready to be a channel of peace? I was comforted by the words of

St. Paul, "I can do all this through Christ who gives me strength." (Phil. 4:13). This verse was the underlying theme of my diaconate retreat which gives me the strength to toil hard in the vineyard of my Lord. My retreat guide through his talks insisted on the need for the spiritually motivated, well-trained deacons. Saintly and service minded deacons are a necessity for the Church today. As the world is in shambles due to the covid-19 epidemic, I have a great responsibility to be at the disposal of the people of God more than before. Throughout the retreat I could experience the joy and peace of my Lord Jesus Christ. As I approach my diaconate ordination my prayer is that I be truly faithful to the Lord who called me to be his disciple.

Steevensen Paul SJ

III B.Th.



FRUITS OF MY RETREAT

We, the eleven III-year students of theology of Central Zone Provinces (Dumka, Hazaribagh, Jamshedpur, Madhya Pradesh and Ranchi) made our Diaconate Retreat at Jesu Bhawan, Jamshedpur from 26 December to 3 January 2021 under the guidance of Fr. Fabian Bhuiyan S.J. The retreat was enriching in terms of strengthening my relationship with God and cementing my vocation in the Society of Jesus.

We began our retreat with questions like- who am I? Who is God for me? What is the ultimate goal of my life? Prayers and reflection during the retreat enabled me know God personally, intimately and profoundly. I felt a deep sense of compassion and love for the poor while reflecting on the person of Jesus. It also made me curious about his mission.

It was an ideal time to pray, meditate and talk to God in the silence of my heart. While meditating on the call of the disciples, I recalled the root of my vocation. In the course of different stages of my formation, I have experienced many ups and downs in life. However, it was the love of God which drew me nearer to Him. I have realized that Jesus Christ has chosen me. He has called me to follow him more closely.

Personally, I experienced that I am a unique person because I am created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, I have a dignified life. I am loved and accepted. This feeling gives me courage and strength to grow in my life. I have emerged as a much stronger and grown-up person. The retreat empowered me to deal and confront many personal issues of my life as well as face the challenges of my vocation.

Thus, the entire retreat was a period of spiritual enrichment, introspection and immense satisfaction. It re-affirmed my vocation to the priesthood which is based on selfless service. It helped me prioritize Jesus as the centre of my entire life. It showed me a right direction in my journey to the priesthood.

I am thankful to Fr. Fabian Bhuiyan S.J. who inspired me by his life and talk. I am sure, this unique experience of God will remain with me always.

Johnny Kujur S.J.

III B. Th.



DIACONATE RETREAT IN SXUK

We had a wonderful diaconate retreat under the guidance of Fr. Sebastia L. Raj SJ. It was held in St. Xavier's University, Kolkata (SXUK) from December. 26th to 3rd January 2021. Fr. Sebastia Raj helped us reflect on our own religious vocation to the priesthood and reliving the precious and unique vocation call. We contemplated on the purpose and call to religious life in the Society of Jesus and its relevance today.



He also emphasized on the role of diakonia in the Church. We reflected extensively on the writings of Fr. Petro Arrupe in particular 'On the Priestly Life' (1975).

We were focusing on the service aspect of the diaconate ordination to priesthood. First and foremost being grateful to God for the grace bestowed upon us to serve Him and the desire to continue to follow Him till the end. That is life in freedom and making that choice to serve him in that personal freedom. There is no compulsion to serve but our love for

Him and his unconditional love which is poured in us provokes us. Having tasted His love in our own lives, we ought to share the same with others in freedom, fellowship and charity. Love of Jesus inspires us to partake in His Kingdom project and His Kingdom values by self-emptying and self-surrender.

As Ephesians 4 talks about "Live a life worthy of your vocation – humble, gentle; one body one spirit", Jesus is the model for us. The importance of growing in intimate relationship with Jesus Christ is the most fundamental to the priestly life and mission. We are all called to be contemplative even in action as Fr. Nadal would put it succinctly. To follow Christ is to partake in his passion, death and resurrection in everyday life. For a priest, crucifixion and resurrection is part and parcel of his everyday life as was his Master.

Antony Albert Suresh SJ

III B.Th.



Diaconate Ordination

Events

DIACONATE ORDINATION

VJ Today would like to keep a record that in 2021 Vidyajyoti College of Theology was blessed with 33 Jesuit Deacons namely Dns. Bulla Peter & KP Saji George (AND), Wellington Patil & Wesley D'Costa (BOM), Jayaraj Selvaraj, S. Manickam, Williams Charles (CEN), Felix Tete, Antony Robert & Suresh A. (CCU), Denis & Devadoss Francis (DEL), Pratap Samad & Stanislaus Murmu (DUM), Satya Prakash Baskey (HAZ), Prabhakar Oddipalli (JAM), Lijo Antony & Steevensen Paul (KER), Biji Thomas, James Chin & Stephen Lalruatsaka (KOM), Cyril Beck & Tobias Tigga (MAP), Doni Raja, Joe Livingston S., Paul Raj & Arul Gnanapragasam (MDU), Jeevan Isaac & Rajeev Ranjan (PAT), Prashant Shaharao (PUN) and Johny Kujur, Libin Kerketta & Sandeep Kujur (RAN). Due to covid-19 pandemic our college was inactive physically. Therefore, we could not have the Diaconate Ordination in the college. All the III-year B.Th. Jesuit students were asked to have their Diaconate Ordination in their respective provinces as per their own convenience. The 33 Jesuits scholastics were ordained as deacons on different dates in their respective provinces. **VJ Today congratulates all the newly ordained deacons and wishes them fruitful pastoral ministry. They will soon be ordained as priests. Best wishes for their priestly ordination as well.**

MAN PROPOSES AND GOD RE-PROPOSES

There is a saying “Man proposes and God disposes”. But my God experience has been a bit different. My God encounter says, “Man proposes and God re-proposes”. When God repropose, He sees to the best possible option. I would have loved to have my ordination to the diaconate in Vidyajyoti, Delhi along



with my other companions. But given the prevailing pandemic situation that was not possible. Therefore, God designed the best alternate plan. I received diaconate ordination in Nashik in the Shrine of the Infant Jesus witnessed by my province members, family and friends. The moments of my novitiate days came alive. I started my journey as a Jesuit novice in the same city. My family and I have devotion towards Infant Jesus. And here, God provides me with an opportunity to be conferred with the order of Diaconate at the feet of Infant Jesus

on 3 January, 2021.

As preparation for the diaconate, I did eight-day guided retreat under Fr. Pravin Severeckar, S.J. It was another graceful movement that helped me to understand the sacredness of being chosen by God. The phrase that remained with me throughout the retreat and after it is “You are My Beloved”. For me, this beloved-ness creates a strong relationship with Jesus because Jesus was beloved too. It is undoubtedly, generosity of God that He calls me beloved. I am quite sure each candidate undergoing retreat for the diaconate might be having similar experiences of being loved by God. With the sense of being loved also came the greater realization that the grace of beloved-ness accompanies with responsibilities. Some might think that God is offering a package. No, He is not offering a package. God loves unconditionally, but the one who feels that Love strongly willingly takes up the task assigned to him by the Church which is the visible body Christ on earth. It is the inner desire to work for the Kingdom of God and the person receiving diaconate feels that desire strongly. Now a Deacon becomes an official face of the Church. A certain way of life is being expected of him. Holiness and service are his two main virtues. Therefore, I understand the sacredness of this ministry. I thank God for His blessings and praise Him for His graciousness.

Wellington Patil SJ
III B.Th.



A CALL TO FRATERNITY

Rajeev and I were ordained Deacons by Most Rev. Sebastian Kallupura, the Arch Bishop of Patna Arch Diocese, on 28 Jan, 2021 at St. Michael's High School, Patna. It was indeed a Kairos moment, a moment of 'GRACE' for both of us. The journey which had begun 16 years ago was confirmed as we were incorporated into the Sacred Order of Diaconia in the name of the Church. It was a day when we had directed our thoughts of gratitude to the Triune God who has deigned to bestow His bountiful graces unto us. We thanked Him for the faith He blessed us with, the faith that nurtured us to embrace His Word; for our Families from where we have been called to a new Jesuit Family for His greater service and glory; and above all for a call to Fraternity, the better service of our brothers and sisters of our universal society.

The role of a deacon is seen as one of humble services to facilitate, enable, animate, encourage and empower the service of the whole Church Community. The Acts of the Apostles, in its 6 chapter, recounts the establishment of the diaconal ministry in the Early Church. Essentially, it was introduced because the Apostles were unable to meet all the needs of the growing Christian community. More precisely, it was from the complaints of the Hellenists, that is, the Greek-speaking Jews, who felt that the needs of their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of goods. The response, therefore,

was that a new group of people with proper disposition be commissioned to attend to those areas that were lacking, while the Apostles occupied themselves with preaching of the Word. As we can see from this text, the diaconate was founded on a socio-evangelical base. However, as it has developed in the Church, it also included a pastoral and liturgical role. We strongly believe that we too have been chosen and commissioned to attend this type of services in the universal church.

The teaching at the time of receiving the Book of Gospels: “Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you have become. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach” still echoes in our hearts and minds.

We have carried from this day some essential messages for our ministerial life:

To seek above all to offer our service to the Lord in sincere humility even if it is one of the more difficult virtues to attain, especially in a world that is so dependent on external manifestation of self-importance. To be men of prayer. Our prayer life will be our substance. Letting the Word of God be the food for all aspects of our life. To be available and reaching out to the people in need. Being of good example to all who are in the path of our service. The world in which we live is hungering for honourable people who could lead the way. And to strive for holiness of life on the patters of the deacons of the early Church who were men of good reputation, filled with wisdom and the Holy Spirit

Jeevan Isaac SJ

III B.Th.



“I HAVE CHOSEN YOU”

“I have chosen and appointed you” (Jn. 15:16), was the theme for our Diaconate Ordination.

Two of us, Pratap Samad, SJ and Stanislaus Murmu, SJ, belonging to Dumka - Raiganj Province, were ordained Deacons by the Bishop of Dumka, His Lordship Julius Marandi DD. The diaconate ordination took



place in Jisu Jaher, Jesuit Provincialate Dumka. The congregation, on this Saturday, 30 January, 2021, comprised the Religious Nuns of the Neighbourhood, the Clergymen in and around Dumka, Scholastics and Candidates. There were also our family members present for this joyous occasion. Yes, it was a day of great joy for both of us, as well as for the Province and for our family members. The Bishop ordained us after he addressed and questioned us about our readiness and willingness to be ordained Deacons. After we were ordained deacons, we were given the “AMPLEXUS” (warm embrace)

by the Bishop, the Provincial and the priests.

May God be praised for this beautiful day. We constantly ask for the loving presence and support of God to accompany us in our lives.

Pratap Samad, SJ

III B.Th.



TO BECOME MORE IN THE LIKENESS OF JESUS

It was a time of grace and deep joy when we felt the Spirit of God filling our inner selves with His abundant blessings. The Church, with her generosity, has considered entrusting us with the grace of sacred orders. It is a great joy to think that the moment has come. The moment that calls forth a greater commitment and responsibility! On 4 February 2021, seven Jesuit scholastics--Arul Gnanapragasam, Doni Raja, Joe Livingston S., Paul Raj Arockiasamy of Madurai and Jayaraj Selvaraj, Manickam Periyannayagaraj and Williams Charles of Chennai--were ordained Deacons by the Most Rev. George Antonysamy, Archbishop of Madras-Mylapore in the Church of Christ the King, Loyola College, Chennai. This was the first Diaconate

Ordination to take place in Loyola College campus and in the new Chennai Province. The theme chosen by the Deacons was: To Become More in the Likeness of Jesus. Jesuits from Loyola College, Berchmans



Illam, Dhyana Ashram, Arul Kadal and Satya Nilayam communities graced the occasion with their physical presence and other CEN-MDU Jesuit companions attended it virtually as the liturgy was livestreamed. The Archbishop preached an inspiring homily requesting the Deacons to be Servants, Soldiers and Saints in the contemporary context. This Diaconate Ordination Eucharist brought tremendous joy to all those who were present, particularly, the seven CEN-MDU Deacons who were blessed with the spirit of service.

The spirit that enabled us to say 'yes' to the call has strengthened us to accept His gracious blessings for his fruitful service.

More than relishing the privileges bestowed on us after diaconate, we look to live the life of commitment that we promised to live during the ordination. In time of growing secularism what kind of spiritual leadership that we can offer to the world has been lingering in our minds. We pray to the Spirit to enable us to see the needs of the world in which we are sent to serve as His ministers. We also request your prayers to strengthen us.

Paul Raj SJ
III B.Th.



JESUS CHOOSES ONLY SERVANT LEADERS

The process for the Diaconate Ordination began as the provincial invited all three of us to apply for the ordination to the Diaconate. Having applied for it after much prayerful reflections, we made our eight-day retreat under one of our abled Jesuit priests who guided us with his rich life experiences. It was indeed a beautiful spiritual journey with Jesus. The retreat reassured our call to priesthood and enabled us to make one bolder step toward the altar. Once we were 'ready and willing' to offer ourselves for the service of God, His Grace Thomas D'Souza, Archbishop of Calcutta accepted for laying on of hands and consecrate us to the ministry of 'Diaconia'. Thus, three of us, Antony Albert Suresh, Antony Robert V and Felix Tete were ordained deacons at Prabhu Jishur Girja parish, Kolkata on 4 February, 2021 on the feast of St. John De Britto. 'Jesus Chooses only Servant Leaders' was the apt theme of the day's celebration. It was grace filled moment for us. We felt the power of the prayers offered by so many of our friends and well-wishers. We were given the privilege to invite some of our family members and close relatives to be physically present to witness the diaconate in Prabhu Jishur Girja. All the government rules of Covid-19 and the guidelines by the Archbishop were meticulously followed all through the celebration. The total number of participants were restricted to 100 only. We pray that God may fill us with His Spirit and make us true servant leaders to work in his vineyard.

Antony Robert SJ
III B.Th.



COMMITTED LOVING SERVICE

13 February 2021 was an important day for us, the six Jesuit Scholastics from three different provinces, namely Johny Kujur S.J., Libin Kerketta S.J., Sandeep Kujur S.J. (RAN), Cyril Beck S.J., Tobias Tigga S.J. (MAP), and Prabhakar Oddipalli S.J. (JAM). On this day we got ordained as Deacons at Christ the King Church Kanke, Ranchi by His Grace Felix Toppo S.J. the Archbishop of Ranchi Archdiocese. Really, it was the most memorable day for all of us. We felt the divine presence during our Diaconate ordination.

We experienced the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. We were filled with the overwhelming experience of joy and gladness.

We chose “Committed Loving Service” as the theme of our diaconate ordination. Everybody was happy and joyous as everything went on well. We began our preparation with selecting suitable hymns for Holy Mass and choir practice two weeks before. Schs. Cyril, Tobias and Prabhakar arrived at RTC, Tarunoday, Ranchi on 09th of February 2021. We had Liturgical practice together for three days. In the mean time we had interior preparation as well.



The diaconate ordination began with solemn Holy Mass presided over by Archbishop Felix Toppo S.J., Archdiocese of Ranchi with the concelebrants Fr. Provincial Ajit

Kumar Xess S.J. of Ranchi province and Fr. Jerome Kotinha S.J. of Jamshedpur province. During his homily, the Archbishop narrated about the services of the deacons. Even he challenged us with our responsibility and being ever faithful in service to God and his people in and through our lives. Thereafter, with his prayer of the Holy Spirit and laying holy hands on the candidates, he ordained us as deacons. The Holy Mass ended with the vote of thanks by Dn. Johnny Kujur S.J. During the Holy Mass, a limited number of faithful and family members were invited for the occasion because of the Corona guidelines given by the Government.

Just after Holy Mass we had small felicitation program. The Archbishop provided us with the diaconate certificates. Afterwards the congregation of Catholic Sabha and Mahila Sangh followed by family members welcomed us with bouquet of flowers and small gifts. The felicitation program was followed by the delicious meal.

Libin Kerketta S.J.

III B.Th.



I CONSIDER EVERYTHING HAS RUBBISH FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST.

Life is a journey from birth to death. All of us are pilgrims in this world. We have come in a particular time and we have to leave when the time arrives. But the life has a purpose. What the role I play no one else can do. Each one has a role to play. “The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4: 11). God has called us to be priests. Diaconate ordination was one of the steps forward to our priestly ordination. Jesus invited us to listen to him. “I am the good shepherd; my sheep listens to my voice”. He called us to abide in him, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruits.” Our diaconate ordination on 13 February, 2021 was the blessing and affirmation of his call to listen to him and abide in him.



The journey which had begun years ago as candidates was being confirmed. It was a Kairos moment, a moment of ‘GRACE’ for us. Therefore, first of all we rise our thoughts of gratitude to the Triune God who has deigned to bestow His bountiful graces unto us. Most Rev. Bhagyaiah Chinnabathini, the Bishop of Guntur laid his hand on us and conferred the Sacred Order of Diaconia in the name of the Church. It was a family feeling when we saw our Jesuit brethren of our province present in large number. Their presence and prayerful support were inspiring and encouraging. They truly made us feel the motherly love and care of the universal Society. Their love for us is immense. I cannot conclude saying that we have run our race. We have only half way of our race, we have miles to

go. So, our only prayer is to give us your strength and wisdom, O God to complete our race, and we may mould others for the race in the future as we have been trained by you and our formators. Thank God and all of you.

KP Saji George SJ

III B.Th.



CALLED TO SERVE WITH LOVE

It was the first time in the history of Kohima Region that Diaconate Ordination took place in the Region on



February 13, 2021. It was a joyful moment for us (James, Biji and Stephen) and for entire Region. It gave us a sense of family feeling. Many of our Jesuits companions helped us to prepare ourselves for that day. It was a few days of preparation. Thanks to Fr. Albert for preparing us spiritually through recollection. Thanks to Frs. Gregory Coelho SJ, Pheiga SJ and Boniface SJ who oriented towards the Sacred Order of Diaconate. We were anxious about our Diaconate Ordination because of limited practices. By the grace of God everything went on well. We submitted ourselves in the hands of God. It was a home coming experience because we pronounced our first vows in the very chapel where we were ordained Deacons. It gave us a glimpse of our novitiate days.

Sun rays reached in novitiate that day more beautifully even in the hardness of winter. Atmosphere was filled with heavenly silence. The Most Rev. Victor Lyngdoh, Archbishop of Shillong presided over the Holy Eucharist and ordained us as Deacons in the name of the Church. Fr. Melvil Perara SJ, our Regional Superior and twenty other priests joined the Archbishop. The Archbishop gave an inspiring homily where he suggested us not to compromise with devotion and duty and be aware of the dangerous while using technology. Our heart was filled with love and tears from our eyes rolled down with joy.

We are called to imitate Jesus Christ who came to not to be served but to serve.

Biji Thomas SJ

III B.Th.



COMMITTED LOVING SERVICE

Five third year students of RTC Ranchi namely, Scholastics Johny Kujur (RAN) Libin Kerketta (RAN) Sandeep Kujur (RAN) Tobias Tigga (MAP) Cyril Beck (MAP) as well as one NTC student, Prabha-

kar Oddipalli (JAM) were ordained deacons by Most Rev. Felix Toppo, The Arch Bishop of Ranchi on the thirteenth of February in the Christ the King Parish, Kanke, Ranchi. The superior F. Mickael Kerketta and all the staff and students of RTC, have made it a big event by putting all their efforts, thanks to the Fathers and Brothers for the generous contribution for this special day of our brothers. They had three-day practice given by the Dean of the Regional Theologate Center, Fr Francis Minj. Thank you, Father, for preparing them for the grace filled occasion. Thanks also to the Ranchi Jesuit Provincial and the Province Curia members for being very supportive and providing everything needed for this event. Despite the Covid situation along with many priests and nuns and the family members of the newly ordained deacons, the provincials and PCFs of Jamshedpur, Ranchi and Madhya Pradesh, were present to witness this event and pray for our brothers. It was also a historic day of blessings in the life of RTC Ranchi and the Kanke Parish to have Diaconate ordination in Christ the King Church for the First time. Despite the



pandemic scenario, the people were very enthusiastic and managed to participate in Deaconate ordination.

Prabhakar Oddipalli SJ
III B.Th.



“SENT TO HEAL AND RECONCILE”

On 14 February 2021, we thirteen scholastics were ordained deacons by Most. Rev. Bishop Thomas Dabre, Bishop of Pune. It was a grace filled day for each one of us as we made our promise to the Lord



and surrendered ourselves for the service of His people. The mass began at 8.30 am. Only the community members and few priests from the campus were present for the Eucharistic celebration. Fr. Edward Mudavassery SJ, the Rector of De Nobili welcomed the Bishop and the congregation. His grace Bishop Thomas Dabre in his message said that today we are in need of new evangelization. We cannot go on with the old understanding. Christ is yesterday, today and always will be the same but he constantly renews our lives and therefore as deacons and priests we need to be creative and inclusive. This new evangelization

is a mighty challenge before us in the present situations. Today apart from our sacred duties we as deacons and priests need to engage in the service of every human being irrespective of religion.

It was a special day for each one of us. There is a sense of joy and happiness as we have taken one step closer to the altar of the Lord. I am grateful to all my formators, especially Fr. Rector at Vidyaajyoti, all the staff members and companions for your prayerful support. We all were away and received our deaconate ordinations at different times but I could feel the presence of each of you in Spirit.

“I have just given you an example so that you also should do the same.” Jn13:15

Prashant Shaharao SJ
III B. Th.



“Sent to Heal and to Reconcile” was the theme for the Diaconate Ordination of Lijo Antony SJ and Steevensen Paul SJ of Kerala Province. They were conferred the Sacred Order of Diaconate by Mar Jose Pulikkal, Bishop of Kanjirappally on March 29, 2021 at 6 am in Mary Matha Minor Seminary, Podimattom.



Dioconate Album
Memories







MY VISION 2021 FOR THE CHURCH IN INDIA

“The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.” Helen Keller.

The Church in India is as old as the times of the apostles of Jesus. I feel volumes of books can be written in terms of various works carried out all throughout the country and many church organizations are still



working in the remotest areas of country providing a number of services and assistance. The Church has done and has been doing much so now the perennial question is “Do we need to do anything more? I feel the answer is ‘yes’. The role that the Church has to play in the democratic country like ours has been more crucial and a prophetic one at this juncture. As a country we are going through an economic, socio-religious turmoil. We are at a point of losing our identity as a democratic nation. We need prophetic voices like Fr. Stan Swamy SJ, who never bothered about his wellbeing or of his own life. He stands as role model for all us, who gave voice to the voiceless, who stood with the most vulnerable in the midst of grave dangers.

The Church today is being projected as an outsider or a foreign entity. We stare at an existential crisis in our own country. But we know that we are woven strongly into the ethos of the fabric of our country. No one can separate or take away our Indianness

from the ‘Indian Catholic Church’. And, our actions and roles should be such that our non-Christian brothers and sisters should feel comfortable calling us their own. That will only happen when we participate with them not only in their joyous celebration but also at the time of crises and the time of their difficulties. I don’t deny that the Church is not working or helping our non-Catholic brethren. In the time of the pandemic, the Church has been doing a number of charitable activities. But are we doing enough? Are we really playing the role that we are called for?

Let’s stand with our farmers who are fighting for their basic rights from past six months. Let’s open our big institutions for the poor students who are not able to afford the education because of economic situation at their homes. The pandemic has changed the entire spectrum of our work and the people whom we have been working for are faced with even greater challenges.

I believe that the relevance and significance of the Church is greater than ever before. The world today looks at us with greater expectations and we must come out of our comfort zones to stretch ourselves for the service of the ‘other’. Is this not what the gospels are teaching us? I must say, with the constant assistance from our Heavenly Father, His Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit, we can surely move mountains. Our Lord with His great promise in MT 28:20 “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”, has assured us His continued presence in all that we do. I feel with such assurance we must take up the challenge and be at the frontiers where we are called to be. Thus, we will fulfil the true meaning of being a church at the service of humanity.

Vivian W. Lopes, SJ

II B.Th.



MY VISION 2021: THE CHURCH OF LOVE

Jesus said, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one

another.” (Jn 13:34-35). At the time of Jesus, there were 613 commandments that the Jews had to keep in mind. These included 248 ‘ought to do’ commandments and 365 ‘ought not to do’ commandments. Jesus, our loving Lord and Master, gives us only one commandment: ‘To LOVE’. Over the years, Biblical



scholars have found that this one command suffices for or sums up all the other commandments. One of them said that when there is love, all the other injunctions fall into their proper places. To cite an example: when there is love, no one, in his correct senses, would rob or kill another. Thus, we see how powerful and effective this single commandment “to love” is.

Today, when we look at the Catholic Church we see there have been and there are numerous people who followed and have been following the ‘Love Commandment’ in their lives. When Mother Teresa approached a shopkeeper to beg food for the inmates of her Home for

the Dying, the shopkeeper insulted her by spitting into her hands she held out in expectation. She, without expressing any show of hurt or disappointment, extended the other hand saying that what was spat into her one hand was for her and, with the other, asked for something for the inmates. She could humble herself to such an extent only because of the love she had for the inmates of Nirmal Hridaya as well as for the shopkeeper. This brought a drastic change in the shopkeeper’s life. He began to help Mother Teresa and her Home for the Dying. Thus, we see that this ‘Love Commandment’ is not new to us. But still, we have trouble living out this commandment. Though it sounds easy, it is difficult to follow in our day-to-day life. Therefore, my vision for the Church of India is a ‘Church of Love’ – where there is no room for hate and revenge but only love and more love. As St. Augustine puts it so succinctly “Ama, fac quod vis – Love, and do what you wish”.

Cajetan A, SJ

II B.Th.



MY VISION 2021 FOR THE CHURCH IN INDIA

Right from the time of arrival of St. Thomas the Apostle in India, the Church in India is graced with the blessings in the form of most precious gift of ‘Christian Faith’. Right from the beginning the sprouting seed of this Christian faith has been undergoing the hardships of different kinds internally as well as externally. But I perceive that at the same time there has been the constant assistance and guidance of the Divine providence in our faith-journey. The Church in India is flourishing by leaps and bounds. Therefore, my vision 2021 for the Church in India is Christian unity. I vision of all the Christian denominations live in peace and harmony which strengthen the bond of Christian unity. This unity re-gath-ers the scattered and the lost by letting love govern the heart and mind of each and every Christian in India. Let the love be the hallmark and centre of Christian life.



After being aware of the pluralistic con-text of India, Christian faith is all about a dialogue. We need to engage ourselves in a dialogue with the people of other faith (inter-religious dialogue) by creating a common ground without forgetting the differences. We need to accept and appreciate what is good and noble in others. Therefore, we the Christians in India need to create a space for the millennium conversation.

On one hand, I envision the Church in India to learn and habituate herself to live with the current burning situation. The Church needs to resume the worship activities in spite of Covid-19 pandemic. We need to have total faith in the Divine Majesty that one day the Holy Blood of Jesus Christ will wash away this deadly virus and free us from panic. On the other hand, the Church in India needs to have a constant and

deep faith formation even more than ever before because currently the Hindutva ideology seems to have taking a deep root in India. There is manipulative violation of the Indian Constitution. New laws are being made which are not inclusive. They are meant to help the corporates and multinational companies. The above issues and factors directly or indirectly are affecting the growth and unity of Christian faith. And now it is the right time to do the necessity before it is too late. Both, All India Conference of Indian Christians (AICIC) and Catholic Union of India(CUI) need to keep ensuring and fostering the Christian faith and unity in the Church in India. The profession, practice and propagation of religion should be guaranteed. Further, the Minorities Committee of the Constituent Assembly of India has a very important role to play in order to ensure the confidence and safeguarding of faith-practices of the minorities in India. I also envision the Church leaders of India to step out of one's comfort zone. They need to be available, free for mission, be vibrant and charismatic in order to foster the spiritual- animation and faith- formation among the Christian laity. Thus, all the Church leaders or religious must become the channel of peace, harmony and unity in and through their ongoing various apostolates, propagating and imparting the Gospel values, moral and ethical values within as well as the outside the Christian folk.

Ajay Bara SJ

II B.Th.



MY VISION FOR THE CHURCH OF INDIA

Every year we need to have a new vision for the Church in India because we are progressing in all spheres of our lives, in terms of science, technology, religion, politics, etc. The vision helps us to be focused on our goals, and it orients our actions and words towards the vision of the Indian Church. Today, we are facing a lot of problems; such as political turmoil, draconian laws, mass migration, utter poverty, the caste system etc. By knowing these difficulties, the Church of India needs to have a particular vision for 2021 so that, our mission is geared towards the vision of 2021 for India.

My vision for the Church of India for 2021 is to establish peace and harmony among all religions. It is the need of the hour as the Hindutva movement is prevalent in our country, which destroys the true identity of Indian democracy. This movement brings hatred and violence in the name of religion. It is a big challenge for the Church of India in 2021. Another vision is to help farmers and the poor to get justice for themselves. Because their fundamental rights are taken away by the present government. It is not only to accompany our Christian brethren. But the Indian Church should involve all religions to accompany them in their struggles. The Church should defend and protect their fundamental rights, which give them dignity and life. Sometimes we bring inculturation in our faith, but we cannot give the real meaning of inculturation, therefore it is the Church's responsibility to give adequate faith through inculturation. If we want to have a vibrant Indian Church, it is high time to promote laity and women leadership in our Churches. The Indian Church should promote holistic education in our institutions so that they may become good citizens of India, who can stand by us in our times of struggles. The Indian Church should evangelize through holistic education and service.



The last vision is to heal the broken world where we can create a society based on Jesus' values; people can feel the love of God and feel peace and serenity among themselves. Lastly, all Indian churches should work towards the vision and mission of Jesus Christ.

