

April, 2024

JIVAN

NEWS AND VIEWS OF JESUITS IN INDIA



All we have is just
ONE HOME

Easter asks us to hope |
Why should we never forget Chernobyl? |



Dawn at Dusk

I watched the teens running with friends along the river
Flowing from the snows of the Himalayas,
They jumped into the water, they collected pebbles
That captivated their eyes and their senses.
They ate, they drank, they made merry -
But they never heard what the rivers and the hills whisper.

Five decades later I walked by that river alone.
I wondered what the river and the hills said, then and now.
'Doesn't every age and every stage in life have its purpose?'
I heard their whisper louder than ever before.
They echoed gently deep within.
"You are but a flash in the night sky!"

The rhododendrons and the trees in bloom display
Beauty and grandeur – passing beauty, transient grandeur
Alone, in the enveloping solitude, the dark truth dawns.
The soul wants to fly to a land of oblivion and rapture,
Where nothing, nothing matters - but the Creator,
Who whispers from the river and the mountains.

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Think of them and their difficulties!

When we joined the Juniorate we had to hand over our cell phones to Fr. Dean. But during my Christmas holidays, I was given back my smart phone. I was ecstatic to have my phone back. I switched it on with a lot of excitement. I found so many WhatsApp messages. Among all of them, one message in particular caught my attention. It was from a tribal girl whom I met while completing my undergraduate internship. It said, "Brother, I am very grateful to you and all the Fathers for guiding and helping me throughout the process of writing EAP- CET (Entrance Test for Engineering). I passed the exam with a good rank and I was glad about it. However, I regret to inform you that I was unable to attend the EAP-CET counselling. I did register, but I didn't know anything about the counselling process. Nor did anyone else in my village. I didn't receive any information about when I should be there for the counselling, since my village had connectivity problems.

"Despite my strong desire to study and fulfil my ambition, I was obliged to lose another year, without studying. My mother is not here with me to share my tribulations. My father is least bothered about my future. He is forcing me to go for daily work. All my efforts to study came to nothing. At present, I am working for daily wages. Thanks for your support and concern."

Tears streamed down my face as I read the message. The pain I read in her writings broke my heart. How miserable her life will be! Her message altered my Christmas mood. I went to the chapel and sat in front of the Baby Jesus to be comforted, and I began talking to Him. "O Lord... Should I feel relieved that my life is not as difficult as that girl's, or should I be depressed about her misfortune and the lives of other students who are dealing with similar issues like hers?" I then began to compare my life with that of others like the girl who sent me the message.

Why did I think of sharing this experience with the readers of *Jivan*? I just hope this will motivate us to think of the all the students who face huge financial difficulties that prevent them from joining colleges and realizing their dreams.

| B. Madan Babu (AND) | Kolkata

My Vipassana Experience

In February this year I enrolled for the Vipassana program in Atmadarshan, Andheri, Mumbai. It has had a deep impact on my outlook, perception towards people, and events, and there is an inner cheerfulness.



From day one, we were urged to concentrate on our life-giving respiration. Breathing in and breathing out, to observe them diligently. No manipulation or accelerating the natural flow. This continued for the first few days. The next step is the observation of the sensation that arises up in the different parts of the body. This is significant, as it means purification, and control of the mind. You are not supposed to talk to anyone. Just observe the sensations objectively, as they come and pass by.

Constant audio guidelines are offered to become aware of our cravings (positive or pleasure occurrences) or aversions (negative or unpleasant events). We need to become aware of both cravings and aversions and let them pass by. Nothing is permanent. Our memories can torment us or the future can make us anxious. Living in the present helps. The imagery of the river was useful for me. Sitting on the bank of the river I watch non-judgementally every flow pass by. It is a process of cleansing and purification.

During my Vipassana meditation, our Ignatian methods of prayer and guidelines for the 'preparatory prayer and the application of senses,' were of immense importance. Modesty of the eyes, silence, the recommendations in the (SE) for the retreat director and the retreatant were useful. At the end of each meditation, I was praying to the 'Spirit' to assist me in the healing process of my body, mind, and soul. I concluded most of the meditations with the disposition of 'Take and Receive' surrendering all to God in this renewal process.

At the end of the program, harmony, peace and tranquility were stressed. I found it helpful to amalgamate this with our 'Contemplation to obtain love.'

As we complete 5 years of our Universal Apostolic Preferences, we must ask ourselves: are we sufficiently open to other prayer techniques from other traditions that can enhance Ignatian Spirituality? I was also touched when I heard that the SVD community at Atmadarshan, which organized this retreat, have been collaborating in organising the Vipassana meditation for the last 18 years. It is their humble contribution to foster Inter Religious Dialogue. The community makes sacrifices, like observing silence, and opting for vegetarian meals during these ten days. It was surely inspiring.

| Robert Das, SJ (PUN) | Pune



WHAT DO YOU SAY?

STANY D'SOUZA, SJ
President, JCSA

The right to hope

'When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed; When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost ...' You have heard this hymn many times, and, I am sure, you have sung it sometimes. Don't you think it is time to sing it again? Happy Easter to you!

