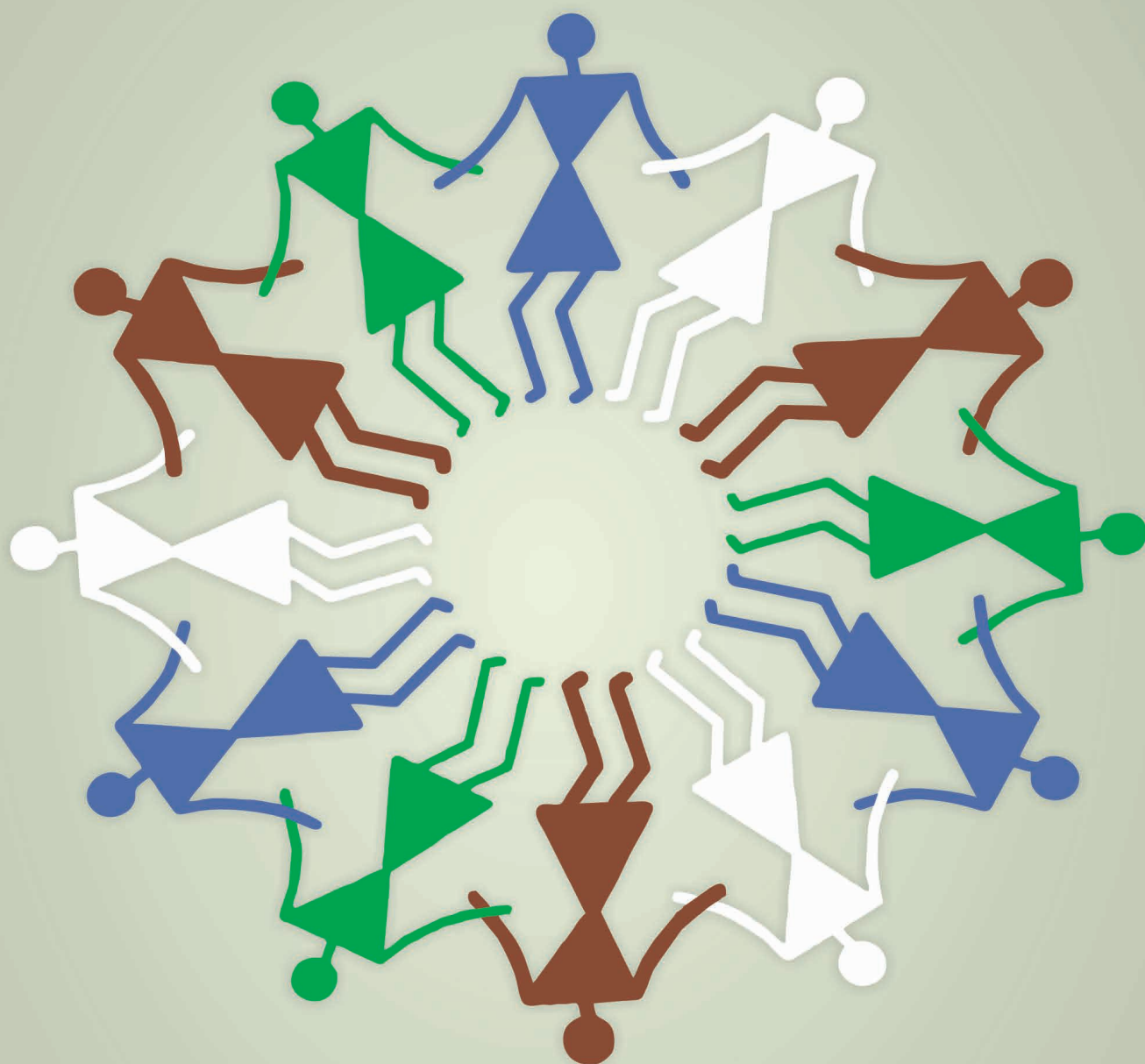


December 2020 - January 2021

JUVAN

NEWS AND VIEWS OF JESUITS IN INDIA



***Fratelli Tutti* in the light
of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam***

Pandemic Christmas

There is a sombre mood this year -
Less of everything and fear.
The world enveloped in a curse,
All have to tighten their purse,
Christmas is here with new hope!

We are given a new opportunity -
Less of wine and cake, but unity.
Christmas lost to celebrations,
The biggest feast of the nations,
Christmas is here pleading for simplicity!

We need to find a new Christmas -
We need to go back to the first Christmas:
No shimmering lights but the lone star;
No Christmas tree but hope from afar;
Christmas is here with the pure gift of love!

Pandemic gifts us the Christmas original:
Let us go back to the biblical -
Searching for Him in the unexpected,
Where God and man are connected;
Christmas is here with its best chorus -
God still loves the world!

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(The author is the in-charge of Bhutan Jesuit Mission and Episcopal Vicar of Bhutan.)



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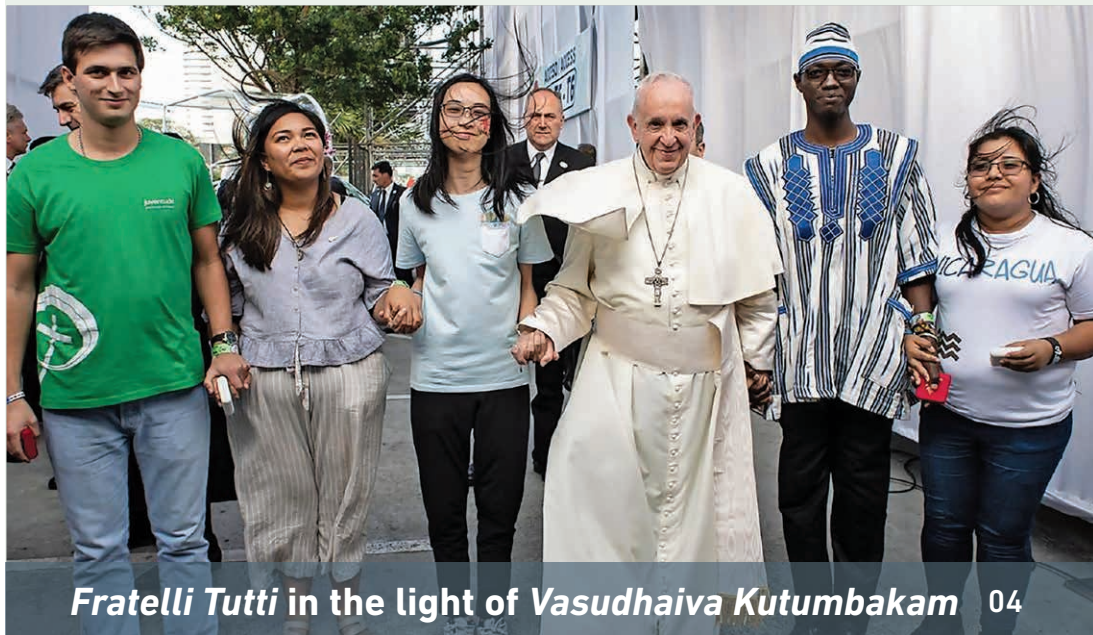
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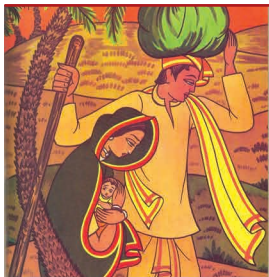
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As a service of information for the South Asian Jesuit Assistency, Jivan is sent to Jesuits and their colleagues, collaborators and friends. Articles appearing in Jivan express the views of the authors and not of the Jesuit Conference of South Asia. All material sent for publication may be edited for reasons of space, clarity or policy. Readers are requested to donate generously towards Jesuit ministries.



May the migrants this Christmas be specially blessed with employment and economic sustainability by Jesus, Mary and Joseph; the ever-migrant family!!

JIVAN wishes all Jesuits, their family, friends and mission-partners a Christmas filled with an 'Emmanuel' (God with us) experience amidst a seeming 'hiddenness' of God and a New Year with an awakened way of life after the Pandemic.



READER'S CREASE



Great preparation for heaven

Thank you Tom, for the article on "The Heaven I imagine". Many years ago I had said at table: "I don't believe in Hell" and was challenged for that. In your article you write "How does God make him fit for heaven?" which in a way confirms my thinking. Our hell will be the full awareness of ourselves and of what wrong we had done, and that in the presence of those we had thought ill of, spoken against them, or hated and despised and tortured and killed but who, when we now meet them, only shower us with LOVE.

You write: "We will intimately connect with the Wonder of Nature, created and sustained by God, including the tiniest star and the biggest galaxy". One of the things that I imagine my heaven to be, is to be able to experience with God and others with me, the life cycle of every plant, insect and all creatures and every Planet, Star and Galaxy. That is going to take trillions and trillions of years. But then there is eternity.

The first thing that I have been asking of the Lord is what you wrote: "Entering into intimate communion with all humans, beginning from Adam to the last human creation, will be our next keystone experience." I have been thinking of that old lady beggar with a distorted

face, who used to sit outside that department store in the early 1950s whom we often just passed by, as also those suffering from leprosy who were sitting on a small wooden trolley and being pulled by another person with leprosy and begging for survival. And so many others like them all over the world. I also see so many poor and rich parents out there with their children showering so much of love on them. The one thing I have been asking of the Lord is to let me meet all these people and embrace them and experience the love they had in themselves despite all the sufferings they had endured. Thank you again Tom for this great preparation for heaven.

Br. Noel Oliver, SJ | Cambodia

But after browsing through this article, I felt it was fascinating. I found every sentence is filled with spectacular meaning and felt the real essence of life. This article, though brief, explains the works, and has amazing and wonderful interpretations of the great progress made by Jesuits. It is also a source of positive outlook in my life, to work for JRS. This article was very easy to understand and thanks for sharing the conception history of JRS. I salute the whole team of JRS and other missionaries who are tirelessly rendering their services in this field.

Steven Joseph, NSJ | Bangalore

JRS - A positive outlook

I am delighted and glad to share my sentiments, after reading the article "JRS - South Asia", written by Louis Albert SJ and Sandesh Gonsalves, SJ in the November issue of JIVAN. First and foremost, I would like to express my thanks for publishing detailed and rich material on JRS. Personally, as I read the article, I felt it was a fulcrum for me to enhance my knowledge about JRS. As it is said "real joy, comes, not from riches, ease or praise of men, but from doing something worthwhile".

Etched in memory

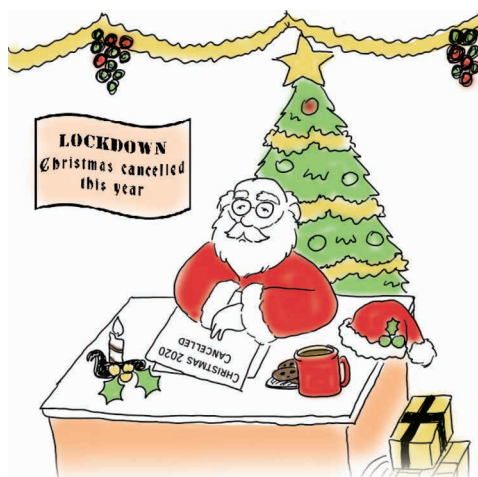
I refer to your brilliant editorial in JIVAN, October 2020 stating Leadership and Conscience are synonymous. Permit me a comment. Your editorial Discerning discernment is well etched in my memory. Thanks and God bless you for the relevant interventions. Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give an account -Hebrews 13:17.

Ranjit Yawu, SJ | Sri Lanka

JESWITS

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With no work this year, you can call me: SANTA PAUSE



Provincials, work for vocations to the brotherhood. Remember 'the harvest is great but the Lay-Brothers are few'.



This year we have brought him masks, vitamin C and an inhaler... Next year, I hope we can bring him the Vaccine.



POSA Speaks

STANY D' SOUZA, SJ

Re-reading Life and Mission

There is a concept called 're-reading' in literature, which connotes revisiting a text. It is not merely a dialogue between the reader and the text in a different time and space, but an encounter with the text - with new questions and new methodologies, perspectives and processes. In fact, it is the new context with new needs, influences and questions that prompts the reader to re-read a text.

An encounter with a text, which need not be a written work alone, is an attempt to make the text and life more meaningful. Hence, a 're-reading' does enrich the text with new meaning, and the reader with a new vision, answer, and tools to further explore life. 'Re-reading' mirrors the ongoing search of human beings to know. What ennobles them, in addition to competence, is social consciousness. Hence a conscientious re-reading does enable and empower humanity.

Our contemporary context, the ravaging pandemic and the hostile socio-political situation, has motivated many to re-visit the text of their life and work. Hence, we have many ways and means to make life meaningful in this new normal.

The prevalent context did force us, the Provincials, to 're-read' our life and mission. The result is the first online JCSA meeting. All became quick learners and handled technology to the hilt. It is not only the technology but also the discussion and dialogue was quite contextual. The discussion on the NEP, while unraveling the hidden agenda, also charted new pathways to serve the poor. The presentation on migration engineered a quick decision to set up the Migration Facilitation Network (MFN) and the mapping of the Conference houses and works awakened co-responsibility for the Conference.

It was a happy coincidence that Fr. General in his address to the Provincials also did make a beautiful 're-reading' on Vocation Promotion (VP). Besides recalling the age-old practice of praying for vocations, he also emphasized and elaborated on a culture of vocation promotion, which implied VP not only in all ministries, but also invited Jesuits to raise the quality of their life and work to make ourselves and our mission inviting to the young.