Bhadagi Jayanti SJ

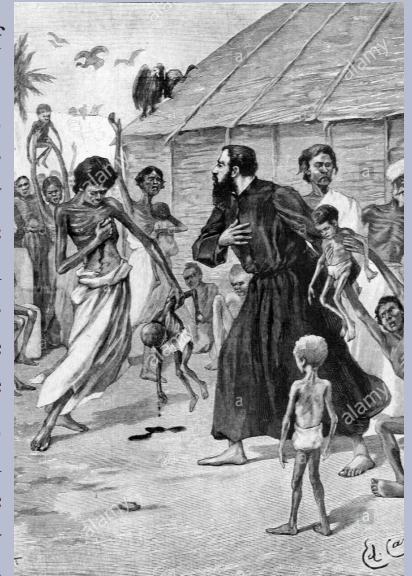
II BTH



MY VISION 2021 FOR THE CHURCH IN THE CONTEXT OF CHOTANAGPUR

"Then the LORD said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them

from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey” (Ex 3:7-8). When I read the history of Chotanagpur, I imagined the picture of the early Belgian missionaries who laboured hard to pitch the tent among the Adivasis of Chotanagpur. In 19 century, the Belgians played a significant role among the Adivasis to empower them socially, economically, politically and gradually brought a new understanding of God. It was the Belgian missionaries who fought against the Zamindars (landlords) and Thikadaars on behalf of Tribals. Another big contribution of the Belgian missionaries is the propagation of faith. I acknowledge, what I’m today is because of the missionaries. Today, the Adivasis have grown in various areas, they are well educated, morally balanced, financially strong and culturally unique. But, on the other hand they are still slave of external forces like political power, poverty and caste system. There is decline in the faith aspect within the Catholic Church of Chotanagpur. The number of baptized Catholics is swelling in the baptismal registers but quality of the faith among the Catholics is decaying. There were times when the Churches used to overflow with the faithful and they used to sit outside the Church. But today the Churches are longing for the faithful to see them sitting inside the Church. Therefore, my vision could be to play a role of a good shepherd to lead the Church in a good pasture: pasture where sheep has total freedom of faith, a pasture where there is justice, peace and human dignity is measured equally. Now there is no concept of missionaries coming from outside who used to be shepherds. Now it is my time to be a shepherd to re-pitch the tent of faith among the Catholics of Chotanagpur. I need to labour to better the Catholic faith and release my people from external forces. I would like to build my faith and the faith of my people on a solid rock, deep rooted in Jesus Christ. I vision that their every activity be focused towards the Kingdom of God. God has given me rich talents and if I do not use them in building up the Kingdom of God, they are useless. Thus 2021 is calling me to review and reflect on my responsibilities towards the Church. The crises and struggles of the Adivasis give me the opportunity to render my service to them. In my little service I’ll be focusing on their faith aspects because I believe that the faith will moderate their lives and help them to access the rest of the sources of life in meaningful way. Faith will integrate their lives and lead them towards freedom from external forces. This faith will unite the scattered Adivasis under one tree - God.



Manoj Lakra SJ

II B.Th.

MY VISION -2021 FOR THE CHURCH OF INDIA

Introspection of our life and mission is a must in order to push ourselves forward with much intensity and fervour. Going back to the roots might help us to see ourselves where we stand as believers of Jesus Christ. We need to raise a few questions to ourselves. Have we lost the enthusiasm of being Christian? Is our faith wavering due to various reasons? For centuries the Bible has been an authentic source of knowledge, wisdom, morality, law, rules and regulations, values of life and spirituality. Therefore, I would like to have my vision for the Church of India, based on the Biblical verses and pick up a few points to reflect upon.

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. (Act 2: 44 - 47)

Togetherness: Having things in common brings all of us together. Christ has brought all of us as one family, being Himself as the head of the family. Christ is the Church and each of us significantly contributes

in building up a strong and vibrant Church. Are we able to live together as one community? If not then we need to find ways and means to get those faithful back, who at one point of time might have felt lost and stopped coming to the Church. For God everyone is precious. He counts on us. As a matter of fact, we should ask right questions to deal with the problems of the Church. The Clergy and the laity need to come together and discuss on such issues. Christ is our common asset let us stick to him until we die.

Self-giving/Generosity: Are we ready to give away things for the cause of the Church or have we become too obsessed with the accumulating culture? Sparing our time from busy schedule to go to the Church itself is a sign of generosity. Let us be part of the Church without expecting anything from it. I am sure the more we empty ourselves the more grace of God will fill us. By the grace of God, in the process of helping and saving others we will be also saving our own souls.

Meeting Together: Social interaction is a must among the members of the parish. Let us not rush home as soon as the Holy Mass ends. Let us all make an effort to meet people converse more deeply to know the other. We might be going to the same Church for many years but may not have known all enough. Some parishes have large numbers. In such situations, have we made any efforts to meet the new parishioners in our parish? In the culture of individualism, we need to swim against the current by interacting with all.



Breaking Bread: Participation in the Eucharist regularly and praying for our own parishioners and leaders of the Church would strengthen the house of God. May the sharing of the Christ in the form of bread and wine nourish and unite us. Let us find meaning in the Eucharist and allow ourselves to be transformed for the better. Let us break the barriers of caste and ethnicity. Having meals together is a sign of communion with one another, thus creating one such event occasionally is important.

Change in attitude: We always expect the other person to change. Conversion should begin within us. There should be a lot of flexibility in our approach to all our rituals and sacramental practices. Considering the Words of Jesus, if rules and regulations are not helping us to create a better society, we need to ponder over it because Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for human beings, not humans for the Sabbath. So, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28). We have remarkably adapted to the Indian context and Status quo. One of the examples would be allowing people to participate in the online Masses during the pandemic. We need to invent some more possibilities to amalgamate western with Indian culture without watering down the essence of Christianity. Let us make the Church more welcoming where people should feel happy to come together to worship one God the universal God.

Cyril Lakra
II B. Th.



A FEARLESS LOVING CHURCH

The ultimate purpose of the salvific plan of God is to spread the Kingdom of God on earth. In the process of responding to His call to participate in His plan, the Church started getting formed. The apostles and the others, who responded to the call, went around preaching about Jesus and spreading the Kingdom of God. As they were preaching, the small Christian communities started getting formed, which was not pre-planned by the apostles. Though the apostles could not continue the work of Jesus perfectly to spread the Kingdom of God, they did as much as they could, in their own way and the Church got formed. But the purpose of the Church was to bring the Kingdom of God on earth. So, the Church is the work of God and the human being to bring the Kingdom of God.

So, the purpose of the Church in India is also the same, to bring the Kingdom of God in India. When we talk about the Kingdom of God, we should know the values of the Kingdom of God. The values of the Kingdom of God is the fruits of the Holy Spirit, who was sent, by Jesus Christ after His resurrection. When we reflect over the fruits of the Holy Spirit in India, we cannot deny that the Holy Spirit is active in most of the people and they bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, we see the various issues in India, like the present issue of the farmers or the long time issues of the discrimination based on



caste system, a big gap between the rich and the poor, the minorities sufferings as they are marginalized. We can go on adding like that and when we see the present situation, it is really terrifying, not only as the number of issues are increasing, but each issue is making us lose the hope to solve the issues, as they are well planned and implemented systematically, in such a way that it controls the people who are fighting against it.

Here we need to remember that, however terrifying they may be, we should not lose our hope. As a Christian, I feel that our way of tackling the issues should not be the same way as the people who create the problem. We should not follow the violence or any other way of evil to solve the problem. Our strength and courage are in following the commandment of Jesus, which is love. I would propose that the Church should follow this commandment of love to solve all the prob-

lems and bring the Kingdom of God. The big blockage of ours to work against these issues is the fear we have within us. The aim of the people who create the issues is also to create fear in us, so that they can do whatever they want, and the people will keep quiet. So, my vision for the Church in India not only in 2021 but always is to try to promote love among people, so that people will not have the fear which reduces the strength, rather they will have love which gives and increases the strength and courage to face the problems in proper manner and to bring the permanent solution for the issues. We will have the Kingdom of God in India.

Felix Raj SJ

II B.Th.



MY VISION 2021 FOR THE CHURCH OF INDIA

We Christians believe that the Church is the body of Christ, the people of God and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit and we are all His members. Therefore, Christian life is centered on Christ, the Church and in God's mission. The early Christian community witnessed risen Jesus, proclaimed the word of God, baptized and celebrated the Lord's Supper. In this way the Church was established. Today, Christians are called to live out their discipleship. Therefore, the Church continues to proclaim the Word of God.

My vision for the Church in India is based on this significant verse "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer Acts (2:42)".

The Word of God: The early Church was devoted to preaching the Word of God. The Church grew as it was "watered" by the preaching of the Word of God. Therefore, without the Word of God, our Christian faith is not nourished. Our faith remains at periphery. The Word of God makes our Christian life authentic. Whenever we receive the Word of God, God's Spirit is active and alive amid us. God presence is felt through signs and wonders. Today, the Church needs vision to continue to proclaim the Word of God so that we members of the Church may listen and truly understand the Will of God. The Apostles are inspiration for us to preach the Risen Jesus in truth and with confidence.

Fellowship: Fellowship is Christian love and sharing in action. Luke in his Gospel mentions Jesus who uses table fellowship meal. This table fellowship was extended to sinners, tax-collectors, outcasts, marginalized and the poor. They experienced love and mercy of Jesus. Therefore, we need to follow the Lord. When we have fellowship, we experience sympathy, mercy and mutuality with others. Today table fellowship (love in action) is not so easy as we think and discuss in the class. It is a big challenge for us.

We need learn from the first Christians community who devoted themselves to each other. In fact, this was their way of living out practically what Jesus said, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn. 13:34-35). The Church needs to grow in fellowship.

Breaking of the Bread: The breaking of the bread refers to the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. The central meaning of the Lord’s Supper is the presence of Jesus. The Church and its members need to hunger and thirst for Jesus in their lives by breaking of the bread.

Prayer: The Church was born through prayer (Acts 1:14), grew through prayer (Acts 2:42), overcame opposition through prayer (Acts 4:24-31), had miracles through prayer (Acts 12:5) and consecrated ministries through prayer (Acts 13:3). A Church which neglects prayer will never see growth. James says, “You do not have, because you do not ask” (Jas. 4:2). Prayer is at the heart of the Church. Therefore, Church should focus more on prayers.

Manish Minj SJ

II B. Th.



MY VISION OF THE CHURCH 2021 - CHURCH NEEDS SAINTS

Pope Francis says, “We need saints with jeans and t-shirts. We need saints who go for movies, who listen to music, who hang out with their friends. We need saints who place God in first place ahead of succeeding in any career.” In this present scenario, the Church is undergoing many crucial moments in terms of her ministry and giving communion to the people. It is also a sad fact that many totally forgot about the joyous moments that they had spent in the Church. Now Church has to take a different step to gather her flocks under the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus in his lifetime visited many people who were sick, whom the society excluded from the public space.

This Covid – 19 also built a prison around us. It was the prison of loneliness for some. Some felt spiritual aridity and some could not get any enjoyment during lockdown. Actually, this pandemic gives a different



vision to the Church that we must somehow connect with people. First and foremost, we need to sit at the foot of Jesus. Getting inspired by Jesus we need to go to the people with Jesus. Jesus has to work through us. Working without Jesus is futile. That is what Jesus is expecting from us. Today we lack saints and models. Children are asking for the right path. Parents are busy with their own dreams. Here Church must open her way to Jesus because he can quench our thirst, he can calm our minds, he can change our lives.

So, all are called to become saints in our given situation. That is why Pope says we need saints from this modern era. Therefore, the Christ-ness should remain inflamed in our lives as the followers of Jesus. Here we have to remember the words of Mahatma Gandhi “I love Christ not Christians.” We all are called to become alter Christus and finally we should be dare to say - “I now longer live, but Christ lives in me.”

Nikhil George CST

II B.Th.



MY VISION 2021 FOR THE CHURCH OF INDIA

Covid-19 has proved that there would be situations which are different from our traditional way of living. Of all these years, we had a kind of thinking which stuck to a traditionalist way. Now, it’s time for us to think about alternatives and stick to certain aspects of worship. These are unprecedented times. We have

never experienced anything like this. We have not been created to walk alone in darkness and bear a broken heart and weep alone in loneliness. We have not been created to put our gifts in boxes admiring our treasures while they overtake our conscience. We have not been created to abandon the widow and leave her in solitude while embracing through the window. We have not been created to turn away the orphan boarding our hearts as if angels are not important. We need to raise our hands to love and to rise above.



Church of India should be the one which encourages everyone to feel the presence of God through even miniscule changes. In all these years, we felt that there is no leader to follow. As we find a great leader in Pope Francis, we need to follow him at close quarters. The Church of India should constitute shepherds who smell of the sheep, members who stand for justice like Fr. Stan Swamy and people who own the poor as their own. It should be a church that takes the side of its master Jesus Christ with an attitude to 'never give up'. Church needs to imitate the qualities of its patron St. Joseph like patience, obedience and strong commitment etc. As the Lord hears the

cry of the poor, Church of India should pay heed to the struggles of farmers. Finally, I would prefer the Church of 2021 to be a Christ bearer in showing the way towards the everlasting love of heavenly Father.

Praveen Polanki SJ
II B.Th.



MY VISION 2021 FOR THE CHURCH OF INDIA

The Church is the unity of people gathered by the inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit is the one who is the center and power house of the Catholic Church and leads the Church. The authorities and leaders of the Indian Catholic Church need to believe in the intervention of power and will of the Holy Spirit. The believe in power of the Holy Spirit will enable them to lead the followers of the Christ to the promised place given by Jesus Christ. The Church is the bride of Jesus. Whenever the bride is with the bridegroom, the bride gets all the privileges and respect from the bridegroom. Unless and until the Church stands with Jesus, she cannot show its Holiness to her children. In 21st century the Indian church has to show her holiness to her children and lead them in the path of holiness and in the foremost covenant of love.



Contrary to spiritual practice and life, the Church and her institutions in India today has become much affluent. The authorities quite often get intoxicated with this affluence. But on the other side her offspring become poor and poorer. The Church shows up as authoritative and luxury driven in her day-to-day activities. In 21st century Indian church should standby the marginalized, the broken hearted, backward people, helpless and needy ones.

Today, the Indian church must find out newways of evangelization in India. She has to read out the signs of the present time. Neither her activities nor her institutions attract the people; rather her holiness and love pull them to her. Let her build the tabernacles in the heart of her children rather than in the modernistic brains.

Praveen Kallikattu CST
II B.Th.



VISION FOR THE CHURCH IN INDIA THROUGH THE EYES OF ST JOSEPH

To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the declaration of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, Pope Francis has declared a "Year of Saint Joseph" from 8 December 2020 to 8 December 2021. In the Apostolic Letter entitled *Patris corde* ("With a Father's Heart") the Holy Father elaborates on the defining

roles that St. Joseph played in salvation history. He highlights seven characteristics of the Saint, as the symbol of the beloved, tender loving, obedient, accepting, courageous, creative, labouring and serving father.

The virtuous and persevering life of St. Joseph encourages the life of the Church in India. Hence, we have many educational and charitable institutions named after St. Joseph. Despite the challenges of poverty, illiteracy, employment, regionalism, casteism and communalism that beset the Church it seeks to move forward with the vision for a better tomorrow. Let us envision the Church in India through the eyes of St Joseph.

Beloved and tender loving Church: During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Church in India sprang into action to curb the spread of the virus. It also adopted ways to cater to the spiritual needs of the Catholics and accompanied those suddenly left stranded due to lockdown.

The Church is called to come out of herself and to go to those at peripheries being ignored and in oblivion. We have a large number of people within the Church jurisdiction that need our support. Our church must be the field hospitals where everyone experiences the tender loving care of God.



Obedient and accepting Church: In the last couple of years, the Church has been tainted with sexual misconduct and financial mismanagement. It has publicly apologized for the faults and has openly condemned these acts with the policy of zero tolerance against the perpetrators.

We, as the Church are accountable for the gifts to the gift-giver. Hence, what we need is transparency and integrity in its matters. The situation demands of the Church more cooperative participation of the laity in decision making. The Church needs to be faithful to its call and honest in the affairs of the God's kingdom.

Creative and courageous Church: Both in the past and in recent times we have witnessed the Spirit leading the Church to be prophetic voices. It has used the social medium to bring about creative solutions and voice out against injustice and ecological concerns.

The uproar from the Church in the campaign against the failure of the state machinery and communalism has been rather feeble. One reason for it would be the fear of losing its non-profit status. It necessitates that the Church is both prophetic and apostolic witness for the common good and wellbeing of God's people.

Labouring and serving Church: The Church labours with God in the world. It has been an instrument of salvation and grace of God to all. Catholic educational institutions and charitable organizations massively contributed to community upliftment and nation-building.

The Catholic institutions need to take stock of their impact and motivations in these ministries. It needs deep and comprehensive reform that touches both the mind and the heart. The way we teach and learn must empower, foster healthy descent and enhance the joy of work.

Sign of the times: The Church in India, though being a visible minority group, has been pioneering its way out with adequate and proper re-sponses to the changing situations. As India is facing its biggest crisis in decades, I wish and pray that St. Joseph continues to strengthen the Church as it works towards the fruition of the divinely ordained plans.

Joy Fernandes SJ
II B.Th.



A CHURCH ENVISAGING AND ENGENDERING AN OPEN WORLD

"No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man" says Heraclitus, the Greek thinker. Everything changes except the change. As a matter of fact, we are living in a world which is not the same as it was when you just read the last word of this sentence. India is no less

a fast-growing country in the hustle and bustle of such a 5G world. India's sagacious march towards the status of a developed country is endorsed by its growing strength of the army, rich natural resources and enviable achievements.



However, inside of such a white-collared India there is a nation that smells the pungent odour of caste discrimination, corrupt politics, gender and social inequalities. What is regarded as the power of India in paper is the biggest weakness of it in effect; religious pluralism! The gap between haves and have-nots is also getting widened day by day. At this juncture, being a Christian becomes far more challenging and demanding. Giving witness to Jesus in the Indian setting needs more diligence and sensitivity.

Aggiornamento "bringing up to date", was one of the key words used during the Second Vatican Council which was convened by Pope John XXIII. But as we realize today, the problem is not so much of "updating" but more of "mutating". According to the current scenario for the Church in India my vision would be to epitomize what Pope Francis said in his recent encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (Brothers All). The Encyclical aims to promote a universal aspiration toward fraternity and social friendship.

In chapter three of the encyclical titled "Envisaging and Engendering an Open World" Pope Francis goes on to say that the social, loving dimension of human life is universal, natural, and essential. Love does both, draws us out of ourselves and draws the ones we love into ourselves. True love also "impels us towards universal communion... By its very nature, love calls for growth in openness and the ability to accept others as part of a continuing adventure that makes every periphery converge in a greater sense of mutual belonging" (FT, 95). This movement toward solidarity does not eliminate differences, but celebrates the beauty of diversity.

Unfortunately, in Church of India we still see discrimination based on caste, colour and gender. We need to eliminate these evil structures within the Church that make us less Christian. We must respect the truth of our human dignity and submit to the truth that we are all equal, made in the image and likeness of God. It only when we begin to realize and live this truth, the Truth will set us free.

Alex Mannoor CST

I B.Th.



A SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE CHURCH

COVID-19, with attendant self-isolation, social distancing and lockdowns, has severely restricted the communal and congregational aspects of all faiths. Most churches, mosques, temples and gurudwaras across the world had closed their doors, signifying the ascendancy of health and safety over collective interaction with the Almighty. A couple of months ago as the lockdown restrictions were relaxed and place of worship were opened for public, many pious people breathed with sigh of relief.

Following the civil and ecclesiastical authorities' guidelines, the administration of Church sacraments was started. It brought life to the Church during the pandemic. I have witnessed the sign of growing faith and devotion among people this year which I hope it continues by grace of God. When the churches were closed due to pandemic, I could see many people coming to our St. Xavier's Parish asking for Holy Communion and Confession. People have become more spiritually inclined. On Ash Wednesday I noticed that at least one member of every family attended mass and got Holy Ash applied on their forehead by the priest. They also carried some Holy Ash for their family members who couldn't attend the service due to restrictions. This



pandemic has surely induced a spiritual awakening among the faithful.

The relationship between the Church and her people has seemed to become more cordial during this pandemic and I hope it strengthens in coming years. Some of the poor parishes in India like parishes in Jashpur Diocese had faced financial problem during this pandemic. But the parishioners literally practised the six precepts of the Church in which the fifth precept says, “to provide for the material needs of the Church, each according to his/her abilities” (CCC. 1351). The faithful collected rice or money from each Christian family every Sunday and sent the collections to the poor parishes. It is through such experiences, the faithful become aware of the value of being socially responsible and take necessary initiatives.

We are living in the era of technology. The Catholic Church has slowly developed a posture towards technology which is predominantly techno-optimist and techno-progressive, and yet the Church does not have this reputation today. During this pandemic, the Church has realized the importance of social media and technology. Eucharistic celebration has become online. Even the sacrament of reconciliation is being done online but very few takers. The Church needs to brainstorm new ideas and creative methods with vigour and zeal on how to connect with people and give them God experience through social media platform.

The crucial need is to open up avenues for participation and to bring social issues to the center of the Church’s agenda. It is through participation; the Church will actually experience its relation to social issues. The Church must get involved in the problems of society or lose its voice and impact in that society. I want the Church as an institution to become active in social affair.

Arvind Kujur S.J

I B.Th.



WOMEN’S SPIRITUALITY: NEED OF THE HOUR IN THE CHURCH

Bhartrhari has this sloka in his work Neeti Shatak:

कार्येषु दासीकरणेषु मंत्रीरूपेषु लक्ष्मीक्षमया धरतिरी।

स्नेहेषु माताशयनेषु रम्भाषट्कर्मनारीकुलधर्मपत्नी।।

The holy sage Bhartrhari highlights six significant criteria for an ideal woman: कार्येषु दासी – takes up any task without weighing it as good or bad, honesty in the work, कण्ठिषु मंत्री – smart in worldly matters, रूपेषु लक्ष्मी – loves herself the way she is, क्षमया धरतिरी – will stand firm, स्नेहेषु माता – takes care of the family, and शयनेषु रम्भा – she too has desires. The rise and development of the women’s movement can be seen as a sign of spiritual creativity in contemporary culture. The current interest in spirituality as a path to personal and social transformation, and also a search for God and transcendence, is strongly



reflected in women’s experience and quest.

Maria Harris in her book ‘Dance of the spirit’ gives seven steps of women’s spirituality. They are awakening, discovering, creating, dwelling, nourishing, traditioning and transforming.

Awakening means giving life to everything including oneself. Discovering is the recognition of what is hidden; the potential energy. The new energy born of awakening lies ready within us, ready to be tapped. Creating is molding and giving form to life in its originality, uniqueness, novelty, sensitivity, flexibility and fluidity. Dwelling is to cultivate the presence, caring and cherishing the presence. Nourishing is more of a spiritual nourishing. It has three elements; personal, communal and integrating. Traditioning is handing over the generativity-guiding the next generation. It is a process by which humans communicate ways of knowing, ways of being, and ways of doing from one generation to the next, bringing together past and present. And final step-transforming is bringing to life, being reborn in self-possession and self-understanding of oneself and of the world.

Pope Francis has recently amended the Catholic Church canon law allowing women to be readers at the

mass, servers at the altar and distribute communion. Breaking with tradition, Pope Francis has appointed Frenchwoman Nathalie Becquart as an undersecretary of the synod of bishops, the first woman to hold the post and have voting rights. This signals the pontiff's desire "for a greater participation of women in the process of discernment and decision-making in the Church". Pope Francis, being a trailblazer, has recognized the great contribution women can make in the Church and has acted accordingly.

The Church in India, particularly in Gujarat, has a long way to go in this direction. Some still need to open themselves up to welcome this move. We are not prepared yet. Forget about any lay person distributing communion, some frown upon a nun distributing communion. It needs to turn over a new leaf in order to allow women participation in the Church. Our ancient literature heritage has ample texts on the importance of women. If men are endowed with strength, then women are endowed with endurance. The Hindu religion depicts goddess as 'Shakti,' the power of god, the consort of god. The 'ardhnareshwar' understanding of god is the unity of two opposite principles having constructing and generating power.

Amidst this COVID-19 pandemic, we see two women who successfully tackled the pandemic situation. New Zealand prime minister, Jacinda Arden and health minister of Kerala K. K. Shailaja. When all science and technology failed, the managerial skills of these women helped control the spread of corona virus. They epitomize the poem of William Ross Wallace, "The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world." I hope the Church in India realize this fact and treat women not inferior to men but equal to man, in the image and likeness of God. The Church needs to look into development of women's spirituality rooted in the awareness of their own power from within, in a newly felt sense of empowerment which helps them to work for personal, social and political changes, and for changes in the Church.

Hitesh Parmar SJ

I B.Th.



JUSTICE AND PEACE: THE VISION AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

From its very inception, the Church has been an active agent of transformation and change in every aspect of human life. Throughout the ages, it has involved in the life of humankind, in making of nationhood, building of cultures, structuring of societies with its functions and institutions and in shaping the form and quality of political systems up to 19th Century. But from the 20th Century, Church has distanced itself from political, economic and social affairs of the state, and restricted solely to spiritual and religious affairs. This self-restriction has made the members of the Church more silent spectators to every form of injustice, inequality and exploitation in society, and also less qualified to voice out publicly on



such issues. Therefore, today much emphasis is placed on the role and mission of the Church to be an agent of change and transformation by standing and voicing out for the poor and marginalized in the society.

Jesus and his apostles functioned within the society in which they were found. Hence, the socio-economic and political factors of the day were to greatly influence the teachings of Jesus and his disciples. In taking sides with the poor, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees for their self-indulgence, empty rituals and shallowness. Jesus' preaching about the 'Kingdom'

made it abundantly clear that God took seriously the concerns of the poor and needy: the poor would be blessed in the realisation that the 'Kingdom of God' was theirs; even tax collectors and harlots would gain entry before those who appeared to be religious and respectable, and the rich and powerful would become acquainted with want and hunger. The arrival of the 'Kingdom' contained the seeds of economic revolution and social reversal. With all these we, however, do not find a 'pattern' of a fully orbed programme to transform society in the life of the early Church. This, however, radically changed when the Church moved out beyond the borders of the Greco-Roman frontiers.

The early Christians took part in public life in the Greco-Roman communities in which they lived. In

fact, the early church taught a civic consciousness among its members. Christians were not to abandon life in public sphere but to address their obligations as citizens from the perspective of the Christian ethic. Therefore, the Christian community, while maintaining a commitment to the tradition of benefaction of the state, required all its citizens, whatever their financial resources, to contribute to the welfare of the state at the same time to stand for the poor and the justice even in the face of persecution. Thus, the Christian social ethic was an unprecedented social revolution of the ancient benefaction tradition. Every Christian had an obligation to promote the welfare of the city and help the poor, and to stand firm for the gospel values. In a recent meeting of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, Pope Francis advocated that ‘our faith in Jesus impels us to live charity through concrete gestures capable of affecting our way of life, our relationships and the world around us’. In this context he heightened the role of the Church as an ‘Agent for Justice’. He went further to state: ‘There is urgent need for an ecumenism that, along with theological dialogue aimed at settling traditional doctrinal disagreements between Christians, can promote a shared mission of evangelisation and service’. It is the latter that is of significant interest for us today. The world is not so much interested in what we believe today but in what the Church is doing to transform society and the world so that justice and peace may prevail.

S. Karunakar SJ

I B.Th.



THE CHURCH AS MISSIONARY-DISCIPLE

The Church – a missionary body, built on Peter, the rock, – first Vicar of Christ, has witness much political dominance, economic downfall, and faith crisis. Yet it is unwavering in faith and fulfilling the will of God in a most profound way. The Church is God’s family, united in triune God. The Church is the foundation of our faith and it is vitally important for growing in Christ. Like a branch that is connected to the tree, the Church needs to be connected primarily to Christ to grow. It also needs to be connected with one another and with the creation in order to bear good and abundant fruit. This virtue of belonging to the Church must sow the seed of love, care, sharing, humanity and unity in the hearts and minds of the people.



Obstacles to Missionary-discipleship: The main obstacles the Church faces in practicing missionary discipleship are modernization and religious fundamentalism. We are engaged in updating and upgrading ourselves rather than experiencing what is at hand. This modernization has snatched our humanness and en-

slaved us in the trap of greed, ego, individualism, and self-centeredness. The dimension of faith in God is vanishing slowly. With modern technology, God’s experience and faith experience are gradually being abandoned.

Religious fundamentalism has shaken the faith of the people and cut off the relationship between the priest and the people to some extent. The people are frightened to profess their faith openly. The fear of fundamentalism has restricted pastoral ministry.

Priest as a missionary disciple: Pope Francis in his encyclical coins the word missionary-disciple, which, every priest needs to imbibe and practice. In his interview Fr. Thomas D. Stegman, SJ elaborates the meaning of this term missionary-disciple. He says, “It’s a circularity, to say we are not at one point a missionary and another point a disciple. We have to be always the missionary-disciple, disciple-missionary—listening, learning, changing”.

In today’s context missionary-discipleship calls for a process of reconciliation with one another and with nature, this can lead us to live in harmony and peace. Today we all need to heal the wounded world with our loving care and embrace it with joy. Missionary discipleship calls for a pastoral care and servant lead-

ership keeping Christ as center. When the sheep goes astray, it's the duty of the shepherd to redirect, guide, and lead the sheep to the right path. Similarly, it's the obligation of the consecrated one to lead his people in the path of love, peace, and harmony.

Today the faith of the people is endangered due to lack of pastoral care, lack of accompaniment and lack of support in times of crisis by the priest. Thus, the faith of the people has become shallow, floating, and superficial. Also, there is danger of people giving importance to the priest rather than Christ, the life-giver. We have built churches of bricks rather than the Church of people of God. We call ourselves consecrated people, chosen by God to lead his Church in the path of love, justice, forgiveness, and compassion. However, the Church has become paralyzed with corruption and rocked by the complacency of some priest and laity who simply prefer not to think of the Church's now bared failures and sins. It is time to introspect and upgrade our inner selves, which is to serve and not to be served. We need to relate ourselves with the people in order to spread the love of God with the same zeal, which the apostles and the early Christians portrayed.