In the Easter narratives the key actors are women. They see, they hear and they proclaim as Pope Francis says in one of his Easter homilies. The women who went to the tomb to anoint a dead body, see an empty tomb, hear the angels speak and then encounter the Risen Lord, as it happened to Mary Magdalene, and, transformed by this experience, return to their group with the breaking news: the Lord is risen!

Of course, as the Scriptures say the women were gripped by fear at the sight of the empty tomb and the angles. However, they did not allow themselves to be overwhelmed and paralyzed by it. They return as the messengers of great hope and unspeakable joy.

All of us encounter tombs in our lives. We have at least some moments of emptiness, meaninglessness, anguish, darkness, desolation, depression and even despair. In utter hopelessness, some of us sometimes may even succumb to the unbearable pressures of life.

It is not only our personal story. It is also the story of our world. It is confronted by unprecedented intolerance, violence, genocide, and wars. Even in our own country, the situation is becoming day by day more and more depressing. The structures and statutes of democracy, which were carefully articulated, long cherished and held sacred, seem to be under systematic and deliberate attack.

Almost every day one finds the blatant violation of fundamental rights and human dignity. The story is certainly disturbing.

However, Easter, which celebrates the great event of Jesus rolling the sealed entrance of the tomb, emerging from the tomb, rising from death, can be a great lesson to us. Despite the dreadful and dismal descent into dreary darkness, all is not lost yet. We can still rebuild our lives, our community and our world.

Easter, a feast of hope, emphatically states that hope is our fundamental right as Pope Francis says. No matter how deep is the anguish, pain and death, Christ can roll back the stone and teach us to emerge from the tomb. From the rubble and ruins, we can pen a new story and create a glorious history.

This indeed is the message of Easter. It is always possible to begin anew in spite of all our limitations and failures, desolations and death. We can always be reborn and restart amidst all our personal and community vulnerabilities.

Shall we then feast on our fundamental right to hope? What do you say?



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

M.A. JOE ANTONY, SJ
Editor

Hope and humour

Are you and I doomed to watch helplessly the eclipse of the India we know and take for granted? Or will God work a miracle to preserve what we have cherished for nearly 73 years – the secular and democratic republic that we chose to be in 1950?

Many shake their heads to suggest that it is not possible. They come up with a long list of reasons for their pessimism and you can't deny any of them.

Some still hope that those who stand for democracy, freedom of expression, secularism, inter-religious amity and so unity and peace will manage to win. Others may call it wishful thinking, but they continue to hope and pray.

Errol Fernandes, SJ, in his article on Easter, emphasizes that the central message of the most important feast in our liturgical calendar is hope. But he hints that Easter Sunday comes only after Good Friday. That means we will have to endure the darkness of Friday before we can glimpse the radiance of the break of dawn on Sunday. He also points out, citing Mk 11: 22,23, that only those who believe that they have already received what they are praying for receive miracles.

Prakash Louis, SJ, in his article, says, "Every year 14 April invites us to remember Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and his unique contribution to our country. But this year Ambedkar Remembrance Day reminds us of our duties as Indian citizens, at a time when all that he stood for is under serious threat."

So, apart from hoping and praying, we need to ensure that we and all we can persuade should go out and do what every citizen should consider his right and privilege – vote.

Let me encourage you to do what Melwyn Pinto, SJ (KAR) did in the March 24 issue. Please compile instances of Jesuit humour in your province – what Melwyn calls the "folklore of humour," handed down to us from time immemorial and send them to *Jivan*.

Melwyn and others who know the value of humour will be happy to know of another development. We had three talented Jesuit cartoonists, whose work delighted the readers of *Jivan* for many years. But sadly they are getting on in age, or are too busy. We have to welcome, therefore, Mathew Assarikudy, SJ (NEP), who has come forward to help out. The talented person who has given a form to his ideas is his student who is in her 9th standard!

Do you know what connects hope and humour? Only those who have hope can really laugh. What do you think?

JCSA meets at Calicut

All the major superiors of the Jesuit Conference of South Asia (JCSA), headed by Fr Stanislaus D'Souza, along with the General Assistants, Frs. Vernon D'Cunha and M K George gathered at Christ Hall, Calicut, Kerala on 18 - 24 February 2024. During the six days, the Major Superiors deliberated on several issues and took many decisions for the good of the Society of Jesus in South Asia and the Society in general.

Continuing with the last JCSA meeting in Pune, the main concern of the Major superiors was the process of Re-imagining and Restructuring of the Society of Jesus in South Asia. A Resource Team headed by Fr Dionysius Vaz, shared with the Major superiors the inputs they prepared and the way forward. Afterward the Major Superiors shared among themselves in different groups the measures taken in their Provinces regarding the reimagining process and burning Issues.

One full day was given to Fr Sebastian Jeerakassery, the General Treasurer, to explain to the group the Statutes on Poverty (SOP) and the Instruction on Administration and Finance (IAF). Fr Jeera, who was thorough with the topic, meticulously went through the whole book to provide a clear understanding of our way of proceeding.