We Jesuits have Ignatian tools like discernment - personal and common and daily examen to re-read our lives and ministries. It is high time that we 're-read' our life and mission oftener to make them more meaningful and relevant so that we can give signal service to the Lord and His people.



Editor's Desk

VINAYAK JADAV, SJ

The Coronas of Christmas

The most dreaded word today - "Corona", literally means a white or colored circle or set of concentric circles of light seen around a luminous body, especially around the sun or moon. It also means the upper portion or crown of a part, as of the head from where the word 'coronation' derives. The deadly virus acquires the same name because it strikes on the peripheral surface of a human cell and surrounds it like a crown. However, a crown actually adores the royals occupying the most visible and prominent place, the head and therefore the culmination of royal beauty and power. At Christmas "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Is: 9.6) This different kind of a royal prince who will reign on the throne of David will come too, with coronas that will illuminate life around the globe of the Earth that today is caught amidst the darkness of COVID-19. It has lifted its head again with greater ferocity. Christmas helps us see how the multiple waves of the Corona virus could bring glittering Coronas round the globe, giving the human life on it the real beauty and glory.

The Corona of Love: Fratelli Tutti, the recent encyclical of Pope Francis, addresses the contemporary context and attempts to diagnose the virus of cultural corona, and points out the multiple Coronas that could possibly luminate the human life bringing back its lost grandeur.

In a fragmented world with broken families, divided communities and warring countries, the Corona of shared suffering enhances the human bonding across class, caste, creed, gender or geography. In a world that claims to be connected ever more by modern technology; social relationships between cultures, countries and religions are ironically ever more disconnected. At Christmas, God connects with humanity through the incarnation of Jesus, showing us what it is to share connectedness.

Love is the only solution that bonds human relations. Compassion is the only medicine that heals them. God so loved the world that he bonded it with Him in Jesus who healed it with his own sacrifice. Christmas comes to wrap the wounded world in Love and Compassion. A love that is unconditional or no love. A love that is as divine as to say "if you do not know love, you do not know God." At Christmas, God loves humanity first, before it could even think of loving back. Filled by such an immense love, COVID-19 is the time to flow with compassion. How majestic is this crown of love studded in compassion that is placed upon humanity at Christmas!

The Corona of Lowliness: Love cannot breathe when attached by the virus of ego and selfishness. The world hasn't looked lowlier now when on its humble knees without vaccine or medicine against COVID-19 than ever before. The pride of the advancements of science and technology have only proved symbols of lesser beauty. The acknowledgement of human vulnerability and dependance on the beyond has finally brought dignity to proud humanity. At Christmas, the Almighty chooses to become a lowly fragile human in a manger, and later even die a humiliating death of a criminal. Jesus walked the talk of beatitudes, culminating in a self-emptying Cross. Joseph and Mary silently but interdependently allowed everything to happen to them. How royal humanity looks in this Christmas crown of lowliness!

The Corona of Likeness: COVID-19 treated all alike. God treats humanity alike as the sons and daughters of one family. At Christmas, Jesus is born as Son of God more than son of mere Mary and Joseph. All through His life Jesus radiated this Sonship, the likeness of the Father. Jesus turned the universe into one family by centering it in the Father. Christmas comes to remind us of our sisterhood and brotherhood in Jesus. The essence of life is in revealing the likeness of the Father as Jesus did. How divine is the crown of likeness that is bestowed upon us at Christmas!

At Christmas, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned. (Is: 9.2) The Corona virus may linger, but human life can shine in Glory, if it chose to be wrapped with the Coronas of Christmas just as the Babe in the manger did.

Are we ready for such a Coronation this Christmas?

Fratelli Tutti *in the light of* ***Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam***



Image Source: Vatican News

The hallmark of the papacy of Pope Francis has been his persistent efforts and inexorable courage to address the issues that touch the grass-root realities of the contemporary human life, dignity, full-flowering of inter-dependent relationships, and a harmonious co-existence in

Our Common Home. Love, mercy, compassion, forgiveness, and reconciliation form the integral and constituent parts of his thoughts, reflections, discourses, and actions; and poor, destitute, migrants, interreligious dialogue, culture of encounter and care for creation are his favorite themes. His



ground-breaking Encyclical Letter 'Laudato si' on Care for Our Common Home challenges and guides the entire humanity "to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" (Laudato si', 49). His latest Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti on Fraternity and Social Friendship acknowledges "the dignity of each human person" and aims to make a concrete contribution toward "the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity – brotherhood between all men and women" (Fratelli tutti, 8). It intends to promote true beauty of authentic human existence which is "stronger than death when it is built on true relationships and bonds of fidelity" (FT, 87). His forceful emphasis in Laudato si' on the fact of interconnectedness expressed in three dynamic affirmations

"everything is interconnected" (LS, 70), "everything is connected" (LS, 117), and "everything is intimately interrelated" (LS, 137) lays the strong foundations for universal brotherhood and friendship.

Elaborated in eight chapters and 287 paragraphs, Fratelli Tutti presents a systematic, ambitious, vibrant, and audacious vision of a better future to the contemporary world, which is being fragmented by an increasing gap between haves and have-nots, rich and poor, socio-political disparity, religious-cultural fundamentalism, conflicts, wars, and gradual rise of a new political tyranny in various countries. Fratelli Tutti leads the way to the universal fraternity and social friendship by inviting "all people of good will" (FT, 6) "as a single human family" (FT, 8) to open wide the doors and to build bridges to "welcome, protect, promote and integrate" (FT, 129) all vulnerable "the poor, the abandoned, the infirm and the outcast" (FT, 2). To complete the promotion and elevation of the universal fraternity to a new height, the Encyclical touches every aspect of human life starting from personal, familial, communitarian, regional, national, and international needs, hopes and aspirations by dealing elaborately not only with the socio-political and ethical issues, but also by deliberating the contributions of

communications media, commerce, and industry for a better future for the entire humanity. The augmented vision of the entire humanity in its diverse complexities, problems and challenges is evidenced in its acknowledgment of the inspiring

and pioneering thoughts of the Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew, Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu, Mahatma Gandhi and Charles de Foucauld.

Reverberation of Fratelli Tutti with Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

Fratelli Tutti finds a strong reverberation with the Indian ethos of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, a philosophy which fosters an understanding that the whole world is one family. As an all-pervading principle of the fundamental unity and interconnectedness of all human as well as non-human beings on the face of the earth, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam brings to the fore unequivocally and substantiates the core message of both Laudato si' ("everything is interconnected" LS, 70) and Fratelli Tutti ("children of the same earth which is our common home" FT, 8).

In the words of Swami Agnivesh, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam inculcates the profound underlying convictions that "only an integrated approach, which encompasses the political, economic, ecological, social, legal, cultural and spiritual dimensions, and recognizes their inter-dependence, can bring the transformation required today." Reverberating the prevailing Indian spirit of the universal brotherhood enunciated in Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, Paul VI had invited the members of non-Christian religions during his Apostolic Visit to India on 3 December 1964 "to work together to build the common future of the human race" and praised the rich spiritual and cultural heritage by declaring, "Yours is a land of ancient culture, the cradle of great religions, the home of a nation that has sought God with a relentless desire, in deep meditation and silence, and in hymns of fervent prayer."

The central teaching of Fratelli Tutti aimed at promoting and strengthening fraternity and social friendship finds an adequate and fertile ground in the Indian pluralistic society noted for its multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious context. Despite the unfathomable diversities and differences, the Indian populace has strived to live peacefully side-by-side, mutually supporting and sustaining in times of need, and invigorated the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. In the present fast-evolving scenario of rising instances of "a myopic, extremist, resentful and aggressive nationalism", and the gradual "loss of the social sense under the guise of defending national interests" (FT, 11), the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and the teachings of Fratelli tutti become all the more relevant and indispensable.

New Impetus to the Jesuit Universal Mission-Vision

An attentive and analytic study of the four universal apostolic preferences of the Society of Jesus evinces clearly that they are in perfect harmony with the pursuit of Fratelli Tutti of "a global ethic of cooperation in the service of a future shaped by interdependence, and share responsibility in the whole human family" (FT, 127). The four universal apostolic preferences, viz., showing the way to God (Show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and Discernment), walking with the excluded (Walk with the Poor, the Outcast of the World, those



whose Dignity has been violated, in a Mission of Reconciliation and Justice), journeying with the youth (Accompany Young People in the Creation of a Hope-Filled Future), and caring for Our Common Home (Collaborate, with Gospel Depth, for the Protection and Renewal of God's Creation) are aimed to have a horizon and a point of reference to the whole Society of Jesus.

Presenting the apostolic preferences on 19 February 2019, Father General Arturo Sosa had highlighted that they were the mission of the Church through Pope Francis "to concentrate and concretize our vital apostolic energies during the next ten years, 2019-2029." Pope Francis had affirmed in his confirmation letter of 6 February 2019 that the apostolic preferences were "in agreement with the current priorities of the Church as expressed through the ordinary magisterium of the Pope, the Synods, the Episcopal Conferences, especially since *Evangelii Gaudium*." These apostolic preferences touch the most urgent and vital issues of the contemporary world, and are aimed to unite all Jesuits in one and the same mission for the greater glory of God and for the good of the entire humanity. They receive new meaning and impetus in and through the teachings of Fratelli Tutti to pursue relentlessly and foster peace, justice and reconciliation in all their dimensions; namely, culturally, ecologically, legally and socio-politically around which the dream of a better future revolves and appears realistic.

Apart from revitalizing the four universal apostolic preferences, Fratelli Tutti articulates some concrete and feasible ways and means to achieve the goal envisioned by the Society of Jesus in a span of ten years. In a pluralistic context of Indian society, which thrives on unity in diversity amidst different socio-cultural and religious traditions and practices, two instruments could yield the desired fruits of fraternity and social friendship, and they are interreligious dialogue and the culture of encounter. Fratelli Tutti offers a hope that "despite obstacles, differences and varying perspectives on the way to achieve peaceful coexistence" (FT, 232), the Jesuit commitment to a culture of encounter with people from different walks of life, faith and culture through spiritual, intellectual, social and legal services would contribute toward building "harmony and understanding between different cultures and religions" (FT, 279).

Pope Francis accentuates the statement of the Bishops of India, which elucidates the urgent mission of the Jesuits in India to come out of their comfort zones, to dialogue whenever and wherever possible and necessary, "the goal of dialogue is to establish friendship, peace and harmony, and to share spiritual and moral values and experiences in a spirit of truth and love" (FT, 271). The ongoing efforts of the Jesuits to get the release of Fr. Stan Swamy demonstrates that the whole-hearted

and tenacious fights for the victims of injustice, exploitation and subjugation are not at all easy; however, Fratelli Tutti shows a ray of hope, no single act of love for God will be lost, no generous effort is meaningless, no painful endurance is wasted" (FT, 195). Such hope is centered on the person of Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb 13:8), who preached love and always took the side of the poor.

Fratelli Tutti and Future Prospects

The source of inspiration for Pope Francis to envisage and promulgate Fratelli Tutti is St. Francis of Assisi, who "expressed the essence of a fraternal openness that allows us to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person, regardless of physical proximity, regardless of where he or she was born or lives" (FT, 1). Therefore, despite the troubled waters of differences and divisions, Fratelli Tutti paves the way to be always attentive on the methodology of see-judge-act to see and study the ground realities, to analyze the situations, and to discern in the light of faith to define a concrete course of action, because "it is possible to find a means of serene, ordered and peaceful coexistence, accepting our differences and rejoicing that, as children of the one God, we are all brothers and sisters" (FT, 279).

Fratelli Tutti is a challenge to remodel our way of life, thinking, acting, reacting, and relating to all those who come in contact with us, to dream and to work together as a single human family in our Common Home for a better future. We are invited to tread the path to fraternity and social friendship into the future, a path marked by a culture of dialogue and encounter. Such journey calls us to embrace the "other", the "desperate, afflicted and wounded" lying on the road, not merely to work for the

poor and vulnerable, but to identify ourselves with them, and finally "to build bridges, to break down walls, to sow seeds of reconciliation" (FT, 276). In the final analysis, Fratelli Tutti is an efficacious instrument in the hands of "all people of good will" who aspire and dedicate their lives to create a civilization of love. Their good will is bound to succeed and yield hundred-fold results if they keep their "door wide open" to accept and respect all as the children of God in Our Common Home nurtured by the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.

What is important is to create processes of encounter, processes that build a people that can accept differences. Let us arm our children with the weapons of dialogue! Let us teach them to fight the good fight of the culture of encounter! (FT, 217)

The author is a Lecturer of Moral Theology at Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome and Coordinator of Joint Diploma in Integral Ecology.

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As an all-pervading principle of the fundamental unity and interconnectedness of all human as well as non-human beings on the face of the earth, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam brings to the fore unequivocally and substantiates the core message of both *Laudato si'* ("everything is interconnected" LS, 70) and Fratelli Tutti ("children of the same earth which is our common home" FT, 8). "



Infirmiry in the Pandemic

I returned from visiting the hospital, dog-tired and ravenously hungry. I collected my dinner from the hot box in the kitchen and ate in the reading room. The T. V. streamed news of the Corona situation in the main cities. Our government herds the infected into the Covid centers where the arrangement of beds, the food and the medical care are grossly inadequate. Knowing it, I admitted my Jesuit brother in the private hospital. It provides good care but bills are astronomical. I was quite eager to see how he is faring and to pray for him. He is put on the ventilator which is truly a money-sucking machine.

