

February, 2025

JIVAN

NEWS AND VIEWS OF JESUITS IN INDIA



**Can 'digital immigrants'
be effective formators
of the 'digital natives'?**

| Time to re-emphasize 'justice'

| Challenges of higher education



Pilgrims of Hope

We set forth on a winding road,
Pilgrims of Hope, with hearts aglow.
Resilience guides us, like a beacon bright,
Through life's dark valleys, where shadows we fight.

With faith as our compass, we navigate the way,
Through trials and tribulations, come what may.
Desire burns within us, a fire that does not fade,
A longing for a brighter tomorrow, in every shade.

The journey tests our will, with twists and turns unknown,
Yet transformation awaits, like a phoenix risen to atone.
For in the fire of adversity, we're refined and made new,
Emerging stronger, wiser, with a heart that's true.

Expectation stirs our souls, a promise yet to come,
A dream of better days, when hope is finally won.
With purpose in our hearts, we press onward still,
Toward a destination, where our joy will be full.

Fr. Francis Perumalil, SJ (JAM) has been an educator and a pastor. Currently he teaches philosophy at St. Albert's College, Ranchi.



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Eyes, hands and feet

An awakening moment came to me through the article “Christmas is an invitation to keep our eyes raised, hands joined, feet bare” by Fr Learoy Rodrigues, SJ, in the Christmas '24 issue of *Jivan*. ‘Eyes raised,’ ‘hands joined,’ and ‘feet bare’ were scintillating phrases that created in me a desire to be a relevant and exemplary priest in this contemporary world. The three phrases emphasize the affiliation with the Lord and with the people. Eyes raised before the Lord, hands joined in worship, and bare feet that symbolize a life with the people, connected especially with those who are in anguish and agony are needed for those who are called to be mediators between the Lord and the people. The article calls us to be rooted in God and in the lives of the poor.

| Sch. Pradeeproy Mahimai Raj, SJ | Trichy

This Christmas gave me nothing!

As I reflect on the recent Christmas that has just passed by, I face more questions than answers. These are questions that have been with me for many months, questions that move me to question God and His presence, questions that stir my conscience.



These are some of the things that stay with me. On Christmas night I saw a crying child lying on the back seat of a bicycle driven by his dad with ballons to be sold that cold, windy night. Two youngsters came so close to my friend to snatch his mobile from his hands while he was walking on the road after the Christmas Mass. I saw Christians, who are from north India and are working here in Bengaluru, continuing

to work even on Christmas Day. They say they need to work to feed their hungry families back home. These images are etched in my heart and refuse to leave me.

I saw some elite, well-to-do people walking past these workers without even looking at them. Some ‘spirit-filled’ youngsters were partying the whole night. I saw some indulging in frenzied Christmas shopping. I religiously attended the events, but felt spiritually empty. Christmas usually gives something to all of us. It brings us gifts from our loved ones, cakes from every nook and corner, and gatherings to share our love and fellowship. Though this Christmas gave me all these things, it gave me nothing that I had really wanted. It did not bring me joy. It did not give me an answer for the questions that keep haunting me.

May be, if I had thought of doing something for the people who have been pushed to the peripheries and are the last, least and lost in the eyes of the world, I would have found some satisfaction and joy at Christmas. May be, if I had done what I could for the crying child on the bicycle and his father who had to sell balloons even on Christmas night, and for the workers from the north who had to work even on Christmas day, this Christmas could have given me something substantial.


I remember what I read somewhere: “Christmas is filled with many C’s – Carols, Cakes, Colourful lights and Cribs. It is very easy to be lost among these C’s if we forget the real C – Christ.” I should have thought of what Christ would have done for these individuals.

| Sch. Emmanuel Akilan, SJ | Bengaluru


Prayer Intentions for February '25


For vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Let us pray that the ecclesial community might welcome the desires and doubts of those young people who feel a call to serve Christ's mission in the priesthood and religious life.



Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network





Pic courtesy: ucaneews.com



WHAT DO YOU SAY?

STANY D'SOUZA, SJ
President, JCSA

Three persons & five skills

When I glanced at the year 2024, three persons caught my attention. The first is Pope Francis. He relentlessly advocated the cessation of war and restoration of peace. The second person is Dr Manmohan Singh, whose sudden demise evoked eulogies from all sides. The third is Mr Madhusudan V, who has kept his small stretch of the street in Bengaluru spotless for the last 25 years. Although an octogenarian, he dedicates two hours daily to sweep the street and clean the gutters in front of his house. It has been a silent but solid work.

What is common among these people? They are persons of conscience, conviction and commitment. They discern, decide and do something helpful to the community and the nation.

The commendable thing is that people who are overwhelmed by capitalism and consumerism are able to recognize and revere Pope Francis, Dr Manmohan Singh and Mr Madhusudan V and respect the values they upheld.

What values should we embody to leave a mark in the year 2025? There is a help from the epic Mahabharata. The Pandavas are not merely five characters but also five skills we need to cultivate and grow in. Sahadeva, a man of discernment, knew not only the difference between what is right and wrong but also when and how to do the right thing. Nakula, externally handsome, had also inner beauty. He would disguise himself and mix with people in order to know their pulse. Arjuna, a man of focus, saw nothing but his goal. Hence, he attained much in life. Bhima, the strongest, was the most sensitive and reliable person. Draupadi always chose to ventilate her pain and sorrows. Yudhishtira, a man of dharma, was always just. Even amidst unfavourable conditions, he stood for justice.

Over and above these the Pandavas had one more skill. When Arjuna, who represented the Pandavas, had to choose between Krishna and his possessions, he chose Krishna, who became the charioteer of their life-mission.

Shall we choose these five skills, discernment, compassion, concentration, sensitivity and dedication to justice, and above all, God, the giver of all gifts and leave a mark in 2025? What do you say?



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

M.A. JOE ANTONY, SJ
Editor

Reimagining and recalling

Two professors who teach in the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, have come out with a new book on the extraordinary Belgian Jesuit, who made India his home, studied *Ramkatha*, and became a professor of Hindi. You know his name, don't you? Camille Bulcke. The interviewer asked them, "What is the relevance of Bulcke in today's polarized times?" They replied, "Today we really lack cultural leaders who traverse different worlds and make different conversations and encounters possible. Bulcke was one such leader, a visionary whose spiritual mission and scholarship enabled him to reimagine postcolonial India as a space where multiple identities could co-exist in a spirit of compassion and understanding."

Read their interview on p. 25

Did you notice the term, 'reimagine' in their reply? They affirmed that Bulcke was a visionary leader who was able to reimagine the post colonial India as a country where people of different religious and ethnic identities could live together with compassion and understanding. Sometimes all it takes to reimagine is to recall something that has been quietly and conveniently forgotten. For a long, long time, until the hate mongers gained power, that is how the people of India lived – with compassion and understanding.

Sometimes things in the past, which have been sadly forgotten, could shine a light on our future and show us what we can do.

In Cover Story 1, (p. 07) Joseph Lobo, SJ raises an interesting, important question: 'In the present digital age, can digital immigrants be effective formators of digital natives?' His assertion, however, that AI (Artificial Intelligence) is just a handmaid and not a queen and that AI can only do what NI (Natural Intelligence) and CI (Cultivated Intelligence) order it to do is questionable. There are experts who warn ominously that what looks today like a humble, docile maid can become a monster that can defy, and even destroy its master, its creator.

In Cover Story 2, (p. 17) Fernando F. Franco and James C. Dabhi point out that the importance we Jesuits give to faith and to justice keeps changing. If justice seems to be losing ground to faith today, it may be because of two reasons, they suggest. Check if you agree with them and tell me what you think.

South Asian Jesuit Theologians Meet to revision the Jesuit theological agenda for India

Jesuits of the South Asian Jesuit Theologians Forum (SAJTF) met at De Nobili, Pune on 3-5 January '25 for a Seminar cum Meeting to revisit the glorious theological legacy of South Asia and to draw out a relevant road map to the future of South Asian theologizing approaches and methods. This seminar became an opportunity for the Jesuit theologians in South Asia to look back and to plunge into the future with hope, optimism, and renewed vigour.

In his presidential address, Fr. Stany D' Souza, President of JCSA encouraged us to identify the Unique Selling Point (USP) of Jesuit theologians in South Asia and accordingly to evolve a new and effective eco-system of theology to respond to today's challenges constructively and courageously. Starting from this year, the forum has decided to honour veteran Jesuit theologians for their extraordinary service to theologizing. Fr. Rajakumar, Convener, introduced the Jesuit Theologians Award. Fr. Michael Amaladoss became the first recipient of the Jesuit Theologian of South Asia Award in absentia. Fr. Jossie Lobo delivered the keynote address and challenged the theologians to do depth-level, analytical, transformative theology, with a special focus on "multi-religious dialogical theologizing".

The seminar consisted of five well-researched papers. The first paper was on 'Contextual Theologians' presented by Fr. Francis Minj on Michael Amaladoss, Sebastian Kappen, Samuel Rayan, and Aloysius Pieris. The second on 'Biblical Theologians' by Fr. Jimmy Dabhi was on George Soares-Prabhu, Paddy Meagher, Maria Arul Raja, George Mlakuzhyil, etc. The third on 'Theology of Religions' by Fr. Xavier Tharamel was on Jacques Dupuis, Kurian Kunnumpuram, and Michael Amaladoss. The fourth on 'Indologists' by Fr. Anil D'Almeida was on Sebastian Painadeth, Francis D'Sa, George Gispert-Sauch, and T.K. John. The fifth on 'Moral Theologians' by Fr. Sahayaraj Stanley was on George Lobo and Soosai Arockiasamy. The paper presenters not only expounded the main ideas of these distinguished Jesuit theologians, but also illustrated the way forward.



It was also followed by an engaged group discussion on pointed questions. The participants engaged in a serious discussion and reflection to discover what would be the relevant Unique Selling Point or Unique Seeking Proposition (USP) of South Asian Jesuit Theologians. The Plenary Session helped us in arriving at the following recommendations that the uniqueness of South Asian Jesuit Theology would emphasize: - Intercultural, interreligious, ecclesial, ecumenical, subaltern, liberative, humane, inclusive, transformational theologizing seen from the point of view of the poor and the marginalized.