Another day was spent on the sharing by the Secretariats. The different secretaries of the Conference before sharing their report with the Major Superiors had a meeting with the coordinators of the forums and networks under them. They summarized the report under different headings like main focus & objectives, programs & activities, achievements & challenges for the academic year 2023, and future plans and

expectation from the Major Superiors. After the Secretaries presented their reports and interacted, the Major superiors acknowledged and appreciated the good work done by the Secretaries and assured them of support.

Fr Vernon had a session on the governance in the Society of Jesus and cautioned the

Major Superiors about the problems in vocation promotion, planning for personnel within and beyond the province/region needs especially of the Conference and global Society.

Fr Brian Paulson, the president of JCCU spoke about the challenges they face in the United States and Canada. Fr Jesu Benjamin requested the support from Major superiors on the occasion of the centenary of the AICUF and its new building.

The Major Superiors spent a good amount of time in faith sharing at the beginning of the meeting and in spiritual conversation during the meeting. At the end of the meeting, the budget of Jesuit Conference of India for the financial year 2024-25 was discussed and passed, the three outgoing Major Superiors, Fr Roland,

Fr Donald and Fr Melvil were felicitated and about fifteen small and big decisions were taken.

All the participants were happy to appreciate the hospitality they received from the host province, Kerala. The host Provincial, Fr E P Mathew and the team, the Christ Hall Community in particular, went out of their way to make the meeting a memorable one. The varieties of delicious food served were highly praised. Above all the company of the senior citizens at table and in the campus added flavor to their stay at Christ Hall. ❖

Thomas Perumalil, SJ (PAT)





This is how I discern God's plan

Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done!

These lines from the Lord's prayer sit again and again at the heart of discernment for me.

Fr Fernando Franco, SJ introduced me to Thomas Green's *The Weeds among the Wheat* a few years ago, a book that broke down 'discernment' as a process that is ongoing, steady and every day.

Discernment is a search for God's cues, for pointers that will lead us down a path that feels as if it is part of God's plan. To me, it is the process of sifting apart aspects of two interrelated things: **1) emotions**, because the various choices I have before me as I decide often elicit very contradictory and strong feelings of fear and excitement, anxiety and hope, assurance and nervousness, and **2) thoughts**, because our brains are constantly churning up all kinds of information (details, facts, to-dos) that are tied to our intense emotions.

The difficulty in teasing this bundle of thoughts and emotions apart lies partly in our **will**, which is comprised of what I think of as our **LACK** (with a capital L). This LACK is comprised of all that we have compromised, given up, longed for (recognition, success, validation, income, closeness) and all that contribute to the deepest of aches we sometimes feel. All of us humans have a LACK and for some of us this can emerge as a victim-story, a narrative about what we didn't have or get that we end up telling ourselves and others repeatedly, and that often gets suffused with a sense of who we are. This LACK can unconsciously inform our will in that what we didn't get can give us the power and the will to make choices that will assuage this LACK.

But in times of discernment, it is precisely this LACK that I need to first become aware of because my WILL can

become like a python slowly wrapping itself around in all of my thinking, acting, speaking, being to where I am so suffocated that I cannot see or hear God. So a crucial part of discernment is very gently letting go our LACK. This means that we have to very slowly figure out what cluster of thoughts and emotions make up that LACK. And this is not easy. It takes time and effort to first mindfully step in to heads to figure out what thought is churning up, and what emotion and then to turn that thought into a prayer that will allow it to dissolve.

Doing this several times a day- almost like a novena- where we deliberately work to surrender our thoughts - starts to open up a clearing where my will starts to subside and God's will very, very slowly emerges.

We very slowly start to step onto another path, one that brings tiny bits of restfulness, calm, and ease, and are often the opposite of what we have been feeling: fearful, anxious, stuck, resentful. It is these feelings we need to pay attention to since it is here, in these small emotive openings, that the Holy Spirit abides. Our job is to grow this small opening by

surrendering those thoughts that emerge from our will by turning those into prayers; the more these subside, the more God's will and voice that are ALWAYS there become audible and visible.

We start then to pursue all that feels more restful, more calm, more assuring, and as we do this will increasingly feel that our choices are aligned with God's will. That sick sludge of anxiety and tension flows away and assurance, faith and possibility seeps in. It is in this process that God's kingdom (which is in each of us) takes center stage. ❖

Ms. Vaidehi Ramanathan is a professor of Applied Sociolinguistics in the Linguistics Department at the University of California, Davis, U.S. She has published extensively in the area of literacy, teacher-education and language policy. She is deeply interested in all the ways that people feel sure of God's presence.



Pic courtesy: ie.edu

“Seek Fellowship, not Confrontation”



The 7th Victor Courtois Memorial Lecture, organized by the Islamic Studies Association in Delhi, was held at the Millennium Hall of St. Xavier’s School, Delhi on 23 February 2024. The lecture titled ‘From Morocco to the Mughal Empire: Franciscan Encounters with Muslims and their Significance for Interreligious Dialogue Today’ was delivered by Professor Michael Calabria OFM.