The masked watchmen led me to the bills and payment section which accepted hard cash. I did not have that much. I rushed to the Bank and got the money. Even after pleading, I was not allowed to meet the seriously ill Jesuit brother. The hospital needed me only to make the payments. I was furious.

After a minute I thought of other urgent concerns of the infirmiry. The hospital bills are enormous burdens. The pandemic has depleted the province treasury. The income from the ministries has stopped due to the lockdown. Though there is no income, the educational and charitable institutions have to pay the teachers, clerks and workers. The infirmiry has its regular expenses for the special diet, medical tests, medicines, and the nursing care. The disgruntled inmates ask for the best of food, drink and special care. They consume the forbidden and suffer the after effects. I have to rush them to the hospital and still be patient and kind to them.

The horrifying description of the Corona virus by the national channels of the media, has spread fear and even panic in the elderly. Our infirmiry cares for the retired, old and sick Jesuits. As precaution, I have procured masks and sanitizers, and I insist on frequent hand-washing. I do not let visitors come into the infirmiry. Some inmates dislike this seclusion and are upset.

I love and take diligent care of the inmates in many ways. I have categorized them as follows: 1. The dying, 2. The half-dead and 3. The die-hard. The dying and the half-dead are in need of constant vigilance. Prolonged neglect of their essential needs can hasten their death.

The dying

They are truly my brothers in Christ and I sincerely wish and want them to live long. They have served God and his people. Many are incapacitated and on the verge of death. Whenever they panic, I am with them. I pray to encourage them to believe in the compassion of God. Gradually their anxiety diminishes and peace returns.

I coax them to believe and live each day as a precious gift from God. I remind them of the presence of God who communicates for Communion with him. They have the freedom and power to choose love or hate. Love promotes life and good relationship with God and others. Hate destroys life and causes pain and suffering. I encourage them to forgive all, just as Jesus did on the Cross. They need to be reconciled with others and God. That brings them peace, and they can face their death.

The half-dead

These were teachers, professors, preachers, or missionaries. Transferred to the infirmiry, they suffer loneliness and some become depressed. They murmur about the weather, the food, the treatment, and the doctors. They re-live the glorious or painful

events of life. Some try to control life around. They do not succeed. They succumb easily to psychosomatic sicknesses. I teach them the prayer of serenity.

I teach the pessimists to write the journal of gratitude and enumerate blessings from God. This helps them become more joyful and peaceful. To the hopeless, I speak of God as our Benevolent Creator and Merciful Father. To the lost, I reveal Jesus, the Way, the Life and the Resurrection. To the fearful, I quote the scriptures, "Fear not. I am with you, always." To the lonely, I ask them to sing, "The Lord is my Shepherd", or "What a friend we have in Jesus".

During their ministry, the half-dead were the focus of all attention for long. In the infirmiry they tend to be restless, listless and even become forgetful. Their smart phone engages them in virtual reality but not for a long time. They long for real interaction with others. They take time to cope with the situation in the infirmiry. Some give up fighting, but others struggle to find creative ways of pastoral ministry. Their ardent desire to serve, enkindles hope and they rise up to the stage of the die-hard.

The die-hard

The die-hard have boundless energy to enjoy life. Now placed in the infirmiry, they find ways to be happy and healthy. A) occupies himself with solving cross-word puzzles, reading and discussing politics. B) contacts his former students and teachers. He takes interest in and guides them. C) inquires about his parish, friends and relatives. D) writes pamphlets and articles to share his pastoral wisdom. E) takes regular exercise and walks, to be healthy. F) enjoys playing the violin to entertain others. G) guides retreats or counsels. H) works every evening in the garden. Being occupied and useful gives the die-hard some reason to live longer. They long to be engaged in light pastoral ministry.

Conclusion

The medical expenses of the infirm during the pandemic have multiplied. This is a matter of serious financial concern. But at the same time, pragmatism, productivity and utility cannot be the criteria for spending on the sick. To care for them is part and parcel of Religious life.

The mission station, the parish or the educational institution cannot give adequate care for the sick and dying. The infirmiry is the most convenient place for doctors and nurses to provide regular medical care. The ideal location could be a formation house or a vibrant parish. Regular visits by the young and healthy do indicate concern for them. Interactions with others heal many a psychosomatic illness caused by total isolation. In addition, they feel encouraged to pray for the Society and the Church.

In sum, Jesuits are to live in Religious communities and serve others. Their last days on earth should be ideally like their first as novices. Fraternal love and service inspired them to leave their home. Their life-long service demands living as Companions of Jesus. They are Jesuits both in spirit and life. And as such, they are to be the sources of blessing to all others.

The author with a double doctorate in Christology as well as Pastoral Counselling, has worked for decades in the formation houses in different capacities.

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From Babri Mosque to Ram Temple

This 5th August (2020), the Prime Minister of India did the ground-breaking ceremony (Bhumi Pujan) for Ram Temple in Ayodhya. The Prime Minister compared the 15th August when India got freedom, to the 5th August when, according to him, Lord Ram was liberated. He also said that as all the people rallied behind Mahatma Gandhi to get India freedom, so now all people have rallied together to liberate Lord Ram. The RSS chief who was present on the occasion quoted some shloka from Manusmriti.

some archaeologists that the remains of some pillars and other artefacts prove that the temple was there, but it is disputed by other archaeologists. On the other hand, while levelling the land for the Ram Temple few months ago, the remains of a Buddhist structure were found there.

As such, the seeds of the dispute were sown by the British, in pursuance of their 'divide and rule' policy. Mrs. A. F. Beeveridge while commenting on Babri mosque in Ayodhya, put a footnote

saying that there might have been a temple on which the Mosque was made. (Anatomy of Confrontation: Edited by S. Gopal, Penguin Publications). In some versions of Ramayana there are nearly 300 versions of the Lord Ram Story (A. K. Ramanujam). Dashrath was the king of Varanasi and not of Ayodhya. Similarly, Valmiki's Ramayana also does not mention the place of birth of Lord Goswami Tulsidas, who wrote the most popular Ramcharitmanas, was living around the time when the Temple of the Lord was supposed to have been destroyed. He also does not mention any such incident in his writings. The mythological issues cannot be compared to history. A.K. Ramanujam's book brilliantly gives the diverse narrative of Lord Ram's story, which is prevalent not only in India but also in various parts of South-East Asia.



An illustration of Babri Masjid demolition

It is wrong to say that from the last many centuries, the struggle for Ram Temple has been going on as claimed by Narendra Modi. There is mention of some disputes for Ram Chabutra on the outskirts of the mosque in the late 19th Century, but to say that Hindus have been struggling for this temple, is a pure concoction. The issue came to the forefront only from the 1980s, when BJP's Advani took over the issue from the VHP, who had begun the campaign that Lord Ram was born at the spot where the Babri mosque is located, and so we should build the grand Ram Temple precisely at that spot. The Ram Temple campaign gained a heightened response in the aftermath of the implementation of the Mandal Commission, giving 26% reservations to OBCs.

The claim that there was Lord Ram's Temple at that spot has been on tenuous grounds. The Supreme Court in its judgement did not uphold this view of Lord Ram's temple being there, and Babar having destroyed it. The SC did not uphold the view that Lord Ram was born at precisely that spot. There are claims by

In recent history, the first incident which occurred was putting up of Lord Ram idols in the Mosque in 1949 in a surreptitious manner. This was done in the middle of the night. Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime minister, asked the UP Chief Govind Vallabh Pant to get the idols removed, but no action was taken by UP's Chief. Nor was action taken by the District Collector, K.K.Nayyar who, after retirement, joined the previous avatar of BJP - the Bharatiya Jansangh.

The mosque was locked, and remained so till the mid-1980s. Under pressure of Hindu nationalists, the gates of the disputed structure were open, and Shilanyas was performed when Rajiv Gandhi was PM. This shilanyas was not at the site where it has been done now. This criminal act of Ram Lalla idols being kept inside, is recorded by the SC judgement. Later, on 6th December through communal mobilization, three lakh Kar Sevaks assembled and destroyed the Archaeological monument in broad daylight. The UP Chief Minister had given an affidavit

to protect the mosque, but he backed out and later proudly proclaimed that he is glad about what he did.

The Liberhan Commission report, constituted by the Government, mentions the BJP leaders as the culprits of this crime. Court cases are under progress on this issue and cases against Lal Kishan Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharati are pending in the Courts. The Ram Temple movement, and the rath yatras led by Advani were the big polarizing factors in Indian politics. It increased the communalisation in society. It also presented Muslims as temple destroyers and widened the Gulf between the two main religious communities in India.

Both, the Muslim kings and Hindu kings had destroyed the temples for wealth and political rivalries. Just a couple of examples: Maratha armies destroyed a temple in Srirangapatnam, which was repaired by Tipu Sultan; Aurangzeb got Vishwanath temple destroyed in Kashi; The same Aurangzeb gave donations to many Hindu temples, and also destroyed one mosque in Golconda. But here, the destruction of temples got associated only with Muslim kings, reflecting it on the Muslims of today. The atmosphere of hate against Muslims was intensified.

This movement has been the major polarizing factor in contemporary India. Now the claims of Mr. Narendra Modi that the movement is centuries old, is not true, and nobody is able to challenge his assertions, as a lot of emotive elements have been created in the whole issue. The ownership of land has been with the Sunni Waqf Board. The judgement of 2010 Allahabad High Court was based on faith and the land was equally divided between three parties, two-thirds going to the Hindu side and one-third to the Sunni Waqf Board. The basis of judgment was the 'faith of the people', not the legal grounding of the case. The same thing was upheld by the Supreme Court, and despite recognising the 1949 smuggling of the Ram Lalla Temple and demolition of the mosque a crime, it allotted the whole disputed land to the Hindu site, and arranged for an alternate site for the mosque. It was an irony of history that those who committed the crime were beneficiaries of the crime, and achieved their target through a crime and other mayhem created by them.

The majority of the Muslim community accepted the Supreme Court verdict with honour, without any protest. They have been allotted five acres of land as compensation. While a Prime Minister who took oath by the Indian Constitution, went to inaugurate the temple building, it remains to be seen if he will go and inaugurate the building of the Mosque, in case Muslims decide to build one. His associate, the Chief Minister of UP, who was accompanying the PM while the temple ground-breaking ceremony was done, did declare that he will not be part of the Mosque-building ceremony.

While today the Prime Minister is doing the ground-breaking ceremony of the temple, one recalls a similar incident in the

aftermath of India getting freedom. There was a clamour that the state government should be renovating the Somnath temple, which was destroyed by Mahmud Ghazni. Mahatma Gandhi said that building the religious places was not the work of the state. So a private trust built it. They invited Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the President of India, to inaugurate the temple. Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime minister, advised that the President should not do it in his official capacity, as the state is neutral in matters of religion. The same Nehru went on to lay the foundations of educational institutes, public sectors, scientific establishments and what have you, to bring India on a par with the modern times. He also went on to label these as 'Temples of Modern India'.

Times have changed. Now temple-building has become the agenda of the state and the education and health facilities have been passed on to the Corporate sector. While the Constitution says the state should not take up issues related to religion, the Prime Minister goes to inaugurate the temple in full religious regalia. We need to bring back the values of the Indian Constitution and welfare of the people on the centre stage of society, and leave 'matters of faith' to the communities. The status quo in matters of places of worship should be maintained,



The proposed Ram temple in Ayodhya

Image Source: The Print

and plans to make more social facilities be brought to the forefront of the social agenda. The whole episode has tainted the secular nature of state to no end. It has put a deep fear in the hearts of minorities.

Whether the secular character of the Indian state be maintained, is a bigger question. Can the state focus more on facilities for the poor and marginalized, and delving in the past as a cover-up for revivalism, be shunned? The history of Buddhist Viharas being destroyed by followers of Brahminism also needs to be remembered, but the past should be a matter for us for learning that wrong paths have to be shunned, and the issues of people be brought to the forefront, so that all of us can live with dignity and honour.

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Christmas in the time of COVID-19

Image Source: SHRM

Can we celebrate the feast of Christmas this year in the midst of a pandemic and the scourge of COVID-19?

If our idea of celebration is restricted to physical participation at various events, then we most definitely cannot. This is because it is unlikely that in many parts of the world, large groups will be allowed to gather together by Christmas day. Besides, this type of celebration will be an abuse to the millions of people all over the world who because of the pandemic, have been reduced to a state of nothingness. We are all in the same storm, but there are millions who even in this storm are in wobbly rafts, and without even a paddle. When this is the reality of our world, we cannot and must not celebrate as we usually did. Our external celebrations must be muted, muffled and hushed much like the millions of the poor, the marginalized and the downtrodden.

Even as this is so, it does not mean that we cannot celebrate

in a totally different way. We can, we must and we will. We will celebrate with the poorest of the poor. Our celebrations will be such that it will offer them hope in their hopelessness and despair, joy in their misery, and love in their fear. We will do this because this is what Christmas is. It is the birth of hope, the birth of love and the prototype of selflessness and self-giving. It is the birth of God.

In the Gospel of Matthew, the story of the birth of Jesus is narrated through three dreams of Joseph (Mt 1:18-25; 2:13-15; 2:19-23). However, after the first and second dream, there is an episode, through which Matthew makes his narrative richer (Mt 2:1-12; 16-18).