Repeatedly, Pope Francis reminds us of smelling the sheep and knowing them and accompanying them in the path of love, peace, and justice. Through his encyclicals, he has been encouraging to get in right relationship with oneself in *Evangelii Gaudium*, Love of Creation in *Laudato Si* and Love of the neighbor in *Fratelli Tutti*. It is also beneficial to revisit our Fr. Pedro Arrupe's word "enculturation". Pope Francis gives us an understanding of the word enculturation. To enculturate means to go into the life of the people, to start from scratch, re-creating all you have learned. Thus, the people of God need a priest, who, together with fulfilling his priestly duties, also acts as the minister of reconciliation with one another, with creation as well as calls for a pastoral care and servant leadership keeping Christ as center and enculturating with the people.

George Victor SJ

I B.Th.



ENCOURAGING CHURCH, THROUGH TRYING TIMES

The Early Church was experiencing a great deal of suffering and persecution during her time of inception. St. Peter himself was in great distress and pressure as he wrote his epistle. However, his heart was full of love and grace, he had received from Jesus. Hence in his epistles, Peter not only encourages Christians but also exhorts them to live joyously in the midst of suffering (cf. 1 Pet. 4:13).



We are living in times of fear and doubt. Charges of fake news make us skeptical about the truth across all topics such as cultures, politics, science and religions. The time of skepticism seems to lead toward an era of little faith to some faithful. In such a pessimistic environment like COVID-19 pandemic, the faithful are having the feeling of neurological and mental complications. This pandemic has seen increase in demands for mental health services. Bereavement, isolation, loss of income, job and fear are triggering mental health conditions or exacerbating existing ones. There are some people who may

be facing increased levels of alcohol and drug use, insomnia, and anxiety in such precarious situation.

The Church and other places of worship have been closed due to health concerns over this pandemic. A pandemic can be a test of God's existence for humans in a unique manner. We Christians believe the Church to be the body of Christ. But when we go to the periphery, the Church seems to be wounded and is in need of healing (wounded by doubts and fear). Those in the periphery are looking for courage, consolation and encouragement, especially the ones who are most affected during this pandemic.

Pope Francis on World Peace Day (December 17, 2020) addressed the gathering saying, "We have to shed the culture of indifference and adopt a culture of care." The need is to care for building a faith community.

The Church in India has hundreds of religious congregations and hundreds of dioceses with priests and religious both men and women. Some of these men and women have helped in the growth of Christian fold by baptizing people. However, baptizing and giving instructions on Sundays is not sufficient. Today many old and young Christians are found wavering in their faith. How does the Church handle such situation? It is not easy to tackle this issue as it is very sensitive. However, when you speak with individuals, you find that many long for personal touch. Many of them feel that they are not heard and nobody cares for them. They find lack of accompaniment in their faith journey from the Church authorities. The Church only expects them to follow rules and regulations. Many are seen leaving the Catholic faith and following some denominations or sect churches for spiritual comforts.

The Church is doing good deeds by feeding the hungry, promoting the dignity of the marginalized, healing the sick, empowering women, giving financial help to the needy in education. But somewhere the faith aspect is neglected. The Church needs to give the person of Jesus to the local churches. Today the Church needs to go after the lost sheep and not after the privileged and donors.

People need to be assured that God loves each one personally no matter who s/he is. Pope Francis says the Church is like “a field hospital” that must care for the sick, even when our actions incite envy and hatred in others. Rather than building church structures, the Church authorities must focus on building vibrant church community where all feel they belong to the body of Christ. Where they feel strengthened and encouraged in their faith during trying times.



Prerna Dhurwey
I B.Th.

“TO BE IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF THE WORLD”

My vision for the Church in India is to be IN the world, but not OF the world (cf. Jn 17:14-16). Jesus in his farewell discourse does not ask the Father to take his disciples out of the world, but that they may be protected from the Evil one. For we know from the Scriptures that the whole world is under the power of its ruler – Satan (cf. 1 Jn 5:19). It is because Christians do not belong to this transient world that St. Paul would remark that our real home is in heaven (cf. Phil 3:20). The best allegory to explain this idea is that of a lotus flower that grows in muddy water. Like the lotus flower, we need to trust the light (Jesus), and grow in the muddy water (world).

To be IN the world...: ‘To be IN the world’ means that we are not to resort to escapism, but to fulfil our duties as Christians by letting our light shine (cf. Mt 5:16), by being witnesses to the Gospels (cf. Mk 13:9), by being ambassadors for Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:20), and by being imitators of God (cf. Eph. 5:1). The Church in India, like a lotus, faces much muddy water in the form of communal violence and persecutions; fascist government policies attacking Indian sec-ularism and religious minorities; worldly pleasures and comforts; various scandals and corruptions and so on. In this challenging context, Christians are not to flee from them, but face them with the power of Christ that strengthens us (cf. Phil. 4:13).



But not OF the world...: ‘But not OF the world’ would mean that Christians are not to be conformed to the values of this world of whose ruler is the Satan. Today Christians are threatened by the following worldly values: seeking approval of society rather than God; pursuit of money as the ultimate source of happiness; materialism, consumerism and throw-away culture, loving things and liking persons instead of liking things and loving persons; compromising one’s moral standards for cheap personal gain, and so on.

It is high-time we remind ourselves that we are not our own, we are bought with a price (cf. 1 Cor 6:19), and we are adopted children of God through Christ (cf. Eph. 1:5). We, as God’s image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26-27), have the duty to reflect and represent God to the world. Let us, therefore, recommit our lives

afresh to 'Christ'-ian values: love of God and neighbour (cf. Mk 12:30-31), service (cf. Mk 9:35), respect (cf. 1 Peter 2: 17), peace (cf. Col 3:15), justice (cf. Isaiah 61:8-9), generosity (cf. Mt 5:42), and doing good (cf. Gal 6:9-10) to mention a few.

Jobin George SJ

I B.Th.

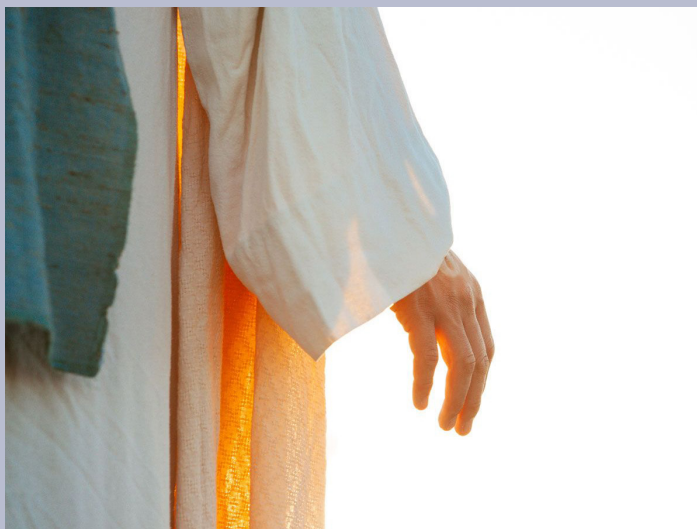


CALLED TO BE THE AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

It's with great excitement that we look forward to the year 2021 as it would certainly bring new opportunities to share God's love. As we come together in faith and determination, we know that God is going to do great things in our Church community and beyond. However, for the past three decades, a rapid decline in Catholic religious vocations has been underway in the Roman Catholic Church globally. There are many factors responsible for this decline in vocation.

Pope Francis dealt with the topic of vocations in the modern world during his meeting with the Congregation for Consecrated Life. He said, "We are facing a 'haemorrhage' that weakens consecrated life and the very life of the Church. The abandonment of consecrated life worries us. It is true that some leave as an act of coherence, because they recognize after serious discernment that they never had this vocation. However, others, with the passage of time, have less fidelity, very often many years after their perpetual vows."

The goal of vocation is simple. It is to 'Be an Exemplary Religious - an ambassador of Christ'. There is no need of making a big agenda or filling



pages with bombarding and empty vocabularies to promulgate vocations. Let us do small things in an extraordinary way for the betterment of the Church and the society at large.

It seems that there is lack of faithfulness or commitment in religious vocation. There is an incident that was shared by a bishop. There was a good boy with a university degree who worked in the parish came to the bishop and said, "I want to become a priest, but for ten years". The culture of part-time has become a norm with today's generation.

We live in a culture of fragmentation and temporary, that lead us to live as slaves to fashion. This culture feeds consumerism and forgets the beauty of simple and austere life, very often causing a great existential emptiness. We live in a new society in which economic rules have substituted moral ones, dictate the laws and impose systems of reference at the expense of the values of life. In the new society there is dictatorship of money and profit. They advocate a vision of existence where non-productives are discarded.

If consecrated life is to maintain its pro-phetic mission and its appeal, it must keep its freshness and the novelty of the centrality of Jesus. Religious must show the beauty of following Christ, and radiate hope and joy. Is there hope and joy in our religious life and community? If not, then we are not ambassadors of Christ's Kingdom.

Religious life needs to be nurtured through prayer in the community, prayerful reading of the Word, active participation in the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, fraternal dialogue and sincere communication between all members, fraternal correction, mercy towards the brother or sister who sins, and the sharing of responsibilities. All these must be accompanied by an eloquent and joyful witness of simple life and mission that sides with the existential peripheries. The renewal of fraternal life is essential for the result of vocational pastoral care, being able to say "Come and you will see" (John, 1:39).

The vocation is a treasure that we carry in vessels of clay (2 Cor. 4:7). Therefore, we must safeguard it. It is the responsibility of all who are called to follow Christ more closely with faith, hope and charity. We must keep our gaze fixed on the Lord, always being careful to journey according to the logic of the Gospel,

and not to give in to the criteria of worldliness. By doing so we are preparing ourselves to our calling of being ambassadors of Christ's Kingdom.

Rakesh Sharma SG
I B.Th.



My Experiences

Sharing

MY EXPERIENCE WITH VIDYAJYOTI STUDENTS

Experiences are always unique, at times they take to a new direction, some other times they lead to destruction. They enlighten me with new knowledge and focus. They empower my heart and mind to see the things in different ways.

The corona pandemic has made us miserable. But it was always an opportunity to look it from a creative view. All these things are challenging me. This year is the lesson for all of us and taught us how to live with new ideas, new thoughts and new style of life. As I was having my as usual regular classes, the sudden death of our Dean Fr. Jerome Sylvester IMS changed everything at once. As a result, I had to attend online classes with Vidyajyoti NTC students. It was a great opportunity for me to be with them in the first year itself. It was an occasion to make new friends online from different parts of the country and listen to different professors. I am grateful to the professors for sharing their creatives ideas with examples. It is really a great service; the professors are imparting their knowledge to us. My student friends of Vidyajyoti are also active in the classes asking questions and clarifications. I feel enthusiastic in the class. All are good enough in language. The way of sharing, explaining and asking questions makes me stronger and challenging. It strengthens me to focus on the subjects. With the different exposure I am able to grow better realizing my weakness. By attending classes with them I am encouraged and motivated to work hard and grow more deeply in Jesus's life and his mission. This contextual theological studies or spiritual journey may be a blessing to me and to my companions.

Akhilesh Lucas IMS
I B.Th.



MY EXPERIENCE

On 19th December 2020 evening, I landed at Varanasi bus stop. As I was waiting for the bus, a young boy poorly dressed, came to me and started asking something to eat. At first sight I ignored him but he continued asking me. After some time, I ordered for him a cup of tea and a packet of biscuit. I thought he would sit there and drink but next moment what I saw was something great. It was a heart touching moment for me. He was surrounded by a group of young boys. All of them sat in a circle and shared the cup of tea and biscuit together. My mind was fully captured by this very incident. A list of answerless questions was disturbing me. I was wonderstruck why it was so? Having completed some first year theological courses at Vidyajyoti, I could say with full confidence that 'this institution provides the students with pastoral theology (contextual theology). This is the reason, after experiencing such incident knowingly or unknowingly I passed through the pastoral theology cycle. This cycle experience has changed my views towards poor and marginalized. Really, I am grateful to Vidyajyoti for its selfless service to the Church.

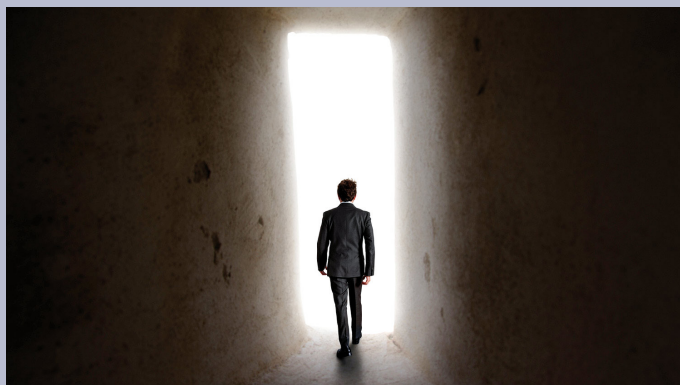
Roshan Toppo JSR
I B.Th.





THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE CONTEXT-BASED CLASSES

God has a plan and purpose for each and everything of his creation. In Jer. 29:11 the Lord says, “I know the plans I have for you, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.” With the arrival of covid-19 pandemic, all the plans and schedules of ours and others completely shattered. People simply did not know what to do and how to move ahead in life? God says, I have a plan for you... so his plan was manifested and executed through people differently and in varieties of ways. In Is. 55: 8, the Lord says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways.” God works in our life in his own ways. During this pandemic, whole world shut down, people were inside their houses; the whole order of life was disturbed and destroyed. Even in this situation, to continue the academic life and schedule, God had helped people to develop modern technologies through which we could engage ourselves in classes and other online works.



The online classes of this semester were contextual based, which could be seen as different contexts. All the students on their own places and communities tried to make it more reflective and personal, based on their own real context wherever they were situated. First of all, it was in the bigger context that is in the context of covid-19, we started our online classes. In this perspective we tried to engage through the perspective of faith - God’s plan, his creative, redemptive and sanctifying act in our history today. We tried to understand, accept, realize and transform ourselves more according to God’s plan in our situation. We tried to look at through the lens of God the whole world suffering and many people of good will coming forward to heal the world, to comfort people, to minimize the suffering of others.

Another aspect of context-based classes is our apostolate and ministry. In various levels and capacities and on our own places and context, our effort remained to reach out to people, and find God in their midst, in serving, accompanying, visiting and listen to people, though it was not as accessible and open as that of normal situation.

The final and most important context-based class was the individual transformation and personalized aspect of the class. Through online classes the professors tried to give and teach their best possible to us – God in Jesus Christ, Church and Sacraments through different courses. It led us into deeper understanding of God manifesting himself in Jesus Christ which is clearly seen in the Church and the Sacraments. We also journeyed deeply into eschatological and universal saving aspect of Jesus and the mission he took up - was option for the poor and the op-pressed. This act of Jesus led him to his suffering and death and finally resurrection. Jesus’ life and mis-sion gave us deeper understanding of communion with the Father and the Spirit. The central theme of the Triune God – unity in love pushes us forward to be the agent of reconciliation and unity among human and whole creation. Therefore, this understanding of God in Jesus as human and divine installs in us forces, power, and insights to go through personal conversion and transformation by change of horizon, perception, attitudes, actions and behaviour.

Nirmal Kullu SJ

II B.Th.



PONDERING ON AHIMSA

On 25 January, 2021 I saw morning sun so red in colour. My thought went on when I was sitting on a

wooden bench in front of the St. Xavier School, Maibang. I felt the blood drops on the ground when sun rays fell on the dew-covered grasses. 25 January is a black day in the history of Assam. Dima Haso, an autonomous district in Assam, gives tribute to their two beloved sons, Mithunjoy Dibragade and Probonto Hakmaosa, who laid down their lives for the rights of their homeland. Three years ago, on January 26, 2018, several organizations called a 12-hours bandh in Dima Haso in protest against creation of 'Greater Nagalim' by curving out parts of their land. The protesters stopped the passenger train at Maibang railway station. Two lives were taken and more than three people were injured in police firing. To develop 'a sense of brotherhood' and to 'build trust and faith' among the Dimasa society, a sort of Bandh or Black Day is observed.

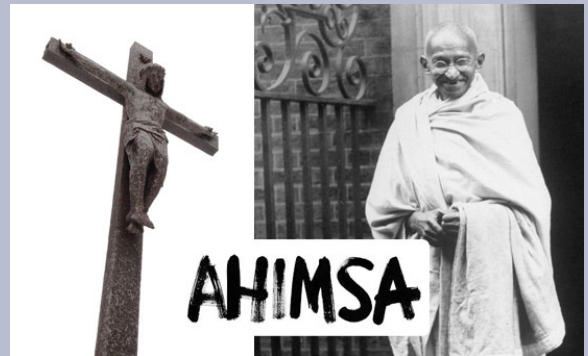
It is not the only incident in India. Many are fighting for their rights and giving their blood for just societies. The whole of India is shaken by CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) protest and 2020-2021 Indian farmer's protest. One side there are civil obedience, demonstration, dharna, hunger strikes, satyagraha, hartal, general strike, bandh etc. and the other side mass shooting by police, riot police, stone pelting, vandalism, lathi charge, mass arrest, internet shut down, curfew etc. Where are we moving? The removal of evil from society is the responsibility of every

Christian. To fight against evil and heal the society Gandhi introduced a revolutionary weapon; truth in action, satyagraha. The basic principle of satyagraha is: evil is overcome by good, untruth by truth. The realization of God is truth. The power of truth and goodness is greater than that of evil and untruth.

Jesus came to the world to bring the rule and Kingdom of God. Jesus saw the breaking of Kingdom as a terrible and violent event as we witness at present. He saw that he himself had to die the most violent death. But he did not want his own person to be defended with the sword. Jesus' concern was not to preserve his own life. But he came to give life, life in all its fullness (Jn 10:10). Violence is an illegitimate use of force. Those who committed to a new humanity and a new society must face challenges. The bloody martyrdom which ushered the Church into the history is necessary for the future, the future of God's reign of justice, love and peace. What is absolutely indispensable is the spirit of non-violence which is compassionate love. If Christian experience of Jesus is to be relevant, it has to be applied to concrete situations. The challenge faced by the Church today is participation in the struggles of the people for a healthy normal existence and leadership in a troubled world.

Biji Thomas SJ

III B.Th.



A BRIEF MEDITATION ON PILGRIMAGING THEOLOGICALLY IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-2021

The days are far spent; the year 2020-2021 of our academic session has given farewell to us. We inaugurated the academy with the theme "Pil-grimaging Theologically in Corona Times" responding to the context of the time (Covid-19), and now ending the current academic session 2020-2021 in an unprecedented, historical farmer's protest, while Covid-19 cases are still proliferating and gained invincibility in many of our states.

As we were on our theological Yatra on virtual platforms, our memories were embedded with cries of the suffering humanity outside of our secured religious compounds, daunting the minds and palpitating our hearts with fright, seeing the nature expressly avenging on us outrageously with the indomitable virus, natural calamities, ruling dispensations' imposition of draconian laws on farmers, false allegations and imprisonments of social activists. (Besides these, we also personally underwent the uprooting experience of unexpected demise of our dean Fr. Jerome IMS.) They all served as the Locus Theologicus in the academic year 2020-2021.

As the existential philosopher Gabriel Marcel says "To be human is to be homo viator" a lifelong wayfar-

er, a pilgrim with other pilgrims. Our life is all about Journey/Yatra, we are pilgrims on earth. I have seen in my childhood, many devotees of Mother Mary both men and women of my parish practising austerity for certain days and make pilgrimage to Valankani on foot covering almost 525 KMs in 25 days, with Naamjap “Mariye Valga- Ave Maria”. Those days will be the days of reconciliation and renewal, and everyone offering special prayers and cheering the pilgrims saying “Mary walks with you”. The point I wish to communicate is that in their Journey they walked with God and experienced him intimately, many even received apparitions. This journey enabled many to live a new life committing themselves in the upliftment of the community.

The Bible is all about this pilgrimage. In the beginning Adam and Eve walked with God, but when they ate “the fruit of the tree that (was) is in the middle of the garden” (Gen. 3:3), they began the journey away



from God. Therefore, God begins his journey to bring them back to Godself by offering Godself as the eternal food in his own Son. The passages on the multiplication of bread tell us that “whoever ate, were satisfied” and “followed Jesus” who is “the Way.”

Abraham encountered God in Haran and made a new journey to the unknown land to become the father of faith to all the nations. Moses experienced God in the burning bush and began the pilgrimage to liberate the

Israelites. Israelites experienced God in pillars and clouds on their journey to the promised land. In the favoured time, God pitches his Shekinah among the mortals, joining in our pilgrimage as a co-pilgrim. Our pilgrimage unfolds the mystery of incarnation, “God walking with us.”

In our theological pilgrimage too, we do not walk alone. When we embrace the reality outside, we recognize God, the co-pilgrim in our Yatra walking with us. This reminds me of a beautiful definition of theology “sitting before the Lord while looking at the reality” to search for the presence or the absence of God in our socio-cultural and economic, and political life.

This sitting and looking will enable us to deepen our pilgrimage and make it dynamic to cross across the boundaries to journey with the people themselves/reality who are the naked Jesus, the homeless Jesus, the prisoned Jesus, and sick and dying Jesus, walking with us as co-pilgrim in our theological journey. “He who said, “This is my body” also said: “you saw me hungry and gave me no food, you saw me naked gave no cloth...whatever you did not do to the least one of these you have not done to me” (Mt. 25:42-45). This propels me to speak of the significance of food in our Journey. The government is attempting to give away the agricultural sector (the source of food) to the corporates. It may empty the bowls and bellies of the poor farmers. For us very important-ly without agriculture (bread and wine), there is no Eucharist (the presence of God). Therefore, if there is no food (Rice, and Eucharist) no nourishment, and if no nourishment no journey.

Finally, Jesus himself is the pilgrim. He was a life-long pilgrim/ Tirthayatri. He journeyed from place to place revealing the Father and transforming the persons, the world and the social-structures. Therefore, our pilgrimage charged with the experience of God in everything and everything in God, we will have to challenge “every rigid, ready-made, sacralised structure” that keeps the humanity in chains of oppression and moving away from one-self to others in loving service.

Therefore, this pilgrimage has no end. It is an on-going journey of creating everything new. This journey “embraces God, Jesus, ourselves, and the cosmos. It is a mutual indwelling...a continuing creation, (Where) God is active, Jesus does God’s work. And in Jesus, we too do the works of God, sharing, serving, self-giving, forgiving, and love.” This pilgrimage “transforms the secular into the sacred, divinizing the universe- the whole reality.” In other words, encountering God and transforming the World, by be-

coming vaccine to the infected, being imprisoned for the enslaved by the oppressive structures, standing with the voiceless farmers on the borders of Delhi, as the “prophetic mystics with the open eyes” pilgrimaging as the people of the Way/ Pilgrimage. Our Pilgrimage continues. For God walks with us.

Aswin Dony D, AGR
II B.Th.



DISHA RAVI: A MESSENGER OF JUSTICE

“The power of truth gives us the ability to tolerate”. Absolute power corrupts everyone when he/she is not aware. The given authority and power are given to people to rule over people in justice and peace. It can be taken away from them. The present situation in India is somewhat ruled by dominating power which is suppressing the people who are powerless. The current issues raise various fundamental questions for us as theologians; are we really free? Who gave them power to rule over us? Do our hearts get disturbed when we see and hear about injustice in and around the society and the world? How far do we channelized our feelings to fight against the evil systems that exist in the society? We see some of the pioneers who fight against the corrupt systems in India today. Fr. Stan, the farmers, and Disha Ravi are some of the whistle blowers who fight against the powerful systems. They fight fearlessly because they are free from within and that makes them to act against the injustice in the society and support the weak and the marginalised in the society.

Disha Ravi is a value-oriented youth against the oppressions of those in power. We, humans have been given the fundamental vocation to be the stewards of the creation. When we try to fulfil that fundamental call of ours, we face a system which is filled with greed. The whole world knows the fact that Disha Ravi has been arrested since she was faithful to her fundamental vocation. She came in conflict with the values of the world. She became voice of the voiceless; the farmers who have been trying to reach out to the deaf ears of the government. Disha Ravi is the harbinger of justice. The Preambles of the Indian Constitution state the various aspects of Justice, Equality and Fraternity. Fundamental Rights and Duties vividly express various other aspects. The questions arise here are; Is the government greater than its Constitution? Is the government greater than its own citizens?



D a s h i Ravi represents the youth of this day who are conscious about the happenings of day-to-day life. The present-day youth are ‘Discerned youth’, who are aware of their fundamental vocation. The youngsters like Disha Ravi are going to be source of change, they are going to bring down the desecrated governing body and justice system. The judiciary which boosted the highest grade of credibility has turned out to be malicious and puppets in the hands of the greedy leaders and ultimately the corporate sector of the country.



t r y . Disha Ravi and youth of the India are going to stir and churn the conscious of the blindfolded citizens of this country; behold the harbingers of justice are here.

It’s a clarion call for each one of us to be the harbingers of justice. Thank you, Disha for awakening our consciousness. It is a high time that we leave our comfort zones and stand up against the worldly principles. Stand for the justice and stand with the farmers. It’s time to be faithful to our fundamental vocation and be the voice of the voiceless. God works in a mysterious way showing signs to fight against injustice and to stand for the truth. How far am I ready to face the challenge?

Savariappan Manickam SJ
I B.Th.





विद्याज्योति गान

विद्याज्योतिर्जननी स्नेहमयी तुमि माता
निष्कलंकामल रक्षिता तुमि माता
विद्याज्योति की संरक्षिका करुणामयी माता

1. हिम को ज्योतिर्मय कर विद्या पताका लहराई
फिर भी तुझे हिम न भाया आके जनों में समाई
लोगों की पुकार सुन हिम शील छोड़ तू भू पर आई
पर्वत से देखा तूने दुःख गण का न भाया
2. हर पल जीवन के आधार भवन को न भूल
देश की करनी तू सेवा फूल हो या शूल
हिन्दु बौद्ध सिख जैन मुसलमान ख्रिस्तान
जीवन के सिद्धांत नित भाई पर बलिदान
3. दिन हिनों का पाठ पढ़ा हमें मार्ग दिखाई
सेवा करना हमें उनकी यह एहसास दिलाई
हर जन का तु भान्तमनुभाति बन आई
अंधकारमय जीवन को तूने उजियारा बनाई।

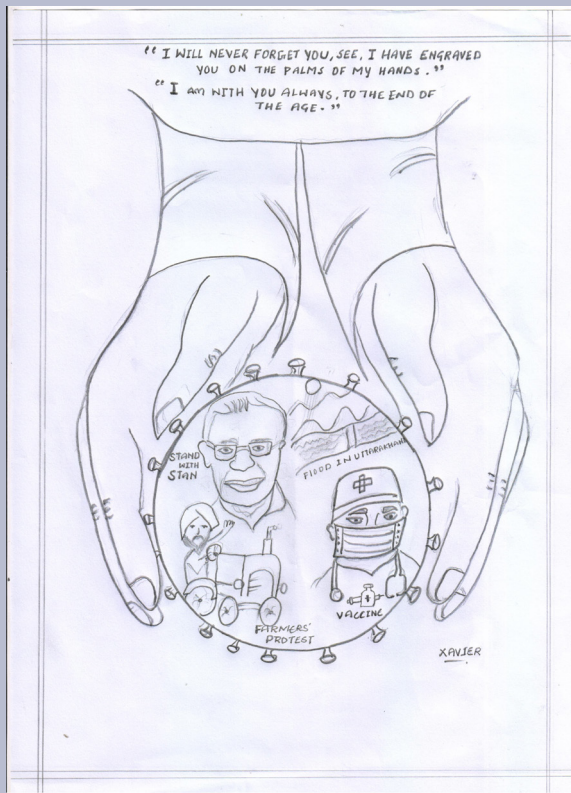
Rajeev Ranjan
III B.Th.



The Holy Maintain

O Holy Mountain of Horeb,
The Dwelling place of the Lord,
Where Lord Appeared to Moses,
In the Burring Bush
O Holy Mountain of Sinai,
Where Lord Appeared
and gave Ten Commandments to Moses
O Holy Mountain of Mount Carmel,
Where Elijah Challenged
The Priests of Bale
O Holy Mountain of Olives,
Where Jesus Prayed Before
His Passion, Death and Resurrection
O Holy Mountain of Calvary,
Where Jesus suffered and
Redeemed Whole Humanity

Rakesh Kumar IMS
I B.Th.



Xavier Lawrence, MRT
II B.Th.





New Professor

Introducing New Face

FR. VINAY KUMAR EKKA SJ

Fr. Vinay Kumar Ekka SJ is a Jesuit belonging to Madhya Pradesh Province. He was born on 23 July, 1981 in Ambakona, Jashpur diocese, Chhattisgarh. He entered the Society of Jesus on 20 June, 2001 and was ordained as a priest on 29 December, 2016. He completed his Bachelor of Theology from Vidyajyoti College of Theology, Delhi and licentiate in Canon law from Gregorian University, Rome. He is interested in reading, writing, Canon law, Church teachings, eco-socio-cultural and political affairs, and working for those who are in the periphery. He visions an inclusive world where everyone enjoys true human dignity, freedom and responsibility. We adopt novelty according to the need of time without losing the essence of the old. Recently he joined the Vidyajyoti community as a Canon Law professor. VJ Today welcomes him and wishes him a pleasant journey in Vidyajyoti as he takes up the new mission in the Society of Jesus and the Church at large.



Staff Publication

Theological Publications



SHALINI MULACKAL PBVM

Articles Published

1. "Inter-ritual, Ecumenical and Inter-faith Living of Catholicism: An Indian Feminist Perspective," in Jane E. Linahan and Cyril Orji (eds), "All the Ends of the Earth" Challenge and Celebration of Global Catholicism, College Theology Society, Annual Volume 65/ 2019 (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2020), 75-94.
2. "Rebirthing Church on the Model of the Early Christian Community," in Francis Gonsalves & Vinod Victor (eds), Corona of Thorns? Or Corona of Life? Changing Church in the Covid Context (Delhi: ISPCK, 2020), 72-76.
3. "Stay home, Stay Safe! Slogan of Covid 19...Are Women and Children really Safe?" in Religion and Society, Vol. 65 No.3 (July 2020): 23-27.