Victor Courtois, SJ was a Belgian Jesuit who spent much of his life in India. He played a pivotal role in transforming the Christian-Muslim relationship in India by refraining from the polemics and debates of the past, and focusing on reaching out to Muslims, loving and respecting them along with their religious beliefs. By doing so, he gained a deep knowledge of the intellectual and spiritual richness of Indian Muslims and established a new beginning in relating to them.

Calabria, in his presentation, highlighted St Francis of Assisi’s beautiful model of approaching Muslims. During the 5th Crusade, while the Crusaders expressed disdain towards Muslims, St Francis chose a different path and reached out to the Sultan in Egypt. To his surprise, the Sultan received him with open arms and showed him great hospitality. This encounter had a profound impact on St Francis and his vision for his friars’ ministry among Muslims. He later wrote that the Friars who go among Muslims could say and do things that would please God, emphasizing the importance of humility and sharing.

This approach reminds us of St John Paul II’s words spoken during the gathering to pray for peace in Assisi. The teachings of Vatican Council II also encourage the



Church to regard Muslims with esteem and work with them to promote social justice, moral welfare, peace, and freedom for the benefit of all.

The speaker highlighted the importance of adhering to the vision of St Francis. He also mentioned that some Friars deviated from this vision and sought confrontation with Muslims by abusing their faith convictions, hoping to achieve martyrdom. The lecture emphasized the need for Christians to follow in the footsteps of St Francis and open themselves to transformation, walking alongside Muslims and doing what would please God. ❖

Joseph V. Edwin, SJ (DEL)



We have only one common home

We are all aware of what an addict goes through. First and foremost, s/he may not be aware of the addiction or s/he may be aware of it but is not willing to give it up. The addict goes on doing harm to self and family and society.

YOU are that addict! By now you (and I) are aware that our lifestyle, our technology, and our sources of energy are all destructive of self, society and ecology but we are not willing to change. We indulge in tokenism like observing the Earth Day but the radical change we need to effect is kept for tomorrow.

Who can save us from ourselves?

The Catholic Church, led by Pope Francis, is seeking to be a positive source of ideas and of motivation for action. The Jesuit Conference of South Asia (JCSA) has organized

itself into 4 networks of the Ecology Platform: REN or Renewable Energy Network; ANRM - Agriculture and Natural Resource Management; SEAL – Spirituality, Education, Awareness and Lifestyles; CARE - Communication, Advocacy and Research. We have learnt the hard way that individual institutional efforts are neither sufficient nor effective and hence Jesuit Provinces are grouped into Zones for better networking and reaping the benefits of scale.

Accordingly, the Bombay, Goa, Gujarat and Pune Provinces form, for example, the West Zone Platform.

Global warming and climate change have been scientifically linked to the use of fossil fuels. The international community has finally acknowledged the need for tapering off the use of fossil fuels,



“ All our educational efforts must effectively motivate the next generation to fight for their future. ”

Pic courtesy: downtoearth.org

Pic courtesy: vecteezy.com

if it has not yet committed to a Non-Proliferation Treaty on Fossil Fuels which the island nations are pleading for.

Jesuit institutions among these 4 Provinces have already moved towards achieving a zero-electricity bill through the use of solar energy. In the next 5 years the 4 Provinces will attempt reaching this for all our institutions and residences. This will be a good demonstration of what is possible. But equally important is the need for Jesuits and their partners to lobby against the import of coal into the country, given the high pollution even during its transportation from the sea ports. Goa's sensitive ecology is at an increasing risk. Big commercial interests are involved but India deserves a clean and healthy environment for its children. Decisions we make now will affect them!

Can Jesuits join with others in civil society to advocate for clean energy in a time-bound manner?

Natural Resource Management has become very practical in its applications towards sustainability, with massive tree-planting drives, water harvesting and watershed management projects and organic farming. Our knowledge in this area has grown but its adoption is not yet widespread. The ANRM network will take initiatives in this regard and some of these have already borne fruit at the micro-level in all our Provinces.

Eco Spirituality is becoming a familiar concept these days but allowing it to become a well-spring of thought, word and action is a long-term goal.

The deepening of our understanding that our common home is a God-given treasure to be cared

for, requires discernment and courage. Finding ways to bring about awareness, among the majority of our people, of the precarious state of the ecology which may reach the tipping point in the next few decades, is a priority for today.

All our educational efforts must effectively motivate the next generation to fight for their future. Changing our lifestyles is a must, including our use of plastics in particular, along with the reduce-reuse-recycle movement.

The SEAL network is at the motivational heart of the eco-movement. Finally, communication, research and advocacy on environmental issues are a great way to keep the momentum going in our care for our common home. We urgently need research on the effects of our technology and lifestyles on Mother Earth and on ways to rejuvenate nature.

Our adivasis have much to teach us about nature and ethnobotanical studies for reviving forest biodiversity to address climate change and distress migration. Research in this area is an urgent need.

Communicating this in an effective and widespread manner is crucial for people to give up their addictions. And advocacy with government and policy-makers is important, as public

policy should not be abandoned to those commercial interests that profit from the status quo.