At the end of his genealogy, Matthew had changed the narrative by saying that unlike the others in the genealogy who were the fathers of their sons, Joseph was not the father of Jesus. Rather, Joseph was the husband of Mary who gave



birth to Jesus. In the first dream of Joseph, Matthew tells us how this was so. Joseph was aware that his fiancée was with child. He also knew that since they had not lived together, the child was not his. This is why he decided to divorce Mary. He was told in a dream, however, that he must marry his fiancée despite this fact. When he heard this instruction, he was confused and could make no sense of it, but in obedience to God, Joseph laid reason and logic aside and obeyed.

Like Joseph we too are confused with the present situation of the pandemic. The varied explanations that have been with regard to the origin, spread, control, and precautions that must be taken, are changing with each passing day. Like Joseph, we too want to decide what is best for us. However, even as we make up our minds to do, so, the voice of God speaks to us of God's saving help.

In the same dream, the name of the child and the meaning of that name are revealed. The child to be born will be named Jesus which means 'Saviour.' By the choice of this name, God shows that God's son will be 'common' and in doing so identify totally with humans. Our God in Jesus is not condemner or destroyer, but Saviour. This fact alone ought to be cause for joy, hope and optimism.

Finally, Matthew uses the universalizing "all" to stress that it is God who ordains everything that takes place. The extension of the name to Emmanuel means that God continues to be an integral part of the world. We can seek and find God here in the midst of this trial and challenge.

In our present situation, it is not easy for us to find God. We search but cannot find. We look for stars that will lead the way, but they do not seem to shine in the night sky. At times therefore, we are tempted to give up. However, like the Magi, we need to keep searching and seeking assiduously.

If we overcome our selfish desires and are consequently fearless in our search, we will indeed find.

It is the challenge and troubled times of the exile that Matthew summarizes in the second dream of Joseph. Though there will be people in power like Herod, who will attempt to thwart God's plans for the whole human race, their attempts will fail. That Herod would kill those who were a threat to his egotism and desire to remain in power is believable. However, God will bring hope, joy and deliverance, through the seeming disastrous event of the massacre of children.

Even in this pandemic, there have been many reports of Governments reacting violently to a difference of opinion, incarcerating without evidence those who are on the side of truth and justice and dealing unjustly with the poor and marginalized. Those in power have used force and draconian laws to stifle the voices of prophets. Children and youth being raped, murdered and burnt has become an everyday occurrence. The situation today seems worse than at the time of Jesus. It almost seems hopeless.

The prophecy of Jeremiah of Rachel's voice wailing and lamenting loudly in Ramah is apt for the present situation. Though Rachel refuses to be consoled, the following verses in Jeremiah (Jer 31:16-17) speak of hope. It is God who offers this hope and God's hope is not deceptive. We need to continue to raise our voices in protest at the injustices and wail and lament loudly till our voices are heard. They will be heard, like Rachel's voice was.

Though there was nothing in scripture which spoke of the Messiah coming from Nazareth which was considered a lowly place, the Messiah does indeed come from there. The choice of Nazareth shows us that even our best laid plans come to naught in front of God. God works in amazing ways. God works even when we cannot see God working. God works for our good, even when we cannot see that good immediately.

The pandemic has shown us that a dead virus can hold the whole world to ransom. It exposes our shallow knowledge and with it our shallow lives. It tells that because of the individualistic manner in which we have lived till now, we are in this predicament. It invites us to realize not only our dependence on each other and on nature, but more importantly our interdependence. It invites us to believe that despite all that we do to frustrate God's plans for us and our world, God will continue to come to us in the hope that we will open our eyes and see, that we will open our ears and listen and that we will open our hearts and love unconditionally, just as God loves us.

This unconditional love of God was manifested in the most tangible manner when Jesus was born. We celebrate God's earnest care for us and our world, by responding with the same earnestness that God shows.

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The Birth of Hope to Heal the World



Image Source: GlobalGiving

Stanley Weintraub in his “Silent Night: The Story of the World War-I Christmas Truce,” illustrates an extraordinary moment in the history of the world. During the first World War, British soldiers and German soldiers were fighting fiercely on the Western Front, in France. Though it was Christmas Eve, they were preparing themselves for another day of war, to kill and to capture more power. To the surprise of all, one of the British soldiers waved greeting signs of “Merry Christmas” from the trenches and others joined in singing Christmas carols. The German soldiers charmingly responded by singing Christmas carols, and both sides came out of their trenches. They met at ‘No Man’s Land’, sang songs, engaged in conversations and went on to play soccer in another corner. The little spark that came out of that soldier’s good gesture, waving Christmas greetings, gave birth to peace, unity and hope between the warring soldiers. The peace continued until the new troops arrived. No elegant speech or moving call to unity would have brought about such

a great transformation and peace. Only the birth of hope and the story of Christmas can bring about such a miracle of peace, healing, love and a new beginning.

We are wounded from many sides. In the face of the unabated, destructive Covid-19 pandemic, silencing of voices of justice like that of Fr. Stan Swamy and in the face of relentless terrorist killings across the world, the birth of hope and healing in Christmas makes more sense than ever before. The Gospel of Luke tells us that the Angel appeared to the shepherds with a message of hope, “Do not be afraid: I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people” (Lk 2:10). The Good News was not merely a message but an action - God’s way of coming down to heal the world from within. The birth of Jesus is the birth of the spark of hope that grows into a flame to heal and to dispel the forces of darkness. The shepherds, who were inspired by the message of hope, left their comfort zones and set themselves on

a new journey to experience the Good News and to be “Wounded Healers,” as Henry Newman would say. The season of Christmas not only heals our wounds, but also fills our spirits with hope, to be like the shepherds and soldiers mentioned above, to take the initiative to change the narrative, to join hands in solidarity with the voices of justice, to fight for the voiceless and to heal the world as wounded healers.

God Is With Us All The While

“God Friendened Me,” is an amazing serial, in which an old man who had been through tough times in life, talks about Bob Dylan - a world-renowned singer and composer. He said, Bob Dylan was constantly changing his religion, sometime he was a Jew, later a Christian and again became a Jew. But all the while he was making music and producing new melodies. So is it with our God. Sometimes we recognize him and sometimes we do not. But all the while, He is with us. Christmas is a significant reminder that God still loves the world, and God is Emmanuel. He is with us both in painful and joyful moments. He cares for us and comes to walk with us in our moments of despair, desolation, anguish and anxiety.

God still loves the World is, in fact, anchored in ‘God so loved the world that He gave his only Son’ (Jn 3:16). The expressions God, ‘still loves’ and ‘so loved’ reveal the enormity and intensity of God’s love, which is never ending. The mystery of such a deep love of God is the cause for God’s incarnation in Christ. The love of God always goes forth, for the sake of the other. St. Augustine defines this incarnational spirit in the following way:

He so loved us that, for our sake,
He was made a (hu)man in time, although through him all times were made.
He was made (hu)man who made (hu)man.
He was created of a mother whom He created.
He was carried by hands which He formed.
He cried in the manger in wordless infancy,
He is Word, without whom all human eloquence is mute”
(Sermons 188, 2, 2).

Every Christmas illustrates this divine love, in which God gives Himself in Jesus for our sake. He empties Himself “to dwell in our midst” (Jn 1:14), to enhance the humanity in us and to set us on a journey towards fullness of life. The mystery of Incarnation tells us that God does not give up on us, and wants the dialogue with Him and with one another to go on.

“Becoming Truly Human”

The Word becoming Flesh (Jn 1:14) reveals the core of “Becoming truly Human.” It is the beginning of the re-humanization process of humanity. The incarnation of Jesus is an action, a unique event that grows and transforms the hearts and minds of people from within. Incarnational love is the antidote to the present power-hungry and discriminatory mind-sets in the world. The birth of the Lord in the manger teaches the world, that ‘being human’ is neither about possessions and

power, nor about name and fame; on the other hand, it is love that goes forth - choosing the manger and the shepherds, love that unifies not divides, love that is compassionate, and love that is willing to dialogue with people of all cultures and faiths.

St. Irenaeus writes, “The Glory of God is the living human person and the life of the human person is the vision of God.” It implies, that when we constantly behold the vision of God and allow God to affect us, we begin to be truly alive. The way we see God is the way we live our lives. If we truly see our God as a humble and compassionate God, we will follow that God in our lives. When we contemplate the infant Jesus, we see a God, who truly loves, sacrifices and humbles Himself even to die on the Cross (cf. Phil 2: 7-8). By following this God, we develop a new attitude and a new spirituality, to be a church that goes forth in serving the poor and the weak. In this process of Godly love and genuine service, our true human spirit blossoms, and we become truly human, in the “image and likeness” of God (Gen 1:26) and in that way we give

glory to God.

Christmas is neither a mere ritualistic celebration, nor a one-day event, but an attitude for everyday rooted in incarnational spirituality. Such an incarnational attitude facilitates the individual to inculturate into the day-to-day struggles of our neighbours. As Pope Francis in Fratelli Tutti says, “All of us have in ourselves something of the wounded man, something of the robber, something of the passers-by, and something of the Good Samaritan.” The spirit of Christmas inspires us to choose to be a Good Samaritan, to be willing to kneel, feel and heal the wounds of others and not only carry the weak person to the hospital, but also be a steward, who will care for the wholistic growth of the person and society by networking and dialoguing, and thus saving Mother Earth.



The spirit of Christmas inspires us to choose to be a Good Samaritan, to be willing to kneel, feel and heal the wounds of others and not only carry the weak person to the hospital, but also be a steward, who will care for the wholistic growth of the person and society by networking and dialoguing, and thus saving Mother Earth.”

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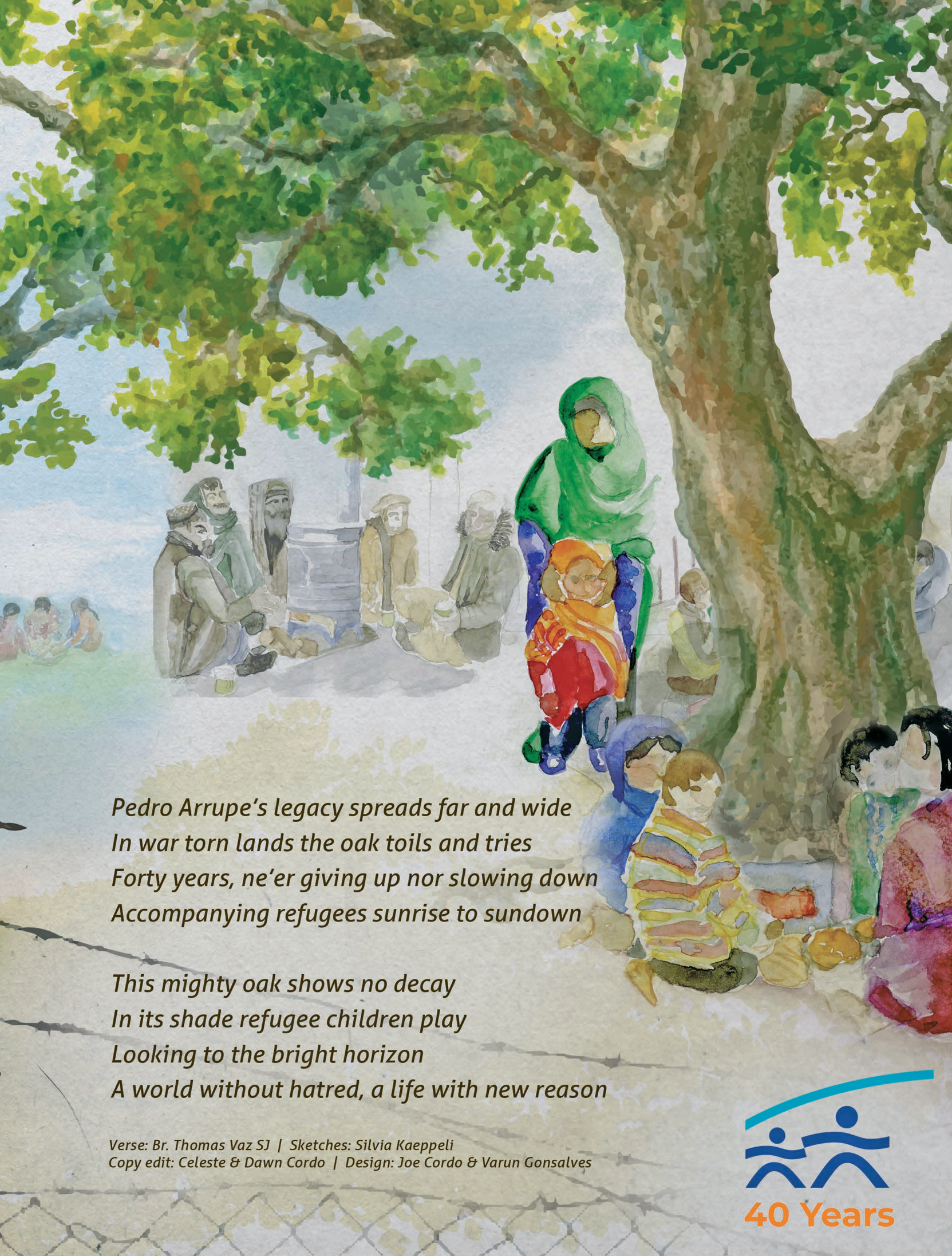
*At each barbed border, at every treacherous shore
Displaced desperate faces the world cares for no more
Their eyes tell a story of heartbreak & loss, of dreams gone up in smoke
Until they reach an oasis in the calm of a sheltering oak*

*The mighty oak knew no religion, nor nation
Considering everyone God's lovely creation
And the weary looked up with disbelief
To the merciful oak who promised relief*



THOUSAND WORDS

In Commemoration of Human Rights
Day -10th December



*Pedro Arrupe's legacy spreads far and wide
In war torn lands the oak toils and tries
Forty years, ne'er giving up nor slowing down
Accompanying refugees sunrise to sundown*

*This mighty oak shows no decay
In its shade refugee children play
Looking to the bright horizon
A world without hatred, a life with new reason*

Verse: Br. Thomas Vaz SJ | Sketches: Silvia Kaeppli
Copy edit: Celeste & Dawn Cordo | Design: Joe Cordo & Varun Gonsalves





NEP 2020

Structural Changes in School Education



Image Source: Australian Marist Solidarity

On the 29th July 2020, the Union Cabinet approved the third National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, which is aligned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and hopes to address the many growing development priorities of our country. It is built on the foundational pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability. At the onset, the Ministry of Human Resource Development is renamed as the Ministry of Education. The numbers quoted will be from the 66-page MHRD NEP 2020 document.