The convener of SAJTF, Fr. Rajakumar Joseph, along with the organizing committee, consisting of Fr. Xavier Tharamel (co-ordinator), Fr. Edwin Rodrigues, and Fr. Alphonse Kispotta laboured hard to make this seminar fruitful. Frs. Francis Pudhicherry and Francis Fernandes hosted the event with magnanimity and grace. After getting enlightened by the exchange of ideas, enjoying the fellowship with each other and warm hospitality of DNC, JD, and Papal Seminary, Jesuit theologians of South Asia left the serene campus of De Nobili to carry out their mission of theologizing with renewed vigour and zeal. ❖

| Edwin Rodrigues, SJ



Can ‘digital immigrants’ be effective formators of the ‘digital natives’?

These are a few reflections of a ‘digital immigrant’ on a recently-held seminar on the topic, “Doing Theology in the Digital Age” at Jnana Deepa, Pune. The participants were the staff and students of theology faculties of Vidya Jyothi, Delhi and Jnana Deepa, Pune and the paper presenters were the students of theology of these two institutions. So the ‘digital natives’ were the resource persons at the seminar attended by digital immigrants like me.

It was a great learning experience for me. I understood several concepts, themes and applications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the biblical and theological studies and research; I became aware of some laser sharp ethical and pastoral questions related to the AI. I learnt about Jean Twenge’s *Gen Z* (those born between 1995-2010), Mark McCrindle’s *Gen alpha* (those born between 2010-24) and *Gen beta* (those who will be born between 2025-39). I came to know some AI-related formation issues. Truly, the youth of today, who are well-informed about AI matters, are posing several significant challenges related to our life and mission today and tomorrow.

I deeply appreciate and congratulate all the resource persons for opening up a new world and the related opportunities and challenges. The present and the future seem to be replete with great opportunities for an effective and fruitful mission. Having said this, I would like to place a few issues that call for reflection.

The AI, just like NI (natural intelligence), and CI (cultivated intelligence), is only a tool and, unlike the latter two, is not capable of a self-induced and revealed insights and intuitions. Even with the most complex organizational capabilities and the highest possible speed, the AI can do only what NI and CI order it to do – nothing more and nothing less.

This is not to negate the importance of AI or to belittle its admirable capabilities and prodigious potential, but to suggest that the agents of NI and CI cannot afford to delegate their duties of involvement in real issues, reflection, introspection, creativity, original and critical thinking to AI. AI is a handmaid and not an enthroned queen.

The concepts such as Gen z, Gen alpha and Gen beta seem to have pigeonholed the entire humanity

into these a priori categories, albeit based on some social-scientific research. The validity or the lack of it of the research apart, what is intriguing, nay troubling, is the capacity of such neologisms to be 'self-fulfilling prophecies'. In the JD-VJ seminar, sadly, no participant questioned the universal applicability of these categories across cultures, nationalities and such other anthropological and historical variables. Their seemingly uncritical acceptance shows the power of social media to make its users uncritical of the ideas and ideologies floated freely therein. When they are uncritically accepted then there is a danger of behaving according to the characterization they depict and proving them to be really self-fulfilling prophecies.

The AI has put the traditional academic evaluation procedures into serious jeopardy. As it was rightly mentioned in the seminar, today anyone can produce an essay, a thesis, a book or an article review within a few minutes using appropriate AI applications – of course with some tweaking as and when required. However, it was quite disheartening to listen to the remedies suggested. One such was to legitimize the use of AI, since no one can control it, and devise alternative means of academic evaluation. This suggestion may be valid in the strictly secular universities. Should it be held valid in the context of the priestly formation too? I beg to disagree.

Seminaries and formation houses are not solely, not even primarily confined to academic matters; rather they are first and foremost centres of human, moral, religious, spiritual and apostolic formation, of which the academics is an important dimension. As more and more sophisticated AI applications



become available, one can go on changing the mode of academic evaluation, but what remains unaddressed is the character formation of the users.

“Formation houses are not solely, not even primarily confined to academic matters; rather they are, first and foremost, centres of human, moral, religious, spiritual and apostolic formation.”

Competence alone is not enough. Conscience is more important. Therefore the critical question is: when and how will the AI users develop a conscience that befits a cleric or a religious? Those who have a developed conscience will affirm that under no circumstances they will do which is unambiguously forbidden by a rightful authority. Unless we have clerics and leaders of such strong

character, moral integrity and basic honesty, we can hardly hope for a mission that would produce fruits worthy of the Reign of God.

Therefore some said that today's formators, who are 'digital immigrants,' need to be well-informed/equipped about AI and such other developments in order to understand and form the 'digital natives' effectively. There is certainly a lot of truth in such a concern; not merely because of the enormous opportunities that AI offers to the formation process, but also because AI has become an inseparable element of our context today and tomorrow; and formation is either contextual or it is nothing at all.



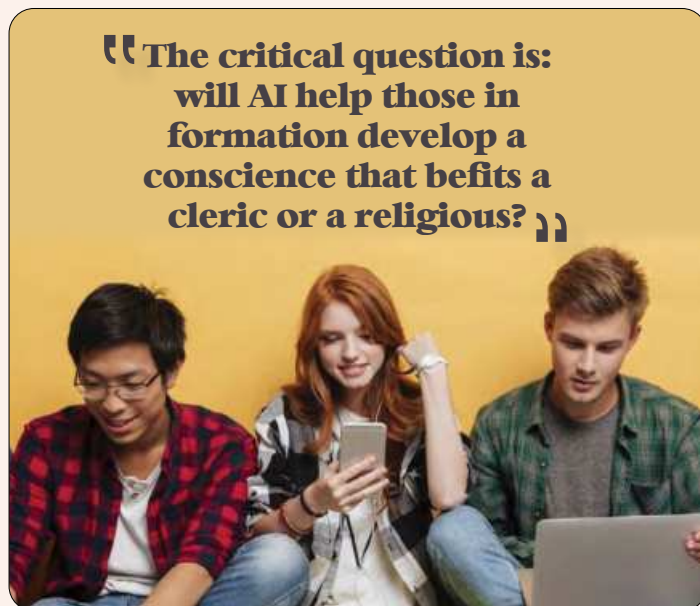
An addiction of any type, understood as reducing or destroying the interior freedom of an individual, is certainly counterproductive to any formative process. But we need to unearth and understand the deeper roots of such addictions and their implications.

To mention just one: “The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast” (*Laudato Si*, 217). The arid and desert-dry human interiority, if not filled with the loving and

Perhaps the history of the past two hundred years has witnessed similar situations during the transition periods of each of the four technological revolutions: steam – electricity – computers - AI.

However, a few questions still linger in the mind: Have there been some constant and non- negotiable factors in religious and priestly formation throughout

gracious goodness of the Lord himself, will certainly find other ways and means of filling it, even at the risk of remaining spiritually hungry and thirsty forever. Meanwhile they will mindlessly plunder and destroy the planet earth in their futile efforts to satisfy the interior craving with power, position, pelf and pleasure. Can the AI be of some help here?



these epochs of rapid and radical revolution? What are they? How to keep AI as a tool subservient to these fundamental factors?

The papers rightly brought out the ill-effects of the internet and social media on the personal life and religious formation of the students.

Finally the title itself: “Doing theology in a digital age”. There has always been a difference between doing/studying theology and ‘theologizing’. The seminar did not maintain this distinction sufficiently. Consequently a lot of time was spent on deliberating about learning/studying/doing theology using AI as a superfast search and organizing engine of the data. However, organizing and re-organizing the data of theological ideas of numerous thinkers in complex permutations and combinations, does not amount to a personal or communitarian theologizing as such.

For, a genuine theologizing process is not primarily about producing theological ideas, but of human agents undergoing a transformative process in a living dialogue between their personal and communitarian faith and their context. Theological ideas are only the byproducts of such a process. The service rendered by AI could remain peripheral, if at all, to such a process. ❖

Joseph Lobo, SJ (KAR) is a former director of Karnataka Regional Theological Extension Center, Bengaluru. Currently he teaches systematic theology at Jnanadeepa Institute of Philosophy and Theology, Pune.

Changing the future of farming families

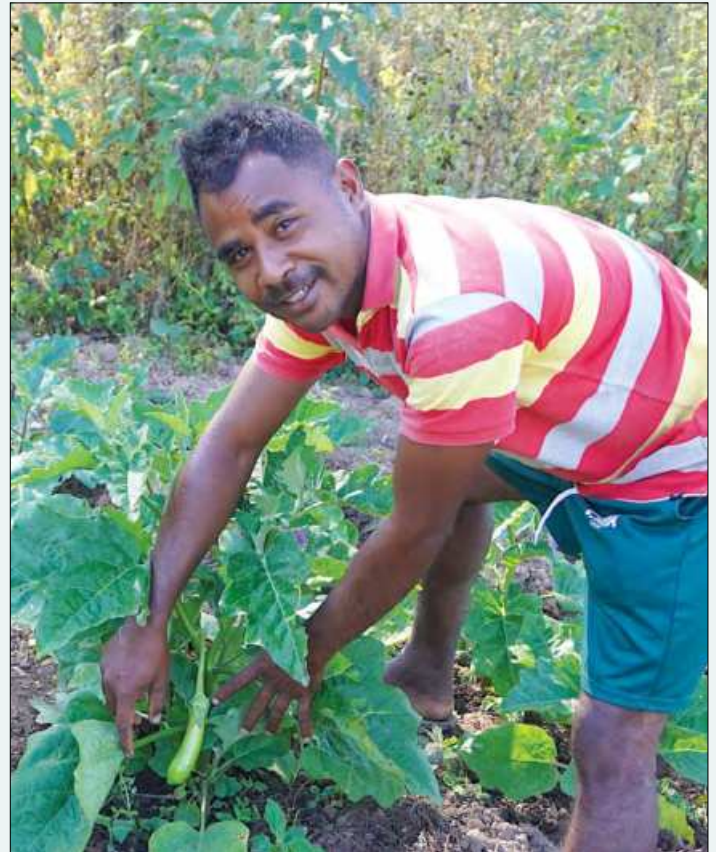
Timor-Leste remains one of the most challenging places in the world to farm. Over 70 per cent of the population rely on agriculture for their income, yet the terrain is extraordinarily difficult, with just 30 per cent being arable land. Traditional farming techniques yield inconsistent, poor-quality crops, which means the vast majority of Timorese live with chronic food insecurity. In fact, nearly half of all Timorese children under five suffer from malnutrition.