POULOSE MANGAI SJ

* Edited 11 issues of Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection (VJTR)

Editorials in VJTR

1. "Dear Amazon," VJTR, Vol. 84, No. 3 (Mar 2020), 161-162.
2. "Please I Can't Breathe!" VJTR, Vol. 84, No. 7 (Jul 2020), 481-484.
3. "Hiroshima & Nagasaki – 75th Anniversary," VJTR, Vol. 84, No. 8 (Aug 2020), 561-563.
4. "Prashant Bhushan & Contempt of Court," VJTR, Vol. 84, No. 9 (Sep 2020), 641-643.

5. "Stand for Stan", VJTR, Vol. 84, No. 11 (Nov 2020), 801-804.
6. "Christmas 2020, New Year 2021," VJTR, Vol. 84, No. 12 (Dec 2020), 881-883.
7. "Listen to the Voice of the Farmers Who Feed the Nation!" VJTR, Vol. 85, No. 1 (Jan 2021), 3-

Theological Articles

1. "To Be a Relevant and Responsive Church: The Indian Church in Need of Liberation from Clericalism," Jnanadeepa. Pune Journal of Religious Studies, 24/1 (Jan-Jun 2020), 8-26.
Republished in SEDOS Bulletin, Vol. 52, nn. 7/8 (Jul-Aug 2020), pp. 2-9.
2. "Religio-Politics of Hindutva and the Subalterns: Spiritual Perspectives for a Proper Response," in Naji Jose Kalambukattu CMI & Benny Thettayil CMI, eds., The Stunned Populace. Religio-Political Maeuvres in India. A Theological Response. Bangalore: Dharmaram, 2020, 181-210.
3. "Fratelli Tutti: Calling the World to a New Humanity," VJTR, Vol. 84, No. 11 (Nov 2020), 805-841.
4. "Go to Joseph," VJTR, Vol. 85, No. 1 (Jan 2021), 75-79.



RAJAKUMAR JOSEPH SJ

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It is not enough to say we are Christians. We must live the faith, not only with our words, but with our actions.

— Pope Francis —

VIDYAJYOTI TODAY

Special Supplement on Priesthood



VJ Today brings out a Special Supplement on Priesthood through the interviews of priests, religious and the laity. These interviews were taken orally by the 3rd year B.Th. students on the course on priesthood. These are the personal opinions of the interviewees.

"You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 7: 17).



CANONICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE SACRED ORDER

Some years ago, in 2013, when I first came to Vidyajyoti as a student of B.Th., each morning in the Holy Eucharist, we prayed for the fresh deacons – students of final year B.Th. – for the success of their comprehensive exam. However, some questions constantly made me ponder over the Sacrament of Order – «What is the basic difference between the diaconate and priestly ordination? ». At that time, I found no big difference between the diaconate and priestly ordination, except the fact that the diaconate ordination did not confer the power for celebrating the Holy Eucharist and administering some specific sacraments to the recipient.

According to the provisions of canon law, through the reception of the sacrament of baptism, the Christian faithful are incorporated into Christ, and they participate in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ (cf. can. 204). Hence, they share genuine equality of dignity and action which is common to all the baptized faithful (cf. can. 208). However, the Code of canon law distinguishes two states or canonical conditions of life among the Christian faithful, namely – the clerical and the lay state (cf. can. 207 §1). The Code of canon law uses the term «sacred ministers» to designate the faithful who are in the clerical state called Sacred Order.

In canons 1008 and 1009, the essential distinction is made between the «common priesthood» and that of the «ministerial priesthood». There exists a «simultaneous equality» among all the faithful as far as they share the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ, at the same time, there also exists a functional «inequality» insofar as «ministerial priesthood» is exclusively reserved to the clerics (cf. LG 10b). Moreover, a fundamental difference is highlighted among «episcopate», «presbyterate» and «diaconate» ordinations.

Canon 1008 stipulates that in the Sacrament of Order, the Christian faithful are marked with an «indelible» or «ontological» character which is effected by divine institution. The same canon further affirms that the «indelible character» is effected on the deacons as well through the diaconate ordination (cf. *Communicatio* 10 [1978] 181). However, a fundamental question remains: «Do deacons participate in the “priestly ministry” of the hierarchy of the Church, or are they only “sacred ministers” at the level of the common priesthood of the other faithful? ». Traditionally, there have been differences of opinions in this regard from the first millennium onwards. The discourse revolves around the function «agere in persona Christi Capitis», i.e., «to act in the person of Christ the Head». The earlier version of canon 1008 of CIC/1983 seemed to attribute to deacons as well as to bishops and priests the function «agere in persona Christi Capitis».

To correctly interpret the applicability of «agere in persona Christi Capitis», Pope John Paul II, on October 9, 1998, approved the modification of n. 875 of Catechism of the Catholic Church, and eventually, it to be adopted in the Code of canon law as well. Following the aforementioned approval, Pope Benedict XVI, through his *motu proprio* *Omnium in mentem*, on October 26, 2009, modified the canons 1008 and 1009 of CIC/1983. Therefore, the last part of canon 1008 was revised by eliminating the *tria munera*, i.e., *munus sanctificandi*, *munus docendi*, *munus regendi*, which was previously given as: «[...] they fulfill, in the person of Christ the Head, the office of teaching, sanctifying and governing so that to nourish the People of God». After the revision, the new version of canon 1008 read more generically as: «By divine institution, the sacrament of orders establishes some among the Christian faithful as sacred ministers through an indelible character which marks them. They are consecrated and designated, each according to his grade, so that they may serve the People of God by a new and specific title». Furthermore, canon 1008 makes three essential distinctions – the cause, i.e., the sacrament of Order, the purpose, i.e., the service of the People of God, and the effect, i.e., the difference between sacred

ministers and other faithful. As regards the first two distinctions, deacons, priests, and bishops share the same cause of sacrament of Order and the purpose of service of the People of God. However, concerning effects, they are distinguished with different functions. Bishops and priests receive the «mission» and «faculty» to act in persona Christi Capitis, whereas deacons receive the «strength» to serve the People of God in the Diaconia of liturgy, Word, and charity always in communion with the bishop and his presbyterate. In conclusion, the following distinctions are made in the Sacrament of Order:

1. There are three grades of munus ministerii apostolici, i.e., «office of apostolic ministry» – the first, episcopate, the second presbyterate, and the third diaconate.
2. Only the grades of «episcopate» and «presbyterate» constitute the «sacerdotal clerical ministry» in a true and comprehensive sense comprising of all functions of «apostolic succession».
3. «Diaconate» constitutes a clerical ministry, which can be said «sacerdotal», but only about limited participation of the munus ministerii apostolici. Diaconate does not enter into the «apostolic succession», consequently a deacon is not constituted a «pastor».
4. Presbyteral ordination establishes a «substantial difference» concerning the diaconate. While, the «Episcopal consecration» does not touch upon the «substance» of the participation in the ministerial priesthood, but only the «fullness of ministerial priesthood». In other words, «episcopate» constitutes the fullness of «apostolic succession», and not the substance.

Regardless of fundamental distinctions in the Sacrament of Order, «sacred ministers» in all the three grades are marked with an «indelible character» from the fact that once validly received, an ordination cannot be invalidated (cf. can. 290). There are three essential characters of Sacred Order intrinsically linked to the sacramental nature of ecclesial ministry – the character of service, the collegial character, and the personal character – to give and do by Gods' grace what they cannot do or give by their own power (cf. CCC 875-878).



Interview 1

Fr. Korkoniyas Moses SJ

An interview with Fr. Korkoniyas Moses SJ. He is a Calcutta Jesuit. He was the novice master in Dhyan Ashram. He has been running an Ashrams in Noorpur, West Bengal and in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu.

1. How do you see as a Jesuit Priest and Ashram experience of training and teaching the values of Ashram lifestyle to people of various faiths and no faith? What is its relevance today in the given context of pandemic Covid19?

Ashram ministry is to assist seekers to realize themselves in God, as divine. This is done through the practice of awareness, breath work, and meditation, yoga, developing eco-sensitivity, openness to all religions and cultures, readings and reflecting on various scriptures. Thus, as a priest I become a bridge between God and the people. It is needed for all times.

2. Were you able to impart the teachings of Christ and His kingdom values to the people who came to your ashram? As a Jesuit Priest, where do you draw your energy and strength to continue this ashram healing ministry?

In the ashram I present Jesus as the Guru, therefore all his teaching is followed up in the ashram. I try to keep my mind in the present all the time, this and the constant reciting of the name of Jesus cuts off the negative thoughts in the mind so that there is no loss of energy; over and above this, regular meditation three or four times a day fills the mind with lots of energy. Karma yoga or the selfless service of accompanying the seekers in their spiritual journey also rejuvenates me.

3. In and through your ashram way of life, were you able to bring holistic healing to the persons who came to you? Do you consider the ashram way of life/ healing ministry could enhance and enrich the quality of human life as Jesus wanted it for his people here on earth?

All social problems have their root in one's ignorance of one's real identity as divine - thinking of oneself as body-mind rather than as a spiritual being. Greed, jealousy, fear, anger and all such negative feelings spring from this body-consciousness, which urges one to do acts of violence, grabbing, oppression, domination, and pleasure-seeking, causing endless suffering for oneself and for others. The greatest help one can give to create a happy society in today's world is to help people to turn inward, in order to recognize their true nature as divine and that actually, they lack nothing but have everything they need to be happy. This brings about holistic healing. Through my Ashram ministry I am able to transform the life of people giving them a new orientation to life devoid of all greed. I also treat alcoholics and drug addicts and the tribal people from the hills.

4. How do you see the future of this apostolate? Do you recommend to your younger brothers, who are aspiring to be priests, in the order of Melchizedek?

These days, we see people all over the world showing interest in yoga-meditation and in the promotion of global inter-religious harmony; they are flocking to Gurus, Yogis, Buddhists and Sufis to quench their spiritual thirst. We are familiar with the prophetic statement of Karl Rahner, "the Christian of the 21st century will be a mystic otherwise no Christian at all". A strong wind of mysticism is blowing across the globe today urging us to take to mysticism.

Hopefully it would draw many young people, Religious and the Christians at large to make use of the ashrams for growth in their own spiritual journey and to lead people in the path of contemplation. Om Shanti.



Interview 2

Mrs. Gloria Rodriguez

Mrs. Gloria Rodriguez is a retired English teacher from a Jesuit School, Haldia, West Bengal.

1. What comes to your mind when you think of Catholic Priesthood?

To me every true vocation is born of the gift of oneself, which is the fruit of mature sacrifice. The priesthood & consecrated life likewise require this kind of maturity. A good priest should always be caring & a guide & support in times of trouble.

2. What are your expectations of a Catholic Priest? How do you see Priesthood from the perspective of Jesus, our High Priest, whom catholic Priests promise to follow in word and deed? Do you see any discrepancy in the priesthood of Jesus and Catholic Priests?

To my expectation, a priest should live like a priest, following in the footsteps of Christ. Jesus was humble, simple, and full of love for the poor & forgave sinners. A priest is expected to do the same.

3. What is the relevance of Priesthood today in the given context of pandemic Covid-19? What are the challenges and hurdles you are facing due to the pandemic w.r.t. your spiritual nourishments, sacraments, etc.? In this given above context, do you feel women religious being priests could have been of some help? What is your stand on this view of women religious becoming priests?

Priests are unable to serve the people due to the pandemic. I personally have had no problems regarding spiritual nourishment. In fact, the pandemic has brought families together, to unite in pray & work.

Hearing Mass online every day is a blessing. We are united in praying for one another & for people in need.

I don't think there's a need for women priests. Women can be of help to priests in many other ways.

4. As Priests, where do they draw their energy and strength from to continue the redemptive work of saving souls? Often you see them more attached to worldly and material things and persons; craving for power, name and fame, how do you see and feel? Are you inspired by their priestly life? Feel free to make comments and observations.

To me all priests draw their energy & strength through prayer & in the complete fulfilment of doing God's will. By offering daily Mass, visiting the sick, helping the needy & by being available to the people to perform various Sacraments like Baptism, Matrimony etc.

5. Do you consider priests hard work, for the people of God, enhancing and enriching the quality of people's human, social and spiritual life, equality, fraternity and justice (Kingdom Values), as Jesus wanted it for his beloved children? How do you see the future of priesthood in the Catholic Church? Do you recommend/encourage your brothers, friends and relatives who are aspiring to be Priests in the order of Melchizedek?

Yes. I do agree. Our world today needs priests. The world has no use for tyrants who would domineer others as a means of compensating for their own needs. It rejects those who confuse authority with authoritarianism, service with servility, discussion with oppression, charity with a welfare mentality power with destruction. No one needs such priests. So, priests do work hard to prove themselves so that they are accepted by everyone.

I personally feel it takes a lot of hard-work to be a good priest. Priests need our prayers & full support to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

A. Suresh SJ

III B.Th.



Interview 3

Fr. Francis P. Xavier SJ

Fr Francis P. Xavier SJ belongs to Chennai Jesuit Province and is the Rector of Loyola College Chennai.

1. Could you say a few words about your understanding of priesthood?

My understanding of priesthood is journeying with the people in mission. As St Paul says, "Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the Church," (Col 1:24). Priesthood is the mission of carrying on the redemptive mission of Jesus. As Jesus said, "The sick need the doctor most," (Lk 5:31) the Jesuit Order's preferential option for the poor and the marginalized reflects the vision of Jesus - serving the needy at the fringes. St Ignatius also said, "My salvation is the salvation of people I serve." Hence, a priest is a joyful giver. Furthermore, it is a call to learn from the people in order to teach them better as our forefathers Robert de Nobili and Bes-chi did. They involved themselves in the inculturation in view of learning to serve the people better.

2. How do you perceive your priestly life now when you look back from the time of your ordination?

The Emmaus disciples recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread. Early Church grew around the table of the Lord. Breaking of the bread is transformed as service to the broken humanity. I think of my priestly

life as Breaking of the Word of God, Becoming the Word of God and Breaking Myself in Mission. I have spent most of the life in higher education wherein I have realized that reading, writing, teaching and preaching are my ministries. I have incorporated the how of the science and the why of religion and devoted myself to explore the complementarity of science and religion. Furthermore, in administration as a provincial of the Jesuit Madurai Province, founder and director of Loyola Engineering College (LI-CET) and now as the Rector of Loyola Campus, I could march with the marginalized. Instead of being a manager who gets work done, I tried to be a leader to inspire people and to walk with the people.

3. What is the uppermost feeling that you have when you look at your priesthood?

‘You are a man for others’, especially, as Jon Sobrino would say, “For the crucified people.” My vocation is to understand people and to alleviate their suffering and to fulfil the expectations described by Jesus (Lk 7:22) such as the blind to see, the lame to walk and the deaf to hear. In summary: good news of liberty and dignity to the poor and the marginalized, not only physically, but also metaphorically and socially.

My predominant feeling is that education is the key to empowerment of the poor. As an educationist, this key should be constantly made effective, relevant, and meaningful. The education that Jesus mentions (Mt 13:33), which Paul reflects (Gal 5:9 and 1 Cor 5:6) is the yeast that transforms the entire universe for the better.

4. In the contemporary world, we observe that many priests are accused of scandals and priesthood is often viewed as a profession. According to you, what are the challenges that priests face today and how can we overcome them in order to be ‘holy priests’?

As Jesus told the young man (Mk 10:18), no one is good, except God alone. He also said (Mt 5:48), be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect.

What I understand is: we are not finished products; we are still in formation- the life-long formation. God is the ideal to become and we are the real in the making. All we try to do is to narrow the gap between the ideal and the real. This is a life-long process.

Scandals caused by priests and religious show that we are human beings. These problems are to be dealt with sympathy and understanding. Accusing is easier but as Jesus said (Jn 8:7), ‘let him who is without sin cast the first stone of accusation’. Of course, there is need for correction, sanctions, reformation, etc. Priesthood is a vocation and not a profession. Some might have the wrong notion but it cannot be generalized. People-oriented life is needed. Self-centred life is what makes one’s vocation as profession.

In short, if a priest feels that he is a 24x7 priest, then his priesthood is vocation. On the contrary, if he thinks that he works between 9 am and 5 pm, then it is a profession.

5. Being a priest in a country like India is definitely going to be extremely challenging in the near future. How do we need to form priests for the future?

First, we need to be convinced of our vocation and our obligation to the people we were called to serve. People’s movement would help them think for themselves. We journey with them towards their upliftment. Today priests need to become familiar, along with pastoral and theological matters, with social, political, cultural scenarios. We need to create a beautiful rainbow of unity and harmony out of different shades of social, political and religious colours in a country like India. We may have all possible colours, but it is the Lord who could mix them with marvellous harmony. A priest is called from his people but his vocation is universal. We have to live this out. The attitude that priests need is that ‘no one knows everything but everyone knows something. Priest is ever ready to learn to do better and more (magis).



Interview 4

Mr. Antony

Mr. Antony, Professor in the Department of English Literature, Loyola College, Chennai.

1. Could you say a few words about your understanding of priesthood?

For me when I think of priesthood, I have the feeling of admiration and great reverence. Priests are always great. From childhood onwards, I was taught by my grandfather and parents that priests represent Jesus. So, whenever I meet any priests, I am filled with reverence and admiration. The priest whom I met first in my life was my parish priest Fr John Antony. He was a superb person with a godly look.

2. In the contemporary world, we observe that many priests are accused of scandals and priesthood is often viewed as a profession. According to you, what are the challenges that priests face today and how can we overcome them in order to be 'holy priests'?

From childhood on I felt that priests are people who belong to some other world. They have left everything. They have the graces not to have worldly feelings. As I grew with priests, through their friendly sharing, I gradually realized that priests are human beings. They have the same feelings as I have. Priests need to spend hours in prayers in front of the Blessed Sacrament. They need to get rooted in their vocation. Only spiritual depth is the way for formation of priests.

3. Being a priest in a country like India is definitely going to be extremely challenging in the near future. How do we need to form priests for the future?

Yes. I fully agree with you. It is not going to be easy. Many problems are arising. What I find in today's priests is that many priests are carried away by the worldly temptations. Priests need to equip themselves with vast knowledge in various fields like politics and economics. Priests need to constantly visit people and talk to them. Some priests are struck within campuses. Besides prayer life, they need to develop socio-pastoral ministries in creative ways. This is the only way to face many challenges.



Interview 5

Fr Jerry Rosario SJ

1. Could you say a few words about your understanding of priesthood?

My understanding of priesthood prefers to employ the challenging concept of 'PRIESTLINESS'. The PRIESTHOOD, in my opinion, is only a sacramental RITUAL received and celebrated on the day of one's ordination. Whereas, the priestliness refers to ACTUAL the quality of the person who has received the sacrament for a life-long journey. It is a process for progress into the demands and dimensions of the gospel – mission till the very end of life. It is an ongoing growth – process converting oneself consistently and courageously to become more and more human and as such, more and more divine. Moreover, priestliness invites one ever -becoming more and more a 'LIVING GOSPEL' rather than just preaching the gospel. Again, priestliness beckons one ever – evolving more and more a 'LIVING EUCHARIST' rather than just celebrating the Eucharist. In all, a life of 'priestliness' is a challenge that one accepts and appropriates for a progressive actualisation at the reception of the sacrament of priesthood.

2. How do you perceive your priestly life now when you look back from the time of your ordination?

When I look back at the past years of my priestly life, I do have a tremendous pack of consolations in spite and despite of my falls and faults along the way. Fortunately, and delightfully, I belong to the Jesuit institute that not only permits but also promotes 'CREATIVITY'. This is nothing but 'IGNATIAN MAGIS' as its / our way of proceeding. Accordingly, I had the joy of giving a kick - start to a innovative way of proceeding on the very day of my ordination and my first mass. Here, i have to applaud the entire dear and near ones both in my family – circle and the Jesuit – circle for graciously agreeing to have the happenings in a very simple but in a significant and much more, substantial way. For example, the first mass was not celebrated in the cathedral but in the central prison. No celebration and no banquet whatsoever. Instead, dinner was given only for prisoners, orphan - children, abandoned senior citizens and leprosy - patients. Actually, it was an attempt to translate an instance that was highlighted by Jesus himself, reported from verses 12 to 14 of chapter 14 in Luke's gospel. Here comes a crucial one: it was not just making the event simple, but it carried and conveyed a strong message: calculating all the possible expenses as per any normal way of ordination - first mass celebrations, and then, setting aside that total amount for the studies of the first generation - rural and Dalit girls.

Nothing wrong in stating here that out of the amount that would have been spent on the occasion of ordination and first mass, over 185 girls have got educated, till this year what a grace - filled delight! By the way, this is indeed just an initial gesture but still, colours one's priestly life. Accordingly, it grants and grantees the Ignatian consolation of concretising one's Priestley commitments toward the least and the last and the lost.

3. What is the uppermost feeling that you have when you look at your priesthood?

The uppermost feeling that I have when I look at my ordination is FURTHER SEARCH based on all that has accomplished down the years. That means never ever to entertain complacency which is one of the strongest temptations in the modernized world of today. I mean, minimisation currently has unfortunately come to be an order of the day. That results, either knowingly or unknowingly, in taking life for granted, rather than with gratitude. In other words, allowing oneself governed by a policy like: ' take it easy ' we know that the life then becomes ' goody - goody' and what we do becomes ' wishy - washy' in that given scenario, i wish to challenge myself with further and further search, as Ignatius would suggest: WHAT - MORE - ARE THE PROPHETIC INSPIRATIONS THAT THE SPIRIT PROVOKES ESPECIALLY FROM WITHIN THAT I CAN DO FOR GOD'S MISSION FOLLOWING THE RADICAL FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS?

4. In the contemporary world, we observe that many priests are accused of scandals and priesthood is often viewed as a profession. According to you, what are the challenges that priests face today and how can we overcome them in order to be 'holy priests'?

In the privatised and liberalised world of today, the challenges that priests face are indeed myriad. Naming just a few crucial ones: CLASSISM, CASTEISM, CONSUMERISM, CORRUPTION, COMMERCIALISATION and COMMUNALISM.

One big reason is that priests currently feel tempted to enter in to COMPROMISE rather QUICKLY in the process, one's conviction is diluted, courage is dismissed and commitment is decreased. One powerful WAY - OUT is to focus straight-ly and substantially on the formation of CONSCIENCE that is well - informed and also well - transformed. If that takes place, each priest will have certain determination in terms of taking upon himself the task of saying an emphatic ' NO' to compromise as and when that comes up along the way.

5. Being a priest in a country like India is definitely going to be extremely challenging in the near future. How do we need to form priests for the future?

In the given state of national affairs of today by way of majoritarianism and moditva-ism which is even

more dangerous than Hindutva-ism, our formation - patterns and processes may have to go through some radical changes such as these: A. from 'institutional' to more and more 'movemental' style of formation, B. from 'churchy' formation to 'socio-political' formation, C. from being 'for' to being more and more 'with and of' the poorest – oriented formation, C. from 'ritualistic' to 'realistic' outlook in formation then, there is every possibility that changes like the above will challenge the formees to become more credible in oneself and more proactive in servicing our country, come what may.

Arul Gnanapragasam SJ

III B.Th.



Interview 6

Fr. Walter S. J,

Fr. Walter S. J, (KOM) is the Director of North Eastern Social Research Center, Guwahati, Assam.

1. Do we need priest in the context of Corona Pandemic?

A priest, as Rahner says, is a person standing between God and his community, taking the offerings of the community to God and God's blessings to the community. That is what we need in the moment of the pandemic, to live the hope of him who gave the message of life in His death and help people live that hope amid despair which is real in the moment of the pandemic.

2. What is the meaning of priesthood in the wake the arrest of Fr. Stan Swamy and there is no good number of Christian communities around him?

As the Vatican II document on the Church says, a priest is a person chosen from among the people of God in the service of the people. Who are these people of God? Are they only Christians? I have had to reflect on this issue because I have spent weeks in the remote tribal areas where it was not safe to reveal the fact that I was a priest. I used to say mass alone but I knew that there was this tribal community practicing their indigenous religion and struggling to be human amid exploitation. That is the people of God who were not physically present during my mass but among whom I was spending those days. I was surrounded by that community of the struggling people of God bringing hope to themselves amid hopelessness and exploitation. Stan finds himself in such a situation. To him a community is not merely Christian people but all those who are working for hope and a new life amid despair and hopelessness. Stan is surrounded by that community and his priesthood becomes very concrete in that context.

3. Why not women as priests?

Yes, why not? Theologically I don't think there is anything against women's priesthood. It is a question of the patriarchal culture, of tradition and history. A large number of Catholics, brought up in the tradition will reject the idea of women's priesthood but we should work towards it.



Interview 7

Fr. Valerian Castellino SJ

Fr. Valerian Castellino SJ (KOM) is the Coordinator of JESA, Guwahati, Assam

1. Do we need priest in the context of Corona Pandemic?

In the context Corona pandemic, we need priest more than normal times. A catholic priest being head of

the community entrusted to his care prays for the overall well-being of the community. He prays much more during the pandemic. Pandemic does not stop him from ministering the people under his care. He finds ways and means to meet the people within the SOPs imposed by the state. He can visit the sick, give communion to the sick, conduct the last sacrament, conduct funerals, etc. When God closes one door, he opens the other. He has opened the door of virtual communication whereby the priest can minister the faithful online. He can hear the confessions; he can give guidance and host of other things. Hence, I feel the priest is needed during the pandemic times more than other times.

2. What is the meaning of priesthood in the wake the arrest of Fr. Stan Swamy and there is no good number of Christian communities around him?

Fr. Stan Swami is an example of priesthood par excellence! Priesthood is not only for the Christian community. Priesthood extends to the entire human community/ entire creation. Fr. Stan worked for the poor, the helpless to defend their human rights and dignity. That is the work of a priest. He did well whole of his life. He is a true example of priesthood, who sacrifices his dignity, his rights to give dignity and rights to the marginalized. He lives tangibly the prophetic call of priesthood. That is what Jesus the master did. Fr. Stan like Jesus stood for and with the marginalized; he became their voice crying out to safeguard the rights of the voiceless.

Priesthood therefore is to be with the suffering masses, defending their rights, consoling them and fighting for their dignity. Priest takes up his prophetic role to lead the people to the right path of human dignity and rights. Come what may!!!

3. What is the task of the priest? (is it to build closed and self-satisfied Christian community?)

The task of the priest is to enable the community to secure its dignity and rights. Community here means the entire humanity under his jurisdiction not the baptized alone. He is the leader. He leads the community towards the fullness of life. While doing this the adversaries may target him. Challenge him, ridicule him, put him in jail and even kill him. He will not hesitate to undergo any of them. Because he is in the place of Christ.



Interview 8

Sr. Joyceline Mary

Interview with Sr. Joyceline Mary, Congregation of Charity Sisters of Vedruna, Headmistress of Loyola School, Didambra, Assam.

1. What is the meaning of priesthood in the wake the arrest of Fr. Stan Swamy and there is no good number of chitosan community around him?

Jesus went around doing good, healing the sick, liberating captives and pardoning sinners. Following the mission of Jesus and to my simple mind priesthood is to be another Christ and to do what he did, bringing God's love, mercy and compassion to broken hearts, justice and equality to the poor and to be life witnesses of Gospel values. There is no catholic presence in the place like Didambra where I work but it is those people that I believe God has chosen us to share his love and to be his presence among them through our life witnesses. We need to reach out to people who are most in need of God's love and mercy. It does not matter where you are and whom you serve. As religious we are called to be the presence of God and bringing his love, compassion to people. Jesus says people who are healthy do not need a doctor but the sick. Fr. Stan reaching out to the poor and marginalized and standing for their justice has in fact given more meaning to his priesthood.

2. What is the task of a priest? (Is it to build closed and self-satisfied Christian community?)

The task of priest is to bring God's blessings to people and is to be another Christ sharing the goodness

of God and to people whom you serve. No, it is not only to Christian community. Jesus's mission was always inclusive he was with poor, outcasts, sinners. Priests are God's instruments who bring love to the unloved, Strength to Weary, peace to broken heart, joy and fullness to the depressed, equality to suppressed and hope to those in despair irrespective of people with whom we serve.

3. Why not women as priest?

Yes, it will be wonderful thing to see that happen. I do not know from biblical and theological point of view why women ordination still remains as question and doubt. Deep rooted patriarchal society and culture in which we live and breathe has its impact and makes very difficult and challenging to bring such changes in the church. I believe if ordination is open religious sisters who feel the call that would a revolutionary positive change in the Church.

Biji Thomas SJ

III B.Th.



Interview 9

Sr. M. Sharon Rose MC

Sr. M. Sharon Rose MC has been in religious life for 15 years and has been serving in Delhi for 13 years, especially taking care of the needs of the abandoned children. All these years of her experiences made her religious life fulfilling and at the same time challenging.

1. In this time of pandemic, which are the ways the priest can discharge his priestly duties?

In this time of pandemic, the priest can be sign of hope, carrier of God's love and compassion by administering His duties courageously and in full faith. He is able to revive the drooping spirit of youth and the people who are suffering unemployment and most important for a priest is to see Himself as a person of Christ. What Jesus would have done in this situation? He will get the answer in prayer. A priest can set an example by reaching out individually to the needy with prudence – Being available to the spiritual needs of the person. 'Man does not live by bread alone' – giving some material help only can satisfy their immediate need, but giving a listening ear is important. Pay attention to the person in front instead of fiddling with the cell phone. Many people are traumatized, so they want to share with someone who understands them and gives them emotional support. Encourage people to hold fast to their faith. 'There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for the other' - Being available when someone knocks at your door with hope provided that there is a genuine need. A priest should be a person of prayer, promote prayer and intercede for others. Encourage people to trust, surrender and be happy. Pastoral visit is important as people are not able to come to Church. Priest's presence gives them such a confidence and assurance. Take the Holy Communion to people whenever and wherever possible, that edifies the younger generation. Promote family prayer – the family that prays together, stays together in thick and thin. The chance to give Holy Communion to the elderly if they ardently desire it perhaps that would be the only time, they would receive Jesus in the Holy Communion. Being available to the penitent if they wish to make confession. How long we can postpone the sacraments in the name of pandemic – conquer the fear with God's love promote rosary and reading the Word of God daily as part of their family prayer.