NEP 2020 recommends many transformational ideas for school education.

The Curricular and Pedagogical Structure: The current 10+2 system is replaced by a 5+3+3+4 curricular and pedagogical structure based on cognitive and socio-emotional developmental stages of children (4.1).

- i. **Foundational Stage (age 3-8 years):** The foundational stage of education or Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) will comprise of 3 years known as preschool or Anganwadi education, followed by two years of primary classes (classes 1 and 2). Students will learn two languages. ECCE envisages to tap the stimulation of the brain in a child's early years through play-based, activity-based and inquiry-based learning for the development of communication and early language, literacy, and numeracy (1.2).
- ii. **Preparatory Stage (8-11 years):** Grades 3-5. Students will learn three languages. This stage involves play, discovery, activity-based and interactive classroom learning.

iii. **Middle Stage (11-14 years):** Grades 6-8. This stage will focus on critical learning objectives, and will work on experiential learning in science, mathematics, arts, social sciences and humanities.

iv. **Secondary Stage (14-18 years):** Grades 9-12. The main change in these classes is the shift to a multidisciplinary system where students will have access to a variety of subject combinations to choose as per their interest areas.

Medium of instruction: NEP 4.11 notes, 'wherever possible, the medium of instruction at least till Grade 5, but preferably up to Grade 8 and beyond, will be the mother tongue/local language/regional language'. Since the mother tongue is the first language that a child speaks and understands, so grasping of newer concepts will be much easier.

Multilingualism: The three languages learned by children will be the choice of States, regions, and of the students, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India (4.13).

Holistic development of learners: The key overall thrust of curriculum and pedagogy reform across all stages is to focus on understanding and learning how to learn. The aim of education will not only be cognitive development, but also building character and creating well-rounded individuals (4.4).

Reduction of curriculum content: NEP suggests reduction in the curriculum to its core essentials, to make space for critical thinking and more holistic, inquiry-based, discovery-based, discussion-based, and analysis-based learning (4.5).

Experiential learning: NEP focuses on experiential learning, which includes hands-on learning, arts-integrated and sports-integrated education. Art-integrated education will create joyful classrooms through integration of Indian art and culture. Also, NEP strongly advocates sports-integration for the development of values of self-initiative, teamwork, responsibility, self-discipline, and to help learners be a part of the Fit India Movement (4.7-8).

Flexibility in course choices: NEP provides choice-based flexible learning where students can choose subjects of their interest. Further, there will not be rigid learning separation between commerce, arts and science streams, curricular and extra-curricular activities. (4.9).

Vocational Education and informal internship:

Students of Grades 6-8 will be allocated 10-day bag-less period for informal internship with local vocational experts such as carpenters, gardeners, potters, artists, etc. as decided by States and local communities and as mapped by local skilling needs (4.26).

Transforming Assessment: All students will take school examinations in Grades 3, 5, and 8 to test basic learning outcomes, assessment of core concepts and application of knowledge in real-life situations (4.40). The board exams for class 10 and 12 will be made 'easier' and will test primarily core capacities/competencies. All students can take board exams on two occasions during a given school year, one main examination and one for improvement, if desired.

Changes in report card: The progress card of all students for school-based assessment will be holistic, 360-degree, multidimensional report card that will reflect in great detail the progress and uniqueness of each learner in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. The progress card will include self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher assessment (4.35).

The National Testing Agency (NTA): The National Testing Agency (NTA) will work to offer a high-quality common aptitude test, as well as specialized common subject exams in the sciences, humanities, languages, arts, and vocational subjects, at least twice every year (4.42).

NIOS, Open Schools to offer courses for grades

3, 5 and 8: NIOS and State Open Schools will also offer A, B and C levels that are equivalent to Grades 3, 5, and 8 of the formal school system; secondary education programs that are equivalent to Grades 10 and 12; vocational education courses/programs; and adult literacy and life-enrichment programs (3.5).

National Assessment Centre: A new National Assessment Centre, PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development), will set the norms, standards and guidelines for student assessment and evaluation for all recognized school boards of India (4.41).

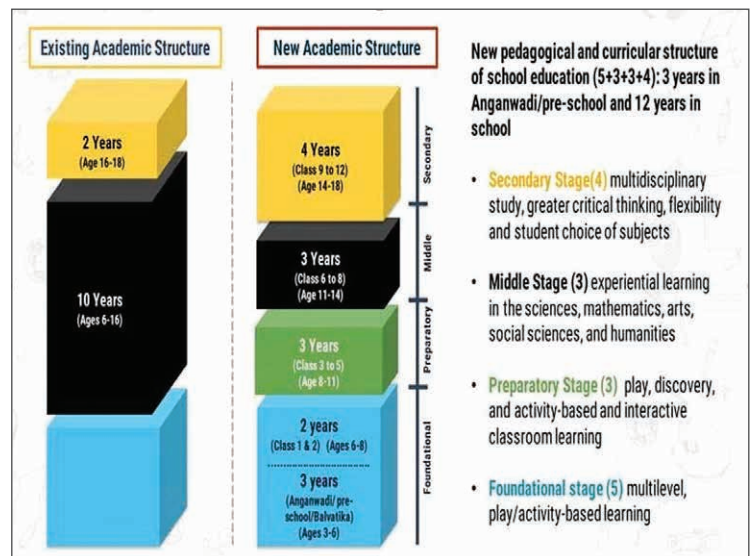
School complexes: The NEP recommends grouping schools together to form a school complex which will consist of one secondary school and other schools, Anganwadis in a 5-10 km radius. This will ensure: (i) adequate number of teachers

for all subjects in a school complex, (ii) adequate infrastructural resources, and (iii) effective governance of schools (7.5).

Continuous Professional Development (CPD):

Each teacher and school leadership members are expected to participate in 50 hours or more of CPD modules every year (5.15-16).

NEP 2020 is embedded with contentious issues. Critics claim that NEP shows a shallow understanding of the ground realities of education in an unequal and caste-ridden society. The highly centralised policy goes against the constitutional framework of federalism, making states mere executors of the policy. The Foundation stage undermines the important aspects of child development psychology. The 'multiple pathways' contradicts the very basic requirement of the RTE, for every child is entitled to quality education in a physical school. Exams at 3, 5, 8 standards will result in high dropouts especially among girls, SC and ST students. The 10-day internship for class 6-8 would affect the young minds, for even today, carpentry and leather work are strongly entrenched in the caste system.



Critics comment that NEP is not advocating effective public school system nor making them accountable for qualitative outcomes. This will only perpetuate the widening gap between the rich and the poor, urban and rural. The Constitution of India guarantees reservation and privileges for ST, SC, OBC, and minorities which the NEP dilutes by clubbing them in SEDGs. One cannot promote critical thinking in the absence of teaching fundamental rights and in a culture of intolerance. One cannot foster the "idea of India" and "Indianness" without affirming the different cultural traditions in the course of history, and without promoting religious diversity and social integration. However, NEP needs a democratic process, to amend these contentious issues so that our poor and downtrodden are empowered and together 'transform India into a new Education Hub'.

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Stan in Jail

Implications for Christian Mission in India



Image Source: newsfile-online.com

Every time I send a copy of my webinar or a write-up on Stan's arrest to my younger sister, the senior-most guardian of our family, she responds with a sigh, 'hope they won't arrest you too!' She prompts my reflections, what will be the impact of our protests about the arrest of Stan?

We will be noticed

We are already. The coverage of the news of Fr. Stan's arrest and response to it has been quite astounding. National and international media, activist groups, religious men and women, all have responded universally demanding justice and compassion. It is satisfying to note how men and women of diverse sectors have acclaimed the work for justice by Jesuits. One typical example was the statement of Shashi Tharoor. Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor

said, "Fr. Swamy deserves respect and support, not a jail term...I am convinced that no Jesuit will indulge in any violence or entice anyone towards violence. This must stop. I appeal to the government to be fair and at least grant him bail. We stand in solidarity with Stan Swamy."

We are likely to create division

There are already and there will be more individuals and groups who would argue that the kind of work Fr. Stan does is not our cup of tea. Splinter Christian groups, for instance in Kerala, have come out with strong denunciation of Fr. Stan, and innuendos that he indeed may be linked to Maoist groups. There will definitely be innocent souls asking if we shouldn't be focussing on evangelisation work and not political acts like Fr. Stan is involved in. Others would be concerned about

how the other ministries of Christians would be affected. Right wing supporters of the ruling regime will definitely find innumerable reasons why Fr. Stan should not have engaged in such activities. Confusion in the minds of the naïve and innocent is bound to create divisions.

We will be forced to take a stand

With the arrest of Fr. Stan, for standing with the marginalized tribals and their fundamental rights, we are forced to take a stand. Mustafa Akyol and Swaminathan S. Ankalesaria Aiyar writing recently in the New York Times (Oct.31st - Nov.1st 2020) said, "By now, the world knows that Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India and his Hindu Supremacist BJP have eroded the liberal principles of the Indian Constitutions and are turning the

country into an increasingly illiberal democracy. It is common knowledge that Mr. Modi thrives on the grievances and bigotries that pit privileged majorities against minorities living in fear.”

The days of convenient neutrality are over. We will need to take a definite stand on political and social issues. Shivram



The days of convenient neutrality are over. We will need to take a definite stand on political and social issues. Shivram Vij wrote (in 'The Print' 29th July, 2020): “Indians will regret their silence over Modi’s ever-growing list of political prisoners”.”

Vij wrote (in 'The Print' 29th July, 2020): “Indians will regret their silence over Modi’s ever-growing list of political prisoners”.

We can expect scrutiny of our ministries

Being noticed, creating divisions, and forced to take a stand we can definitely expect our ministries to be scrutinised and even to be harassed. “Across India, anyone who dares or could dare to express political disagreement with the Modi government risks going to jail on trumped up charges, in which trial and bail are difficult.”, said Shivram. Look at the way the Rajasthan High Court has blocked schools collecting part fees. We are already experiencing hurdles in getting normal approvals of our institutions, clearance certificates, disbursement of grants and others. Our own very ‘loyal and long-term’ collaborators may as well be our ‘betrayers’. Avenues of our charitable works, especially institutional ones, are being closed slowly and steadily.

One crucial question is how aware are we of the dynamics of the control of our ministries by the forces of a vested government. We Jesuits have the additional burden of having educated many of the leaders of the ruling party, who while maintaining a very friendly and cordial relationship with us, show no qualms of conscience in enacting legislations and effecting policies, which could kill our efforts.

The call is to a radical discipleship

Ultimately, Fr. Stan’s arrest, the responses of the civil society towards the arrest, our own assertive stand and consequent reactions call for a radical discipleship. As the very word ‘radical’ indicates, we need to get to the roots of issues, look at the fundamentals and be willing to be challenged for change. We will thus be able to change others and ourselves as genuine Companions of Jesus. Radical discipleship calls for a commitment beyond what is currently practised.

GC 32 and GC 36 stand out in articulating what radical discipleship means for a Jesuit: Faith and Justice; Reconciliation and Justice; Discernment, Collaboration and Networking; Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs). All these need to be read together. Of particular focus for us, are the UAPs. Writing recently on UAPs, Fr. Damian Howard wrote, “Taken together, the apostolic preferences give us an elegantly expressed focus for our Jesuit mission. They enable us to communicate what is important to us and indicate why we live and work the way we do. Reading between the lines, they also offer a compelling agenda for action and engagement which responds fittingly to a powerfully felt need to find a way through a culture which has gone awry....”

Living a radical discipleship would demand of us absolute commitment to transparency and highest ethical standards characterised by a conquering of the ‘viruses’ that we had articulated already in 2014. We are challenged to review our heavy dependence on institutional forms of service. Personal holiness and quality of expertise in various disciplines should characterise our radical living of Jesuit life. Letting

go of the privileges, and recovering the meaning of ‘learned and poor’ Jesuits, will be the core of living a radical Jesuit life in India.

Fr. Stan’s arrest wakes us up. We are called to a new way of living the Jesuit vocation. GC 36 put it well, ‘the audacity of the improbable/ impossible’. Padre Arrupe reminds us, ‘the world does not need words, but lives which cannot be explained except through faith and love for Christ’s poor’.

The author is the former Provincial of Kerala Province and currently the General Assistant for South Asia in Rome.