Jesuit Mission Australia's Food Security programme, run by Jesuit Social Service in Timor-Leste, is dramatically changing lives and futures for farming families. Every year, over 400 farmers are trained and supplied with the skills, materials, and support they need to improve harvests, be food secure, and fuel better futures.



Bartolomeu, a 30-year-old husband and father of two, knows firsthand the impact of this programme. Just two years ago, his family faced chronic food insecurity, struggling daily to put meals on the table. Today, thanks to innovative training in sustainable farming and farming support, Bartolomeu's farm not only provides nutritious meals for his family, but he has enough to sell to market and have a reliable income.

"The training we've received has been invaluable," Bartolomeu says. "From growing vegetables to making organic fertilisers and managing irrigation, this knowledge has been a game-changer for us."



Jesuit Mission CEO Helen Forde highlights the profound impact donations can make in Timor-Leste, where many families survive on an average income of just A\$2.40 per day. "A donation can help provide essential training in sustainable agriculture, nutrition, and organic farming techniques to Timorese farmers," shares Forde. "Through the programme we also support the development of cooperatives, enabling communities to save for the future and create lasting change."

Forde echoes the words of Pope Francis: "Solidarity is not the sharing of crumbs from the table, but to make space at the table for everyone."

"With your generosity, more Timorese families like Bartolomeu's can build thriving farms, fill their plates with nutritious food, and secure a brighter future for generations to come," says Forde. ❖

Source: <https://jcapsj.org/>



The Noble Ruins of Paradise in Paraguay

Pic courtesy: unesco.org

“I have just said to Your Excellency that the people of this reduction are very good, docile, and amenable... They attend Mass and sermons very well on Sundays and feast days. Easter, Corpus Christi, St John’s Day and the feasts of Our Lord are celebrated with great joy and happiness, but especially the feast of Our Holy Father and Patron Saint Ignatius.”

This is how the mission of San Ignacio Guazú was described in the letter of 8 October 1613, and this is the attitude that we observed in today’s Paraguayans, descendants of the interaction between the Spaniards and the native peoples.

I was on a trip to South America to fulfill various academic and cultural objectives, the first stage of which has been to accompany a pilot group of travellers on a route organized by the ‘Opera Romana Pellegrinaggi’ and the Paraguayan Ministry of Tourism.

We were welcomed at the diocesan museum of San Ignacio Guazú by its director, Fr David Hernández Correa, a Spanish Jesuit, who accompanied us on the visit to what used to be the mission schools, the only preserved part of the reduction, which contains the imagery of the church that collapsed in the 20th century. It is one of the oldest missions, started by

Marcial de Lorenzana in 1609. The word “reducción” comes from the Latin word “re-duco”, since the idea was to bring the indigenous people back from dispersion to a common life in small villages, for their evangelization, protection and socialization.

We also visited the mission of Santísima Trinidad de Paraná, founded in 1706. It is the largest and most spectacular group of reductions in Paraguay and its majestic ruins were declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1993. We arrived on 28 September on a magical night. The enclosure was dimly illuminated and the recorded sounds of animals and environment took us back to some centuries ago, for example, to 1728 when it had a population of 3,000 Guaraní Indians. We were received by a group from an indigenous community that sang a sober welcome melody with ancestral instruments, after which the Cacique (tribal chieftain) addressed us with some moving words of welcome.

We then took a tour, which we repeated the next day, in daylight. The guide highlighted the work of the Jesuits with the natives to whom they provided evangelization, education and socio-economic development.

We also visited the mission of Jesús de Tavarangüé, founded in 1685 on the banks of the Paraguay River by Jesuits Francisco García and Jerónimo Tiburón. It was intended to be one of the largest churches of its time, but it has remained unfinished (this is what “Tavarangüé” means in Guaraní) due to the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Spanish domain in 1767. It was also declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1999.

The film *The Mission* (1986) is clearly linked to the Jesuit reductions with the Yguazú Falls (“big water” in Guaraní). It is a national park with 274 waterfalls that was chosen as one of the seven natural wonders of the world. A breathtaking spectacle is the so-called Garganta del Diablo (Devil’s Throat), which one can almost touch while walking along some footbridges, as it is only 50 m away. It shows the pure and powerful essence of nature, before which one is overwhelmed, and one cannot help but be transported to another dimension and experience the Creator.

Nearby is the Itaipú hydroelectric power plant (“sounding stone” in Guaraní), a bi-national enterprise of Paraguay and Brazil, built in 1984. It is the largest producer of electricity in the world, which is shared equally between both countries. However, Paraguay,

after covering 90% of its energy needs, sells the rest to Brazil. If before we were impressed by the work of God, now we felt overwhelmed by the work of the “work of God” – man.

☪ **The film *The Mission* (1986) is clearly linked to the Jesuit reductions with the Yguazú Falls (“big water” in Guaraní). It is a national park with 274 waterfalls that was chosen as one of the seven natural wonders of the world. ☪**

The tour also took us to the Paraguayan Chaco, whose area covers 60% of Paraguay but is home to only 2.8% of its 7 million population, including various groups of native peoples with the difficult challenge of maintaining their culture without their original environment and in contact with the city. Another key group is the Mennonites, a branch of the Anabaptist movement. After living in different countries, some of them took advantage of the Paraguayan government’s offer of land in this region in 1930. It is a minority with a strong identity and a tenacity that has enabled them to turn

this rather inhospitable area into an economic empire.

Our long journeys have evoked many reflections: the glorious past of the Jesuit reductions and their possible replicability today; the uncertain future of the native peoples; the harmful exploitation of the natural resources that threatens drastic changes... We hope that among these good people, suitable solutions can be found. ❖

Source: <https://www.jesuits.global>





The challenges of higher education

Balancing Tradition and Modernity in Education

In an era dominated by rapid technological advancements, society, particularly the realm of education, stands at a crossroads. While the digital age has introduced transformative possibilities, it has also raised critical questions about the virtues of modern learning and its drift from holistic development to superficial certification. As education tumbles into a vortex of digital facades, AI-driven shortcuts, and fractured values, we must ask: Is this the progress we envisioned? An exploration of modern learning's fading virtues and the journey from holistic development to mere certification.

Tradition Meets Change

The Jesuit tradition, rooted in "*Cura Personalis*" or caring for the whole person, has long championed education that emphasizes holistic growth and ethical values. This philosophy becomes even more crucial in today's technology-driven world, where students are often caught between curiosity and confusion. As an educator with years of experience, I have witnessed the challenges of nurturing young minds amidst shifting paradigms, where meaningful engagement demands both adaptability and compassion.

The Pandemic's Impact on Education

The COVID-19 pandemic marked a watershed moment for education, necessitating an unprecedented shift to online learning. Platforms like Zoom and

Microsoft Teams allowed lessons to continue, but this transition came at a cost. Teachers faced the daunting task of transforming homes into virtual classrooms, while students grappled with isolation, burnout, and declining social skills. The convenience of online learning also created resistance to traditional classroom structures, fundamentally altering expectations and engagement.



Pic courtesy: hainan-bjsh.edu.cn

The AI Conundrum in Learning

Technology has undeniably enhanced accessibility and innovation in education. Yet, the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) presents a double-edged sword. Students now rely heavily on AI tools for quick answers and assignments, often at the expense of curiosity, originality, and deeper learning. Educators, meanwhile, struggle to keep pace with tech-savvy learners, attempting to balance digital engagement with traditional methods in

increasingly distracted classrooms.

NEP 2020: Opportunities and Challenges

India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 seeks to reform higher education by promoting experiential learning, soft skills, and skill-based courses. However, its implementation has not been without hurdles. The transition to a four-year undergraduate program and the emphasis on internships and research demand a level of commitment that students, accustomed to passive learning, often find challenging. While holistic education pushes students to confront real-world issues, it has also exposed a lack of preparedness

for rigorous experiential learning. However, this transformation also reveals an unexpected downside; a lack of commitment is becoming more noticeable as students struggle to adjust to the demands of rigorous, experiential learning.

Gaining Grades and Losing Compassion: The Changing Priorities

Accreditation systems have shifted the focus of educational institutions toward grades and performance metrics. This shift risks eroding the compassion and humanistic elements of education. Faculty, too, face immense pressure to publish research for career advancement, often prioritizing quantity over genuine research of societal impact. Such metrics-driven approaches can undermine intellectual curiosity and innovation, reducing education to a



Pic courtesy: ifisid.com

beyond their comfort zones and engage in critical thinking. As educators, we must create environments that nurture not only academic excellence but also personal growth and social responsibility.

Reclaiming Education’s True Purpose

We must also remember that education is not only about imparting knowledge but about shaping future leaders, nation builders, critical thinkers, and change-makers. In the Jesuit tradition, we strive for “Magis” or “the more” and do everything for the “Greater Glory of God.” Our aim is not just to educate but to transform, to instil a sense of purpose and commitment in each student that goes beyond personal gain alone.

As educators, administrators, and mentors, we have a responsibility to offer students a learning experience that is as enriching as it is challenging. We strive to keep the human touch alive, recognizing the classroom as a sacred space where students can grow, explore, and evolve. Despite the allure of technology, the role of personal interaction, compassion, and ethical guidance remains irreplaceable. In this way, we can ensure that our students not only excel academically but are equipped to “Set the World on Fire,” armed with knowledge, values, and the desire to make a positive impact on society.

In this journey of balancing tradition and modernity, the challenge lies not in rejecting technology but in integrating it thoughtfully while preserving the human essence of education. Only then can we ensure that the transformative power of learning serves both individual aspirations and the greater good. ❖

Courtesy: www.inimagazine.org

Fr. Xavier Savarimuthu, SJ, (CCU) an environmental scientist, is currently the Principal of St. Xavier’s College, Jaipur, Rajasthan.



Pic courtesy: makeuseof.com

checklist rather than a transformative experience.

The Debate Around Indian Knowledge Systems

The recent push to integrate “Indian Knowledge Systems,” such as *Sanskritisation*, astrology, and Vedic Mathematics, into the curriculum has sparked debates. While cultural awareness is essential, making these subjects mandatory risks alienating students and detracting from education’s broader goals of inclusivity and critical thinking. A balanced approach that values tradition without imposing rigid frameworks is vital to fostering unity and openness in learning.