Our current addictions need to change. Can we, instead, become addicted to all that is needed for a fuller life, in a vibrant and rejuvenated ecology? We only have One Common Home! ❖



Picture courtesy: Eco-spirituality

“ Eco Spirituality is becoming a familiar concept these days but allowing it to become a well-spring of thought, word and action is a long-term goal. ”

Fr. Frazer Mascarenhas, SJ (BOM), a former Principal of St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, is now the Coordinator, Ecology Platform, West Zone, JCSA. He can be contacted at: frazersj@jesuits.net



When Jesuits had to go, she took over

This newly-minted saint has a surprising, delightful connection with Jesuits. She was raised to the altar on 11 February 2024. She is the first woman from Argentina to be honoured as a saint and the first Argentinian to be canonized by an Argentine Pope.

Her baptismal name is Mario Antonia de Paz Figueroa, but today everyone calls her lovingly 'Mama Antula' which means 'Little Mother.' She was born in 1730 in Silipico, Santiago del Estro in northern Argentina. Belonging to an illustrious family of rulers and conquerors who were wealthy, she showed no regard for riches or social status. She was a very devout child. At the age of 15, she declared she would never marry and that she wanted to be a consecrated virgin all her life, so that she was able to devote herself entirely to God.

Those who are truly close to God seem to quickly understand that God loves the poor. She took to serving the poor and the sick. Initially she also helped several parents instruct their children. A few women who admired her person and her work soon joined her and they lived as a small community. Her spiritual guide was a Jesuit priest, Fr Gaspar Juarez. She understood that what distinguished the Jesuits was the Ignatian spirituality that was rooted in the Spiritual Exercises, written by St Ignatius of Loyola.

Charles III, King of Spain, expelled the Jesuits from his kingdom in 1767. The same year Jesuits were expelled from Argentina. Antula was just 37. Irked by the work of Jesuits for and with the African slaves, many Christian rulers across Europe, who profited from the unchristian and inhuman slave trade, put enormous pressure on the Pope to suppress the Jesuit order. There were other reasons too. Eventually Pope Clement XIV gave in. He ordered that the Jesuits should renounce their vows and go into exile. When Jesuits had to leave Argentina, Mama Antula understood that

“ She understood that what distinguished the Jesuits was the Ignatian spirituality that was rooted in the Spiritual Exercises. ”

God called her to ensure that people continued to be helped by the Ignatian spirituality.

She began to offer retreats based on the Spiritual Exercises in places nearby. Their incredible success made her understand how much the spiritually hungry people needed them and benefitted from them. In 1779 she travelled to Buenos Aires, Argentina's capital, and met the imperial officials seeking

permission to offer the retreats in the capital city. But they refused permission. But in 1780 she ventured to



Pic courtesy: caminosreligiosos.com

offer retreats and they drew a large number of people. Seeing for himself what it did for his people, the Archbishop of Buenos Aires offered his support to her. She established in Buenos Aires a centre, which she called the House of Spiritual Exercises.

Her selfless work for the poor and the sick and amazing contribution to the spiritual life of people as a lay woman made her known in other countries like France and Germany. In order to continue the good work she had begun, Mama Antula established a religious congregation called the Daughters of the Divine Saviour. She died in 1799 at the age of 69.

After the Vatican recognized a miracle in the inexplicable healing of a seriously ill Sister who was in charge of the House of Spiritual Exercises founded by Mama Antula in Buenos Aires, Antula was beatified in 2016.

The second miracle that opened the door to her canonization came in 2017, when a former Jesuit seminarian was on the verge of death from a stroke. A friend brought a picture of Mama Antula to the hospital and stuck it on the vital signs monitor. The former seminarian steadily improved.

At the canonization Mass Pope Francis said, “She travelled thousands of miles on foot, crossing deserts and dangerous roads, in order to bring God to people.”

Javier Milei, the new President of Argentina, who assumed office in December 2023, was born a Catholic, but has lost his faith. During his election campaign he called Pope Francis an imbecile who promoted Communism. When the canonization of Mama Antula was announced, he decided to travel to Rome and attend the canonization Mass on 11 February '24. After

“When Jesuits had to leave, Mama Antula understood that God called her to ensure that people continued to be helped by the Ignatian spirituality. ”



the Mass, he went to greet the Pope and asked him if he could hug him. Pope Francis responded, “Yes, son, yes. Nice to see you. Thanks for coming. May God bless you very much!”

Later that day, in a radio interview, Javier Milei said, “Pope Francis is the most important Argentine in history.” That itself looks like a miracle worked by Mama Antula soon after her canonization, doesn't it? ❖

(Adapted from his column in The Magnet (March '24)



Dr. Ambedkar should inspire us to save Our Constitution & Our Country

Every year 14 April invites us to remember Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and his unique contribution to our country. But this year Ambedkar Remembrance Day reminds us of our duties as Indian citizens, at a time when all that he stood for is under serious threat.

Dr. Ambedkar placed liberty, fraternity and equality at the heart of democracy. After careful reading and research he declared, “The roots of democracy lie not in the form of Government, Parliamentary or otherwise. A democracy is more than a form of Government. It is primarily a mode of associated living. The roots of Democracy are to be searched in the social relationship, in terms of associated life between the people who form a society.”