Contact: gmutholil@gmail.com

We Stand With You in the Dungeon

We stand with you in the dungeon
We all stand for you Father Stan
Every bleeding conscience is here
Every blighted life is with you here.
To devour their rights rightful
When decrees pounced on people
Shined your deeds like a lamp
On the vast hills of deep gloom.
Prophets have spoken fiery woes
To all unjust edicts and decrees
And your vibrant life has shown
Prophets still live to utter woes!
With your sweat and brave vision
Inherited from Paraguay Reduction
You have guarded from erosion
The first footprints of civilization.
Daniels can shut the jaws of a lion
Whenever opens its own a dungeon
Wherever cowardice carries a throne
There you can be sure of a dungeon.

■ Joe Palathunkal



Challenges Raised by the Jail Custody of Fr. Stan Lourduswamy

Image Source: Intertron

Fr. Stan Lourduswamy SJ, aged 83, who was working for the Adivasis of Jharkhand for more than three decades, was taken into custody and imprisoned on October 9th in the Talaja prison in Mumbai. Along with 15 others, he was charge-sheeted by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) mainly for two crimes under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). They allegedly supported the violent riot which took place at Bhima-Koregaon near Pune, and secondly they gave financial and other support to the Maoists. Fr. Stan refuted both these charges saying neither did he support the riot nor did he help the Maoists. That means, as Fr. Stan himself said, the charges were falsely framed against him by the Investigating Agency. Then what is the reason behind his custody? According to Ramachandra Guha, the famous Indian historian, “it was to silence Fr. Swamy who worked for the rights of the Adivasis, that the Modi Government arrested him.”

The Real Reasons

Land for Adivasis: There is a law in most parts of India especially in Jharkhand, which prohibits non-Adivasis to purchase tribal land. The BJP government in Jharkhand amended this law for corporate industries to exploit the rich minerals in the state. Adivasis strongly and collectively resisted it. Later the BJP lost its government in the election. Besides, whenever the government or industrialists tried to take over tribal land, the Adivasis opposed it. In all these struggles, Fr. Stan was with them.

Releasing innocent Tribals from prison: Thousands of Adivasi youth were imprisoned for years as under-trials, on the alleged link with Maoists. Fr. Stan took up their cases in the High Court

and got hundreds of them freed from prison.

Involving himself in their livelihood issues: He was working with Adivasis to get their livelihood entitlements and rights related to forest, land and water. He also worked with them to get their rights related to the ‘Tribal Forest Rights Act’ and the 5th Schedule of the Constitution giving Adivasis local-panchayat/self-rule.

In short, it is for his work to get justice for the ‘marginalised’ communities that Fr. Stan was arrested. Hemant Soren, Chief Minister of Jharkhand said the same thing, “The main reason for the imprisonment of Fr. Stan was that he constantly worked for the development of Adivasis. Anybody who meaningfully works to get justice for the poor and the marginalised, will have the same fate as Fr. Stan and other human rights activists. This is what Fr. Stan himself said just before his arrest. “My experience is not an isolated event. It is part of the broader process which is taking place all over the country”.

Expressions of this ‘Broader Process’ in the country

Anti-national tag on all those who criticize the Central Government or the ruling party: Media persons are one category of such people. Many media persons who recently went to Uttar Pradesh to report about the girl who was raped and killed, were booked and imprisoned for alleged unlawful activities against the nation. Many human rights activists throughout India were put in prison under UAPA. Most of those who were arrested

in connection with Bhima-Koregaon case were human rights activists. Hundreds of people who participated in the agitation in Delhi against the Citizens' Amendment Act, were booked for anti-national activities. The Central Government recently blocked financial sources of Amnesty International, a global human rights organisation which works in most of the countries. And so it was forced to close down its office in Delhi. The Human Rights Commission of the United Nations Organization strongly deplored the action of the Indian Government on the organization and other human rights activists, including Fr. Stan.

Threats to all the constitutional bodies: There is increasing tendency to influence and indirectly control the constitutional bodies of the country. The Indian Statistical Organisation, a semi-government autonomous body which independently studies about the socio-economic situation of the country, was blocked to publish its report one year back, about the unemployment rate in the country, because its report was not palatable to the Central Government; instead the Government published its own report. Supreme Court Judges, for the first time in the history of India made a public press conference, two years ago, because there was an effort from some quarters to influence the Court. Many doubt that the same situation exists even today. The former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court recently said, "All the constitutional bodies including the courts in the country have become weak". The report of the Sweden-based Institute which studies the fate of democracy across the globe, recently said, "India has continued on a path of steep decline to the extent that it has almost lost its status as a democracy."

Attack on the Minority Communities: Many missionaries in North India, especially in Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, have been put in prison on the false accusation of religious conversion. Recent studies show that such attacks on missionaries have been steadily increasing during last ten years. Many poor people of a minority community were killed in north India through the so called mob lynching, allegedly for cow slaughter. Last month the U.P. High Court set free many such people, when it observed that the police did not scientifically examine whether the meat they caught was of cows. The fact that a particular religious community was excluded from the

Citizens' Amendment Act is a real blot on the secular character of the Indian democracy.

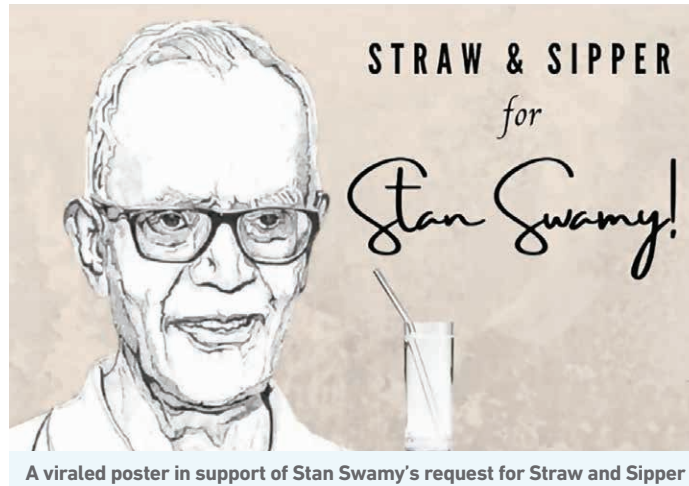
Legislations without due democratic process: Three important agricultural bills which affect the farmers radically, were passed within two days during the last Parliament Session. So also the law curtailing many rights of the workers was passed without sufficient deliberations. Important constitutional amendment bills concerning changes in the status of Jammu and Kashmir, were passed hurriedly by both the Houses of Parliament within hardly three days. The National Education Policy, which is going to affect radically the present and future generations of young people in the country, is approved by the Cabinet, and is going to be implemented without discussing it in Parliament or any other national official forum. The basic principle of arriving at a collective decision through debate and discussion

of differing ideas, which is important for the proper functioning of democracy, is sacrificed here, leading to weakening of democracy itself.

People's Task

Some years back, the JCSA cautioned the Jesuits and others about the danger of 'Religious Fundamentalism' in the country. What the Provincials foresaw at that time has become a stark reality today. I would suggest one recommendation to the Provincials - namely to study the Constitution of the country seriously. People should have awareness and knowledge of the Constitutions and its basic ideals of secularism, democracy and socialism. This can be done by the centres of all the apostolates of Jesuits and others - schools, colleges, parishes, retreat houses etc. When the Constitutional provisions are violated, people should be able to recognise it and respond to it critically. According to political thinkers, eternal vigilance of the citizens is a must, to preserve and protect democracy. More than ever, it is vitally relevant today for India.

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A viraled poster in support of Stan Swamy's request for Straw and Sipper

**Intention For
December
2020**

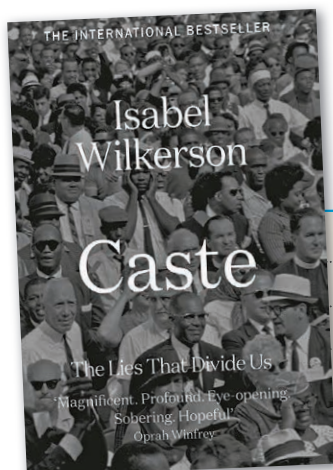
For a life of prayer

We pray that our personal relationship with Jesus Christ be nourished by the Word of God and a life of prayer.



**Pope's Worldwide
Prayer Network**





TITLE: Caste: The Lies that Divide us

AUTHOR: Isabel Wilkerson

PUBLISHER: Allen Lane

PAGES: 495 | PRICE: ₹725

Caste and its Avatars

keep them subservient. Slavery is considered as a necessary evil. The whites say that the slaves in USA are better off than the blacks in Africa. Segregation of living quarters even in middle and upper classes continues.

In India though the constitution of India gave 'one man, one vote' equality and reservations for lower castes, these were deeply resented by the upper castes. Even today - the Valmiki (sweeper caste) in UP, is not allowed to own farm land; if they flourish, their houses are set on fire; the Valmiki are not permitted to go to school; nor change their sweeping jobs; cannot enter upper caste houses; cannot touch hand pumps in the village; but molestation and rape of their women is common.

In Germany, the Jews were scapegoated for the ills of Germans and subjected to physical and social elimination. The Jew to the Nazi German was malevolent, corrosive, and had to be eliminated physically and socially. Six million Jews were eliminated by Hitler's willing executioners, those who were brainwashed by Hitler's propaganda machine.

In India, the Hindu Rashtra ideology which basically has the upper castes who lost their wealth, privileges, perks, services, status, and power after Independence, wants to unite the Hindus on majoritarian grounds and reduce the minorities to second-class citizens who are to live appeasing the majority. The Muslims and Christians are clear targets and, to a lesser degree - the Sikhs and Buddhists. Especially during the elections, the upper castes co-opt the lower caste Hindus on the Hindu card and win elections. Once the elections are over the lower castes get the same traditional treatment of lynching, rape, atrocities, boycott, hate and molestation, as it is demonstrated in UP these days.

Germany took the shortest possible period to eliminate this diabolical casteist ideology, and repented. USA - especially the South, is still struggling to concede equality to blacks, Latinos, and browns. In India there is an effort to undo the achievements of equality, achieved by lower castes through education, reservation and urbanization in the last 70 years and re-establish the hierarchical caste system, which is not just social, but economic and political in nature. Acquisition of power, wealth to the top and deprivation of the same to the lower, is the logic of the system.

I have been a student of caste for the last 40 years and still I learn the nuances of caste. The book by Wilkerson broadens our understanding of the nature of caste across the globe. This book also shows how the white race has colonized the world and colonized the minds of people. In India it is the internal colonization of the lower castes and minorities by the upper castes.

It should be particularly enlightening to the priests and nuns who have got out of their social moorings of caste hierarchy, division, stratification, discrimination and have created their own samaj or sangh (order, congregation, communities) where they try to practice equality. There are rumblings among Religious personnel about caste and ethnic discrimination within their orders. However, these Religious have least experienced discrimination in terms of caste as they join Religious life early in life, and escape the first-hand consequences of caste. Their knowledge of caste tends to be merely notional, tokenistic and caricatured.

|| Lancy Lobo, SJ

Recently, Oprah Winfrey interviewed Isabel Wilkerson - the author of the book, *Caste: The Lies that Divide us*, published a couple of months ago. Wilkerson is a black scholar from USA who has studied caste in India, USA and Germany. Indeed, she studied race in USA and Germany, but found that the DNA of caste and race was the same. In Germany, the extreme form of caste lasted for just 12 years under the Nazi regime; in USA its existence is 400 years old, while in India it has been 3000 years old.

She delineates eight pillars of caste: 1) Its origin is traced to divine will and laws of nature (legitimacy); 2) Heritability, i.e. by birth; 3) Endogamy and the control of marriage and mating; 4) Purity versus pollution (in daily behavior); 5) Occupational hierarchy; 6) Dehumanization and stigma; 7) Terror as enforcement, cruelty as a means of control; and 8) Inherent superiority versus inherent inferiority.

At the face level it strikes that race cannot be caste. Race is based on the colour white versus the rest, black, brown or whatever. Before the blacks came to America as slaves, there was no racism. In Africa too there were no blacks, as no one called them blacks until the white man entered Africa. In India the caste is again based on varna, which means colour or Varnashrama dharma... the fairest white, to other shades ending with black - the lowest. Upper castes are dominant castes possessing wealth, status and honour, while the lowest deprived, marginalized, and providing defined services to the rest. The difference is, in India, one cannot go by colour alone, but one's caste is identified by asking many questions. Caste is a state of mind and one's behavior is tailored having located another's caste first. In USA the White Anglo Saxon Protestants (WASPS) were the dominant castes; in Germany those of the Aryan race; and in India the twice-born castes of Brahmins, Baniyas and Kshatriyas.

Caste system based on physical or natural traits is given divine sanction for considering hierarchy, the lowest being the most impure and the highest being the purest (in food, dress, occupation) - attaching a stigma to the lower, scapegoating them and instituting cruelty and violence against them to make them appear inherently inferior.

The consequences of caste were such that the dominant castes could freely hate, denigrate, and revile the lower castes with impunity, so as to keep them in their designated system. Particularly when some of the lower castes attempted to break loose of the stranglehold of caste, the reaction was severe. In the USA the Bill of Rights alone did not give equality to blacks. Legally they emerged from slavery, but they entered into a world of being lynched by 'night riders' and 'Klansmen' - terrorizing them to

Online JCSA

Oct, 2020

Online JCSA:

JCSA meetings take their name from the place they are held in. This JCSA held in cyberspace, was baptized, as 'Online JCSA'.

Being an online meeting, members had to familiarize themselves with a host of issues such as listening intently with their mikes muted. The online meeting may yet see a repeat in Feb 2021, if the pandemic persists. The silver lining was that after months of lockdown, we saw each other's faces, cajoled one another; magically we congregated in virtual space.