Charting the Future of Education

The future of education lies in striking a delicate balance between technological progress and timeless values. Holistic education, rooted in ethics, must remain a cornerstone, encouraging students to step



Preserving the archival patrimony of the Society

An interview with Fr Festo Mkenda SJ, Director, ARSI

Fr Festo Mkenda, SJ, is currently the Academic Director of the Archivum Romanum Societatis Jesu (ARSI), which is the Archive of the Society of Jesus. Earlier he was a prominent figure in researching the history of the Society of Jesus in Africa. Here are excerpts from a conversation he had for Jivan with Joseph Victor Edwin SJ.



Festo, what are your duties as the Director of the Jesuit Archives?

Currently, there are ten of us working in the Roman archives of the Society of Jesus (Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, usually abbreviated as ARSI), including four Jesuits and six lay people. Together we work as a team to implement ARSI's mission. The mission itself has three aspects: first, to preserve and conserve the archival patrimony of the General Curia of the Society of Jesus, which includes historical Jesuit documents and those that continue to be generated at the central administration of the Society; second, to facilitate access to that archival patrimony; and third, to promote the use this archival patrimony, through scholarly research and publication. Although each one of us ends up doing something different from the rest, together we are responsible for ARSI's singular but threefold mission.

As we do this we ensure the safety of the records and create an environment for the Society's continued understanding of its spirituality and mission through history.

What kinds of documents are maintained in the Jesuit Archives?

The Jesuits have a rich historical legacy. The many scholars who visit ARSI for research bear witness to this fact. They find the documents held in the archives important for understanding that legacy, which is not only Jesuit but also Catholic and human. Generally, the documents include letters, reports and plans, spanning the entire period of the Society's existence. Jesuits wrote letters from their missions in various parts of the world to the central administration of the Society in Rome. Similarly, reports on various matters were always sent to Rome. These include the famous "annual letters," which are based on a tradition that

goes back to the time of St Ignatius of Loyola and aim to give the Superior General an overview of the progress of persons and activities. Matters requiring the General's approval were also sent to Rome. Finally, other documents of historical importance, for example final vows pronounced by Jesuits and requests to be sent to the missions, are also kept in the archives.

Are these valuable records accessible for examination and scholarly research? Who are those who come here to make use of what is here?

We usually describe ARSI as the private archives of the general curia at the service of the central administration of the Society. For this reason, the Superior General has unfettered access to all the records and can grant permission to anyone he wants to access any records.

However, the historical records are also available more generally to researchers for various purposes, including scholarship. Like other archives, ARSI follows established ethical standards to grant access, including a duration of time that must elapse before personal records can be opened to the public. For our part, we adhere strictly to the limits set by the Vatican and regularly adjusted by it. Currently documents are accessible up to the year 1958, the year of the death of Pope Pius XII. Anyone can ask to view any records in ARSI up to that date for any reason.

What are the most significant items in the archives that date back to St. Ignatius and his early companions?

We are lucky in ARSI to be the custodians of the very foundational documents of the Society. For example, we keep the oldest manuscript of the Constitutions, upon which all the other copies and translations are based. We keep the autograph manuscript of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius—autograph in the sense that it is not hand-written by St Ignatius but contains evidence of his approval. We also keep the surviving portion of the Spiritual Diary of St Ignatius,



which provides so much insight into the saint's personal prayer and into his intended understanding of the vow of poverty. These three documents are worth everything, yet they are not the only valuable items in the archives.

“Currently documents are accessible up to the year 1958, the year of the death of Pope Pius XII. Anyone can ask to view any records in ARSI up to that date.”

Many visitors find that the death mask of St Ignatius, the final vows of St Francis Xavier and the other first companions, and several letters from that foundational period of Jesuit history help them establish an immediate spiritual connection with these revered Jesuit ancestors.

Do you find your work to be rewarding?

For me, working at ARSI is like being at the very source of Jesuit history. Although I do not find a lot of time to do my own research, I find it rewarding to look after these historical documents and to help others find what they need for their own projects. As ARSI's academic director, I meet many scholars who come to the archives and discuss their projects with me. At the conclusion of their work, they send us copies of their publications, which allows us to share in their joy.

Moreover, we have a vibrant publications department, namely the *Institutuum Historicum Societatis Iesu* (IHSI). This brings out two issues of the journal, *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* (AHSI), and publish one or two high quality books on Jesuit history every year. IHSI's work is very rewarding as well, especially because it puts ARSI in direct contact and collaboration with scholars in Jesuit studies, a majority of whom are not Jesuits. ❖



Now is the time to re-emphasize the justice dimension of faith

In the understanding of the Jesuit mission, faith and justice have always been linked. Their inseparable union has been our mission's foundational expression. Raising questions therefore about the relationship between the two may help Jesuits discern more accurately the life-mission of the Society of Jesus in today's context.

Interest in our questioning was heightened when Moises Naim's socio-political analysis (*The Revenge of Power, 2022*) was incorporated into an official document of the Society. Naim mentions three forces that delegitimise democracy: populism, polarisation, and post-truth. The serious attempt to single out these socio-political elements as one of the epochal changes

is praiseworthy, and is an almost irresistible invitation to look at their effect on the relation between faith and justice.

Our suggestion is that the relationship between faith and justice in Jesuit practice is marked by certain tensions that tend to distance one from the other. This is happening for at least two reasons: the rise of the political and Christian right and the changes in defining the charism of the Society.

Let us take up the first. What the analysis of the three Ps does not clearly mention is that underlying populism, polarisation and post-truth there is a political aspect: the global political "right" is rising at an astonishing speed. A conglomerate

of ultra-right parties is pulling the more moderate traditional right in the same direction. They share at least four characteristics: a xenophobia against immigrants and asylum seekers, a negative attitude towards climate change, an antagonism against all that leads to a more inclusive society and the use of religion as an instrument to defend their ideas and positions.

The presence of these groups in the European Parliament and Council has been strengthened. The same trend is apparent in the United States. To put it simply: the traditional Christian West that turned rabidly "secular" is now becoming "new" Christian.

In Latin America populist leaders like Rafael Correa, Evo Morales, Jair Bolsonaro, Hugo Chávez



Pic courtesy: eeverycio

The purpose of this piece is to engage readers in a reflection that has important consequences. We are looking, primarily at the whole world, not just the Jesuit Conference of South Asia, but this global perspective has consequences for and linkages in South Asia.

Our reflection starts from the observation that Fr. General made in *De Statu Societatis* (DS, 2023) on a worrying trend towards a weakening of the social commitment of Jesuits: The reports prepared for Conference for Procurators (71) confirm the worrying trend towards a weakening of the social commitment of Jesuits that Fr Kolvenbach had pointed out in a letter on the Social Apostolate (*Letter of 24 January 2000*). (DS, 103)

and López Obrador have resorted to the religious ingredient to legitimize themselves in the eyes of the masses. Africa and Asia present a more varied and complex context, and yet the move towards a “religious right” is growing.

We believe that this shift to the political right is influencing decisively the separation of faith from justice. The decoupling of faith from justice is gradually influencing Catholic life, and even religious life in the Society. Is it not true that many of those who want to join the Society come from Christian contexts close to the right? Are we not aware of the division existing in many Episcopal Conferences between those supporting Pope Francis and those who don't align themselves with his vision? How do we explain the fact that among the persons selected by Donald Trump to become members of his cabinet there are 9 Catholics?

It would seem that what accounts for the large mass of angry and disenchanted people voting the right to power is the resentment caused by globalization, which has left them with no real aspirations for the future. The trickle-down principle has not worked, de-localising industries has left them without jobs, and the financial crisis of 2008 revealed that the State was ready to spend millions to save the banks. In short, globalisation has been a failure.

The second possible reason for faith moving away from justice may emerge when we examine the development of the relationship between the two in the documents of the General Congregations. Developing a modern formulation of the apostolic charism of the Society of Jesus over a period of 43 years and 5 GCs has not been an easy task. From GC 32 (1973-74) to GC 36 (2016), the formulation of the faith and justice relationship has experienced subtle



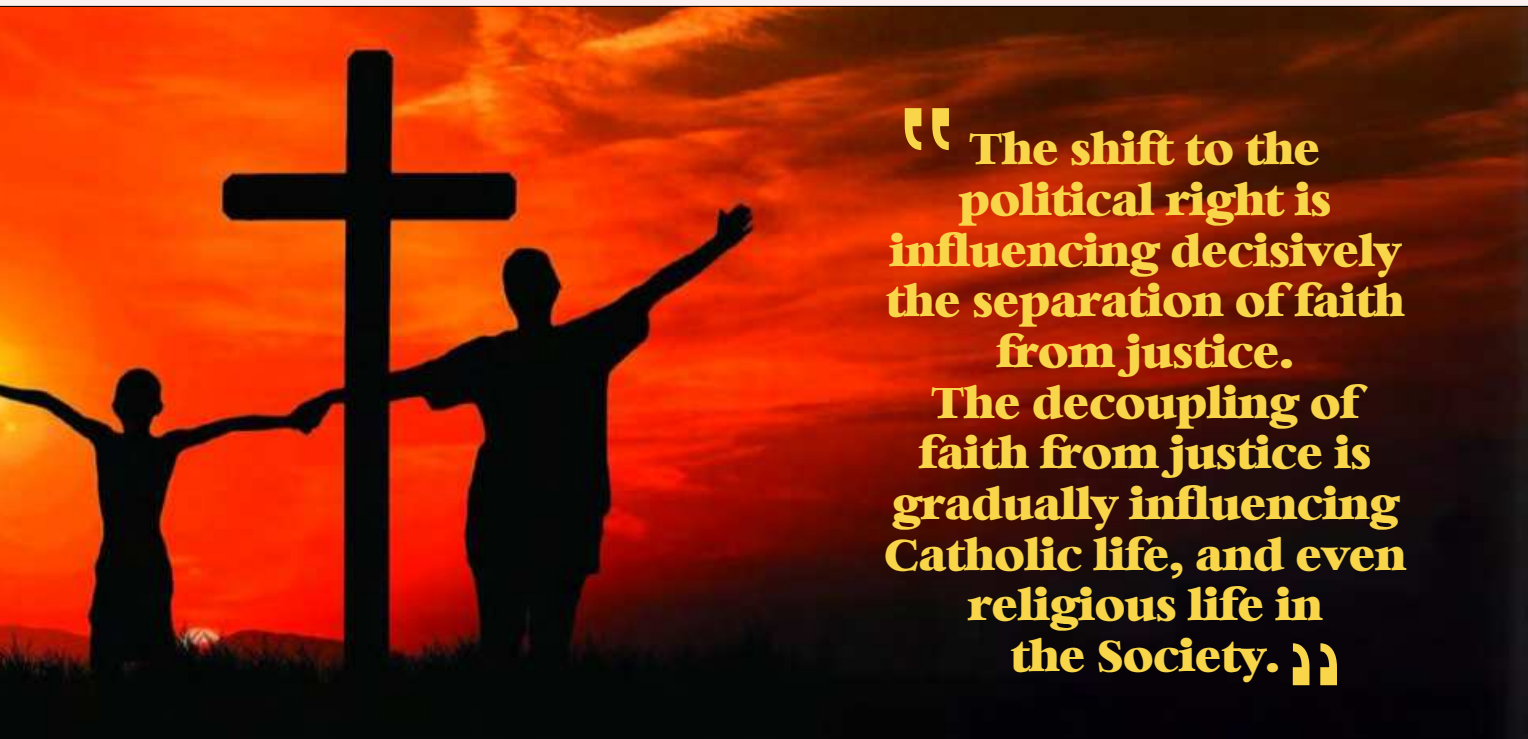
and nuanced changes that may have contributed to obscuring or weakening their inseparable unity.