2. What are the challenges today that ruin the life of a priest today?

Some of the challenges that might ruin the life of a priest could be: Lack of commitment, mediocrity and desire for power and money, indulging too much into social media and neglecting the person in front of you, lack of prayer and neglecting spiritual duties, being self-centred, taking people for granted, no de-

sire for holy life, no contentment, lack of interest in ministry, being drawn by the comfort of the world, incapacity to build up appropriate relationships, may be for some wine and women.

3. Do you think the priests of 21 century are effective and fruitful in their ministry? How?

In the 21st century the priests are as effective and fruitful as before. First of all no one can replace a priest as the Holy Eucharist is instituted by Christ himself and entrusted this sacred duty to the apostles not to the disciples. As St. Paul says, 'We carry the treasure in earthen vessel' a little carelessness and lack of prudence can shatter their vessel into pieces which cannot be recombined. A priest can be a sown of inspiration for many when they live what they preach. It is the sacred duty of the priest to heal, to build, to forgive, to console, to listen, to love the unloved, to befriend the unwanted, to accompany the lonely, to bring hope to the hopeless. First and most important to pray for the souls entrusted to his care. A priest is a gift of God to man and of man to God. What he does is his gift to God. A priest is the symbol of word made flesh. A priest is the hand of God's mercy. A priest is the reflection of God's love. The priesthood is not something, it is someone Christ.

4. What are the few specific qualities that a pastor should have in his life?

As a religious I expect from the priest to have balanced personality – a soul of prayer and proper human. A person who understands others than to be understood. A man of honesty and humility. A man true to his word. Common people do not take a priest's word for granted, they take it seriously and when he does not keep his word, he is losing his own credibility and reliability. A patient listener- when a person wants to share and if he is going to fiddle with his cell phone or shows impatience hastiness breaks the trust of the people in them, of course for a reasonable reason they must excuse but get back to them at first opportunity. Get to know the people with whom he is working / serving. Pay attention to every work done by the people of God. A person who is able to see everyone as equals, I have noticed especially among the priests they pay more attention to the people who have high social standard. Of course, they have to be taken care of but at least they should acknowledge the presence of the "lowly ones" otherwise they feel out of place- joining a social gathering would be an ordeal rather than a joyful experience. A priest must always hold his dignity. They should be careful with their words, vulgar jokes no one expects from a priest, especially if there are women religious and other women present. A priest who praises publicly and corrects privately is acceptable to everyone. It is better to have a simple and understanding priest than intelligent and arrogant priest. It is not only the administrative qualities matters but a capacity to dialogue and listen.

Thomaiair Charles ADL

III B.Th.



Interview 10

Fr. Julian Fernandes SJ

1. What do you understand by the word "Priest"?

"Priest", etymologically "presbyter" (Greek & Latin) is an "elder", which evolved in the Church's tradition right from the apostolic times to mean a leader of a community. But also, a leader along with other presbyters – a council of elders – to preside over the assembly of the faithful, to teach & guide their community (presumably in ALL matters of life). In our Jesuit understanding, the word 'priest' needs to be distinguished from the Latin word 'sacerdos' (usually associated with something 'sacred', offering a sacrifice – confined to the sacristy, administering the sacraments...), and the Greek work 'hieros' (which includes priesthood of all the faithful). For us Jesuits the priest is a mediator between God and human beings in ALL matters that touch our lives – the material, social and political aspects as much

as the spiritual and the sacred. “Find God in things, and all things in God”. The human person is not a compound of several separate elements (body, soul, spirit...), but one single integral entity. Our mission challenges us to serve the integral development of the human person in all aspects in relation to God, to all human beings and to all creation. (See the Decrees of the last two GCs on our Mission of Reconciliation.) Everything is sacred, the world is a sacrament, a visible sign of the God’s invisible presence, love and active (“labouring” in creation – Sp. Ex. Contemplation to Attain Love). Nothing is alien to our mission of mediation and reconciliation; no human endeavour is purely “secular”. Only when these various aspects are divided, made autonomous & independent on their own right, they become idols. Jesus Christ and his mission are our normative model. He did not engage only in “spiritual” ministry, but reached out to the whole person – health & healing of body, spirit, emotions, community-relationships

“Do this in memory of me” was a mandate not just to perform a ritual over bread and wine, but to do what HE did and indicated by that sign at the Last Supper and on the next day: to wash one another’s feet, love & serve one another, share bread with the hungry, remain united with HIM and with one another, be ready to shed blood and die out of love for others.

The priest is a servant, not a master. If this is ingrained in us from early formation, then we will avoid the evils of “clericalism” – the sense of superiority, entitlement & privilege. Many evils in the Church have been the result of this attitude.

2. What are the joys and sorrows that you come across in your Priestly life in serving the Lord with multi-lingual in the Northeast India?

The joy was to discover the tribal community’s spirit of unity, of lay initiative and leadership in matters that belong properly to their sphere: financial administration, building & looking after their churches, organising their community exercises like “sobhas”, catechism camps, festivals... Not transplanting here, a priest-centred Church of the South. The joy of being available to help them in all their needs, material, educational and social as well as spiritual. The struggles connected with the inability to communicate directly in their language. But this also led to our necessary dependence on the catechists or translators, empowering them in their service of building up the faith of the community. The sorrow of avoidable deaths, especially of children. No hospitals in the villages, no money to take the sick child to a hospital in time. ... The pain of a child’s burial would last for days and weeks. The sorrow of seeing young people who lose a sense of direction, lacking in motivation, going astray & taking refuge in drugs, alcohol & other evils....



Interview 11

Fr. Charles D'Souza SJ

1. What do you understand by the word “Priest”?

A Priest is a leader of the Catholic community and at the same time he serves the community with love and concern. In this work he imitates Jesus closely. Vocation to be a Priest is an invitation to love and serve without reserve.

2. What are the joys and sorrows that you come across in your Priestly life in serving the Lord with multi-language in the North east India?

The joys are manifold. It is a great privilege to lead and to serve the catholic community. The joy of administering the sacraments like baptism, Holy communion, reconciliation and blessing the marriages and above all offering the Eucharist daily with the people, taking care of catechism children, visiting the sick, instructing the youth and organising them for the Church services and involving them in Church activities.

There are a few sorrows such as: when people do not turn up for Sunday Eucharist, when families break up and separate, when children dropout from schools, when young people fall into bad habits and addictions, when children do not get enough to eat at home, when children are abused by bad parents, all burials, especially when young people die.

One difficulty is language. There are so many languages spoken in the North East. Most of the time we cannot speak the native language and have to depend on the translators while saying mass and reaching. This is a lengthy process and many times it is very frustrating.

3. what are the challenges that you face in your Priestly Ministry in the Northeast?

The protestant churches and their prejudices are a big challenge. To initiate a dialogue with them is difficult. Not knowing the language is another challenge, to make an effort to study the language and prepare well the translators or catechists. To reach out to communities which are far away from the main roads. Heavy travelling, cold weather in the hills and bad roads in the plains. Adjusting the mind set to the people's way of thinking and behaving. If the Priest is also the Head of an Institute, he cannot really do justice to both the responsibilities. Bring back the lost sheep, especially among the youth. To practise what you preach.

4. What message would like to give to the young Priest that would be helpful and fruitful in their Pastoral ministry?

Be kind to people, know people well and be sensitive to their problems and struggles, be authentic and genuine. Love your community well. Good to practise what we preach. Be available, prepare your mass and sermons very well, learn to relax, smile very often, never forget to pray for your Catholic community, take care of the Sisters and the catechists in the parish. They also sacrifice much just like the priests. Never to indulge in any bad habits. Be very accountable in all matters. Always be humble, especially when you do well. A realization that God is in charge of everything.

Chin Kap Sian Muang SJ

III B.Th.



Interview 12

Fr. Tom Kunnumkal, SJ

1. What is your understanding of a person as a priest to bring God's kingdom on earth?

Priesthood demands intelligence and will. A person with intelligence opts to follow Jesus with his free will. He does so because he wants to become a partner with Christ to establish God's kingdom on earth. Thus, this is a primary duty of a priest.

2. Does the vow of obedience curtail the fundamental right of freedom of a person and his congruent reasoning power?

We have to give enough freedom for a person to take his decisions. We are not small boys to be controlled and dictated everything. Seeing God in our superiors is something very difficult to believe. God rarely talks. We have to take action on what God had spoken already. Most often the superiors want us to do what they want than what God wants of us. And so, I feel that where we have to take action we have to. We need not wait for the superior's approval.

3. The mainstream psychology of the "American Psychological Association" has come to say that sexuality is an integral part of healthy psychological growth in a person. Keeping in the perspec-

tive of the vow of celibacy, what is your comment on it?

Sex is part and parcel of human beings. We cannot separate humans from sexuality. We have to come out of the understanding that sex is something wrong. In my opinion, it is high time that the Catholic Church should allow the priests to get married.

4. In the recent past, as the innocents are deprived of their fundamental rights, our 'Faith doing Justice' demands us more and more to be active participants in the politics of the nation. In this context, how do you evaluate a priest in politics?

It is not something new for a priest to participate in politics. By very nature, politics is not bad. Only in party politics, we find corruption. Politics is a must for all. It helps us to live our life meaningfully. It helps us understand our fundamental rights. Jesus was a prophet, teacher, and priest. Thus, every priest is asked to imitate Christ. Wherever injustice occurs the priests must raise their voice. It is the need of the hour.



Interview 13

Fr. KT. Thomas, SJ

1. Does the vow of obedience curtail the fundamental right of freedom of a person and his congruent reasoning power?

We are not living alone but we live in a community. Thus, obedience plays a vital role. I strongly believe that obedience is a must for our religious life. As a priest, it helps us understand God's plan and will rather than our will. The superior knows the common good of all. It does greater good than damage. Even if we have certain opinions, we can always bring them to the notice of the superior. Dialogue is always possible in the communitarian life. It should not be considered as a person who dictates everything to us.

2. The mainstream psychology of the "American Psychological Association" has come to say that sexuality is an integral part of healthy psychological growth in a person. Keeping in the perspective of the vow of celibacy, what is your comment on it?

In my opinion, a priest should be allowed to get married. But when we talk of religion, there we have to restrict it because a religious person volunteers for some particular mission. To administer sacraments alone a priest should not be deprived of marital life.

3. In the recent past, as the innocents are deprived of their fundamental rights, our 'Faith doing Justice' demands us more and more to be active participants in the politics of the nation. In this context, how do you evaluate a priest in politics?

It is indeed a very necessary thing today that all the priests must be active participants in politics. But it should not be of starting a new party. We should participate in the sense of giving our opinions and fighting for our rights when the government imposes us with wrong policies etc. We have the greater task of giving people awareness and stand for and with people. Without social elements, the priesthood is incomplete.

Devadoss Francis SJ

III B.Th.





Interview 14

Fr. John Sagaya Ravi SJ

1. How do you meaningfully exercise your ministerial priesthood in the context of corona pandemic?

I meaningfully exercise my ministerial priesthood in this context of corona pandemic by adhering to the norms of Covid safety regulations, yet daring to go and exercise my sacramental duty towards the faithful as and when it was required of me. By doing this, I too put my life at risk to some extent, but trusting in the divine providence and mercy who has ordained me a priest for this very purpose. In this way, I witness to Christ who is a healer and a good counsellor of people who are in need of healing from every physical, emotional and spiritual ailment, especially in the context of Pandemic which has distanced people from one another. I also make use of the social media and communication tools available today to reach out to people who are in need of my presence either physically or virtually. I have celebrated Holy Mass during this pandemic, not only for my community members, but also reached out to neighbouring religious communities as well as to the North Indian Labor Migrants who are very poor, collaborating with the JMS, Chennai. I have attended to number of Sacrament of Reconciliation. I have presided over family prayer services/rosaries and shared Biblical reflections with different clusters within the Parish through virtual Zoom platform. It gives me tremendous satisfaction and fulfilment spiritually that I have become a messenger of peace, reconciliation and hope to people in this time of distress and uncertainty. In this way, I exercise my ministerial priesthood meaningfully in this pandemic time.

2. How to work for the reign of God amidst the challenges of fundamentalism, atheism, casteism and social oppression?

To work for the reign of God amidst the challenges of fundamentalism, atheism, casteism and social oppression, is to be a witness to Christ as a priest and pastor. Challenges are meant to bring out the best out of us. We have been trained in the workshop of St. Ignatius of Loyola, as sharp tools and weapons in and through the Spiritual Exercises. We should be discerning priests who respond to the signs of the times. Even though we all are gifted differently, the Society of Jesus will assign each one of us accordingly but at the heart of all our activities in different institutes and mission fields we need to develop a heart of a shepherd/ pastor. We have to have the pastoral approach in every choice that we make while we exercise our ministerial priesthood. In all these challenges mentioned above we have a choice whether we face them head on or succumb to the pressures which these challenges pose. We have a preferential option, obligation and a conscious choice to make in every distressing agonizing situation; that is; on whose side are we standing. With the rich or poor, with the oppressor or the oppressed, with the elite or the downtrodden, with the perpetrator or the victim; the choice that we made during the 'Kingdom Meditation' to be on the side of Christ our Eternal King and what he would desire from us is the answer to all our challenges fundamentalism, atheism, casteism and oppression. If we don't discern and act/ voice out now we can't be prophetic priests. We may face persecution and isolation even from within our own circle. The values that are opposed to these challenges like secularism, faith in God who is Just, inclusive egalitarian values, social equality, liberty and human dignity can guide us through every unhealthy situation. We can be the 'torch bearers' instead of being just 'office bearers' who uphold these values when we impart education and values to our society.

3. What are the challenges come from the contemporary world that diminishes the real nature, work and commitment of priests?

The challenges that come from the contemporary world that diminish the real nature, work and commit-

ment of priests according to me are self-centeredness and lack of God experience. The contemporary world is filled with lots of allurements which can divert a priest from being a committed pastor/ man of God. First of all, the prayer experience/ God experience should permeate the life of a priest. Then only he will be able to overcome the self-centeredness. If not, the so-called challenges within institutionalized structure of Church hierarchy itself will allure him to crave for power and position. Alcoholism, lack of transparency in the money matters, lack of maturity in relationships with the opposite sex, paedophilia, loneliness, depression and suicidal tendency among priests, lack of motivation and commitment towards the mission assigned, mediocre attitude, ghetto mentality, groupism, casteism, addiction to gadgets and media, lack of intellectual reasoning, lack of reading habit, individualism and diminishing communitarian values that takes away the credibility of priests. These above mentioned vices according to me are the challenges that diminish the real nature of priests as 'good shepherds' of their faithful flock. On the contrary they become 'blind guides' who bring about scandals and do not live witnessing lives.

4. How do you envisage the life and mission of priests after fifteen years?

I envisage the life and mission of the priests after fifteen years will be more challenging than what it is today. The world will be more advanced in information and technology. There will be more technically advanced gadgets available. Families will be smaller or non-existent. Possibilities of more and more broken marriages and disintegration of values will be there. In such situation we have to develop a witnessing lifestyle which is truly inspiring for people to uphold the religious values. We cannot forget or overlook the women religious and their contribution towards ministerial priesthood. They may have to play a vital role in the growth and sustainability of the Church. We, the men religious may have to develop a more open mindset to accommodate them as our equal partners in the Kingdom of God.



Interview 15

Ms. Mary Hilda

Interview with Ms. Mary Hilda, Loyola College of Education, Chennai.

1. How do Priests meaningfully exercise their ministerial priesthood in the context of corona pandemic?

All priests are praying for the Church. The Corona pandemic time has also helped priests to engage those people with prayers. They had time to understand the need of people and helped them spiritually and materially. This is also time for priests to examine themselves and rediscover and reorient their priestly ministry. They could understand the expectation and the wishes of people for Eucharistic celebration. They do offer mass for all suffering people through online mode and offline mode. Though some of the priests were affected with Covid-19, they themselves spearheaded the spread of faith to the people. They arranged counselling session through online. They are giving counselling sessions to families, young people and students amidst this pandemic.

2. How to work for the reign of God amidst the challenges of fundamentalism, atheism, casteism and social oppression?

It is a perennial issue faced by the Church than stand as a stumbling block in the process of professing our faith and to lead a witnessing life. The media also makes the people not to think about the current political issues rather by way of supporting the dominant people it makes the social oppression worse. Priests should make a vow against caste system and need to conscientize people about the evil effects of caste system, fundamentalism. They must explain the cause of the social evils to the faithful and on the other hand need to boldly confront Hindu fanatics. Priests should play a role model in these aspects.

They must follow equality, fraternity and in their approach and way of life. They must have the vision to build a community in hope and truth.

3. What are the challenges come from the contemporary world that diminishes the real nature, work and commitment of priests?

Some of the priests tend to attach themselves to the family, caste minded and language group and base their identity on that. The world pulls priests to lead a comfortable and sophisticated life. Many are not ready to serve the marginalized people. Some people get influenced by power, caste affinity and do things in the name of God for their own glory. In this situation they should become aware of the conditions of people. All priests should renew and strengthen their collective thinking and working. Priests should become more interested in the growth of people than themselves.

4. How do you envisage the life and mission of priests after fifteen years?

The life and mission of the priests after fifteen years will be more challenging. The main challenge is vocation to priestly ministry. Now young people are not ready to opt for priesthood. There is also lack of faith and hope with in them about the future of the Church. All will be using more technology, so that they may not think of human beings who are pushed away from the main streams of life. The present political scenario will give more challenges to priests. For being effective in coming years priests should get rooted more in their call and mission. They should be ready to face any situation.

Jayaraj Selvaraj SJ

III B. Th.



Interview 16

Fr. Mathew Chemplan SJ

1. What has been your holistic understanding and experience of priesthood in the Catholic Church?

Priests share in the ministry of Jesus, sent by the Father. The purpose of the ministry is the glory of the Father. They accomplish this as the co-workers of the Episcopal order. By their ordination priests share in the ministerial priesthood by which Christ, through the gifts of the Spirit, unceasingly builds his Church; guides peoples through the pastoral office that leads them to the Kingdom of the Father. For Jesuits in particular – Ministerial priesthood being an essential character of the Society to carry out its mission entrusted to it by the Church, we accept this grace and responsibility in order to serve the Lord alone and the Church, his spouse, under the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on earth. Jesuit priesthood, by which Jesuits place themselves directly at the service of the Pope, is a gift from God for the needs of the Universal Church.

Experiences of Priesthood in the Catholic Church

a. The Role of a Reconciler: Listening to stories of pain and anger, of sadness and grief that people are going through, I have spent long hours trying to bring about reconciliation in the families. It has been more of a norm in today's world and at times it has been a challenge to respond to such situations when bitterness and hatred has entered into sacred relations. At such times I have found recourse to being in prayer to resolve such problems and bring erring members together. To enable them to experience the healing power of forgiveness, the healing touch of Jesus.

This all the more becomes a personal challenge to me to live my Jesuit priestly life with deeper conviction

and integrity. To become a wholesome person, so that I in turn will be enabled to build communities of wholesome human beings in the Parish.

b. The Role of a Counsellor: Persons caught up in various types of addiction while visiting families as the parish priest, I came across number of the persons addicted to alcohol. The aftermath of this was constant fight in families and many families broken. My role became rather crucial in helping persons addicted to give them insights and awareness of what addiction does to them and their families. My priestly role as a counsellor helped them to give up alcohol and other addicted drugs and transform their lives.

2. What are the qualities do you think that the Church and the people of God look for in a Candidate aspiring to be a Priest today?

Dedication and commitment to assignments given or undertaken, Creativity: resourceful in developing new ideas and finding fresh ways of doing things, Judgement: Able to think for oneself and to make reasonable, correct and responsible decisions, Leadership: willingness to take responsibility; animating and inspiring confidence in other, getting along with others: relating comfortably with others, Communication: Listening sensitively and attentively to others, Emotional maturity: having a sense of identity and purpose in life, A sense of vocation and mission

3. Are most priests happy in their vocational lives and in their work for Christ today? What challenges do they face in today's complex context?

Yes, in general most priests are happy in their vocational lives and in their work for Christ today.

Priests face the following challenges: Being misunderstood. Being just to a situation often is misunderstood as of taking sides. People today look for a shortcut method even in preparation for the Sacraments. Priests often face with unwanted criticism in respect to the in-depth study of the sacraments. For example, in the preparation of the Sacrament of Marriage persons do not wish to go through an elaborate preparation citing no time factor. On the other hand, long holidays are taken for outings after marriage. In searching or looking for a place to bury the dead at the parish graveyard often brings in surmounting challenges to the priest.

Family members look for the privatisation of the graves which causes a lot of stress on the priests. Mixed Marriages: In the preparation of a mixed marriage make those going to get married understand the Sacrament of Marriage becomes a herculean task. In normal circumstances the couple going to be married is not interested in understanding the Sacrament. The only interest is in just getting married. In matters relating to deepening the faith of the Christian community the community does not wish to undergo a change but stick to its traditional practises. A timely revival is of prime importance which the Christian community is not willing to accept.

4. Are there people-oriented priests who get involved at the grass roots level to shepherd their sheep or priests who just maintain structures and institutions?

It often looks as if many pastors are generally hesitant to relate with grassroots, possibly owing to the fear that they may turn against our own parish structures and vested interests. We should rather positively view that the laity has "the renewal of the temporal order as their own special obligation and everywhere and in all things the justice characteristic of God's Kingdom must be pursued", Christian grassroots cannot but be fully involved in the struggle for a new society (II Vat. Council: Laity: 7).

Hence there is a very serious need to spend time on if we desire that our faithful continue to live Jesus' way of life. It is the whole area around formation and the values we uphold as priests. Instead of being good pastors, we have taken upon ourselves the task of becoming administrators and running institutions and have forgotten why we have been anointed with the ministerial role in the church. This is a growing concern as we see a large number of priests just maintaining structures and institutions.



Interview 17

Sr. Mary Udaya SND

1. What has been your holistic understanding and experience of priesthood in the Catholic Church?

The priesthood focuses on enhancing one's relationship with Christ, to understand his strengths and weaknesses and to learn how to balance work, prayer and ministry in life. The priesthood is one of the three holy orders of the Catholic Church and the Church teaches that when a man participates in priesthood after the Sacrament of Holy Orders, he represents the person of Christ. The Catholic priesthood is a state of life; it follows logically on what the Church teaches that the priesthood is a sacrament that imprints an indelible character for a permanent state of life. The priesthood is the most sublime vocation to which God can call man, and those who respond and are ordained remain priests forever no matter what may happen to their mind or body or even their souls.

The priesthood is simultaneously four things: it is a sacrament of the new law instituted by Christ, it is a state of life to which some men are called by a special vocation from God, it is an institution without which there would be no Christianity on earth and it is a ministry of the Catholic Church by which Christ continues His own priestly work of saving and sanctifying the souls for whom He shed His blood on Calvary.

The primary function of all priests is administering the Church's seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Confession, Holy Communion, Marriage, Holy Orders, and Anointing of the Sick. A priest offers the ministry of Jesus Christ to us today. As a priest you are with people during some of the most significant moments of their lives. You are there to baptize their children and give them first Holy Communion. When a priest offers the holy sacrifice of the Mass, it is Christ who offers the sacrifice. You are a minister of God's mercy and forgiveness in the sacrament of Reconciliation, when he absolves sins, it is Christ who forgives. When you partake in the mission of the Church, to teach and evangelise, it is Christ who speaks through you. You are privileged to walk with young couples as they prepare for and celebrate the sacrament of Matrimony. You witness God's healing presence in the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. When you offer love, comfort and support to God's people by visiting the sick, and generally provide pastoral care to the people, Christ is truly present with you. You have the opportunity to be with families who have lost a loved one, and you celebrate the funeral Liturgy with and for them. These are wonderful sacramental moments when you can be present during the joyful, as well as sorrowful, moments in people's lives.

2. In your opinion what are the qualities the Church and people of God look for in a candidate aspiring for priesthood today?

Qualities which I think that the Church and the people of God look for in a candidate aspiring to be a priest today are: To be God and People centred, prayerful, transparent, respectful to everyone, young and old and never forgot the dignity and value of each person.

On the other hand, the quality of a priest is to do possibly everything that Jesus did. A priest is a "Father" to the people with a shepherd's heart that he serves even laying down one's life for the people. Priests are a prime example for the Catholic faith and morals.

Another quality of a priest is to have an evangelical heart. Never worn-out of preaching Christ crucified the power of God and the wisdom of God - Spirit-filled evangelizers. Priests do need to be caring, compassionate and understanding.

A good priest is a joyful person, called to live the Beatitudes for the whole world. They are looked up to as good role models and are often asked for their opinion or advice. He is a person who unites the congregation, charismatic, sincere, believes in people, enthusiastic & called forth their gifts in an empowering way, and modelled Jesus-like wisdom and behaviour.

The qualities of kindness, compassion, sociability, sensitivity, ability to communicate well, and a collaborative style of management are much appreciated in a priest. Priests need to be well versed in sacred scripture, liturgical theology, moral theology, spiritual traditions, sacraments, canon law, philosophy, some level of skill, or talent, eloquence, dynamic & proficiency in language, leadership and is available to spend the time to chat, eat, and meet all family members.

3. Are most priests happy in their vocational lives and in their work for Christ today? What challenges do they face in today's complex context?

Some of the priests today live holy, happy, genuine and simple lives in spite of the temptations all around for power, position and wealth. But many get entangled into the way of the world, lose sight of the reason for their commitment and live meaningless, unfulfilled lives. There is lack of interest to travel the narrow path and asceticism. Charismatic and religious activities are sometimes getting diminished due to the present socio political and cultural scenario. A possible way out, initiative is not largely sought by all. A sense of revival is needed at faith level. The attitude of the people towards religious practices is also diminishing along with a sense of responsibility for the faith they have inherited.

Jeevan Issac SJ
III B.Th.



Interview 18
Mrs. Lorraine Innocentia

1. Jesus was a radical leader who opposed the power structure of his days - head on - We have the example of Stan Samy....Can a priest be politically active? to what extent?

A priest can only be active, if he has the Word (Jesus Christ). Jesus Christ became flesh to destroy the works of the flesh, the Word – Jesus Christ is Truth and fullness of Love. A priest cannot serve two master, either he serves God truthfully or be a politician that will surely take him to hell because a politician is of the flesh and only desires the luxury of the world.

2. Jesus was a leader par excellence - he trained people for ministry - As a priest, modelling on Jesus, how well can you fit in the shoes of the Nazarene?

A priest can do the works of Jesus only if he puts Jesus Christ in front and not lean on his own understanding and insights. Just as Jesus said in John 14: 12 Truly I say to you the one who believes in me will do the same the works that I do and he will even do greater than these for I am going to the Father.

So, every person be it priest or lay person should know that only Jesus Christ is the Mediator to God the Father because Jesus Christ left all His heavenly glory and came to do the will of His Father – save humanity because we are created in the image and likeness of God.

For God so loved the World... John 3:16 & 17 for God the Father has given all authority to His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ...Eph. 1: 20 to 23. So, a priest can be like Jesus Christ only if he anointed by the Holy Spirit because Jesus has given us another Helper to be with us forever; the Holy Spirit will teach us all things and remind us of all that Jesus Christ has done.

3. Jesus had women followers. As a priest of the 21st century, how far a priest can accommodate women in his ministry?

Jesus Christ was God; He knew what was inside each person. So, a priest should never forget that Jesus is not looking at the flesh (body) but the intension of the mind and heart for they are spiritual and have life. For Jesus knows beforehand what you are going to think or do even before you can do it (Jesus and the

Samaritan Woman). A priest should have EYES, EARS, HANDS, LEGS, MIND and HEART of JESUS CHRIST

EYES --- see with Love, EARS --- listen Attentively, HANDS --- serve honestly and truthfully, LEGS --- walk the journey of LIFE focusing only on JESUS CHRIST, HEART --- to Love and to Forgive unconditionally, MIND --- only to Praise and Thank God.

4. Jesus was a prayer- often he disappeared into mountains to Pray (one who prays- Thomas H Green). As a priest, could you say, what is prayer to you?

Prayer is believing that God is Living and He gave His Only Son Jesus that whoever believes in Him may not be lost but have eternal life. God has created us in Christ Jesus for the good works he has prepared that we should devote ourselves to them knowing that it is God's gift and it is not the result of our works so we are not to feel proud of it.

Only if we know the word - Jesus Christ, Jesus will give us the Holy Spirit Lord to help us prayer. Without the Holy Spirit we cannot pray to God the Father for only the Holy Spirit knows the intension of the mind and heart that is pleasing to God the Father.



Interview 19

Fr. C. Joe Arun, SJ

1. Jesus was a radical leader who opposed the power structure of his days - head on - We have the example of Stan Samy....Can a priest be politically active? to what extent?

A priest should not involve in party politics, but true to real politics in the sense of using power to serve the people and questioning the people misuse the political power is a mission of a priest. This is a way of taking political stand. Jesuit priests in El Salvador is a case in point.

2. Jesus was a leader par excellence - he trained people for ministry - As a priest, modelling on Jesus, how well can you fit in the shoes of the Nazarene?

Jesus as a leader whose heart was for the poor and the marginalized. In whatever ministry I do I am conscious of my commitment to the marginalized. In feeling, thinking and in action, what benefits most the marginalized in the ministry I am asked to do is my focus. I try my best to remain a voice for the voiceless as Jesus was for the lost and the last in His times.

3. Jesus had women followers. As a priest of the 21st century, how far a priest can accommodate women in his ministry?

The question speaks of accommodation. That is very condescending. A priest today cannot do everything by himself. Collaboration and net-working are two enablers of effective mission. Collaborating with women becomes a very important commitment as women are the ones who are on the extreme margins even among the marginalized. It is not just complementary service but a core service that a priest should do. More sharply, a priest must have humility to work under the leadership of women that is very challenging many a time. Priests should be collaborators in the mission of women, not vice versa.

4. Jesus was a prayer - often he disappeared into mountains to Pray (one who prays - Thomas H Green). As a priest, could you say, what is prayer to you?