JCSA meetings require months of planning with meticulous execution to prevent any slip-up. The online one, only multiplied the variables. However, with the expert CDO team accompanying us, desired goals were achieved, to the satisfaction of all and the relief of the organizers.

Welcome and Farewell:

At this JCSA, Fr Jerome Stanislaus D'Souza took over as the new President of JCSA. With him four other provincials were welcomed: Fr. Ajit Xess (RAN), Fr Jerome Cutinha (JAM), Fr Soosai Mani (DEL), and Fr Dionysius Vaz (KAR). Fr George Pattery logged on, allowing us to thank him on behalf of the JCSA and the Conference of South Asia, for shepherding us (Oct 2014 to Oct 2020).

Fr General Speaks to JCSA:

Fr General's address to the JCSA revolved around three pertinent issues: Vocation Promotion, Solidarity in Formation and the Ignatian Year.

On Vocation Promotion he underscored the need to usher in a culture of vocation promotion, which includes helping young people discern their vocations. Major Superiors were expressly asked to appoint a full-time vocation promoter in the province. The Brother's vocation came in for special mention. He said that by their selflessness and humble service, shorn of fanfare and status, in line with the Paschal way, they embodied the essence of a Religious calling. It must be promoted as vigorously as the priestly vocation is. In this regard, we need to interrogate ourselves to see what it is we are promoting and communicating, when we promote vocations? Is it about status, privilege, name and fame, or a call to serve the Lord, in whatever capacity He calls us?

On Solidarity in Formation, he drove home the point that it is not only about finance but about sharing of resources and expertise, supporting one another, across the globe.

Finally, the Ignatian Year calls us to follow Ignatius on the path of inner change (renewal); discover the spirituality of the pilgrim; deepen our commitment to Christ. It is a time to delve deeper into our spiritual heritage and let others partake of it too.

Five other significant inputs:

Five other inputs were given during this JCSA. (1) Common House Mapping by Fr Siji Chacko and team, covered personnel



and finance in a professional manner. It helped to know where we stand, and will be a help to plan more realistically for the future. (2) Frs. Sunny Jacob & Joye James enlightened us on NEP, its implication with concrete suggestions for doable actions. (3) MNF – Migrant Facilitation Net by Fr Joe Xavier, provided a model to facilitate the Conference's outreach program to the migrants. (4) JRS Afghanistan, Frs. Tom Smolich & Louie Albert challenged us to respond ever more generously to the needs of the Afghan mission. (5) Ignatian Leadership by Fr Joe Arun, informative and motivational, was about the program slated to take off in the conference soon.

Group work leading to decisions:

Group work followed the inputs, providing JCSA time for spiritual conversation and discernment. The reports ended up in the plenaries on the final day, resulting in concrete implementable decisions.

Reviewing the meeting:

The virtual meeting had its merits but it nonetheless prevented informal parleys; the opportunity to bond together; the opportunity to get to know firsthand another province's experience, its hospitality, its mission.

Experience is a good teacher. The next meeting will surely improve upon this one.

W. K. Abranches, SJ

NEW APPOINTMENT

Fr. General has appointed **Fr. Shajumon Chakkalakkal** (DAR), born on 14th July 1966 as the new Socius, Admonitor and Consultor to the POSA. He is currently the Socius, Admonitor, Consultor to the Provincial of Darjeeling Province since June 2018 and Superior of Province Curia at Matigara. He has served as the Novice Master from 2006-2012, the Superior of St. Joseph's College and Rector as well as Principal of St. Joseph's School, North Point, Darjeeling. JIVAN extends prayerful wishes to Fr. Shajumon Chakkalakkal (DAR) for his new ministry as Socius, Admonitor and Consultor to the POSA.



Fr. Valles

The Gujarati Jesuit, Mathematician, Writer, Guru

Fr. Valles! Initially in Ahmedabad, then across Gujarat, the USA, and ultimately across continents, that was his name. Popular perception affirmed the Jesuit guru in his persona. Known among his followers as a writer with unique style and charismayet no string of words will do justice to the person of Carlos Gonzalez Valles. Scores worshipped the ground he walked upon.

I write as a near and dear one whom he deeply touched. On his last visit to India we managed an uninterrupted, exclusive thirty minutes, filled with joy and energy. I will remember Carlos (as he loved to be called), as a quintessential fellow Jesuit colleague and friend who encouraged me through word and deed to live a life that reached for the utmost, the unusual. In many, many ways this was how he lived his own life.

At his memorial service, Fr. Durai, our Provincial, emphatically demonstrated that in all that Fr. Valles did he was essentially a Jesuit Priest, who reached out to the world outside and within the church and the Jesuit Order. His pen reached out to the 'aam yuvan' and their families. True. He did affect them. But, what was his influence, as a Jesuit priest? Significantly his first article was published in the Doot (Gujarati Messenger of the Sacred Heart), and was on the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

He was well versed in St. Ignatius's Spiritual Exercises and guided retreats for priests and religious in Gujarat and outside the state. For many years at the bidding of Fr. General Arrupe, he gave the thirty day retreat to Jesuit Tertians. Moreover in the summer and Diwali breaks he often directed retreats. In the 1970's during the annual scholastics' retreat at our Mount Abu villa, a nearby resident yogi inquired, "What is going on at your place? There are powerful spiritual vibrations emanating from it". Carlos was there, directing a retreat!

His book, "Living Together", he said, was the result of conferences given during a retreat at Andhra Loyola college. When the Pentecostal wave was nascent among us Jesuits, he eagerly jumped in. With Joe Aizpun, Isudas Cueli and some of us young scholastics he prayed for hours in what came to be called the Holy Spirit room at Premal Jyoti. His book titled 'Murli' (flute in English), distills the theology of the Holy Spirit, in a way similar to Paul who used the 'unknown god' idea of the Greeks to preach Christ to them,

As a student in the pre-science class at St. Xavier's College, I remember him vividly, walking into the class. Tall, erect a no-nonsense look on his face, he taught for every second of the lecture. Years later I learnt he was aware, that this younger brother Jesuit of his was there, and how glad it made him. The Jesuit Carlos, valued his fellow Jesuits whatever their age or position.

His had striking Jesuit traits. He applied himself with all seriousness and attention to everything he put his hand to. He was all 'there' in the present tense to the work at hand, and could come across as a highly reserved person. But as I got to know his inter-personal side, this I saw that when in his presence, he focussed on you and was 'all there' for you. This gave all who came to him a satisfaction of being

affirmed. Those who wrote in, received a personal reply and advice. Visitors left with awe, respect and admiration in their hearts.

An accomplished mathematics stalwart, he held sway on the discipline; no obstacles hindered his grasp. The text book that he co-authored for us in pre-university science, is proof! The Gujarati version is an unparalleled work, with a set of creative terminological gems. Jesuit calling...Jesuit style, he mastered maths to its essence. His contributions of similar language gems to the Gujarati liturgy and Bible translations, further demonstrate his creative, innovative Jesuit side.

His greatest delight and satisfaction was when he chiselled away as a writer in Gujarati and then in Spanish and English. Generations looked forward to his Sunday column in the Gujarat Samachar. "There are moments, when one person makes a special difference that no one else can make". Carlos was for many, such a person. He was a priest to his readers, bringing solace and relief to many.

Early in his active apostolic life, he lived in the boys' hostel and shared life with the rural youth, and dined with them in the mess, and got to know them at close quarters. His writings inspired generations of youth seeking meaning and direction in life.

Did the Jesuit quest for a simple life egg him on to abandon the Xavier Residence and live like a 'bhikshuk' among the families in the 'pols' of Ahmedabad? He looked a quixotic figure riding in and out of the campus on a common man's bicycle.

But, as a true Jesuit, again he was reaching for the stars. From the limited space of the columns of a newspaper, he built a universe of hope for many young souls and families feeling lost and helpless. The experiential lent vitality to those columns.

Carlos wrote by hand, and of course he churned out hundreds of articles on his type-writer, and when that became obsolete, he went on to the electronic version. Computers came in 1987. Fresh from the USA I had started classes for the college Fathers. Carlos picked up quickly and moved fluidly to writing and correspondence through computer. Open to change, and learning, delighting in humankind's progress his outlook on life was contagious and positive.

This is the Carlos legacy, the Jesuit legacy I live. So, he lives in thousands of his readers. A poem that Carlos possibly read in the original Greek, winds down thus:

"They told me Heracletus, they told me you were dead.....

.....But still art thy pleasant voices thy nightingales awake,

For death he taketh all away, but them he cannot take.

Carlos Gonzalez Valles, in your pleasant voices you live, and continue to give life. Requiem in Pacem!

|| Vincent Braganza, SJ

(Based on the Province On line Memorial Service)





Br. Sebastian Valiamattam, SJ (KER)

Br Sebastian Valiamattam left for his heavenly abode as if it was part of his daily routine. He took his evening tea and slowly breathed his last. He was as peaceful in his death as he was in his life. During the past year, several times his health became critical; he would ask for the anointing of the sick and would recover soon after. "The Lord has still some more plans for me and I have to finish them soon", he would say joyfully. Then he would get back to his routine of reading and writing with diligence. Despite his ailments, Br Sebastian believed the Lord had a plan to spread His Kingdom.

Born at Kidangoor in Kottayam district in 1928, Br. Sebastian joined the Novitiate at Calicut in 1962. He served in almost all Jesuit houses and institutions of the Province in various capacities. He was known for his availability, devotion to duties and loyalty to the Society. Br. Sebastian came across to all as a man of

serenity and prayer. In 2014 he moved to Christ Hall, Calicut for rest and medical care.

Though not an erudite academician, Br Sebastian was a self-made theologian. His weakening health didn't detract him from his routine of study and writing. That was the secret of his inner strength to stay active till death. He has five booklets to his credit, the latest being "Way of Salvation" published last year. Fr General wrote to him on the occasion of his jubilee: "You can be described in just one sentence. A man with a poetic heart, scientific bent of mind, theological sharpness and spiritual depth." He leaves behind good memories of dedication to work and a life of holiness. May he rest in peace.

Jose Thaiparambil, SJ

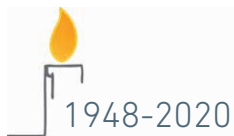


Fr. Jayant Kumar Padival, SJ (KAR)

Fr. Jayant was born in Mangalore on April 16th, 1950, to late Mr. and Mrs. Victor and Candida Tauro. He joined the Novitiate in Bangalore on June 19th, 1967. He earned a BA degree from Mysore University and went on to do his Philosophy in Shembaganur. He then did a year of regency in Trivandrum. He completed his theology in Pune and was ordained in Mangalore on April 24th, 1979. Immediately after his ordination, he was sent to Nagaland where he served as pastor. He then moved to Manipur where he spent several years serving in different capacities as pastor, principal and spiritual director. After a short stint in Meghalaya where he worked as socius to the novice master, he returned to Manipur as pastor in one of the interior missions of the Kohima Region. Owing to his weak lungs, he returned to Karnataka and joined the team at Fatima Retreat House, Mangalore, where he offered spiritual ministry till he breathed his last on September 8th, 2020.

Fr. Jayant came to the Northeast in the early 1980s when life wasn't easy because of the burning insurgency problems. He took trouble to learn Manipuri language and used it effectively to bring Christ to many. In fact, he was the first Kohima Jesuit to learn a local language and use it for pastoral ministry. His simple yet, deep spirituality endeared him as spiritual director to many young seminarians and priests in the Archdiocese of Imphal. Fr. Jayant's greatest gift was his humane way of relating with people, young or old, educated or illiterate. That is what made him a successful missionary, a much sought-after spiritual director and a successful pastor. He is indeed one of the unsung heroes of the Kohima Region who has left behind a rich legacy to his brother Jesuits.

Anand Pereira, SJ



Fr. John Berchmans Nag, SJ (JAM)

Fr. John Berchmans Nag left for his eternal abode on September 10th, early in the morning, and in the evening he was buried in the cemetery of Jesu Bhavan, Mango. He was born on 31st March 1948 at Kamanta Khunti, district Khunti, Jharkhand. He completed his degree studies before joining the Society of Jesus, from Birsa College, Khunti, in 1972. After working for some years in one of our schools in Dhanbad, he joined the Jesuits in 1984. Most of his companions in the province fondly called him 'Guru' as he was a teacher before joining. He was ordained in 1996 at Khunti, and pronounced his Final Vows in 2010.

He worked in various ministries in the province. During his 24 years of priestly life, the longest service was at Jisu Jaher, Tundi for two terms - pastoral ministry (1998 - 2000) and teacher (2002 - 2007) in the school. In two communities he rendered his service for three years each - Loyola Bhavan, Bhubaneswar

and Divya Bharti, Chaibasa. At all the other places, he worked for a year or two as Teacher, Minister, Sub-Minister, Farm-in-charge, Music teacher, Headmaster etc. He enjoyed doing all sorts of work given to him.

He was passionate about music, played the harmonium and flute. He used to write lyrics and compose music too. He lived a very simple life, truly living the vow of poverty. Other most noticeable qualities of Fr. John, were his availability and adaptability. He had been assigned to almost every area of the province. Language, culture and geographical areas were no barrier to him. He loved the people wherever he worked and was very effective in his ministry. For the last few years, he had been suffering from high BP, diabetes and kidney problems. May his soul rest in Peace.