Dr. Ambedkar must have dreamt of India becoming the mother of democracy. But sadly many in the country he loved and served have come to downplay his intellectual and liberative legacy by acting to weaken democracy in our country.

It is unfortunate that many tend to identify Dr. Ambedkar with the Dalit community or to project him

as anti-caste activist. Some Indians use every occasion to decry Dr. Ambedkar and his legacy. There are some who feel so threatened by his prophetic and revolutionary ideas, they attack those who try to follow him. Those in power pay lip service to him while working against all that he fought for.

Both in his writings and in his social interventions for the upliftment and liberation of all the downtrodden, he placed democracy as the central pillar. Dr. Ambedkar pointed out that democracy was “a form and a method of government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed”. In a country which was poised for bloody conflicts because of caste, class, gender, region and religious oppression and exploitation, Dr. Ambedkar was a rare Indian who believed that democracy as a form of governance would address all the contradictions and disparities by bringing about change for the betterment of all in a peaceful manner.

He wanted his fellow Indians to be liberated not merely from the rule of the colonizers, but every form

“ Dr. Ambedkar pointed out that democracy was a form of government through which revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed. ”



of discrimination and exploitation which do not allow democracy to function as a liberating and unifying factor.

Ambedkar delved deep into different forms of democracy and called for a comprehensive democracy for India. “A democratic form of government presupposes a democratic form of a society. The formal framework of democracy is of no value and would indeed be a misfit if there was no social democracy. It may not be necessary for a democratic society to be marked by unity, by community of purpose, by loyalty to public ends and by mutuality of sympathy. But it does unmistakably involve two things. The first is an attitude of mind, and attitude of respect and equality towards their fellows. The second is a social organisation free from rigid social barriers. Democracy is incompatible and inconsistent with isolation and exclusiveness resulting in the distinction between the privileged and the unprivileged.”

Being a keen observer of the Indian social reality, it is not a surprise that he thought India needs not merely a political democracy but also a social democracy. “We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life, which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life...”

Therefore he knew that a mere declaration that India is a sovereign republic will not address all our problems.



“ His toil and labour to come up with an excellent Constitution should impel us to safeguard it. ”

“On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality... We must remove this contradiction at the earliest moment, or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up”.

At a time, when India’s Constitution and citizens are threatened by autocracy and authoritarianism, Dr. Ambedkar’s belief in democracy should inspire us. His toil and labour to come up with an excellent Constitution should impel us to safeguard it from those who would undermine it for their own political objectives. All citizens who value democracy and the fundamental rights it gives us should see the forthcoming parliamentary election as an invitation from Dr. Ambedkar to participate in the elections to save our Constitution and our country. ❖



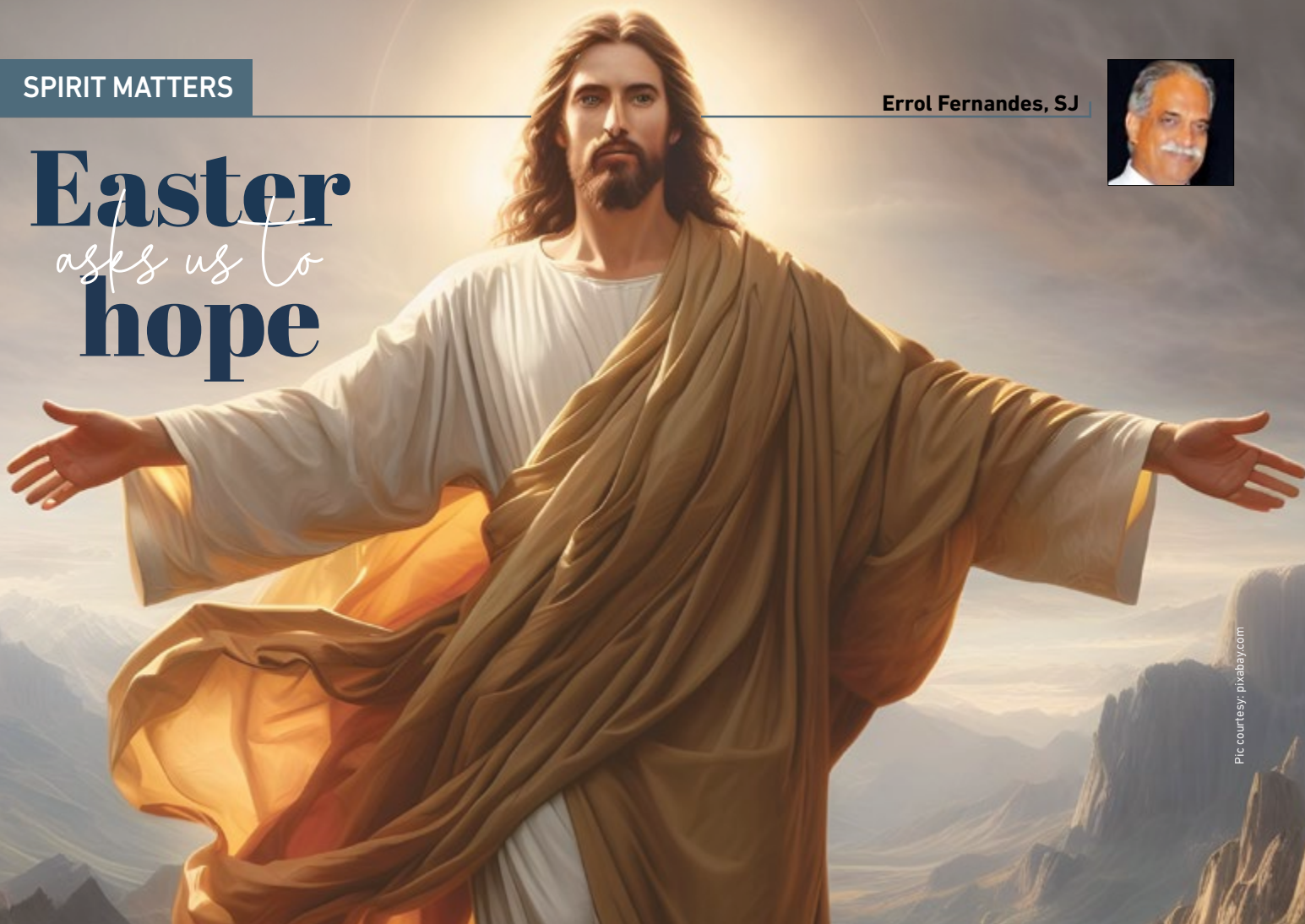
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Easter