Prayer for me is moment of discernment during which I recognize my inner dispositions I have for life and mission I am opted to. I place before God my entire being transparently and discern the way of Him in the life I live and the mission I do. Prayer is not a ritual but a moment of reorientation my life. I ask every time I sit in prayer how must I break myself for the work I have been given and the people I am asked to

serve. That is for me the real Eucharist. Then celebrating daily Eucharist is just thanking for the life of breaking myself.



Interview 20

Fr. Michael Alosanaya, SJ

Interview Fr. Michael Alosanaya, SJ. He is former Novice Master and Tertian Instructor, At Present a Spiritual guide in Satya Nilayam, Chennai.

1. Jesus was a radical leader who opposed the power structure of his days - head on - We have the example of Stan Samy....Can a priest be politically active? to what extent?

Father Stan Swamy has been politically active in forming people to demand their constitutional rights in a non-violent way till now through his courses on social analysis, organizing the people through the different movements, etc. Hence a priest can be politically active in being an exemplary self-effacing person, placing the people before his personal interests, even ready to lay down his life for the sake of people, following his great Master Jesus of Nazareth. What the Church does not recommend is: a priest being involved in PARTY POLITICS, belonging to a particular political party because then he will lose his freedom to fight for the values of Jesus hundred percent.

2. Jesus was a leader par excellence - he trained people for ministry - As a priest, modelling on Jesus, how well can you fit in the shoes of the Nazarene?

Looking at the life of Jesus of Nazareth, I have been accepting all along my life the ministries which have been missioned to me by the Society of Jesus. In those ministries I have tried my best to form various persons – be the lay people, the religious or the priests – by animating the different communities in the values of Jesus, particularly following his servant leadership. Most of my life has been spent in the formation ministry and directing the Ignatian retreats and accompanying religious and lay men and women in their life in the Spirit. In all these ministries Jesus of Nazareth with his servant leadership has been not only my model but also my companion, walking with me all along. In particular the ministry of accompanying different persons in the journey of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola has been offering me the grace of “fitting into the shoes of Jesus of Nazareth” to some extent.

3. Jesus had women followers. As a priest of the 21st century, how far a priest can accommodate women in his ministry?

In your question, you have asked me how far a priest can accommodate women... I would like to consider this question in the following manner: how far can a priest have women as partners in his ministry? From my priestly ministry of directing the retreats and spiritual accompaniment, I have had very grace-filled experiences of having women as companions and more than once I have learnt from them many insights and I would dare say that they have contributed much to my personal growth. Of course, there is more to be done. What I desire to grow more personally and as a group of men =religious and priests = we need to be freed from prejudices and to have true authentic love, including deep reverence for them and consider them as partners in ministry and not just as co-workers, etc. I need to learn more from women.

4. Jesus was a PRAYER - Often he disappeared into mountains to pray (one who prays - Thomas H Green) As a priest, could you say, what is prayer to you?

I do understand by this statement: Jesus was a Prayer, a praying person – in communion with his Abba: both when he was all alone praying early in the morning, or during the whole night (according to Luke's

gospel) and during the day when he was doing the will of his Abba: preaching, teaching, healing, etc. Hence as a priest, I am anointed to be Jesus a Prayer = in communion with the Father, not only during the times for formal prayer but also during the whole day when I am involved in fulfilling his mission of doing His Abba's will in my ministries.

For me prayer is opening my whole being to the Divine by means of thinking, feeling, imagination, silence. Of course, I am open to use different methods of prayer for this opening myself to the Divine. According to the Ignatian exercises, one has to prepare himself for the time he sets apart for personal prayer: should be clear about the matter and method. Should not be vague, etc. Of course, my ministry of directing the Ignatian Retreats has provided me with many opportunities to deepen my prayer life. May I say for a priest prayer is his breathing...? The spirit of "purity of intention" will be one of the precious means for a priest to be an integrated person = Prayer.

As a Jesuit, I am still growing in the Ignatian grace of being a CONTEMPLATIVE IN ACTION = seeing everything in the Divine and seeking the Divine in everything = encountering the Divine in all creatures and all creatures in the Divine. One has to dispose himself for this grace by "divesting himself from self-love, self-will and self-interests" [SE 189]. In other words, I have to be a "mortified person" [=death to "EGO"].

As a priest, I bring all that I am, including my ministries, the persons whom I serve, etc to the feet of the Divine and take the Divine to those whom I serve as a priest. In the words of St Teresa of Avila: "I carry the God of my heart and the heart of my God everywhere".

Joe Livingston S SJ

III B.Th.



Interview 21

Fr. Emmanuel Horo S.J

1. Looking at the present situation such as Covid-19, economic slowdown, increasing unemployment, suffering poor, political turmoil, violence on social activists, how would you describe the role of a priest?

In the present scenario, the role of a priest is a complex one. Different voices are heard in the media many of which are quite disturbing since they express views of those in power. Only a few critical voices are heard because such voices are either ignored in the media or suppressed. It is not easy to understand the situation in which the common people find themselves trapped. A priest is to discern and this is possible in the light of the divine history. What is happened down the century and God has guided the believers through prophets. As the prophets listened to God so also today a priest has to seriously discern. There is no escaping from this primary duty.

Further his discernment has to find proper outlet/outlets whereby the faithful are enlightened and can see where God is leading them. One thing is certain, God is leading the present generation to the "promised" land but we have to discover the right path.

2. After spending years as a priest, how do you look at your priestly life personally? What is your understanding about the theology of priesthood?

Priestly life has been a liberating experience for me. As a priest I have had the opportunity and privilege to be in contact with various types of people in their specific situations. Somehow by God's grace, I have been a source of inspiration to quite many people. Difficulties, challenges, problems, moments of uncertainties came on the way. They were not obstructions or enslaving primarily but opportunities of finding new and better paths in life.

Theology of Priesthood: Well, priesthood is a gift for the community of the faithful. Apart from the faithful, priesthood has no meaning. From the Christian perspective, a priest is one among the faithful with a specific role for building up the community. He is called to share the joys, sorrows, struggles and success of the people. In spite of his weaknesses, he is to be a shepherd leading the flock entrusted to his care. Ultimately priesthood is a sharing in the mission of Jesus Christ fully. For Christ, this entailed carrying his cross in obedience to the Father who raises him from the dead in order to be the source of eternal life for those who believe in him. What is noble task!

3. What are the qualities to be carried out a priest to face challenges of today?

In order to face the challenges of today, a priest is to have the following qualities, among other qualities: Deep faith in the providence of God. Situation may seem very grim, but God has his way to make it transformative. Closeness to God in prayers and reflections. Detachment in order to able to reach out to the needy. Ability to read the signs of the time/situations. Optimism. Readiness to carry the cross with Jesus.

4. What do you think about woman ordination in the Catholic Church?

The ordination of women is a complex question. Theologically there does not seem to be any obstacle in ordaining women to priesthood. In the Catholic Church there has been a long tradition of only men being ordained and therefore, it is not so easy to change the tradition. When we look at priesthood as the sharing in the Mission of Christ, it easily understood and accepted that all the believers – men and women – are “priests”. This is the so-called common priesthood. It is this priesthood that is made visible in the specific role of the ordained priest. True, not everyone can be a priest because the community is in need of many other services which are equally important.



Interview 22

Sr. Catherina Purty DSA

1. Looking at the present situation such as Covid-19, economic slowdown, increasing unemployment, suffering poor, political turmoil, violence on social activists, how would you describe the role of a priest?

Looking at the present situation such as Covid-19, the role of a priest should be faithful to the call which received from God, believe in the power of the Creator who made everything with a word and without his knowledge nothing is going to happen. The role of a priest should be a prayerful, be a good shepherd, voice of voiceless, fight for justice for others, good example to the faithful, sincere with oneself and with others; and the task which entrusted to him, work with collaboration with the public and the members living with him.

2. After spending years as a priest, how do you look at your priestly life personally? What is your understanding about the theology of priesthood?

After spending years as a nun working with priests, I personally feel that a priest is especially chosen man with his human weakness made holy by God. We should look at them as holy persons and we should not judge them, but we must accept them as they are because they too are also human beings. They are anointed by God that is our contribution and faithfulness to the people of God.

3. What are the qualities to be carried out a priest to face challenges of today?

The qualities to be carried out a priest to face the challenges of today are good relationship with all, positive thinking, knowledgeable person, prayerful, good leader, forgiveness, obedient to the will of God and

their superiors, helpful, loving, availability, and away from alcohol.

4. What do you think about woman ordination in the Catholic Church?

The tradition and the history of Catholic Church do not speak about woman ordination. It speaks only for male – priesthood. Jesus also chose twelve apostles and they were male; and they are commissioned to do the same what Jesus did. They are called the foundation of the Church. Therefore, I am not in favor of woman ordination.

Johnny Kujur SJ
III B.Th.



Interview 23

Fr. Rajesh Samad IMS

1. How do you look at Catholic Priesthood today?

It is a God's providence that I am a priest today. It is a grace. I have become an instrument of this grace and blessing for the faithful. This is a choice given to all to become an inspiration for all by choosing the way of life as we live in the society. We become diocesan and religious Priests in the Catholic Church where I am consecrated and willingly committed my life by receiving the Vows of Chastity, Poverty and Obedience for the Kingdom of God. The Sacrament of Priesthood is an instrument for me to become a holy religious by encountering the Lord in the Eucharist daily and be inspired by the Word of God to live in holiness amidst the faithful doing all the responsibilities and duties rendered to me. I also see the profit from both the sides from God and the society where I live. I experience the grace, peace, joy, happiness of God upholding in joyful moments and sad moments.

God gives blessings abundantly to a priest whom he has consecrated and makes him like Him in all that he does. When I become Christ like, the inspirations are drawn from me by the faithful. Therefore, I see that Catholic priesthood is very much demanded in the society to lead the faithful towards God and become Christ like.

2. What are the challenges do you see the Catholic Priests face today?

There are so many challenges a Catholic priest faces at present scenario in the changing society where so many people are leaving the Christian values. People are having access to think differently and live as they like, the world offers before them. They do not follow any norms and rules and regulation of Catholic Church. They criticize the way of living and thinking in particular way. Many people have refused the way of the Church. People are losing their faith, going back to their old life. Politically, norms are being made to restrict to think about the good and new life, conversion of heart etc.

Government is taking upper hand in all the religious dealings and the practices of Catholic Church. The Catholic Sacraments are being questioned. Due to pandemic all the services in Church are restricted, sacraments are not given, and people are not able to attain the holy mass. Many people are frustrated in life and committing suicide, religious are not accepted in few dioceses. There is no loving acceptance in community life with many. There are many more challenges for the Catholic Priest to solve and make the people understand to go forward in their life according to the Will of God. A Priest is asked to speak it out the reality and stand for the poor in all the situations of society for the justice and values to prevail.



Interview 24

Fr. Nelson Lakra

1. How do you look at Catholic Priesthood today being a Priest or Nun or a Lay person?

Catholic Priesthood is a call to radical discipleship of Jesus. It means it is being called to serve Christ and His people. The Catholic Priest is respected as Christ Himself who is chosen from the people to be a mediator between God and the people. Today being a Catholic Priest is not easy. He has to sacrifice everything for the sake of Christ like family, possession and all his self-interests. He has to play an important role in the Church. For me, a Catholic priest is a spiritual leader who leads all the people in the path of righteousness, justice, peace and love.

2. What is the role of a priest in the Catholic Church and outside the Church?

A Catholic Priest has to play a great role in the Catholic Church. He is to proclaim the Word of God. Priests are the mediator between God and human being. He guides the people in the path of God. He performs functions like: preaching the Word of God and administering of the sacraments. As priest he has to play a greater role in the lives of people in the spiritual matters. Priest's role is to instruct the people on the matter of faith. He helps them to lead a life of sincerity and active charity. Priest also has to know what is happening in the world. What are the problems and challenges in the society? He has to understand the movements of culture, politics and economy. Therefore, People need priests for spiritual growth.

3. What are the Challenges do you see the Catholic priests face today?

Human life is challenging. The life of Priest is not easy. Catholic priests face a lot of challenges in their lives which are known by the people and also hidden. Today, first of all, the priests lack the true understanding of the words of our Lord and ecclesiology. They lack personal experience of God. They fail building up a healthy relationship with the people. There are also some personal problems like alcoholism, sexual scandals and finance mismanagement which do not allow priests to focus on their mission and therefore, the purpose of Priesthood fails.



Interview 25

Sr. Rashmi Kerketta DSA

1. How do you look at Catholic Priesthood today being a Priest or Nun or a Lay person?

First of all, Catholic Priest is a consecrated person, the chosen of God. He is also a human being but chosen one of God. A Priest is a spiritual leader who leads the faithful towards to the way of God. He is the one who breaks the word of God, offers Holy Mass and nourishes the faithful with the spiritual food. Holy Mass which is the centre of the Christian life, without a Priest the Holy Eucharist is not celebrated because through the Holy Eucharist faithful receive Christ into their hearts in the form of bread and wine.

However, when we see in day today's life, Catholic priests have some weaknesses and shortcoming, like selfishness, self-possession and not dedicated to their responsibilities and duties.

2. What is the role of a priest in the Catholic Church and outside the Church?

Inside the Church: A Priest as a good shepherd takes care of the faithful. Priest is a mediator between God and human beings; therefore, he hears the confession. A Priest's role is to baptize, to bless the marriage couple, to anoint the sick and to say the Holy Mass. His role is to build up the Christian community & helping faithful in solving their problems. A Priest has to make himself available in the needs of the faithful.

Outside of the Church: He has to keep up the loyalty by his appearance, people see Christ in him. He has to be sociable and an example for others.

3. What are the Challenges do you see the Catholic priests face today?

The world is full of challenges. There are different types of problems and challenges that Catholic Priests face today. Catholic Priests are the chosen one. Their life is different from the worldly life. They are in the world but not of the world. Today the world is very attractive. Priests are the human beings. Obviously, they might be attracted towards the world. They face the problems like temptation of alcohol, having money and to live luxury life as the people live. Sometimes they face problems in preaching the Gospel. Some people may point out their negativity; their weaknesses rather accepting their teaching. For small and simple reason people blame the priests in today's world. Sometimes the Priests are not respected because of their personal weaknesses. Priests have challenges against anti-Christian people. Above all taking the risk, they try to bring the faithful together in unity.

Libin Kerketta SJ
III B.Th.



Interview 26

Ms. Jijimol N. A.

1. How do you regard the priests of today?

Priests are the channels for the faithful to grow in spirit and reach the Truth (God). But it seems like a majority of priests today give priority to rituals, festivals, and social work. Consequently, we have a new generation who would not mind ignoring faith and faith life for worldly pleasures. The joy of seeking the Lord has become a rarity today. Those set apart for working for the greater glory of God have trapped themselves in self-glorification and fame.

2. What is the role of a priest in today's socio-political and economic context?

A priest should be able to conscientize people in matters of truth and untruth and justice and injustice according to the needs of the times. This must be carried out not just through proclamation and activities but primarily through their own lives.

We need priests who untainted by partisan or individualistic biases can proclaim the truth; who would boldly adhere to their prophetic duty.

3. How close or far are priests from being the representative of Jesus?

The Church views the priests as representatives of Christ and teaches that to the people of God. However, it seems like about 80 % of priests fail at inculcating the attitudes of Jesus in their own lives and sharing it with others. Christ has reduced to their preachings and proclamations. As a result, people who know these priests closely tend to extricate themselves from the Catholic Church and Christian way of life. Many priests thus appear as counter-representatives of Christ. However, the humble and simple lifestyle of a handful of priests remains an inspiration and motivation for the faithful even today.

4. Amid sexual and financial scandals do you envision any transformation necessary for the priestly life?

Pleasures of this world can disorient anyone who have not been able to discover the divine presence within them and recognise these desires as fleeting offers of the world. Those who seek and find that divine light within them and adhere to it will enlighten many just as Christ did. Hence, a right realization and repentance is crucial today.

Lijo Anthony SJ
III B.Th.



Interview 27

Fr. Arul SJ

1. Being a priest what do u feel about the scandal of the priest and the sacrifice of the priest (Fr. Stan SJ) in the Church?

The scandals of the priests are very disheartening to hear and the sacrifices of the priest has to be emulated. As a priest I need to follow the examples of virtuous priest and disregard the scandals as something to be avoided.

As Pope says “Who am I to judge?”, I will not judge in the first place but take it for my growth. But my life as a priest can affect the faith life of the people. As we live in a technological world of updates and trending every news about the priest spreads like fire. “The good that men do lives after them the good is oft interred in their bones” says Shakespeare. The bad things spread very fast.

2. Christian Priest entering into politics (India)- what have you to say?

No, I don’t want Priest to enter politics. Having Political opinion and expressing it vehemently can be a point to be agreed upon. But entering politics is not necessary.

Religion and politics should not be intertwined, intrinsically I am saying that Political leaders need not be religious leaders and vice versa. Pope as a head of a religious state would be enough, priests need not replicate it. Priest predominant help that he gives to the people is spiritual in nature. He sacrifices his family life only for that sake. If he politically engage himself he loses the real fervour of his sacrifices. The temptation of power and money is very much evident in this case.

3. How to understand priests as radical and prophetic discipleship in today’s context?

Christian priestly vocation has been prophetic all throughout two thousand centuries. In this world of instant gratification, being a priest following the vows, is prophetic and radical in itself.

Religious ideologies are sceptically look at. How are we going to explicate the priestly vocation to the youth hundred years from now? It is complicated even now also. The sacrifices are necessitated only in religious circle. Living a radical and prophetic life is very much necessary in priestly life. Priest should show no discord between our preaching and real life. Living the gospel values is a compelling duty of a priest.

This world is filled with lots of agnostics and atheists, in this circumstance prophetic nature of one’s vocation is very much difficult to be elucidated. The humanness will be given as an explanatory point for the sacrifices the priest makes. There are lot of people live as spinsters and bachelors to fulfil their dreams in their lives. What is speciality about priest’s bachelorhood? Their life should show that difference. But in reality, we do not see it.

4. What do priest lack in the perspective of lay people? What do people of other faith think about

priests?

Priests lack prayer life. They do not show real commitment to their vocation as a priest. They need to live a life radical and prophetic life. They need to live the gospel.

The educational qualification of all the priest should be augmented. Nowadays educational qualification out rightly defines who you are. Being a priest, the qualification is very much necessary to guide others. Priest need to engage themselves in serious debates and their homilies should define who they are. Their homilies should be sophisticated as well as simple. God's wisdom should guide them always. Their holiness should exhibit that they are very special being blessed by God.



Interview 28

Sr. Rosy

1. Being a priest what do you feel about the scandal of the priest and sacrifice of the priest (Fr. Stan SJ) in the church?

Church encourages priest to involve in social welfare activities and I personally feel that only certain priest who go out of their way to involve themselves 100% in their work for people welfare. There are quite a number of priests who get themselves involved in scandals. I need local church encourage such priests and not to discourage them in their work for the community. I feel as a church we have to engage ourselves more especially working for the downtrodden people. We received without money and therefore we have to give without money. There are many priests who look for financial gain in work they do for the people. More individuals are negatively inspired by them and they also get into the loop of gaining money than God's grace.

2. Christian Priests entering into politics (India) – What have you to say?

I feel politics is not something to be avoided. Priests should diligently involve themselves in people welfare politics other than party politics. I have witnessed few priests who have voluntarily involved themselves in people politics and they stand with people for protesting against anti people welfare issues. Even though our church does not allow us to directly involve in party politics we can in the least be with people for welfare issues and show our support.

3. How to understand priests as radical and prophetic discipleship in today's context?

According to the signs of the present times radical and prophetic priests are needed of the hour. They must be good leaders who can make a positive impact in the daily lives of ordinary people. I take the example of John the Baptist who was radical and prophetic in the same time. I feel we have to follow his example keeping with the signs of the times and be radical in our approach towards people's spiritual welfare and be prophetic in saving them from their loss of faith.

4. What do the priests lack in the perspective of lay people? What do the people of other faith think about priest?

Priests lack the friendliness that will make them approachable. People think twice before going to a priest to get help for their spiritual problems. The trust between a priest and the laity is diminishing in the present times. Lay people feel that priests are not always available for them to share their troubles and get counselling. More and more family visit is the need of the hour to build our church strong and enriching. People of other faiths see priest as a professional who conducts ceremonies. They feel priests are well off and they have power to influence people around them. People of other faith have a very stereotypical view of a Catholic priest based on media portrayals. They also think that a Catholic priest is humble and

they won't confront them when issues are raised before them avoiding conflicting situations.

Manickaraj SJ
III B.Th.



Interview 29
Fr. Paul Pragash SJ

1. Pope Francis has spoken about the need for the priests to be joyful. But we see in the current scenario the priests committing suicide. How do you evaluate the priest committing suicide and what would you suggest as a help keeping Jesus and his way of life in the background?

Anyone, leave alone priest, even a layman who is not rooted in his/her faith or ideology, will eventually lose meaning in life. Petty pleasurable things don't sustain one for long, all the more the priest who owns no family of his own. So, everyday union with one's own God/ideology matters a lot in living an authentic/joyful life. Suicide is an impulsive act, alien to a mature priest.

2. The life of a priest is to be responding to the signs of the time. We see some priests are oriented to only spiritual activities, some others to only social work and some others to only administrative work. And we also see some priests balancing all the aspects of life. In the history of the Church, we have seen priests as witnesses to faith as well as social cause. Keeping in mind the life of Fr. Stan what is your understanding on the works of a priest?

Integration is the key word in a priestly-ministerial life. As a priest, I am primarily a pastor. Pastoral care must reflect in every aspect of priestly life. In my perception, spirituality is constituent of personal integrity and ministry of preaching the Word (Through social work / dialogue / education / media / even a hermit's life / etc.). If one separates spirituality from ministries, then s/he lives in medieval darkness of meaningless mystified piety.

3. The people of other faiths do not normally understand or accept the aspect of celibacy of priesthood and chastity of religious life. We also see the pastors of other denominations carrying out the pastoral work being in the family. And some of them perform better than the celibate priests. What is your opinion the life of a Catholic priest in this regard? How do you justify your opinion?

There are utter failures among celibates, and equal number of failures among married pastors. So is the case with success rate on both pedestals. So, the status of being 'Married / Unmarried' matters the least. What matters is 'ruthless commitment' to the business one has voluntarily opted for, the business of 'Noble Priestly Ministry' of effectively promulgating the Word by one's preaching and practice. If one can do it, being a celibate, let him do it. If one can't as a celibate, let him marry and be a witness to the Word. Who bars anyone from 'being honest with oneself'?

4. Jesus did not have a place to lay his head according to his words. The Pope signs tagged "Servant of Servants". People want to see the priests as one among them like they live. But we see in the world today that priests do not lack any basic necessities if not a luxurious life. What is your take on this issue?

Poverty in itself has no value. The earth has enough for everyone to be decently equipped. Need-based life helps one lead a positive productive altruistic life. Greed-based life makes one frivolous and navel-gazing. Let us leave the clichés as 'Jesus said' 'Pope signs like this,' etc. Let us take care of the basic needs so that we can be effective in our work. Let us promote the culture of sharing so that everyone has what one needs. Of course, Jesus or Pope or such ones are some models for us.



Interview 30

Sr. Nirmala Arul IBVM

1. Pope Francis has spoken about the need for the priests to be joyful. But we see in the current scenario the priests committing suicide. How do you evaluate the priest committing suicide and what would you suggest as a help keeping Jesus and his way of life in the background?

- Prime importance not given to Jesus.
- A person doesn't decide to commit suicide overnight. So, the leaders of congregations and dioceses need to know the members individually (their traits) and care for everyone.
- Not able to maintain equilibrium in life situation.
- Too much importance to the emotional part of life.
- Guilty conscience leading to depression.
- Need to revise our formation
- Encourage personal prayer which will develop close relationship with Jesus.
- Engage in service which will help to be other oriented and brings meaning in life.
- Be sensitive to each other and offer help to those in need of psychological help.

2. The life of a priest is to be responding to the signs of the time. We see some priests are oriented to only spiritual activities, some others to only social work and some others to only administrative work. And we also see some priests balancing all the aspects of life. In the history of the Church, we have seen priests as witnesses to faith as well as social cause. Keeping in mind the life of Fr. Stan what is your understanding on the works of a priest?

- Priests need to learn to be human and be available for all the sacraments.
- To listen to people without judgments.
- A person who discerns the will of God continuously.
- Going out of the way to help.
- To have passion for the mission with compassion.
- To be rooted in God's love and wisdom tradition, responsive to the crisis and cry of the earth and relevant and innovative in our approach and response.
- To be daring to dream and have vision.

3. The people of other faiths do not normally understand or accept the aspect of celibacy of priesthood and chastity of religious life. We also see the pastors of other denominations carrying out the pastoral work being in the family. And some of them perform better than the celibate priests. What is your opinion the life of a Catholic priest in this regard? How do you justify your opinion?

- Celibacy enables a religious to love and serve more people.
- It doesn't restrict one to be committed to one person or just one family.
- To be available for ministry.
- Have the sense of freedom.
- To move freely for the work of God.

4. Jesus did not have a place to lay his head according to his words. The Pope signs tagged "Servant of Servants". People want to see the priests as one among them like they live. But we see in the

world today that priests do not lack any basic necessities if not a luxurious life. What is your take on this issue?

- A person's basic needs are to be fulfilled only then he/she can think of others.
- Many priests justify their needs.
- For some of them, it is very difficult to differentiate between Need and Want.
- Poverty is personal, one needs to learn to consciously say NO to consumerism.
- Having minimum would help one to have dependency on the providence of God and identify with the humanity.
- Only those who can live with minimum can identify with the deprived and feel with them.

Paul Raj SJ

III B.Th.



Interview 31

Sr. M. Angela A.C

Sr. M. Angela A.C., Carmel Bal Vihar, Sonari, Jamshedpur.

1. What is your understanding and experience of priesthood in the Catholic Church?

I would like to share a few points on given question in the light of these three passages from the New Testament: Heb. 4:14-16, 5: 7-9, Mt. 28:16-20, Jn. 21: 15-19.

Jesus is the Great High Priest. Jesus had to die to institute the Priesthood. "Though He was God, He is not surprised to our weaknesses, because He was tempted in every way, so one need to approach the Throne of Grace to remain in Jesus. This Priesthood is to continue God's mission. The greatest concern or the goal of the Priesthood is to do God's work on earth, spread His Kingdom and to save the souls of the faithful for His glory. Jesus handed over this Mandate "Go, therefore, and make disciples..... I am with you always, even to the end of the world." He Chose Peter, the first Vicar, saying: "Feed my lambs" (Jn. 21:15) and "Tend my sheep" (Jn. 21:16). It is a Trinitarian Mission. This mandate of Ministerial Priesthood is taken care by the College of Bishops, Pope being the Head of the Church and the Priests and deacons are the partners in the service of the Church.

The Hymn "We hold a treasure not made of gold in earthen vessels, wealth untold One treasure only, the Lord, the Christ in earthen vessels" by Fr. John Foley SJ, comes to my mind, as I reflect on the Priesthood. God has to put the Gospel Treasure in Earthen Vessels, which is the most precious and worthwhile. Though priests are special ministers of God, respect their frailty, because they are Vessels of Earth, not of Gold.

Priests are the men from among the people and by the people of God called and chosen, anointed and consecrated and set apart through the Sacrament of Holy Order, to serve the people of God. All priests whether Diocesans or Religious do share and exercise Sacred gift and trust by exercising their ministry by co-operating with the Bishop of the Diocese, with true humility and obedience. By their very life, they are to present themselves as another Christ to the people, holy and self-sacrificing and ready to lay down their lives for Christ who is their constant guide. They are mediators between God and human-kind. The sacred responsibility is to safe guard the Faith entrusted to the Church as well as strengthen the faith of the faithful, administer the sacraments and Celebrate the Eucharistic Sacrifice in memory of Christ. Primary role of pasturing and shepherding of the faithful lies in the hands of the Parish Priests whichever parish they are entrusted to. The Religious Priests in many places are entrusted the Parishes to

take care of the faithful and others continue their priestly ministry and Apostolic activities according to the Charism of the Congregations but under the jurisdiction of the local Bishop. The faithful who by our very Baptism are called to fulfill Common Priesthood as lay faithful collaborators.

In connection to this sacred ministry of the Priesthood, I have experienced the cumbersome and selfless responsibility under taken by the majority of Priests in establishing many churches in late 60s and 70s in the North. Their services were for pastoral care, required even at risking their personal comfort, energy, time and their life too. Those days did not have the knowledge of what is a church, theology or the function of the Church. They received maximum support from the faithful even though there were limited families, they felt their role was equally important. Priests have to exercise multiple roles – such as Fathers, mothers, brothers, guides, care takers, healers, teachers, preachers, listeners, giving hope to the hopeless etc. In a word they have been faithful to their Sacred Ministry. Now the Parishes are increased, most of them are well established and catholic population is also increased. But still there is a dire need to tend the flock and so some dioceses do prepare the Catechists to catechize in the remote areas before the priest reaches there, which is greatly appreciable.

2. What are the main qualities that you think today's priests must cultivate to assist the faithful in their faith journey in an effective way?

First of all, I would like to say that a Priest does not become a supernatural being just because he is the Minister of Christ. He is like a John the Baptist showing the way to Jesus Christ. He is very much a human being and not perfect. No one is worthy of such a Sacred Mission of Christ but Jesus has chosen them and set apart. Therefore, when I write the qualities they should cultivate does not mean, they should amass everything at once. It is a continuous growth in one's Spiritual Life therefore regular confession and spiritual direction is important. Encourage the faithful to go for confessions regularly. All human beings cherish motherly love, care and protection therefore, Priests should have special devotion to Mother Mary and make her their favorite Mother.