Gyan P. Kujur, SJ



Fr. Jacob Carvalho, SJ (GOA)

Fr Jacob Carvalho's favourite saying was: "Let your greatest happiness always be to make others happy." The eminent Jesuit priest and former principal of St Paul's High school, Belagavi, died on 12th September 2020, after a brief illness. He was 75 years of age and 57 years in the Society of Jesus. Those who knew him - his former students and those with whom he worked - from around the globe, paid rich tributes to their 'Great Guruji'. Anyone who knew Jacob would describe him as a quiet, soft-spoken person who was very concerned about all: community members, teachers, domestic staff, relatives and friends. He was administering the newly set-up St Paul's Pre-university college in his own quiet but adequate way when he was called home to God.

Born on 16th December, 1944, in Kakkeri, Belagavi, Karnataka, Jacob entered the novitiate in the year 1963 at Vinayalaya, Mumbai, and was ordained a

priest 30 April 1977 at Fatima Cathedral, Belagavi. He pronounced his final vows on 15th August 1986 at Loyola, Pune. Jacob possessed a unique ability to lovingly bridge the gap between the poor and rich students. He was loved by all. He was never on a pedestal and was always on the people's level. People felt comfortable in his presence. He was a generous man and was loving and gentle in his pastoral relationships with people.

One of the teachers who worked with Jacob described him as "a great inspirer of thousands of students. He was well respected for his austere sense of simplicity, empathy, compassion, humility, and divinity. His exemplary and distinguished stewardship was an enlightening inspiration to everyone" Fr Jacob has left a rich legacy for his followers.

|| Ronald D'Souza, SJ



Fr. Vijay Kumar Prabhu, SJ (KAR)

Covid-19 cruelly cut down Fr Vijay Kumar Prabhu, "a Jesuit with a large heart and deep humanity", who left us on 15th September 2020, the feast of the Mother of Sorrows. He has rightly been described as a gentle and generous man of deep spirituality and a positive attitude.

Born in a devout Catholic family in Madanthar, Dakshina Kannada, on 11th October 1940, when he joined the Society on 29 June 1959 - one among the first batch of fresh novices to be housed in the just inaugurated Mount St Joseph - Vijay bore the name of Victor Gonsalves, which he later changed to Vijay Kumar Prabhu, and was ordained a priest on 25th March 1972 under that new name. From then on, for nearly 48 years, barring a couple of years spent in Rome securing the Doctorate in Philosophy from the Gregorian University, Fr Vijay had been quietly but fruitfully spending himself in

the service of God's Kingdom as a teacher, formator, superior, provincial, spiritual director and mentor, until the end came suddenly and unexpectedly in the wee hours of the morning on 15th September 2020.

Despite failing health, Fr Vijay was busy directing eight and thirty-day retreats, and people have been struck by his great intellectual, spiritual and human depth as well as his friendliness, warmth, affability, kindness and understanding. And so, as we bid a painful farewell to a much loved companion, we indeed mourn his death, but even more, we celebrate his eventful life lived wholly for God and God's people, and thank God for giving us the privilege of knowing and loving a rare human being, an inspiring Jesuit and a compassionate priest like Fr Vijay Kumar Prabhu. May he rest in peace.

|| Frederick D'Silva, SJ



Fr. James Thottakath, SJ (KER)

Fr James Thottakath passed away quietly on 15 September 2020 after fighting cancer for a while. He spent his final days in Christ Hall cheerfully accepting the suffering as a reward from the Master. Born on 13th February 1937, at Kothad, in the Archdiocese of Verapoly, Fr James joined the Society in 1957. He was ordained a priest in 1971. The early years of his priestly ministry were in the Chirakkal Mission in north Kerala, and he served the parishes of Pattuvam and Thavam before he was appointed Superior of S.M. Farm, Pariyaram. In 1994, he bid goodbye to Chirakkal Mission and shifted his field of apostolate to the diocese of Neyyattinkara in South Kerala.

Fr James was the parish priest of St. Mary's Church, Balaramapuram for 12 long years. He was known for his cool and gentle ways of dealing with difficult situations and problems. Nothing could make him angry or lose his temper. It was while serving as

Parish Priest of Anugraha Matha Church, Nemom, that he got interested in the history of Nemom Mission, a forgotten chapter in the Jesuit history of the Pre-Suppression Society. He began preparing articles and booklets on Nemom Mission, and took up the cause of Devasahayam Pillai, the lay martyr of the Mission. Devasahayam Centre at Ayanimood, stands as a sign of his tireless efforts. Fr James will be the happiest person as Bl. Devasahayam Pillai will be canonized soon.

Fr James was known as a simple and compassionate person but firm in his commitment. He was careful to give a smile to those who dealt with him rudely. In this life he ran the race competing with himself, and not with others. So he could ever remain happy and peaceful. May the Lord reward him.

|| Mani Manimala, SJ

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Joseph Marianus Kujur, SJ

When my name was announced as Provincial of Ranchi in April 2014, there were mixed reactions. While some congratulated me, others sent condolence messages implying that the next 6 years would be a waste, as I should have spent my time in rigorous research

and academics rather than in administration. Still others were sceptical, "He has been away from the Province in Common Houses for 20 years, and lacks adequate knowledge of the Province." However, I was fully accepted and there were indeed high expectations. After six years, I am full of gratitude to God for guiding me all along. I experienced the Provincial's Office as a sacred seat, entrusted to me by the Society, to carry out God's Mission – of Peace, Justice and Reconciliation. I felt that God's hand was right there throughout. There is a feeling of self-satisfaction that we did God's work and that He took care of us.

I felt a strong sense of responsibility, dealing with *cura personalis* and *cura apostolica*. I was part of the joys and sorrows of Ours, slogging in the remotest of the villages. Our relationship with the dioceses was at an all-time high. The Ranchi Province spreading over three States, i.e. Jharkhand, Assam and the

Andamans, and the dioceses of Ranchi, Gumla, Simdega, Khunti, Port Blair, Bongaigaon, Dibrugarh and Tejpur, was indeed a herculean task to cover all Province-men in a year. Moreover, annual visits of Common Houses, Roman Houses and also of Cambodia, Guyana, Africa and Egypt was not easy. What made the task more difficult was my membership to different

Commissions, Governing Bodies and meetings of Registered Societies, which necessitated my physical presence.

We insisted on formation, life and mission with spiritual, intellectual and human depth. Financial Administration gave me much joy and satisfaction but also frustration. It was challenging to bridge the gap between the haves and have-nots in the Province. In today's context of globalization and privatization, a higher secondary education is not sufficient to ensure the Adivasis and other marginalised groups, a life of dignity and self-esteem. Jesuits should play an important role to motivate them for higher and professional education. This also addresses the issues of the 4 UAPs.

An integration of the social and pastoral is a must to address the challenges of the times. Intellectual depth with social action, political analysis and advocacy, is today's need. It is high time to have a well-thought-out programme for the youth, who are the future of the church and country. The roadmap should take care of the pioneering mission beyond the boundaries. Spirituality is foundational to all apostolates. If the spiritual roots of the Province are strong, all else will be strong. A robust formation should be part of the governance, so that we prepare men who can withstand any challenges of the world in today's context.

The author is the former Provincial of Ranchi Province.

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G Victor Roch, SJ



For me, the very thought of 'subject' brings up obedience. A complete obedience is to a 'Superior'. The subject-superior relationship that is centrally governed by 'blind obedience' is unique to the Society of Jesus. Totally, the subject has to surrender to directions and guidance of the superior that demands a huge spiritual strength. May be this is why St Ignatius asked us to see Jesus Christ in Superiors.

Personally, while I am grateful to all the superiors I have had in the last twenty-five years of my life in the Society who recognised my talents and appreciated my life and mission, what I share below is what I learnt from observation.

When a superior does not have a sense of accommodation and generosity, many good, talented and competent individuals leave the Society. These Superiors fail to accompany the individuals who go through tough times personally. I believe that the 'superior status' of a Superior lies in accompanying the weak subject, *cura personalis*. Instead of relying on data from manifestation of conscience they believe in prejudiced inputs and loose talks. More than that, it hurts when a Superior acts, based on language and caste. Most of the superiors in my experience were good and simple men. But they lacked organisational skills. That brought down the performance of the institute they led. When these superiors were challenged by the subjects, they were victimised and the only weapon at their disposal was transfer from that place.

In my opinion, a Superior should trust his subjects. Lack of trust leads to a series of unhealthy events, resulting finally in an unfriendly atmosphere of community life among the 'friends in the Lord'. It brings down the morale of the community.

Another area that many superiors need to look at is making quick decisions. That does not mean that I recommend decision-making without discernment. Instead, good discernment should help prompt decision. Delaying in making a decision results only in the indecisive atmosphere in the community. Care-fronting members of a community is also a characteristic of competent superior. While taking utmost care to be sensitive to individuals, Superiors should challenge a community member when he does not follow our way of proceeding.

Manifestation of Conscience, I believe, is the best source of information about a subject. Instead, I have seen some Superiors employ "informers" by which they make decisions and carry out punishment unfairly. This creates in community an atmosphere of fear, all the time.

As everyone knows, we are in testing times that require competent, committed and sensitive Superiors who could lead Jesuit communities efficiently. When asked about profile of a Jesuit Superior, Fr Nick Austin SJ, English Jesuit, said, "What Ignatius wants for the leader of the Society of Jesus, someone who can lead, above all, with his example, which should be a mirror and paragon for all of us".

I desire to live in the accompaniment of Superiors who are really 'friends in the Lord'.

The author is Asst. Professor in the Plant Biology and Biotechnology Department at Loyola College, Chennai.

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“Care-fronting members of a community is also a characteristic of competent superior. While taking utmost care to be sensitive to individuals, Superiors should challenge a community member when he does not follow our way of proceeding.”

“Spirituality is foundational to all apostolates. If the spiritual roots of the Province are strong, all else will be strong.”

Kiran Nidhi Yojana

Piplantri was a Rajasthan village of barren and dusty hills. From 2005, Marble mining completed its desolation. Heat and dust, water scarcity and droughts made young people migrate. Girl children were considered a curse, many of them extinguished at birth.

GIRL CHILDREN OF PIPLANTRI VILLAGE

The village leader Shyam Sunder Palival's dear daughter Kiran, died young, in a hot and dusty summer. He wanted to keep her memory alive. A dream germinated in his mind to keep, care and nurture all girls born in Piplantri.

When a girl child is born in Piplantri, the whole village, not only the parents, celebrate. The land, sky, flowers, rivers, birds, ... of the village, join the celebration.

On the birth of a girl child, 111 saplings are brought to her home and planted - it is the rule of Piplantri village. Six years ago the norm was accepted by the whole village. Many girl children were born since; over 2 lakh plants/trees grew with them in and around the village!

Medicinal plants and fruit trees are preferred - Mango, Gooseberry, Neem, etc... Trees planted on such occasions, cannot be cut. The Alovera plants grown in between trees add to the income!!!

This custom of tree plantation when a girl is born was named, 'Kiran Nidhi Yojana' to keep alive Kiran's memory.

More well-thought-out customs followed. The villagers collect Rs.21,000/- to give the new girl child's Father who adds Rs.10,000/-. The Rs.31,000/- is deposited in a 20-year fixed deposit in the child's name!

Till 20 years, the girl is not to be given in marriage, but given education - the Father gives such a written promise!!! Shyam Sunder Palival, who became Sarpanch, changed the area through this innovative and creative custom.

A girl child is considered and treated as a curse in many parts of India. Piplantri village turned the man-made curse into a blessing to be celebrated by the community with joy, creativity and foresight. The trees grew; rain, water availability and greenery increased. Healthy rearing and good education of girls assured their happy future.

The Piplantri dream and its realization confirm that care of Mother Earth and Mothers-to-be, assures the establishment of well-rooted, flourishing and happy human communities, even in the Rajasthan desert.

Adapted from TBI



Image Source: India Today



Image Source: TBI



Image Source: India Today

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

C. Joe Arun, SJ
cjarun@gmail.com

Yamraj: The God of Life



Image Source: The Hindu

Yamraj, aged 49, is a farmer by profession, and dedicates two months during the monsoons every year, to help people cross flooded rivulets in Uttarakhand, India. He literally carries travellers on his shoulders to cross the Jauligarh river.

It all started a couple of years ago, when a group of travellers wanted to travel across the Bangapani region in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district. But due to heavy rains, a bridge over the Jauligarh river that connected other villages had been washed away. A villager informed them about Yamraj, the only man who could help them. The group hesitated to ask him, because Yamraj, in Hindu mythology, is the god of death. But they decided to approach him anyway.

Since it was late in the night, he refused to cross the stream and promised that he would help them begin their journey in the early hours of the next morning. Since the travellers had no place to stay, he took them to a nearby government school and arranged for blankets and snacks.

Next morning, as promised, he carried each person, by turn, on his shoulder in waist-deep waters, and helped them reach the other side. Moved by his selfless service, the travellers generously paid him Rs 8,000. But he refused to accept the money, saying that he was doing only a service to people.

"My dad believed that offering help without expecting anything in return is the biggest service you can give for the nation. His words have stayed with me till today, and I have even passed them on to my kids. For three generations we have been helping people including villagers, travellers and officers to cross flooded regions. My father taught me how to walk in deep waters when I turned 14, and since then I have been doing this work every season. Now my son has also joined me," he says.

To appreciate Diwani's exemplary work, people voted him to be the Gram Pradhan (village head) of Siling village between 2015-2019 and even as he occupied that post, he continued to carry people on his shoulders to cross the river.