The starting point can be the famous statement of GC 32 (1973-4): “The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. For reconciliation with God demands the reconciliation of people with one another.” (D4, n.2)

Note that the term ‘absolute requirement’ emphasizes the inextricable link between both. This seems to be emphasized by acknowledging that the “reconciliation” with God is closely dependent on the reconciliation among human beings.

GC 33 (1983) acknowledges the same formulation but adds a note of caution that may be the reason for later developments: “Some have at times emphasized in a unilateral fashion one aspect of this mission to the detriment of the other.” (D1, n. 33).

“ What accounts for the large mass of angry and disenchanted people voting the right to power is the resentment caused by globalization, which has left them with no real aspirations for the future. ”



“ The shift to the political right is influencing decisively the separation of faith from justice. The decoupling of faith from justice is gradually influencing Catholic life, and even religious life in the Society. ”

Pic courtesy: proclaimingtimewomen.com

During the years of successful “globalisation”, GC 34 (1995) expressed the need to expand the binary of faith-justice to other dimensions: “In the light of these reflections, we can now say of our contemporary mission that the faith that does justice is, inseparably, the faith that engages other traditions in dialogue, and the faith that evangelizes culture.” (D 2, no. 21)

It is, however, with GC 35 (2008) when the new triple role of “reconciliation” is strongly and clearly formulated: “As servants of Christ’s mission we are invited to assist him as he sets right our relationships with God, with other human beings, and with creation (D3, no. 18). Including the environment as an issue of reconciliation and justice follows closely the mind of Pope Francis and must be accepted as a positive deepening of our charism.

GC 36 (2016) reaffirms the expression coined in GC 35 and it adds the important nuance that: This reconciliation is always a work of justice, a justice discerned and enacted in local communities and contexts (D1, n. 21). Following the directive given by GC 36, Fr General has promulgated the UAPs, and they have an influence on the relationship between faith and justice. It seems that their weight is on the pole of justice, since three out of the four are related to it. The problem, however, is that they are “dimensions” and not objective goals that can be easily evaluated.

We believe that the general government of the Society is not in favour of justice gliding away from faith. Yet the understanding of the inextricable connection between faith and justice does not seem to us to be lived in all apostolic sectors.

The DSS spoke of “necessary tensions.” Fr General speaks of the tensions in our life-mission (DS, 64). With that in mind, we may add one more tension to the ones he describes. We call it the local “institutional tension” between the two poles of faith and justice. It is “institutional” because the tension exists and is broken mainly in local communities and apostolic works. The solution is not to do away with the tension, but, as the DSS explains, to manage this tension effectively; and for that we need to give each the weight it deserves so that the proper balance is determined (DS, 65).

Our suggestion, therefore, is: now is the time to give, in all ministries, more weight to justice, so that the balance is maintained. ❖

James Regina C. Dabhi, SJ (GUJ) is the Director of the Centre for Culture and Development (CCD), Sevasi-Vadodara, and Coordinator for Higher Education of Gujarat Province.

Fernando Franco, SJ (GUJ) served as Secretary to Fr. General for Justice and Ecology for 8 years. A retired professor of Economics, he stays at St. Xavier’s College, Ahmedabad.



A sacrificial victim

Film: *Father Stu*

Writer/ Director: Rosalind Ross

Run time: 124 minutes

This real life story narrates God's amazing grace working on a most unlikely candidate for priesthood: Fr Stuart Long - an ambitious, agnostic, worldly, pleasure seeker, amateur boxer turned wannabe Hollywood actor called by Christ to the faith and transformed into a priest eventually to follow the divine master in his sufferings.

Stuart Long grew up in a dysfunctional family to an alcoholic, abusive father and a naïve mother. Stu nursed the wounds of emotional trauma from the parents and also from the loss of one of his siblings in early childhood. Having no religious formation and thirsting for recognition, Stu took up football, then turned to boxing but failed to make a career there as he had dreamed. He was popular as a sociable, funny and brilliant conversationalist. Dreaming of Hollywood, Stu moved to California living on a job in a grocery shop where he fell in love with Carmen, a Catholic catechist who would date him only if he would become a Catholic. Pretending interest Stu turned up for catechism but soon gets serious about it, eventually getting baptized even as he was struggling with his alcoholism. His drunken driving gets him arrested. He even steals his father's truck to drive to an audition.

Briefly he acts in some commercials but is soon discouraged. He meets a mysterious man in a bar one night who advises him not to drive home as he is drunk. Stu ignores his advice and crashes his bike with a car bringing him to the brink of death. In trauma care, Stu undergoes a serious conversion experience when he had a vision of the Virgin leading to a miraculous healing. Taking this as his God-given second chance, he opts for priesthood, even as he is conflicted between choice of marriage and his aspiration to become a priest. His troubled parents vehemently oppose the idea and the Seminary, considering his background, is skeptical.

Stu's perseverance impresses the seminary rector who allows him to enroll. Halfway through the seminary training, Stu's ordination is imperiled when diagnosed with a chronic debilitating muscle condition. The bad prognosis meant Stu would not be able to perform as a pastor. Like Job Stu's faith is put to the trial. He struggles through it questioning God's wisdom and growing to accept suffering as a gift and as his vocation and returns home where



he is looked after by his parents. Persevering in hope, he is supported by his fellow parishioners who appeal for his ordination to the authorities. Stu is ordained a priest. Later the bishop admits that it was because of Stu's sufferings — and not despite them — that he decided to ordain him a priest. Suffering united to that of the Lord was redemptive and Stu's life was one such. Though his career as priest was short, his fervor and commitment inspired many and many sought spiritual guidance and counsel from Fr Stu, who died in 2014 aged 50. ❖

Prof. Gigy Joseph Koottummel, former Head of the Department of English, SB College, Changanacherry is a sought-after writer, translator, columnist and actor-director of Shakespeare productions.



Heart-listening: Key to Fruitful Collaboration with Women

Reflecting on my years of working with the Jesuits in various ways, I acknowledge with gratitude the many ways I have grown as a religious, because of the positive experiences of genuine participation in mission with the Jesuits. I remember the very challenging collaborative mission with the Jesuits in Sasaram, Bihar, after the murder of Fr. Mathew Mannaparambil, SJ, in 1980. In that very precarious situation, a small team of Jesuits and three Sisters of Notre Dame were missioned to search and find new ways of continuing our presence in the Sasaram mission. For months, we Sisters in the team went from village to village, meeting people and listening to them. It was a unique experience of deep listening to the poor who felt devastated with the tragic events in the parish. On a regular basis we met as a team to share the fruit of our visits and listening and spent quality time reflecting and searching together for new directions. No one had the answers, and no one was trying to control the process. This ongoing dialogue and listening at various levels paved the way to restarting the Sasaram mission in a new way.

My years of experience with the Social Action Team, comprising women religious and the Jesuits,



pic courtesy: veteerzy.com

“ In that very precarious situation, a small team of Jesuits and three Sisters of Notre Dame were missioned to search and find new ways of continuing our presence in the Sasaram mission. ”

headed by Fr Philp Manthra, SJ, working in the poorest villages of Khagaul, is another transforming experience of collaborative mission. Although we shared a common vision and mission, all of us were not always on the same wavelength. Women collaborators bring unique experiences and alternative approaches to challenges. When there is a culture of respectful listening, women will be empowered to bring their full competencies, their hearts, to bear on serving the church and society devotedly. What was life-giving in our joint venture was the sustained process of regular coming together for well-planned reflection, deep listening, sharing, struggling, and searching together. The openness to relate, to listen, to trust, to be challenged by the feminine insights, intuitions, and wisdom, and the feminine perspective, especially in decision-making, energized the whole group to carry out their role and responsibilities with creativity and enthusiasm.

Pope Francis says, “Women have much to tell us in today’s society. Women are capable of seeing things from a different angle, with a different set of eyes.” Yes, women see things differently.

Women do things differently. Women deal with people and situations differently than men. That’s how God made women, and that’s good and necessary.

In my conversations with women who work with the Jesuits, several of them expressed their appreciation for the Jesuits for their openness to new initiatives to enhance the quality of collaboration with women. We do appreciate priests in whom we women experience the sensitive, relational spirit of Jesus. Thanks to the insights of Decree 14 and the ongoing emphasis on collaboration, there are visible evidences of increased awareness and action towards gender justice within the Society of Jesus. Hopefully this does not depend only on personality factors, but rather on a conviction and a “Jesuit culture” of walking together with women as collaborators and equal partners in mission.

Already in 1995, the GC 34 had brought out Decree 14, recognizing that ‘Jesuit mission is incomplete without solidarity with women, and the Society committed itself to make solidarity and reconciliation with women an integral part of its mission. (384.16) Listening to the experiences of women and coming in touch with their God-given resilience, strength, and ability to overcome various challenges will open the door to ‘solidarity and reconciliation with women.’ It invited all Jesuits to *listen* carefully and courageously to the experience of women, the stories of women in mission alongside with them.’