There are many qualities expected of a Priest to cultivate and to set good example to the faithful as Jesus did are: Keep Jesus close to your heart, the best and the only guide who learnt Father's will through prayer and suffering. Priests are naturally expected to be prayerful, caring, compassionate and understanding. They should take care of the flock and be available to them when they are in need. They are looked up to as good role models and are often asked for their opinion or advice therefore, expected to be approachable and friendly, Be a person of loving and compassionate father, brother or a friend. He should cultivate the caring attitude towards everyone including nuns and persons of other religions with due respect. They should be careful not to use vulgar language instead cultivate self-control - what they speak, how they speak and with whom they speak. In the earlier stages itself should learn self-control, discipline, time management and be trustworthy. Be a good listener, be sympathetic, be honest and truthful, tactful in giving advice. Be careful and mature in dealing with the opposite sex.

Must have some persons with whom you can confide honestly and be open so that it will enhance your priestly ministry. They could be older priest as well as experienced religious women who could be trusted with confidential matters and upheld your dignity and encourage you with positive strokes as well with proper guidance. Make an appointment to listen to the success stories of the elderly priests as well as nuns, not that they were perfect or faultless but how they learnt through them lessons for life. Hard working and less pleasure seeking. Reading good books. Cultivate disciplined life. Not to miss any opportunity when asked to offer special masses, to give talks, retreats, preach homily, hear confessions, visit the sick and elderly because some of these areas will enrich your life and there will be no room for boredom, loneliness, depression, selfishness, misuse of media, instead aim at making difference in people's lives. Let people know that they can confide in their parish priest and change their lives

for the better. A Priest should help in all possible ways to love, care and uphold the dignity of the other priests who live together. There should be no room for jealousy and enmity which causes them to harm others or destroy their life. Groom oneself so that others will respect as the representative of Christ. Never miss the opportunity to give positive strokes to others as they will come back to you in a same measure or more and you will find joy and fulfilment.

3. What are the different challenges that priests face in their priestly ministry in the church today?

Life is filled with trials and temptations, loneliness and disappointments and many unforeseen challenges. If the prayer life is strong then they are able to handle them. One of the most damaging consequences of mandatory is CELIBACY. There are a few men who find difficult to handle their sexual urge and at times it is highlighted or magnified worldwide about the sex abuse scandal of women and young girls, lies, denial, arrogance, selfishness, criminal acts and cowardice. In such an atmosphere Catholic priests nowadays live with fear and anxiety. This is the sad state of our Priesthood today. In order to preserve the sanctity of the Roman Catholic Church, there should be proper evaluation in this matter during the training period and be careful not to let men enter the priesthood with non-acceptable behaviour, abnormality and peculiar behaviour in their affections. Fear and anxiety prevail due to social media. In the Catholic Church a bishop, priest, or a deacon may be dismissed from their Priesthood, as a penalty for certain grave offenses, or by a papal dispensation granted for grave reasons therefore, to avoid such things, Priests need to consecrate themselves for God's honor and glory and follow the Lord and should live lives worthy of their calling to witness Christ.

What is observed is as soon as they become ordained priests, some of them behave or think that they know everything. They are free. Many are very holy, and lead saintly lives. Many good priests sometimes get burned out. Some become disillusioned or disenchanted. Some sadly end up disappointed and turn to inappropriate distractions and a few even embrace self-destructive behaviour. Some just wind up being cranky and bitter towards their people and towards the fellow priests who live or work with them. Due to these flaws some do not prepare their homilies well thus they are unable to direct and guide or instruct their faithful or catechize them. Sometimes Priests are not willing to go to remote areas where there are hardships no proper facilities. Inordinate desire for worldly attractions, luxurious life, money, power, addiction to media, alcohol, independent living, higher studies, aim for higher positions creeps in. Sometimes they face lack of respect from the faithful when they are weak and fall victims to their emotions and behaviour. Sometimes they are misunderstood due to wide social media coverage. Go through loneliness, depression, stress and lack of zeal. Church authorities – bishops or parish priests, principals, sometimes ill-treat or ignore their dreams in life. Sometimes label them. Some priests go through lack of co-operation from the people, fellow priests. Some fail to respect nuns who collaborate with them and misbehave with them and don't consider their religious duties apart from their apostolate, then they keep distance from the Priests. Gossip, dishonesty and envy should be wiped out. Priests should nurture and promote various talents of their fellow priests.

Prabhakar Oddipalli SJ

III B.Th.



Interview 32

Fr. K. M. Jacob SJ

Fr. K. M. Jacob SJ has been more than 70 years working as a Jesuit and more than 50 years as a priest, among Santals and he is one of the first missionaries from South India to Dumka - Raiganj. He worked in many new parishes of Dumka diocese and other dioceses of our province. While listening to him about

his vocation story, I could see the tears of joy, dropping down from his eyes. He is very grateful to God for fulfilling his dream of becoming a missionary. He is still young in heart.

1. Your own vocation to priesthood especially becoming a missionary among Santals. Why did you choose to serve people here where there are no facilities available?

I decided to be a priest from my early boyhood. I had no idea of mission. In Kerala, a classmate of mine mentioned about going to the mission to the North India and preach Christ. It sounded nice to me. Then onward I became firm about it. I heard name of Society of Jesus from another classmate. The name in Malayalam “Jeso Sabha” this name captivated me. This was in class nine. He was speaking to others, saying he had two brothers in Society of Jesus. After my (matric) school final, I wrote to the Jesuits of Trichy. I was admitted in the Pre - Novitiate while doing my PUC (Pre - University Course). After this I entered Novitiate in Dindigul of Madurai Province. When I realized that one is confined to the province where he is admitted, I expressed my desire to go to the North, which was denied by the Madurai Provincial. Later on, when Kerala province was established the provincial of Kerala also denied. I had asked the Provincial to send me to the North where there were less persons and more work. I did not choose to Santal since I did not know. It was God’s plan that Kerala province was asked to give persons to Santal Region of the Society of Jesus. I was given a chance and not forced. The same provincial who denied me asked me (written) whether I would like to come to the North. But he also told me that I should be faithful to the province which admitted me to the Society. I told him that Kerala province did not admit me into the Society. The provincial told me to consider before the Lord. And on 1 August 1962, I joined Santal Mission. On 2 September 1962 Santal Mission (Region) was formed. In 1989 Dumka - Raiganj Province was established. So, before this province was formed, I joined it. In this way I joined three provinces, Madurai, Kerala and Dumka - Raiganj but Society of Jesus only once.

2. What were the challenges you went through during your pastoral ministries?

It was a big challenge for us to nurture faith of the Catholics, to nourish and nurture, since they were new Christians and difficult to visit every now and then because of big number of Christians and vast area with no means to move around.

3. What suggestions would you give us as we prepare for priesthood?

Firm commitment to the service of faith and justice with stress on education of literacy with intellectual knowledge of the socio - economic development and growth in this area.

4. What works a Priest among Santals should do? (A role of a Priest among Santals)

The need of the place and time as Ignatius has told us. We should be committed to faith formation in the knowledge (catechism) and the prayer, prayer in their own languages. We need to be committed to education and to the poor, poor in mind and marginalized people.



Interview 33

Sr. Lalita Lugun, S.C.J.M

She has experience of working among Santals. She visited many families in Dumka diocese and she later on worked in English medium with Jesuits in Dumka district. At present she works as a teacher in a school.

1. Your experience of working among Santals in Dumka area.

My experience is very unique which I find difficult to share everything with you. However, there are

certain things I would like to share with you. Being accepted as their own. The experience of being accepted as their own was great. The respect they give to religious people is beyond imagination. People also expect from us as we work with them and for them. They are very happy when we visit their families.

2. What were the challenges you went through during your pastoral ministries?

The First challenge was Santali language which I had to learn. I also had to learn culture and their traditions, like greetings. We were told that Santals only accept and give more respect to missionaries who could speak their Santali language.

3. What suggestions would you give us as we prepare for priesthood?

Today we need morally righteous priests in our areas. So, become good priests. You become the voice of the silent, build the network of friendships and of compassionate.

4. What works a Priest among Santals should do? (A role of a Priest among Santals)

People need good education. Administering the sacraments and evangelization should be the first priority for a priest.

We also need leaders in the Catholic Church who could lead common people. You have to build Catholic lay people as leaders for the people. Today rarely we have political leaders who are Catholics.

Last few years the tribals have been divided into Christians and Sarna. Today priests need to work for the promotion of Inter - religious harmony.

Pratap Samad SJ

III B.Th.



Interview 34

Fr. Francis Xavier, O. Praem

Fr. Francis Xavier, O. Praem, Jamdara, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.

1. Did you feel any time the ministry of Priesthood that was out of context during the Corona Pandemic?

During the initial stages of lockdown, I was involved in distribution of ration and PPE kits to people. This gave me a sense of satisfaction that I was able to do a bit for the poor and the needy. However, there were moments where I felt the present form of priesthood is irrelevant especially during the pandemic for various reasons.

I could not venture out to meet people easily because of the lockdown. While people were struggling and (even now) for food, I was ensured of food, clothing and shelter. And thus, the structures I live in do not allow me to experience such harsh realities. I believe that living among the people and experiencing the struggles could help me to bear better witnesses. Hence, I had questioned if the priesthood amidst this pandemic has any relevance at all. There were not much newer ways found to reach out to people except through phonecalls and WhatsApp messages. However, it is not enough and newer ways are needed to reach out to the people especially for the spiritual growth.

2. What do you say about evangelical vows of Priesthood? Are they faithful enough to carry out the mission of Kingdom of God by practicing those vows?

Evangelical Counsels are sacred bonds, bind us wholly to God, to honour and serve Him. 1) to set oneself free from hindrances to love and worship Him; 2) to consecrate more thoroughly to the service to God. However, practicing the evangelical counsels towards advancement of the Kingdom of God with utmost

care is almost impossible. It demands complete dedication and commitment. Practicing evangelical counsels would enable us to carry out the mission of the Kingdom of God. We being fragile beings fail more often in day today life. Nevertheless, frequent reflection and trying to embark on our life will help us stay focused.

3. Do Priest think that they are above all once they are ordained? And how do you justify that?

The Ordination serves to be the occasion to provide more free life for priests. Prior to ordination, the candidate is under watch constantly and post ordination completely left free. Balancing from being watchful and being left totally free is an important element in life of priest. The Brothers who are not properly oriented and grown in freedom with responsibility take recourse that they are above everyone and develop the tendency they are absolutely free. This is more dangerous attitude one can develop. The Lord Jesus was always down to the earth and he respected people always. Hence, periodical reflection and assessment of one's life can help priests to get rid of such mentalities and grow matured persons where everyone is respected.

4. What do you think of the statement- Priest are here to serve and not to be served? What is your opinion about it?

I agree to the statement that the priests are here to serve and not to be served which goes in line with the statement of Jesus. Unfortunately, what I have seen is that the priests are given excess respects in all walks of life. Even, when a priest goes to an ordinary function, he is given preference over anybody and people take care of him more than required. This has widened the gap between people and priests. The people also do not expect the priests to work with the people at the grass root level although there are some priests who are able to do it. And they deserve big appreciation. The present generation would like to spread what one does through social media and other means. Driven by this, the priests are not exempted to this but succumb to it. Hence, the service and simplicity have little value. We cannot blame people for giving us excess respect. They do it out of reverence. And also, that is the kind of picture given to them. Taking into consideration of all the cultural elements and one's own character formation, it is difficult and challenge to live a life of service completely. However, it is possible with our own way of doing things. We need to keep away our comforts and walk differently embracing simplicity which may be contrary to the present context.

Alex Diamond SG

III B.Th.



Interview 35

Ms. Kumud Henry

She is the Co-ordinator of St. Xavier's High School, Patna.

1. How far the faithful will accept the women priests in the Church?

Our society has shown remarkable transition from patriarchal society. Moreover, the active participation of women in deepening the faith of the people and their valuable contribution will ensure the acceptance of the women priests by the faithful.

2. How to revitalize the pastoral care of the faithful today specially in terms of visiting the houses of the faithful and being with the faithful?

In order to revitalize the pastoral care, it is imperative for the priests to visit the houses of the faithful.

This will lead to the building of bond and trust between the priests and the faithful. This will strengthen their relationship.

3. Is it the work of a priest to raise his voice against the tyrannical governments and their unjust policies? Kindly give reasons.

It is the work of the priest as well as the people to raise their voice against the tyrannical and unjust policies of the governments. The priest's role should be that of a leader. But he alone cannot raise his voice. He needs the support of the people.

4. Have the priests lost their credibility in the Church as well as in civil society? How?

The priests have lost their credibility in the Church as well as in the civil society to some extent. This could be due to their failure in addressing some sensitive issues related to the faithful. Another reason could be misconception of people towards their work.

5. What is the role of priests in forming the faithful amid the people of different faiths in Patna?

It is important for priests to deepen the faith of the people in their religion by encouraging them to go to Church regularly and to read the Bible regularly so that they come closer to God. Once they come closer to God, their faith will deepen.



Interview 36

Sr. Jincy A.C

1. How far the faithful will accept the women priests in the Church?

It's a debatable question. It will take a long time for the faithful to be comfortable to accept the women priest in the Church.

2. How to revitalize the pastoral care of the faithful today specially in terms of visiting the houses of the faithful and being with the faithful?

Concentrate on a small group. Build up the contact. Help them to converse rather than advising or solving their problem. Be a listener. Main focus should not be on giving in kind.

3. Is it the work of a priest to raise his voice against the tyrannical governments and their unjust policies? Kindly give reasons.

Yes. It can be part of your ministry, but to be done in a prudent and mature way. Because Jesus came for the last and least so you too are called to be the voice of the voiceless, the common man doesn't understand the policies.

4. Have the priests lost their credibility in the Church as well as in civil society? How?

To some extent. Due to greed for power, position and money. Sexual abuse and misuse of Church resources are some of the reasons for losing the credibility.



Interview 37

Fr. Joseph Sebastian SJ

Fr. Joseph Sebastian SJ (PAT), Rector, St. Xavier's School, Patna, Director, PDD

1. How far the faithful will accept the women priests in the Church?

First of all, on this question I don't think a time has come for us to reflect how the faithful will accept because the question of women becoming priest is a closed chapter. Pope Francis has clearly said about it and even the previous Pope has said. For me there is a confusion between giving equal dignity to women and confusing with the role of priesthood. We must by all means acknowledge the capabilities of women. They should be treated equally and respectfully and given responsibilities at various levels of the Church. But then the Church has got a strong tradition of a priesthood. Now only when women become priest, then they are given equal treatment? I do not believe it. That is in fact, we are putting this Sacramental priesthood into a kind of dignified role. I am against this. The dignity of a person is intact whether he/she is a priest or a deacon or a brother or a sister. Dignity cannot be equated with the role. It is unconscious desire within us saying that unless I become priest, I am not given equal treatment.

It has more of theological and traditional reason. The tradition that is being carried forward for whatever reason. I don't think it is immediately going to be changed and even if it changes, I don't think that it is going to make a major difference in the actual quality of the Church. I am for a complete recognition of the worth and value of women at all levels. Pope Francis has recently appointed women to the highest diplomatic and administrative posts in Vatican. Similarly, in each diocese and each parish we can give some responsibilities to women. There are various ways in each diocese or parish where women can play a crucial role. Actually, the real oppressor comes sometimes the parish priest or the priest concerned. He would like to use the sisters for sacristan's works and for menial task never ever treating them as equal partners, partners in decision making and partners in mission.

So, my understanding is that it is important for us to differentiate the grace God has given to both men and women. We are called to complement each other. We should not put this priesthood in too much of the pedestal. We must consider it within the tradition of the Church. At the same time, we must give ample opportunity and equal partnership to women. I think the laity will accept that part. There are some Anglican churches where some Anglican women are priests. But then it has not made much of a difference in the quality of the women there. Even they have difficulty because that is not meant for them theologically and traditionally.

How qualitatively it is going to make a difference. It should be of qualitative change. Priesthood should not be a struggle for power. If we are going for power struggle presentation in a certain sociological and political representation in a certain criterion, I think we are again diluting the very notion of priesthood. Christ is the best example for this. The Risen Christ was revealed to a woman. She was missioned to go and communicate that news to all. He gave utmost respect to women and women companions. But he called the twelve men as his apostles to move around with him. Therefore, that has become a tradition. If the things have to be changed, it has to change but it will take time. But I am not too much worried about that change.

2. How to revitalize the pastoral care of the faithful today specially in terms of visiting the houses of the faithful and being with the faithful?

I think, it is a dire need. We tend to remain in our comfort zones. We have to move out of ourselves. Pope Francis invites us to meet people on the crossroads and in existential peripheries. He says, "We must be also a point of encounter for people to meet God." We have laid down our lives as priests and religious. This life does not belong to us. Once we start treating it as own our private time and our own convenience, as if we are the rulers of the faithful, then the whole attitude changes. Therefore, it is our responsibility to communicate the faith, clarify the faith and bring Jesus to people.

I think therefore, human fraternity is important: going, visiting, knowing people and meeting them where they are. If they are in periphery we have to go to the periphery. We cannot bring the periphery to our four-walls. That is an artificial thing. So, meeting people where they are, visiting them, accompanying them, participating in their struggles and praying with them will strengthen the faithful in their faith. These are all the experiences; they would cherish as God the "Emmanuel" is with them, because people

tend to look at us as people dedicated to God. Their experience of God mostly comes from how we relate with them. The qualities of God, the ways of God and the real God experience they understand from our visiting and prayer. Most of the time, they get the God experience, it is through their interaction with the religious and priests. So, we can either hamper or enhance their faith.

3. Is it the work of a priest to raise his voice against the tyrannical governments and their unjust policies? Kindly give reasons.

Surely, we believe in faith that does justice and without justice there is no love. Justice is the minimum in love. We stand with the people who are oppressed, people who are being treated unjustly and we align with them. In history it matters, where we stand and what stand we take. We cannot be neutral. Therefore, we must actively participate in people's struggle to be with them in their quest for liberation, their quest for justice and quest for human dignity and well-being.

One more thing I feel, we also need to be the educators of this, not just struggling with them. If forming of the ideas of basic human dignity, human rights and justice is not there in us, our priesthoodness is not complete. We must form the minds and hearts of the laity, teachers, students and youth. That's our primary goal. We are not going to be political administrators. I don't think we are going to be good political administrators. Our role should be basically to enlighten people regarding these things in solidarity with them and solidarity with the suffering masses.

We must oppose the tyrannical governments and their unjust policies and if we have to give our life we must give for this cause. I am against direct entering into electoral politics. The system already we have is a sinful system and changing one system from another does not make any difference. Essentially our contribution has to be of enlightening people, standing with them in solidarity and creating new human being. So that from new human beings and liberated human beings we can bring out new systems that deliver justice. It may be an endless journey; a long process and it may be utopia but we need to persevere and be patient.

4. Have the priests lost their credibility in the Church as well as in civil society? How?

Yes and no! People still have great hope in priests. There are some people who look at the priests for their guidance and leadership. Of course, there are some sexual scandals, the lavish individual life-style of priests, enmity among the priests, power struggle, politics in the Church all these surely tarnish the image of priests in the Church as well as in civil society. We have to fall back to our original call to imitate Christ. We need to be true representatives of Christ for people. We are other Christ for people on the face of the earth in tangible way. It is through our joyful following of Christ whole heartedly and selflessly; we can reclaim this lost credibility.

If somebody is not happy as a priest and looking for some selfish motive, he should not be admitted for the priesthood. A priest who is looking for somebody's emotional needs, accumulating financial fortunes for himself, family and friends will never put on Jesus. These people find it difficult to follow Christ and always look for self-will. The people who cannot find God's will in the authority, they have no place in the priesthood. These people may do well in other forms of vocation. We should have certain criterion for selecting people for priesthood. Actually, there is a small number of persons who should have never been priests, they are actually tarnishing the whole image of priesthood. Whether it is sexual scandals, politics, power struggle, groupism and ethnicity are all these created by these small number of people. These people are not in majority. Such people have no aptitude of radical following of Christ. I think, they should be screened well before they enter the priesthood.

5. What is the role of priests in forming the faithful amid the people of different faiths in Patna?

The priests are the duty bound to form the faith of the faithful. Most of us ironically, do not have a personal experience of Jesus. Therefore, when we talk about faith, it does not convince people. We have nothing much to share with the people. Faith formation does not come by looking at someone's homily, reading something from there or trying to get some ideas from there and deliver it to somebody. These kinds of

things will never form the faith of the faithful. Faith formation happens when the priest shares from his deep experience he has in prayer. Faith formation happens when he shares from his life experience in solidarity with people. Life experience has much to share with the people.

Faith formation should be an urgent concern for us in Patna specially looking at our local Church. It is relatively a new Church. People have accepted Christ in a mixed society with other religions living alone sometimes one family or two families in a village surrounded by other faiths and festivals. They have a lot of challenges from other religious settings and RSS. They even encounter so much problems in marriage and in their daily lives. The priests have to accompany the faithful in innovative ways. They need to teach them the truth about Christ. There should be passion in the priests to communicate the faith to the faithful. The people are struggling actually. Thus, the priests need to guide them and be with them in their difficulty. There is no ready made solution for the problems, for instance getting a spouse from the same faith for marriage or questioning the purity of faith while participating in the festivities of other faiths. All these things are some of the existential difficulties. If the priests have genuine encounter with Christ, we can be present there and lead people taking them to the Christian values.

We also run hostels at many places. The students stay with us for 10 years or 15 years but there is no quality in their faith. It is a matter of concern for us. There are some catechism classes after the Sunday mass but nobody talks to them the real truth of Christian values. They do not have God experience in so many years of their life. That requires a great effort from the parish community or the hostel community and the teachers. What we are interested often is mainly in terms of certain discipline, certain decorum and fulfilling certain kind of obligations but not exactly addressing to form them. Therefore, we the priests need a lot more generosity, a lot more sharing, a lot more understanding and a lot more selflessness.

We are too much afraid. We are also trying to defend ourselves so much. We are afraid to love. We are afraid to share. We are afraid to talk about our faith. We are afraid to teach our faith. There is no creativity in teaching our faith. The youth and the other students who stay with us in our hostels and our parishes for 10 to 15 years, at least they should be able to understand the beauty of Christian faith and the truth of Christian faith. They should have the passion for Christ.

Rajeev Ranjan SJ

III B.Th.



Interview 38

Fr. Rajeev Paul IMS

1. Who is a priest according to you?

A priest is a mediator between God and his people. It is his responsibility to make them realise their dignity as the children of God. In the Christological sense help them believe that they are Christophany. They need to teach that everyone has the potentiality to become Christ. We too share the same body as Christ did during his earthly ministry.

A real priest is the incarnation of Christ (altus Christus as St. Francis calls). Christ was with the people all times and lived for the upliftment of the downtrodden. Therefore, priests are called to be another Christ who is enriching people to walk towards Kingdom of God on earth.

2. Is priesthood relevant in the present times? (pandemic, scandals in the church)

Yes, priesthood is very relevant today more than any other times. But the relevance depends on genuine priests, who know the taste of the Father and smell of the sheep. Amidst of all these scandals people flock

to holy men of God for their consonance and sharing. People love real and genuine priests who have no double stand, who says the truth and does it with very life. Problems and scandals are part and partial of human society. Even Judas one among the twelve betrayed Jesus. But Jesus said, it was better for him if he were not born. I must live my life in God and accountable to God and his people.

3. How do you see the weakness of a priest who falls into problems and struggles to get up to live an authentic life?

Priests are also human beings with bone and flesh but are called for a different way of life that is consecrated life. To live our vows is the gift from God but we are to be united with him. If we fall into problems because of our carelessness in spiritual and temporal matters we are the cause of our downfall. The stand of the Church in the sexual misconducts is very clear- no tolerance. Because the Church is not only the home of priests but also of the victims. Thus, the Church gives preference to the victims rather the accuser. However, the priests must be given an opportunity to repent and be united with the forgiving Father. In my views the Church must always stand with the victims as Christ did. We can be compassionate to the fallen priest but make sure justice is done to all at any cost.



Interview 39

Sr. Ann MMM

Sr. Ann belongs to the Missionaries of Mary Mediatrix of Andhra province.

1. Who is a priest according to you?

A good priest's qualities are always reflected on the very life style. He, who is closer to God, in his ministry, his friendly and loving communication with people, his relationship with people and in his daily reflection on the word of God. He should be a man of prayer, which would draw more people to God, also which will help him to encourage in his vocation and Mission activity. Priest, who is a mediator of grace for the people of God. A person who is next to Christ; accountable, responsible and holy. A leader of the people of God.

2. Is priesthood relevant in the present times?

Yes, it is very relevant. Missionary urgency is always there. The Kingdom of God is present and not yet. We need priest to enrich the people of God, administer the sacraments and be another Christ in the present world. Problems are always there but the grace of God is above all. We do not guide the church but the Holy Spirit. We need priests who are the compassionate heart of Christ.

3. How do you see the weakness of a priest who fall into problems and struggling to get up and live an authentic life?

As per my experience and observation, it is reflected that we are humans and everyone has both weaknesses and strengths. However, it should not lead us to fall again and again. The priests are engaged in many areas in their daily zealous ministry despite many obstacles. Unfortunately, the mass media ignores these generous, quiet and hardworking priests and true witnesses of the greater love, devoted to their duty.

Becoming priest is to be with Christ. Priesthood is not just for respect, position, money or any other worldly power and authority but for Christ alone and his Kingdom. But In this present world, priests are forgetting to imitate Jesus. Jesus is our guru who engaged himself in many works of God. He is only solution for our human weaknesses. We need to hold his fingers even if we have lost the connection. He will help us to live a holy life. Along with our duties spend time in prayer and reflections. Scandals are there.

We need to pray for the Church and our priests along with penance.

4. Your view on women priesthood- are all human beings called to be priests of Christ?

Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist and said, “Take this all of you eat it, this is my Body and take this and drink this is my Blood which is given for you. Do this in memory of me”. As per my knowledge, Jesus gave this command to the disciples to do in His Memory. So, the priests are in the place of Jesus Christ. Thus, it is being continued by the ordained priests.

The Catholic Church is dominated by male. She is a little slow in bringing change. We will be happy if the Church is open to introspect her life. At the same time, we are happy to serve the people of God as lay missionaries. We look forward for newness in the Church. Women stood by Jesus Christ at the foot of the Cross. They are the first missionary. The good news of resurrection of Jesus was first spread by the women. It is the supporting evidence of the importance of women as leaders in the early Church. Church should not discriminate any section of people on the basis of gender. Christ came to this earth for all.

Rijo Joseph IMS
III B.Th.



Interview 40

Fr. Antonysamy

1. As a priest/religious person yourself, do you see any difference in the life style, commitment, enthusiasm, a sense of mission and identity of priests, between those who lived some centuries/de-cades ago, and the priests of the contemporary?

Yes, I do see some differences. The priests of our time seem to be distracted with many things sometime with peripheral matters. There is decadence in their commitments to religious duties and in their enthusiasm to pastoral ministry and mission. Some of them seem to have missed their focus in life and are deviated from right orientation in life. Because of the close association with family and with the world, many get themselves lost into them. Though the above mentioned situations and problems were there in the recent past decades, the ratio of the priests affected by these are increasing rapidly in the present time.

2. According to the time and the context, what do you expect from today's priests?

The formation of the candidates for priesthood is to be an integrated one – integrated with intellectual knowledge and personality development. Their formation – both under and ongoing formations – must enhance them to make right choices in day-to-day activities and must enable them to lead a disciplined life. They must be committed to the service of the Church and her faithful; and they need to take personal efforts to guard themselves in order that they are not deviated or succumbed to any worldly attachments/ allurements.

3. How do the people of other faith perceive the role and function of Christian priests? Do the scandals committed by priests affect their priestly ministry in the Church?

The people of other faith perceive the Christian priests with great dignity and reverence. They see in us as persons equipped with intellectual and divine knowledge and committed to the service of the poor and the needy.

The scandals committed by the priests do affect their priestly ministry in the Church.



Interview 41

Sr. Gemma Rose OSU

1. As a priest/religious nun/a lay person yourself, do you see any difference in the life style, commitment, enthusiasm, a sense of mission and identity of priests, between those who lived some centuries/decades ago, and the priests of the contemporary?

Life Style: The priests of the olden had a very simple life style. Their life was based on their life of prayer. I have seen them praying the rosary and praying the divine office. They owned the people wherever they went. I have not seen the priests today praying. I see them always busy. Priests of 2 to 4 decades ago lived on with what the people provided or the parish owned. They shared with people what they had. After the Holy Mass and breakfast in the morning, they were seen on the bicycle moving towards the villages, to be with the people. Now the priests are busy in their institutions only.

Commitment: They were available for the people all the time, day or night, especially for the sacrament of the sick and confession. They visited the families and knew each family by name. Now the priests are not found in the parish. Even if they are there, they are not available for the sick and dying. In olden days priests took turn to sit for confession every day before mass. Nowadays they are not there. Priests of the present time do not know the people. They are involved with their families or the institutions alone.

Enthusiasm: Yes, in olden days, I have seen the enthusiasm of the priests in the mission. I have seen joy and energy on their faces in whatever they did. I still see the joy and enthusiasm in the young priests for sometime after the ordination, but this fades away very soon.

Sense of mission: In those days each priest was a missionary. They had a sense of mission in their own person and presence. They shared the love and presence of God in all that they did. Now the priests have become work oriented and money minded. The pastoral care of the people is neglected.

Identity: Few decades back the Christians and non- Christians knew that a priest is the man of God. Now sometimes it is even difficult to recognize them, if they are priests. Often, we hear the scandal of their bad conduct or lack of commitment. So, the respect and dignity of a priest is less and less.

2. According to the time and the context, what do you expect from today's priests?

I expect a priest to be an anointed and consecrated holy person. He is consecrated to God for the service of his people. He is expected to be like Christ to love, serve and die for his people. I expect him to have deep faith in God and deep love for his people. I expect him to be very simple, humble, obedient and free person with the inner freedom, a free person to love all. He also must have a sense of justice and defender of human rights.

Rose Usha Kujur, OSU

III B.Th.



Interview 42

Fr. Rajat Hassa Purti, SJ

Fr. Rajat Hassa Purti, SJ, Parish Priest Nikum Community, Apostolic Prefecture of Battambang, Cambodia.