asks us to

hope



Pic courtesy: pixabay.com

The Synoptic Gospels contain three Passion, Death and Resurrection predictions. It is important to note that these are not just Passion predictions as they are sometimes referred to. Every one of them includes also a prediction of the Resurrection. These are matched in the Gospel of John, though the language John uses is different. The predictions in Mark (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34) and John (3:14; 8:28; 12:32-34) can give us strength and hope in our own life situations.

The first of these three predictions in Mark is brief (8:31). After Peter responds that Jesus is “the Christ”, Jesus sternly orders him and the disciples not to make him known. Jesus was aware that the image that Peter and his companions had of the Christ was of a glorious Messiah, who the larger majority of people were also expecting.

In all three Passion and Resurrection predictions, the Markan Jesus uses the phrase “after three days”, which would mean “the day after tomorrow”. Not only was Jesus confident that he would rise, he also knew when that would be.

In the Gospel of John, the verb that is used in all three predictions is translated as “to be lifted up”. This verb may be interpreted as “crucified” (because the condemned man after being nailed to the horizontal beam, was lifted up onto the vertical beam) and as “exalted” to mean exalted from the cross and into heaven. In John “being lifted up” refers to one continuous action of ascent. The first step in the ascent is when Jesus is lifted up on the cross; the second step is when he is raised up from death; the final step is when he is lifted up to heaven.

In John, the first passion and resurrection prediction is found in 3:14-15. Here, the crucifixion/exaltation of Jesus is linked to the bronze serpent of Num 21:8. Just as the bronze serpent was “lifted up” to become a sign of life for the people, so “must” Jesus be lifted up to become a sign of eternal life for all.

The second passion, death and resurrection prediction in Mark is brief. It is briefer than the first. Here, the religious/political authorities are not specified. It is “human hands” that Jesus will

be handed over to and it is they who will kill him. To be sure, he will rise, “three days after being killed”. The phrase “betrayed into human hands” is used in this prediction alone. Its use here indicates that it is the people as a whole who will “kill him”.

After the first prediction, Peter responded with shock and incredulity (8:32). After the second one, the disciples as a group do not understand what Jesus means and are afraid to ask him. The disciples are not usually reluctant to ask Jesus to explain difficult sayings (4:10; 7:17; 9:11). It is likely that their reluctance on this occasion was because they could guess that the answer would be one they would not want to hear. In other words, they understood enough to want to not understand more.

The second passion, death and resurrection prediction in John is in 8:28. In this prediction the understanding of “being exalted” becomes clearer. It is through the combined event of his being lifted up on the cross to be crucified that Jesus will be lifted up into heaven. It is through his Ascension that people will recognize the divine in him. The exalted Jesus who is lifted up on the Cross is Lord and God.

The third and final prediction in Mark (10:33-34) is the longest and most detailed of the three. In this prediction, the two groups which will collaborate are mentioned. Jesus will be “handed over” to the first group made up of the religious leaders. These will condemn him to death and then “hand him over” to the second group made up of political leaders who will kill him after mocking, spitting and scourging him. The use of “handed over” here is to reiterate that though the work is carried out by human agency, it is God who is in control. Here, like in the earlier two predictions, “he will rise again”.

The third and final prediction in John is in 12:32. The consequence here, of his being “lifted up” is that he will draw all peoples to himself. Jesus was sent by the Father to grant eternal life to all who were willing to receive it. He was sent to save the world, not to condemn it (3:16-17). This salvation would not depend on the fidelity of the world. He would save even in the face of infidelity. However, he would not force his salvation on anyone. Those who wanted to receive it

had to do so willingly. His arms spread on the cross which on one level symbolized the power of the world over him, were also spread out to embrace the world, which symbolized his unconditional love for the world.