One of the indispensable requirements for enhancing the role and responsibilities of women in the Society of Jesus is the capacity to *listen* to women. Decree 14 points out, “Many women feel that men simply do not listen to them.” (372.12). Listening requires desire, motivation, effort, and humility! When men listen to women with empathy, sensitivity, understanding, respect, trust, and appreciation and without an attitude of superiority and condescension, prejudice, and control, it brings personal transformation for the speaker and for the listener. A big challenge for priests today is to be men who listen heartfully, soulfully, and sensitively, not only to what women are saying or daring to say but also to what they do not have the courage to say.

Decree 14 is an invitation to every Jesuit to ask himself: What is my personal and the common ‘Jesuit perception’ of women and women’s contribution in the Jesuit ministry and mission? Do I sincerely respect, recognize, and acknowledge the professional competencies and spiritual gifts of women? Do I at times use my sacerdotal power and position to control women? Do I include them in making decisions and policies that have an impact on their lives and ministry?

Questions for common reflection among the Jesuits will be: What systems and structures have the Jesuit Provinces, communities and institutions, and, very specially, the Jesuit Formation, both initial and ongoing, put in place to

ensure gender sensitivity, gender justice, capacity for partnership, dialogue, and true synodal spirit?

The dignity of the human person, male and female, equally accorded, is at the heart of Christianity. Gender discrimination is socially learned. Power is learned. Patriarchal culture is learned. Then all of these can be unlearned and replaced with the spirit of the Gospel, the spirit of Jesus. Within us lies the power and the grace to walk the synodal path together as equal partners, impassioned by the life and mission of Jesus.

Here are the powerful words of Neale Walsh: “Yearning for a new way will not produce it. Only ending the old way can do that. You cannot hold onto the old way. You cannot hold onto the old, all the while declaring that you want something new. The old will defy the new. The old will deny the new; the old will decry the new. You must make room for it.” God bless the Jesuits for their commitment to solidarity with women collaborators as an integral part of their mission! ❖

“Gender discrimination is socially learned. Power is learned. Patriarchal culture is learned. Then all of these can be unlearned and replaced with the spirit of the Gospel, the spirit of Jesus. ”

Sr. Mary Sujita, SND, is a social worker. Earlier she headed the Women Development Project of the Government of Bihar and was the Superior General of her Congregation.



Like a flower that blossoms In the stillness of the night

The flower that blossoms in the tranquility of the night undergoes a profound interior transformation in silence, unseen by the world. In the stillness of the night, the flower unfolds its petals and shares its essence through the fragrance, touching every passerby without discrimination. Though the greatest transformations often happen in silence, the fruits of those transformations, like the fragrance of the flower, have the power to reach and impact the world.

St. Ignatius of Loyola experienced a profound interior blossoming in the stillness and solitude of the Manresa cave. This period of silence allowed him to encounter God deeply and intimately. This transformative experience enabled him to emerge with the gift of Spiritual Exercises, a tool that carries the essence of his interior journey.

The Spiritual Exercises has touched countless people and led them to profound personal transformation. I had such a deeply transformative experience, when I did the one-month Spiritual Exercises again during my tertianship, here in Kandy, Sri Lanka, eighteen years after my first encounter in the novitiate.

But initially I found it challenging to maintain silence. The constant noise in my mind and my longing to connect with others often distracted me. Thank God, I persevered in quieting my chattering mind and, as the days passed, a gradual shift began to take place. When I embraced silence, I was able to bloom again with the fragrance of love.

I experienced the soothing power of silence within me. It allowed me to tune into the subtle

whispers of God, reminding me that I am created to praise, reverence and serve God. The meditation on the 'Principle and Foundation' helped me reshape my perspective, allowing me to see every one, everything in my life as gifts meant to draw me close to the Creator. Embracing God's relentless love and mercy by acknowledging my sinfulness was a transformative experience for me in the first week, prompting me to say "I am a loved sinner".

The journey in the second week reminded me of watching a movie about the life of Jesus during my fourth grade. The film was screened as part of our parish feast celebrations. The scenes of Jesus multiplying bread and healing the sick left an indelible mark on me, and I felt the same sense of awe and wonder as I began contemplating the life and mission of Jesus. As I prayed for the grace to love him more and follow him more closely, I experienced a growing intimacy with Jesus who became a companion walking beside me daily. The contemplations in the second week reaffirmed that following Christ meant walking with him day after day in love, trust and humility. The profound understanding of Jesus awakened a sense of clarity and purpose in life.

In the third week I felt I was walking with a close friend in the final hours of his life. Witnessing someone so close to our heart endure tragic moments cannot be a passive experience. It is a shared journey of pain, vulnerability and sorrow. Accompanying Jesus in his passion and death was a deeply relational and emotional engagement. Walking with Jesus in his passion reminded me of the importance of being present with loved ones during their difficult times. As we accompany Jesus on his way to Calvary, we

are called to walk with people who are marginalized, broken and forgotten. True friendship and discipleship challenge us to bear the cross, not as spectators but as companions and this journey does not end at the cross but leads to the empty tomb.

Contemplations on Mary Magdalene's bitter tears turning into tears of joy at the sound of His voice, the disciples' gloom disappearing when they recognize Jesus at the breaking of bread, and Thomas's journey from doubt to belief resonated deeply with my own struggles in my spiritual life. These transformative encounters reminded me that resurrection is not merely an event in history

but a reality that touches the broken part of my life, to heal and restore it. The journey with the risen Christ was a transformative experience which invited me to live as an Easter person, holding onto hope and sharing the joy of the risen Christ with others.

The concluding meditation in the Spiritual Exercises on the contemplation to obtain love helped me recognize and respond to the boundless love of God which permeates all creation. Just as the fragrance of flower wafts freely, God's unconditional love flows abundantly into our lives and it nourishes and sustains our being. This beautiful meditation helped me see God's infinite love in the world and made me

resolve to share its fragrance with others through acts of service.

This 30-day Spiritual Exercises was a transformative journey that has filled me with a renewed sense of purpose and gratitude. ❖

“ The journey with the risen Christ was a transformative experience which invited me to live as an Easter person, holding onto hope and sharing the joy of the risen Christ with others. ”

Fr. Roy Alex, SJ (KER) is doing his Tertianship in Kandy, Sri Lanka. Formerly he was the Principal of Loyola School, Trivandrum.

Camille Bulcke, SJ: The Jesuit who studied Ramkatha

(In this interview granted to Avijit Ghosh for the Times of India academics Ravi Dutt Bajpai and Swati Parashar, who teach in the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, talk of their new book, Camille Bulcke: The Jesuit Exponent of Ramkatha.)

Camille Bulcke was born in north-west Belgium. What attracted him to India?

In 1984, having completed the first stage of his religious training, Bulcke returned to the Louvain seminary; he was offered two options: either to undertake missionary work at home or to serve in a foreign country. He resolved to go to India for missionary work because he found great inspiration in the exceptional missionary service of Fr Constant Lievens, who was from the West Flanders region like him.

Bulcke post-graduated in Sanskrit, earned a Ph D in Hindi from Allahabad University, headed the Hindi and Sanskrit departments of St. Xavier's College, Ranchi. What was his driving force as a scholar?

Bulcke was born in a Flemish-speaking family. At the beginning of the 20th century, Belgium witnessed French hegemony over the Flemish language and culture. During his university days, Bulcke emerged as a leading student-activist in the Flemish language movement, opposing the French colonization of his native language and culture. In 1935, after arriving in India, he witnessed the imposition of English over other Indian languages. He resolved to learn Hindi and work to restore its rightful place among ordinary people. As a scholar, he pursued popularizing Hindi as a language of choice for academic, scientific, administrative and literary works.

His Ph D in Hindi titled, *Ramkatha: Utpatti Aur Vikas (The Ram Story: Its Origin and Development, 1950)*, is remarkable in terms of scope, ambition and erudition. He was also inspired by the mission



Receiving the 'Padma Bhushan' award from President V. V. Giri.

Pic courtesy: punekarnews.in

priests had a rudimentary vocabulary of Hindi. He prepared a technical English-Hindi glossary in 1955 to help them. It was very well-received as an essential reference book. However, it was taxing to compile this glossary and he had pledged never to take up the work of a lexicographer. Bulcke stuck to this resolution for many years. However, during his other writing tasks, he started to make notes of translating specific words. Gradually, he accumulated such an impressive list that he was forced to renege on his pledge, and he began work on building a complete English-Hindi dictionary, which was an extremely arduous and mentally exhausting task for him. But Bulcke's unwavering commitment led to the compilation of one of the most popular reference dictionaries across India.

How did he view Hinduism and Christianity at a time when Chhota Nagpur saw large-scale religious conversions?

Bulcke argued that although Hindu and Christian religions have different historical, cultural and ideological foundations, they share many similarities. Given that he idolized Goswami Tulsidas, he found great similarities in Tulsi's path of devotion, selfless service to fellow human beings, compassion towards all, and moral conduct very close to his own religious practices as a devout Christian. He did not see any contradictions between being a devout and

practicing Christian himself, devoted to Christ and his admiration for Tulsi's devotion to his deity, Ram. Bulcke solely focused on translating Christian sacred texts, prayers, hymns and the conduct of the rituals into Hindi, and also working as a lexicographer.

He was not engaged with proselytisation nor referred to this subject in his writings.

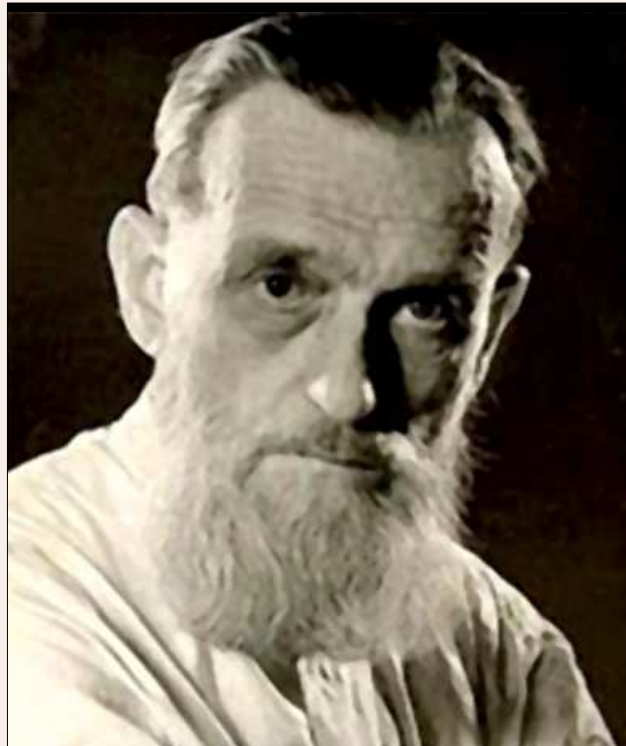
What prompted both of you to work on a biography of Bulcke, who passed away in 1982?