1. What is your personal understanding of priesthood in the Catholic Church – identity, formation, life-style, etc.?

Priesthood is a call to serve God and God's people very specially the marginalized. Priests are chosen from among the people by and for God and God's people. They try to imitate Jesus Christ in their poverty, chastity and obedience. They are the servants of Christ's mission. They are the living images of Christ the poor and holy. They are the signs of the saving presence of God in the world. They are the ministers of the sacraments of the Church.

The formation of the priests is well organized. The different stages of formation to the priesthood help the priests to get intellectual, spiritual, psychological and pastoral formation to be fit instruments for God's mission.

The priests in general live a simple life according to the people's standard of life. They identify themselves with the people they serve. They adapt themselves to the life and culture of the people. They manifest Christ the poor in their day today life. They journey together with the people.

2. What do people expect from Catholic Priesthood?

People expect a certain level of holiness, intellectual, spiritual, psychological and pastoral maturity from the Catholic priests to listen to them who come with varieties of needs and problems. The people expect from the Catholic priests that they must be available for the people. They must know and take care of their sheep. They expect from the priests that they accompany the people in their life journey. People expect that the priests are the men of prayer, love, apostolic zeal and responsibility.

3. What challenges does a priest face in today's complex context?

The great challenge the priests face in today's complex context is to be relevant to signs of the time and needs of all the people irrespective of their ages, sexes and economic status. They face the challenge of living up their consecrated, vowed and committed life to God and God's people. They are being affected adversely by growing individualism, materialism, institutionalization so on and so forth.

4. How is the ministerial priesthood relevant in the context of religious plurality?

The ministerial priesthood has been observing and promoting religious tolerance. The priests of today preach the kingdom values of love, service, peace, freedom, reconciliation, inter-religious-dialogue, unity and justice to the world. All the religions teach how to live in peace and harmony. All religions teach to love, respect and serve human beings. Today's priesthood is for the love and service of the humanity. The Catholic priesthood become a sign of unity, and fraternity among all the people of God.



Interview 43

Fr. Elias Surin SJ

Fr. Elias Surin SJ, Pastoral Ministries, St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Guyana, South America.

1. What is your personal understanding of priesthood in the Catholic Church – identity, formation, life-style, etc.?

The priesthood is special vocation to continue the salvific work of God by becoming another Christ. It is a total surrender to God, total dependence on God. It is God who acts through me. I feel so privileged to celebrate the Holy Eucharist which is the centre of my life, the source and summit of the Christian life. I am priest for the world. I am a person of God. Personal prayer keeps me united with God.

2. What challenges does a priest face in today's complex context?

These are some of the challenges a priest faces in today's complex context- Constant Discernment- worldly attractions and the will of God. To build a Christian Community- One heart and one mind. To keep the faith active and alive – to become light and salt of the world. Personal Care of a priest- understanding, trust, belongingness, Care, concern, support, encouragement, guidance. Opportunities to excel in his field- with our knowledge and experience we need the degree to be more effective in our mission.

3. How is the ministerial priesthood relevant in the context of religious plurality?

Ministerial Priesthood is a blessing for the world. There are people longing for love, longing for peace, longing for justice. A Catholic Priest is a priest for the world. He is the frontier; he has the capacity to reach out everyone. His life is a living message of God.

Sandeep Kujur, SJ
III B.Th.



Interview 44

Fr. Cyril Soren

1. What are the major challenges of Priests in the land of Santhal Parganas?

Santal Pargana is the heartland of Second Homogenous tribe of India. Santals have a very rich tradition and culture. Thus, to work among the Santals is a very enriching experience as the Vicar of Christ. However, challenges are many but to enumerate are as follows. People of this land are very illiterate and eventually they are exploited by the other non-tribal people. Santals' livelihood is dependent on agriculture. For them Land is very sacred. All their rituals and culture are based on land. But the sad thing is that now these people are slowly displaced due to mining and becoming a bonded labourer in their own land and forgetting their culture. Thus, to work amidst this situation required ardent hard work and compassion for the people.

2. How to revive the spirit of pioneers in Santal Parganas in the wake of mediocrity?

I do not believe in mediocrity and excellence rather in the transformation of heart as well as rootedness of one's life in the gospel values with zeal for the pastoral care deep down love for people. We do not know whether the pioneers were mediocre or excellent but we know that their love for people and mission was immense which is the result of rootedness in the gospel value. Mediocrity and excellence have no value once one is deeply rooted in Jesus Christ.

3. What is the role of a priest in the faith formation in Tribals' areas?

Santal Parganas is very fertile land for evangelization and all the mission endeavours are thriving well. Therefore, the role of priest is immense in the faith formation of the people. The major role for priests is to enhance the faith of the people towards maturity of faith.

4. Where is the place of local priests in the context of Universal Church?

Catholic Church is the communion of churches and believes in the unity in diversity in liturgy, and culture. It respects the diversity and differences. Local priest plays a very important role in the unity of the Church. It bridges the universal faith into local context with its rich culture and tradition without compromising the gospel value. Since Catholic Church is the communion of Churches, each Church is important to strengthen the Universal Church. A particular Church consists of diocesan Bishop, presbyters and faithful. To build up the Church, the clergies are given priority. It is the role of the priests to build up the Universal Church by strengthening the faithful. In order to strengthen, the priests have to

live exemplary life and faithful to their mission entrusted by the Church.



Interview 45

Sr. Paulina Soren

1. How to revive the spirit of pioneers in Santal Parganas in the wake of mediocrity?

To be prayerful and cultivating the positive attitude in one's own life are the essential elements to revive the spirit of the pioneers. The pioneers wanted to spread the Word of God by teaching good values in life. They brought awareness among the people by means of education and making them realize their rights and justice. They worked ardently, tirelessly, consistently to spread the good news among the local people. The local priests also should work hard to fulfill the dreams of the pioneers.

2. What is the role of a priest in the faith formation in Tribals' areas?

A priest plays a vital role in the faith formation of people. All the priests are expected to live good and moral lives. They should be examples to others in their locality. They should live a moderate life. When the priests live exemplary life the faith formation becomes easy for them. Seeing the lifestyle of the priests and they are edified and they become rooted in the faith. Even those who have not known Christ yet, they too are drawn towards Christianity.

3. Where is the place of local priests in the context of Universal Church?

Universal Church reflects in the local Church. Local Church makes the Universal Church. Therefore, in order to build up the Universal Church, the local Church should be rooted in the mission and the Word of God. When the local priests take life seriously and fulfill their duties well, we can expect of a strong Church. In the present context of Covid-19 since the local Church is unable to administer sacraments the universal Church is suffering.

Stanislaus Murmu SJ

III B.Th.



Interview 46

Fr. Philip Kurisummootil

Fr. Philip Kurisummootil MSFS, SFSMission, Lengpui, Mizoram.

1. What does it mean to be a Catholic priest amidst the protestant community?

A few years of living in a protestant dominated area as a catholic priest convince me that it is of significant relevance to extend the presence of catholic priesthood in its all possible visibilities. First of all, making our presence felt in the typical identity as a catholic priest will help to reduce the psychological opposition people might possess in the mind. The person of the locality is ignorant about many aspects of the priest, priesthood and the Catholic Church. When they do experience what we are for being a priest, they also come to know that we are not actual threats and but helpful assistance. One of the best examples for what I am trying to communicate is related to the scenario of education. We can conformingly say that our educational endeavours are significant tools to make people feel not only that

we are not a threat, but catalyst agents for their societal and life development. People those who come to know who is a catholic priest amidst denominational population appreciate and keep in respect our identity. Through the educational intervention the human relationship factor is established in ease which would be difficult in any other ways. If the Catholic Church thinks of intervening within protestant dominated society considering and prioritizing establishment of human relationship factor, that will be a significant step to form methods of evangelization in protestant dominated area. Here in the society, they hardly know any details of about the life style of a catholic priest or what catholic priesthood means. The only way to make them familiarize is to expose ourselves in our celebrations, liturgy, and in catholic education as much as possible. It is of relevance that we enter into ministries that help to make people really experience that we are for them and not against them.

2. Do the schools, colleges, and other related institutions hinder a catholic priest to fully administer his ministerial priesthood?

As far as I can personally understand, it need not necessarily be a hindrance but can become a hindrance. If a priest has the spiritual maturity of exercising those aspects as a ministry, he would be living what he is supposed to be living. The real question therefore is about understanding and coming in terms with what ministry is and how it is different from a professional work. The question here is also very much related to a life of identity. There need to be recognition that a priest is a person whose personhood is gradually being unfolded, who cannot contain himself with his identity as a priest who performs certain rituals for the people. He needs to live his own personal expression within his identity as a priest. For example, an artist- priest, a film director priest, a psychologist priest is all really important not only because it is a professional living, more than that it is a personal expression. These aspects can wonderfully evolve in unimaginable ways within one's priest identity. Such an understanding of priest is yet to emerge as acceptable to the public and to the internal administrative authorities of the Church. It can shape and form, broaden and deepen one's own understanding of who a priest is. Such expressions of being a priest will necessarily remain a powerful witnessing dimension in the life of the church. But within the Church the possibilities for such kinds of unfolding are limited because the Church possesses less of spiritual view and more of religious view survives as a deciding factor. A profession or career can never substitute a ministry. But ministry as a deeper way of Christian living truly possesses the capacity receives into itself the unfolding of the personhood of the priest. Two questions remain relevant. Does the person of the priest truly comprehend what ministry truly means? Is an insight and realization that personhood can evolve itself within ministry embracing multi dimension of this unfolding?

3. How can a priest experience, encounter and understand the anguish and frustration of the catholic community he lives in?

The first thing is to be a person who is able to make relationship and to maintain it. A priest is a public figure; the specialty of his life calls him to be relational. It is then that people will feel the approachability and availability. Unfortunately, this does not happen often. For people priest is a person at a distance who is to be approached for when there is a sick-call and for prayer meetings. Relationship which has full human dimensions rarely occurs between priest and the people. Rarely do people feel that priest is a person who can really get involved in matters of very personal concerns. The kind of parish structure that has come to evolve does not support real personal interaction at a human level. It is basically administrative. Added to this, in the north eastern context a priest is also called to be busy with schools. Therefore, the question of sharing of the people's frustrations, problems and anxieties is of relevance. Here are a few ways that can be thought of

1. Since administrative structure is not something to be done away with, incorporate into its mechanisms that facilitate relationship dimensions, like counselling, rehabilitation and health care. We need structures that make people feel that this is the place I can move with my problems, pains and confusions. Parish priests or other people's office does not give this feel any more. People come to offer mass

intentions, admission jobs, and to speak about the performance of their student children.

2. Family visits is a wonderful opportunity, especially when people are sick or in helpless situations. Many priests do it though not often. This aspect has power to maintain binding relationship.

3. Reorient the homily structure. Include in homilies the possible problems a family could face. Explain the success stories of priests past encounter, or inspiring anecdotes. People who hear similar stories to their own won't feel isolated and it is likely that people come to the priest to share their stories of pain and confusions after they have come to know that their situations are shared.

4. Show interest in the family affairs like marriage, house making, celebrations, financial liabilities etc, if possible, organize help. In short when these relationship platforms are established people generally feel to talk about their life of pain, shame, guilt and fear.

5. Arrange seminars and program that address life issue. If general awareness is given people will come to know these are issues to be addressed. They will seek help. Then a priest can function as agents of change either through themselves or through others.

4. What are some of the ways a priest represents the visible Christ who is active and present among his people?

1. The priest today needs to make visible the teaching Christ. Today the need is not only to pass information but people need to be led to convictions. One of the important functions of this teaching dimension is to lead people to awareness that life in the world is only a relative one. That settling their own life and their children's life is only one of the roles and functions. Today there are many problems that need to be settled. Most majority live life as though death is the end of human life and that all that a person needs to gain needs to gain here. Therefore, many people might be living their life with no reconciliation with the fact of mortality. A priest's teaching job is therefore deep and wide.

2. A priest as the person who makes alive Christ in his person is fulfilling an important function when he is able to give hope. There are many people who have gone hopeless. People experience real depression at the old age because of life style they had employed in the youth. Working and living for values that has only a single dimension of living totally in the experiential world gradually led them to depression and hopelessness. The priest must bring in hope that things can be set alright even now at the time of utter helplessness. (For me everything is possible through Christ)

3. A priest authoritatively need to scold, rebuke, admonish and correct his people amidst when anti-Christian values are held in esteem like the aged being deposited in old age home or in other care homes or about the cases of abortion, about being so casual about physical relationship etc.

4. The poor need to be given a special preference always, the homeless and hungry, and people who are in deficit for health care expenses and education should be considered with all the means possible to settle their issues.

5. The families where people are there in the prison, or people who struggle with law suit issues, the families where alcohol and drug addicts are present, families who undergo the burden of financial liabilities, families which has mentally ill people should be given heart and ear sufficiently to listen to them and share their sorrows and anxieties. Priest as living Christ should do everything possible to direct such people and families towards solutions that are possible or at educating them to face the difficulties in sufficient strength.



Interview 47

Sr. Rebecca Lalhmachhuani

Sr. Rebecca Lalhmachhuani MSMHC. St Mary's Covent, Don Bosco Parish, Seling, Mizoram

1. What does it mean to be a Catholic priest amidst the protestant community?

A Catholic priest follows the Gospel values amidst the Protestant Community. Witnessing values are significant amidst the Protestants. Definitely they have great regard and respect for them. Therefore, it is truly important to be genuine and transparent. They observe everything the priest does and speaks. Some Protestants try to see a catholic priest as an opposing element with regard to religion and also in the educational intuitions. Attending services with them whenever call upon is a must.

2. Do schools, colleges and other related institutions hinder and a Catholic priest to fully administer his ministerial priesthood?

Yes, it is true that schools, colleges and other related institutions hinder a catholic priest to administer his ministerial priesthood. Some priests do have the tendency to give importance to the educational institution where he fully gets involved. Though the results in the schools are well appreciated in and around the state and eventually some priests are carried away by that. Priests need to strike a balance between the priestly ministry and institutions. Too much involvement in the educational field leads to careerism among some priests. Educational institutions should be used as a tool to reach out to others.

3. How can a priest experience and understand the anguish and frustrations of the Catholic community he serves in?

There are some faithful who share some important elements about the parish to the Parish priest. Family visits are a good component for a priest to come to know the situation of the people, to understand their joys and sorrows and also their financial difficulties. It is not only to come to know about the situation but also to help the faithful in their difficulties. The priest can help a poor family financially. There are some good and generous people who can help the priest to identify some families who struggle in various ways. The priest can go to the family and console the family members and also accompany them in their struggles.

4. What are some of the ways in which a priest represents the visible Christ who is active and present among his people?

Preach what you practice is a dictum in the life of a priest. Priests used to think earlier that lay people do not know about many things. There are some lay people who are well read than some priests. The faithful want walks the talk. In this way a priest can show witness to them. Justice should be done to all the people. People do not like partiality and favouritism. When a priest is just to all, it will be very easy for the faithful to approach the priest. People want their priests to be men of God. A priest needs to be a prayerful person in order to be in union and familiarity with God. A priest needs to be a discerning person. He needs to be authentic in dealings with others.

Stephen Lalruatsaka, SJ
III B.Th.



Interview 48

Mr. Milan S. Thottathil

Mr. Milan S. Thottathil, Doing Masters in Environmental Engineering, University of Leeds, England

1. As the Church in Kerala is going through a series of scandals and scams, what are the changes you would like to see within the church?

The first change I would like to see is the Church leaders accepting the fact that they are simply trust-

ees of the material and spiritual goods of the community of believers and not the lords/gods. They are accountable to all members of the community and should be transparent to the Church members in the work they carry out in the name of the Church. Next, I would like to see a Church that welcomes and cares for the marginalised and not the affluent. Jesus cared more about the sick, disabled, women and elderly rather than able bodied rich people. Yet somehow the modern Church lacks the representation of its biggest group of followers- women. I wish Church leadership accommodated more women and marginalised communities in the collective leadership. I dream of a Church that would stand with the prey and not the predator. Presently, the Church is more concerned about silencing voices so as to uphold its political and social image rather than correcting itself in the face of scandals and scams. I wish the Church was more open minded, conscious and more concerned with the spiritual well-being of its members rather than becoming a pawn of the powerful and the affluent in their quest for more material gains.

2. According to Pope Francis “Priests should be shepherds living with the smell of the sheep.” What are the qualities a priest should have in the present context?

I always wonder why the priests are very gloomy and indifferent during the Holy Mass. As a result, I am always confused whether the Holy Mass is a remembrance of a tragedy or a joyous celebration of the life of God in flesh. I am very sure Christ was smiling and joyous when he broke bread with his disciples. I am not qualified to enumerate the qualities a priest should possess, but I would love to see priests smiling and filled with joy when celebrating the Holy Mass and sharing this joy with other Disciples of Christ. Priest is an embodiment of Christ who was non-judgmental, welcoming and full of life. I wish the present-day priests were like Christ who understood his disciples and cared for them more than himself.

3. What have been some of the greatest joys for you as a Christian?

The Christian community have been the biggest joy for me. There is always some kind of collective ego and challenges in the community, but the power of coming together in the name of Christ has been a source of constant encouragement and support in my life. In challenging times or when faced with a hurdle, the belief in Christ has been very helpful in facing the challenge head on. The belief that Christ is there for me has been a soothing song for me during difficult periods.

4. Jesus is the role model for Christians. How has Jesus influenced your life?

On a personal level, I am still exploring Christ and his teachings on spirituality. But from where I stand today, I can say that the journey with Christ the spiritual teacher towards the truth has been very rewarding and enriching. I try to emulate Jesus the teacher who was spiritual, kind to others, non-judgemental, caring, a good listener, a welcoming and understanding leader and always full of life and love for this world and all its inhabitants. His life and his philosophy have influenced the vocation I have taken up in my life.

Steevensen Paul, SJ

III B.Th.



Interview 49

Sr. Vidya Tirkey

1. Looking at present situation such as Covid -19, political turmoil, economic slowdown, increasing unemployment, atrocities on social activists how would you describe the role of a priest (as king, Prophet and Priest)?

A priest can't remain aloof. He is meant to serve the people. A priest has to play the roles of all three: as a

prophet he has to bring the words of comfort to the disheartened, discouraged, broken hearted, as a king needs to serve his flock. “I have come to serve, not to be served”, should be the motto of life. A priest is a spiritual father of thousands of the faithful. He has to administer the sacraments to the faithful, the people of God.

2. What type of virtues do you think a priest should have to carry out the mission of Jesus?

A priest should be service minded, obedient to will of God and to the superiors. A priest is called to be a compassionate, loving and forgiving person. He destined to be a good leader and being available to all.

3. What do you think about woman ordination in the Catholic Church? Could please highlight few points?

In the history of the Catholic Church, it is nowhere mentioned that there were women priests. Jesus had twelve disciples and apostles. They were the foundation of the Church. From the inception of the Church, the priesthood is preserved for the males. History shows that the first Christian believed that Christ intended a male – only priesthood. For this reason, the ordination of women is not possible.

Tobias Tigga SJ
III B.Th.



Interview 50

Fr. Joel Noronha SJ

Fr. Joel Noronha SJ is a Bombay Jesuit. He is the director of Maharashtra Prabodhan Seva Mandal (MPSM) and Xavier Institute of Social Research (XISR) at Nashik. The organisations are involved in extensive work with non-formal education and also working with farmers. They were very active in supplying relief material especially food grain to the poor tribals in the villages during the pandemic.

1. How do we understand priesthood in the light of the corona pandemic?

I understand priesthood as a sacred/sacramental responsibility of making the divine present in tangible ways by reaching out to those in dire need getting out of our own comfort zones just as Jesus did. It means building the community and their confidence for a better life and help them experience hope through actions and life witness.

2. How do you exercise your priesthood while dealing with people of other faiths?

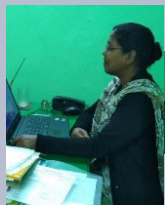
The thread that runs right through the understanding of priesthood and weaves all my thoughts, words and actions together is “making the divine present and help people experience the joy and hope of life keeping in mind common good and nation building”. It is this base premise that helps me interact with them with freedom and confidence.

3. How do we exercise the prophetic dimension of priesthood given the present injustices prevalent in our world?

We need to take a stand for the values of the Kingdom and against the injustices that are happening. Taking a stand calls for risks, a lot of letting go and taking a leap in the dark (faced with uncertainties). For me all these are deeply embedded in our vows, the utmost risk we took in the novitiate. The prophetic witness begins with one’s life example and that which flows into one’s words, choices and actions in life.

4. How does a priest sanctify and transform the world around him if there are no possibility of doing it through cultic rites and practices (Sacraments)?

By his life, that is, his interactions, exchanges, works and the way he lives. In the words of St. Francis of Assisi - preach the Word of God always and if necessary, use words. If I were to modify this a bit, it would be - preach the Word of God always and if necessary, use rites and rituals for greater understanding of the divine realities of life.



Interview 51

Sr. Sagaya David FC

Sr. Sagaya David FC belongs to the Congregation of the Daughters of the Cross. She has a background of social work and has been working extensively in rural Maharashtra. Her areas of expertise include women supplementary education, legal aid, women empowerment and development. Presently she resides at Nashik and works with the Jesuit run organisation Maharashtra Prabodhan Seva Mandal (MPSM). She is the manager of the education programs run at MPSM. They cover a number of villages in Nashik and Palghar.

1. How do we understand priesthood in the light of the corona Pandemic?

Priests are called to be witnesses of strength, courage, and faith. In the midst of sadness and death, a priest has the opportunity to be the healing power of Christ to those who are grieving the loss of their loved ones. A priest should reassure and help those in the midst of uncertainty, to live in trust, confidence, and hope in Christ's promise to be with us always. He needs to be more tangible in love and service.

2. How do you exercise your priesthood with people of other faiths?

Moments of 'universal crises' are times when it breaks all barriers to unite oneself as a Human community for a better cause. As priests we are called to join hands with people of other faiths, to express our solidarity with the suffering humanity and show the supreme act of love which permeates all religions. Thus, growing in our deeper awareness and understanding of the Universal God, the God of LOVE.

3. How do we exercise the prophetic dimension of priesthood given the present injustices prevalent in our world?

Jesus took side of the poor and paid a price for the same. As a priest one needs to ask oneself, 'Does the plight of the poor afflict my heart as it afflicted the Heart of Christ.' We are called to be daring and courageous. We are called to be the Voice of the Voiceless. It is essential to be equipped with knowledge and skills to express, demonstrate, collaborate and join hands with like-minded individuals and groups who work for the cause of social justice. To be a person of prayer, rooted in God and be convinced of one's calling.

4. How does a priest sanctify and transform the world around him if there is no possibility of doing it through cultic rites and practices (Sacraments)?

Cultic rites and practices are only an outward religious practice. It remains as a ritual if one does not have a God experience. Covid 19 gave ample scope to lead people to a God Experience, by allowing them to experience God's love, care and compassion in the midst of this treacherous virus.

Priests, praying first and foremost for those affected and in helpless situations, connecting with those who are distressed, depressed, those who became jobless, those who lost their loved ones. Giving material

assistance where possible. Above all giving them a listening ear, sustaining their faith and hope in the Lord.

Wesley D'Costa SJ
III B.Th.



Interview 52

Fr. Immanuvel

Fr. Immanuvel, Parish Priest, Nemilichery, Chengalpattu Diocese.

1. In this 21st century what is your understanding of priesthood and priest? From the Chosen ones to the ones sent on Mission how do you understand priesthood now?

Priests are Chosen. Chosen to do God's mission. I understand priest as servant of God. Priesthood is a call from God. I think priesthood is an invitation. Priesthood is a royal term. This always gives me a sense of pride and satisfaction. Only the chosen ones are gifted with priesthood. Now many are not willing to become priests and many are thinking that priesthood is not at all needed. But for me priesthood is a real gift. We need to promote this life style more and more. Unfortunately, many of us don't do that.

Priesthood in 21st century is different from 20th century. Those days we thought we are called to be parish priests, now the time has changed. Priests do many jobs. They are parish priests, teachers, advocates, social activists, professors and many more. Priesthood has gone beyond the Church campus. It is a healthy one. I myself has recently completed my studies on law which I think is a need of the time. So now priesthood is considered by others as Gift and I am also thinking the same.

Chosen one and sent on mission. I think both are there in priestly life. Unless we are chosen, we can't be sent on a mission. God chose disciples and then sent them to do what He wanted them to do. The same principle is applicable to priests now. We are both chosen and sent on mission.

2. In this world of consumerism, individualism, secularism, sexualism and modernism how do you see the relevance in the priestly life? Is it still a call to lead an exemplary life or an escape route from this corrupt world?

You are correct now we have so many isms which is a threat to priestly life. In the world of consumerism, individualism, secularism, sexualism, etc. it is the duty of priests to bring back people to normal life. So, our duty is expanded in the contexts of all these isms. Our life may look like irrelevant because we find people know everything, they now-a-days don't listen to parish priests, they don't look for us for all the spiritual needs except for sacraments. But in all these difficulties our life is still relevant because as I told already, we are called to bring back the lostsheep. We can't say to ourselves that this life is irrelevant. If this attitude grows in us, our life will become miserable. Only the priestly community with all its limitations has the power and capacity to shape the life of people when they turn away from God. So, our life is still relevant.

As a parish priest I hear many families saying to their children that they need to be like our Father. I think this statement of many parents made me think this life is a call to lead an exemplary life. Escape route ... yes it can be an escape route. Those who feel that they are not able to cope up with the secular life, at times they choose to become religious. But those people they prefer cloister life to parish life. But I prefer the word consolation to escapism. They find consolation in this life and so they choose. We can say it as escape route but I feel that word is heavy to use.

3. The call of Moses to the call of apostles we have seen so many unique ways of God's call, in your personal life what do you think you are called for? (To be a messenger, to sacrifice yourself for

others, to preach the Gospel values, etc.).

Why I am called is a good question. From the beginning of my seminary life till now I am very happy that I am called to become a parish priest.

For this question I want to go back to my vocation story. I don't have peculiar way of God's call in my life. I was a pious fellow in my parish. I was serving as an altar boy when I was small. My parish priests and the sisters in my parish encouraged me to become a priest. Out of their motivation I joined the seminary. So, there is nothing special in my story. But I always feel that those encouragements are from God. Unless and until God wants someone to do His work, He won't call them. I strongly believe that. So, in my case there is no special story but my parish priests have inspired and the sisters have encouraged me. Those things have made me what I am today.

As a parish priest I preach the Gospel to people and I find happiness in that. So, I think I am called to proclaim his Good News through the word of God. It is the Gospel; the Holy Word of God gives people the strength to face the world. Whenever they are down, whenever they feel they are left alone, whenever they are cheated, whenever they are sad, they look for the Good News. Only the Word of God consoles them. I am happy that I am proclaiming that Good News through my sermons. In my proclamation of Gospel, I see to it I bring the Christian values and insist that people need to live a life accordingly. I feel my parish people listen to me.



Interview 53

Mr. Tipston Rubus

Mr. Tipston Rubus, Professor, Department of English, Loyola College, Chennai.

1. In this 21st century what is your understanding of priesthood and priest? From the Chosen ones to the ones sent on Mission how you understand priesthood now?

Priesthood is a service, a service which demands complete surrender to God. Priesthood is not an easy task. Many want to become priest but fail to live up to the expectations. Priesthood is a divine providence. Only a very few are gifted to join that royal family. Priest is an instrument of God. God uses priests to do His works. The tasks of priests are many. Pastoral, Spiritual, psychological, are some of the few tasks I can remember now. Priest guides people as a pastor. Priest helps people to fulfill their spiritual needs through mass and other sacraments. Priesthood today like it has always been, a call of God. However, the role of a priest today extends beyond the Church. Their role is to mentor families, empower the weak and marginalized and many such works that help people see teachings of Christ take shape in practice.

2. In this world of consumerism, individualism, secularism, sexualism and modernism how do you see relevance in the priestly life? Is it still a call to lead an exemplary life or an escape route from this corrupt world?

This situation is what calls for the utmost need of priesthood today. Priests have renounced it to an extent that they can help commoners objectively to stay away from these addictions, as well as see to it that they are educated on being judicious about all these ideas. At the same time priests are expected to love each other and be exemplary about it to people who look up to them. Their stance largely in such scenarios. A priest can lead people to be inclusive and conventional based on his stance and outlook. However, if one has the feeling that he is also into any of these problems it would be better for him to leave the priesthood or get guidance to come out of it. It will be good for the individual and the Church.

3. The call of Moses to the call of apostles we have seen so many unique ways of God's call, in your personal life what do you think you are called for? (To be a messenger, to sacrifice yourself for

others, to preach the Gospel values etc.).

I think you'll know it better... But from what I've seen it's for the empowerment of the marginalized, help the needy and teach the relevance of Christ in today's society. I also understand that each one is called to different mission. But ultimately it is the work of God that is reflected to the individual so I think it will be good that priests understand the call in a deeper manner and be committed to the call. They should abide by the spirit than the earthly positions. As a lay person I can't say much on this question.

4. In this modern era having seen the problems of Catholic priesthood, especially the child abuse and other sexual problems, how do you look at the celibate life and a call of women priesthood?

With women entering various fields and performing as much as men today it cannot be denied that they will do well being a priest. Nuns around the World keep showing us that they're capable of serving people as much as a male priest. However, when it comes to women priests, we know that the Holy Mass is celebrated as a symbol of Christ's sacrifice and the communion he left us until the second coming. It is to signify that I believe a male is expected to assume the role of Christ in that ritual. As long as the Bible and the Church has it that Christ was male it would be apt that the present system continues. I don't see it as a male privilege over women but just as an enactment of Christ through a sacred ritual.

Yet if the Church decides on allowing women priests, I will all the more welcome them into the community.

Williams Charles SJ

III B.Th.



“The ministerial priesthood that is rooted in the priesthood of all believers conferred at baptism, getting away from the idea of ordained ministry as belonging to ‘ecclesiastical power,’” writes Cindy Wooden for Catholic News Service paraphrasing Cardinal Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Congregation for Bishops and an organizer of the forthcoming Symposium on “Toward a Fundamental Theology of Priesthood,” Rome, 17-19 February 2022.