Bulcke's iconic English-Hindi dictionary was our constant companion since our childhood in Ranchi. However, the real inspiration for this biography came in March 2018 when Bulcke's remains were bought from Delhi's Nicholson Cemetery and reburied in Ranchi's St. Xavier's College premises. Many people, including his former students, spoke at this event. We thought that his story needed to be told to a wider audience.

What is the relevance of Bulcke in today's polarized times?

Today we really lack cultural leaders who traverse different worlds and make different conversations and encounters possible. Bulcke was one such leader, a visionary whose spiritual mission and scholarship enabled him to reimagine postcolonial India as a space

where multiple identities could co-exist in a spirit of compassion and understanding. ❖



“Bulcke's iconic English-Hindi dictionary was our constant companion since our childhood in Ranchi.”

Courtesy: *The Times of India*, 02 September 2024



Arul Maria Varaprasadam, SJ (MDU)

Arul Maria Varaprasadam's desire to become a Jesuit priest was confirmed by a very rare opportunity to kiss the incorrupt body of St. Francis Xavier, during its exposition at Bom Jesus, Goa, in 1932, when Vara was just 8 years old. After finishing his school and college studies in Trichy, he entered the Society on 13 June, 1942. He was ordained a priest on 31 July, 1955. In 1962, he was appointed the Rector of Loyola College, Chennai.

Then in 1964, he was appointed the Provincial of Madurai province at the very young age of 40. He shouldered the responsibility effectively from 1964 to 1969. After his tenure as Provincial, he did a course on Counselling Psychology in Chicago. He started a Tamil magazine called Kumurum Nencham and ran it for quite a few years.

At the age of 63, he began a new life as a missionary. For about 3 years, he served in Zambia where he launched a Jesuit Centre of Theological Reflection (JCTR) and then went to the island of La Réunion where he worked for 27 years. Only at the age of 93 he chose to return to the province. Throughout his life, with the donations from his benefactors, he helped the poor build houses and poor children receive education.

The community of Beschi, Dindigul, where he spent his last years, celebrated with joy his 100th birthday on 27 May '24. He surrendered himself to the Lord on 4 Dec 2024. At the funeral Mass, presided by Fr. Thomas Amirtham, the MDU Provincial, Fr. Arul Sivan spoke of his committed, simple and profound life, lived for 100 years.

| Anto Arputha Raja, SJ



Ashuli Phimu Joseph, SJ (KHM)

Ashuli was raised in a loving and faith-filled Catholic family in Mao Gate, Manipur. Over the years, he experienced the pain of losing his mother and two brothers, but his faith remained unshaken. He joined the Jesuits in 1995. After his ordination in 2009, he served in different roles, from being a school principal to a parish priest. Fr. Ashuli dedicated himself to the field of spiritual direction, and became a guide and mentor. He displayed a unique ability to accompany people on their spiritual journey. He would direct the youth, guide retreats for religious groups, and conduct special prayer days and recollections.

In the final months of his life, Fr. Ashuli served as the Assistant to the Novice Master, while also

serving the Ka Rympei Arrupe Novitiate and the Arrupe Renewal Centre in Mawshohroh. Despite his illness, he continued his work.

While we mourn the loss of a dear brother, we also gratefully celebrate the beautiful life he lived, a life full of joy and cheerful service to others. He was truly a gift from God, whose life touched many of us, in profound ways. He began his earthly journey 48 years ago, on 29 September 1976, and on 23 November 2024, he completed his life's mission, here on earth, as he began a new journey – one toward his heavenly home.

| Melvil Pereira, SJ



P.J. Joseph Paimpallikunnel, SJ (CCU)

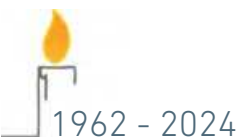
Fr. P.J. Joseph Paimpallikunnel, born on 10 October 1962, hailed from the Kannur district of Kerala. After his graduation in Economics, he joined Calcutta Province of the Society of Jesus in 1986. He was ordained in 1995. Ever since, he was in the field of communication serving in various capacities.

He served as the Province Coordinator for JESCOM and Director of Chitrabani for several years. He was also the Regional Secretary for Social Communications in the Bengal Regional Council of Bishops. From 2003 till 2009 he also served as South Asian Assistancy JESCOM Secretary.

He was called to Rome to be the Programmer of Vatican Radio's English Service for South Asia,

from 2011 to 2014. He was again appointed as the Director of Chitrabani, a task he accomplished faithfully till he breathed his last. He also served the Jesuit Community of Prabhu Jisur Girja as its Superior from 2016 to 2021. These valuable contributions bear testimony to his hard work, sense of commitment and availability. He touched the lives of many, especially the colleagues and the students. He was self-disciplined, hard working, committed and unassuming. He was so welcoming, accepting and accommodating everyone without prejudice.

| Sunny George Kunnel, SJ





Petrus Minj, SJ (MAP)

Br. Petrus Minj, S.J., born in Ambera Siktatoli, Gholeng Parish, was a devoted Jesuit Brother whose life was one of committed service to others. He was the fourth of seven children in a farming family, where he learned the value of hard work and service from a young age. After completing his schooling, Petrus pursued polytechnic studies in Raigarh but felt a calling to be a Jesuit Brother. He joined the Society in 1984.

Petrus's early years in Jesuit communities were marked by his adaptability and dedication. His experiences at the novitiate in Ambikapur and later at various Jesuit centres shaped his mission work. Over the years, he took on several roles, including building and supervising construction projects, electrifying new facilities, and helping others with



water divining. His technical skills, honed through his polytechnic education and hands-on experience, were invaluable in his Jesuit service.

Br. Petrus was known for his humility, compassion, and selflessness, often putting others before himself. His health began to decline in 2022, and after a period of rest, he attended a retreat at Loyola, Kunkuri. On 26 November 2024, during the retreat, he passed away suddenly after a cardiac arrest. His death, though unexpected, was part of a well-lived life dedicated to service. His funeral took place on 28 November 2024, where family, Jesuits, and friends gathered to honour his contribution to the Church and the Society and witness his journey to eternal rest.

▮ Sebastian Lakra, SJ



Patrick Eaton, SJ (CCU)

Fr Patrick Eaton was a quintessential Jesuit, a man of prayer and remarkable self-discipline. A simple man, he was also a quintessential Calcuttan, rooted and grounded in the urban metropolis from his infancy. He studied in St Xavier's School and College, graduating with an Honours Degree in Economics before joining the Society.

After his ordination in 1976, he was a teacher, social action coordinator, and chaplain to Catholic students in the College. He remained in the College until 2009. Fr Pat was a very organized person, and a first-rate Professor of Sociology. There was always pin-drop silence and rapt attention during his classes. He also proved himself to be an able administrator as Vice-Principal of St Xavier's College for many years. Generations of students remember his painstaking care, unswerving loyalty,



total presence and generosity. He was a strict disciplinarian, no doubt, yet always caring and devoted to their welfare.

Discovering another vocation, he started an initiative for students who had to drop out of school for various reasons, or were unable to go to school at regular hours. In later years this mushroomed into the Marian Educational Centre and School, the brainchild of Sr Marisa, formerly of the Apostolic Carmel. For him, this became an engrossing passion, which complemented his primary assignment as Vice-Principal. He remained a deeply pastoral man throughout his life. His Masses and homilies were painstakingly prepared, and well-delivered. He was much sought after in many of the city parishes.

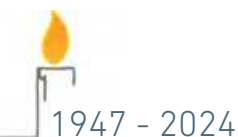
▮ Patrick Walsh, SJ



Scotus Fernandez, SJ (KHM)

Seventy-seven years ago, on 2 August 1947, he embarked on his earthly journey in Kollam, Kerala. On 9 December '24, he concluded this journey in Satribari hospital Guwahati, and began a new one, setting his gaze firmly heavenward.

Scotus joined the Jesuits in 1967. He took his final vows in 1984. Of his 45 years of priestly ministry, Fr Scotus dedicated 15 years each to the ministries of education, formation, and retreat apostolate. From 1979 to 2000, Fr. Scotus was either teaching in schools in Bengaluru or serving as a formator in Jesuit Juniorates in Dindigul, Trivandrum, or Bengaluru. He continued his retreat apostolate at Dyanashrama in Bengaluru and then became the Rector of St Joseph's India High School, Bengaluru



and concurrently as Headmaster of the middle school. He served as Superior at Vidyaniketan Juniorate in Trivandrum and later continued his retreat apostolate at Mt St Joseph, Bengaluru. After serving as Socius to the Novice Director, Shillong, Kohima Region, he spent his final years at the Arrupe Renewal Centre, where he served as Director from 2019 to 2023, and continued his retreat ministry until his passing.

Fr Scotus was blessed with many talents and he excelled in every endeavour he undertook. He believed in nurturing and mentoring those around him, especially younger Jesuits. Throughout his life, Fr. Scotus exemplified the virtues of humility, faith, and unconditional love.

▮ Melvil Pereira, SJ



Letting silence heal and renew us

We six men would nightly sit silently, around a campfire in the most ancient part of Australia, some 1,500 kilometres from Perth. It seems that most people do not master this capacity to sit silently among others. Yet paradoxically silence contains everything that needs, or does not need utterance.

We sought signs of oil under the ancient inland that had lain silent for 4.6 billion years. At night I would gaze at the billion twinkling stars. Silence in the face of such enormity gave meaning to my adolescence. Eternity wheeled overhead soundlessly. I felt the stars live in me as I in them. What comprises me is the same stuff that makes everything wheeling above me. Sleeping in this ancient silent vastness taught me to 'feel' the inner reality of everything beyond mental barriers. I perceived that we live in each other at the heart's centre.

I don't think that I have glimpsed that sense of cosmic unity since. Those experiences confirmed that if I was to say anything of importance in later years, it must come from this depth of silence. After taking on priestly duties in my twenties, my life became a caricature of the over-active professional, juggling multiple works simultaneously. Ama Samy says, in one of his books, our ego-self imagines itself as separate, autonomous, focused on survival and appearances. So, any silence emanating from the ego-self, it will inevitably be infected with anxiety and dread.

Therefore let me offer you a daily self-care plan, so that you'll be able to experience silence and all its benefits:

Prayer and Meditation: Fix a specific time in the morning or evening for silent prayer/meditation. If you have found no time at all in the past, start with 5-10 minutes every day.

Guided Meditations: Utilise apps/online resources offering guided prayers and meditations for a calming atmosphere.

Breath Focus: Deep breathing centres the mind. Inhale for four counts, hold for four, and exhale for four to six, repeating several times.

Create a silent sanctuary: Designate a Sacred Space in your room or office for silence, reflection, and prayer. Make it comfortable and interruption-free.

Limit Distractions: Quit electronic devices, set boundaries with others, telling them that this time is dedicated to silence and contemplation.

Nature's Embrace: Take short walks outdoors. Release stress by focusing on sounds around you - birds chirping, leaves rustling.



Pic courtesy: prama.org

Mindful Observation: Sit in nature, close your eyes, listen. Take in sensations: breeze, warm sun, or cool shade, allowing thoughts to settle.

Mindful Transitions: Pause between activities: take a moment to breathe deeply, gather your thoughts, creating mental space and fostering clarity.

While travelling: Listen to soothing music or a spiritual podcast encouraging reflection instead of giving in to distractions.

Establish Boundaries: However good your work is, don't let your work consume the whole day. Define working hours and communicate it to others, so that you have time daily for silent personal reflection.

Learn to Say No: Recognize limits; learn to decline requests or activities that pull you away from your self-care.

Connecting with Community: Find people who will be silent with you. Organise silent group retreats and quiet days.

Share your practices with fellow priests or religious: Find out what they do for finding silence and stillness, and offer valuable peer- insights and encouragement.

Conclusion: It is essential for priests and religious to find time for silence in order to replenish the Spirit and enhance your ability to serve others. Silent moments will help you cultivate deeper connection with yourself and your faith, which will lead to a more balanced and fulfilling ministry. ❖

Rev. Dr. Meath Conlan is a Counsellor and Adult Educator. He travels frequently to India. He can be contacted at meathconlan@icloud.com



"If you had saved all the money you spent on smoking and drinking, you could have bought a Mercedes car by now."

"Father, do you smoke or drink?"

"No. Never in my life, son"

"Then, where is your Mercedes car, Father?"



"I recently learnt that no Jesuit goes to heaven unless he has written at least one book. So I have just started."



"Come, let's go for dinner. It's time to attack..."

"Attack?"

"Attack the Brother in-charge of the kitchen and complain about the food and the menu."



"Lord, don't let me forget things. I don't want to forget where I hid the bottle in my room."

Melwyn Pinto, SJ

JESUIT HUMOUR

Found and Lost

"I had no intention of disturbing you, Brother; I only came seeking shelter for the night," pleaded Fr. Rajesh* as he stood at the entrance of the Jesuit house. Bro. Wilson, the house minister, eyed him suspiciously. It was just past midnight, and Fr. Rajesh had arrived unannounced. He had missed the connecting train and so decided to spend the night there rather than waiting in the station.

Upon arrival, he was dismayed to find the house in darkness, the main door bolted shut. After ringing the bell a couple of times, he heard footsteps behind the door, followed by the flicker of a light inside. When Bro. Wilson cautiously opened the door, his annoyance was evident. Fr. Rajesh described what happened. Somewhat softened, Bro. Wilson said, "Alright, Father. You can use the guest room at the far end of the corridor on the right. And please, remember to turn off the lights before you sleep. Good night." With that, Bro. Wilson disappeared into his room, leaving Fr. Rajesh on his own.

Fr. Rajesh spent a few moments in the chapel, then made himself a light supper with a slice of bread and a bowl of cold soup in the refectory. Following the brother's directions, he headed toward the guest room. But when he switched off the light, he was plunged into total darkness. Groping along the corridor, he tried to feel his way to the room. At last, his hand found a door handle. Relieved, he turned it, stepped through, and shut the door behind him - only to realize he was back outside the front entrance!

(* Names fabricated)





To sustain your love

As a Lutheran priest, Dietrich Bonhoeffer would frequently offer this advice to a couple when he presided at their wedding: “Today you are in love and believe your love will sustain your marriage, but it can’t. Let your marriage sustain your love.”

Wise words, but what exactly do they mean? Why can’t love sustain a marriage?

What Bonhoeffer is highlighting is that it is naïve to think that feelings will sustain us in love and commitment over the long haul. They can’t, and they wouldn’t. But ritual can. How? By creating a ritual container that can keep us steady inside the roller coaster of emotions and feelings that will beset us in any long-term relationship.

Simply put, we will never sustain a long-term relationship with another person, with God, with prayer, or in selfless service on the basis of good feelings and positive emotions. This side of eternity, our feelings and emotions mostly come and go. We know the inconsistency of our emotions. One day we feel affectionate toward someone and the next day we feel irritated. The same is true for prayer. One day we feel warm and focused and the next day we feel bored and distracted.

And so, Bonhoeffer suggests we need to sustain ourselves in love and prayer by ritual, that is, by habitual practices that keep us steady and committed within the flux of feelings and emotions.

For example, take a couple in a marriage. They fall in love and commit themselves to love each other and stay with each other for the rest of their lives, and at root they fully intend that. They respect each

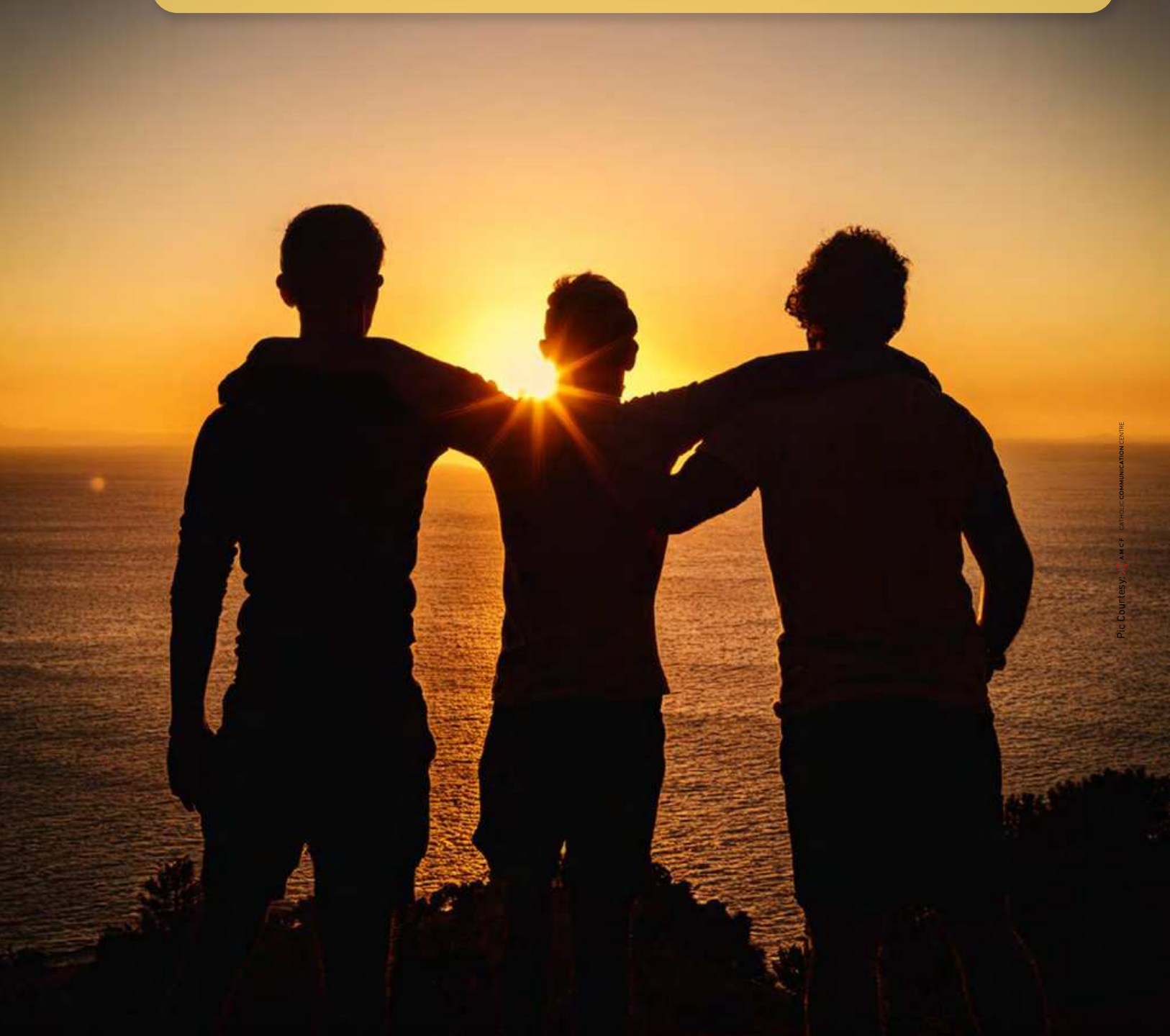
other, are good to each other, and would die for each other. However, that’s not always true of their emotions. Some days their emotions seemingly belie their love. They are irritated and angry with each other. Yet, their actions toward each other continue to express love and commitment and not their negative feelings. They ritually kiss each other as they leave the house in the morning with the words, “I love you!” Are those words a lie? Are they simply going through the motions? Or is this real love?

If Bonhoeffer is right, and I submit he is, they are not just going through the motions, they are expressing mature love. It’s easy to express love and be committed when our feelings are taking us there and holding us there. But those good feelings will not sustain our love and commitment in the long-term. Only fidelity to a commitment and ritual actions that undergird that commitment will keep us from walking away when the good feelings go away.

The book we need on love will not be written by passionate lovers on their honeymoon, just as the book we need on prayer will not be written by a religious neophyte caught up in the first fervor of prayer (nor by most enthusiastic leaders of prayer). The book we need on love will be written by a married couple who, through ritual, have sustained a commitment through the ups and downs of many years. Just as the book we need on prayer will be written by someone who has sustained a life of prayer even when the last thing he or she wanted to do was to pray. ❖

WELL SAID

**“Life is partly what we make it,
and partly what it is made by the friends we choose.”
- Tennessee Williams**



Pic Courtesy: [iStock.com](#) / CATHOLIC COMMUNICATION CENTRE