What lessons can we learn from the passion, death and resurrection predictions in Mark and John?

Like in Jesus’ day, political leaders are content to feather their own nests. They care little about the people. They see people as votes not humans and live from one election to the next. When they are in power – as is happening in India today – they realise that the best way to dominate is to divide people. In India, this is happening blatantly on religious lines and also on the basis of caste, language and state.

Some religious leaders will support the political leaders and create even more confusion among the people. Religious leaders, who belong to a different tradition, are clueless about how they must respond. The end result is that there is division, disharmony and strife, which often lead to violence. Those of minority communities get frightened. They see no future for themselves. Soon they give in to despair and lose hope.

Jesus stood for the truth and came out victorious. Like him, we will continue to stand for truth, non-violence and harmony and be finally victorious.

In Mark, when Jesus speaks of faith (Mk 11:22-23), he defines it as believing that what one is praying for is received already. There ought to be no doubt in one’s heart. He could predict his resurrection because he had faith in God.

When we look at the situation around us, we too might be tempted to feel defeated like the disciples felt. We can, however, opt to imitate Jesus and be faithful till the very end knowing that like him, if we too accept God’s will, the cross will lead to the resurrection. The God who raised Jesus from the dead, will raise us too. This is why the resurrection of Jesus keeps offering hope even in the midst of hopelessness. It keeps offering faith even in the midst of faithlessness and it keeps offering love even in the midst of fear. ❖

“When we look at the situation around us, we too might be tempted to feel defeated like the disciples felt.”

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The Monsoon Rain

“This wasn’t so when we were young,” a nonagenarian Ramaiah would complain. “These corporate bandicoots have not only looted our money, but also turned this paradise into an open drain...!” Muṅgāru Male, ‘monsoon rain’ in Kannada, would remind every Kannadiga of the sandalwood romantic movie of the same name. But not all Muṅgāru Male’s are romantic.

It was the first Tuesday of July; and the sky appeared greyish. The playgrounds were wet, soaking every drop of rainwater, and the fragrance of sweet- earthy wet soil lingered in the nostrils; however, recently, water-clogged gullies and over-flowing sewages emanating an awful stench have become a common sight in the silicon valley of India. The people didn’t mind this awful smell as long as it combined with the choking aroma of *tadka*, when fresh curry leaves and *asafoetida* are tossed into hot oil.

Much before buildings ate up its green cover, Bengaluru, formerly Bangalore, had a lush-green terrain and lakes were an important source of water. In a bid to make space for the expanding city, the existing

lakes were converted into land, affecting the natural flow of water.

Ramaiah-avare, as he is known, was a native of Kolar, the place where K. G. F. was shot. He migrated to the capital city of Karnataka, along with his parents, when he was barely four; ever since, he has been a resident here.

Ramaiah and his family live in “DJ Halli” (aka Devara Jeevanahalli), the “Dharavi of Bengaluru”. In DJ Halli there is barely enough room for people to live in, forget about space for home appliances like refrigerators and washing machines. With an area of just over a square kilometre, this area is home to a whopping 33,000+ people. People here live in ‘chawls’ and can’t even dream of ‘individual and self-contained’ homes. ‘Privacy’, for them, is synonymous with ‘luxury’; the greatest favour a family-member can ever offer his family would be to leave the blankets-turned-purdahs that separate the main room into small cubicles undisturbed – ensuring each one his private space.

This area is a stark-contrast to the posh places in Bangalore, like M.G. Road and Vittal Mallya Road.

Ramaiah was strong, beyond anyone's expectation. He was a living testimony of the fact that 'age is just a number'. It was just a week through the wedding celebrations in the family. Charan, Ramaiah's grandson, was to be married to Latha, who proudly called herself 'self-employed' for selling some of the tastiest dosas in the area at a minimal rate of ₹20 per plate. Charan got a government job as a municipal cleaner.

Theirs was a love-marriage. Unlike the rich chaps, who can afford to go on a honeymoon, Charan and Latha (Charu-Latha) couldn't afford to go anywhere. Just a day after the nuptials, it rained cats and dogs. The area was water-clogged with no outlet. It was as though the sewers were kept wide open; and the area stank like a month-old decaying corpse. However, the people were now accustomed to this mess.

Now, for Charu-Latha's wedding rites and rituals, beginning from the engagement, *muhurtha*, *lagna* and reception, the family had to take huge loans. The entire family's income for a year would not be enough for a decent wedding celebration. Moreover, Indian weddings are a matter of extravagance; it is always the desire of every family to make the wedding a big fat celebration, not only to keep the bride and the groom happy but also to maintain a 'standard' in the eyes of the neighbours.

Added to this was the misery of the live electric wires: a number of wires and cables ran overhead as usual; but they were not strong enough to resist a storm. Some were dangling loosely over one another, posing a serious threat. Though many educated people brought it to the awareness of the local authorities, nothing had happened yet. Shyamaiah, Ramaiah's beloved brother, came home for the haldi programme, wherein Charan would be smeared with turmeric paste over his face, arms, legs and chest.

It rained as usual and after the programme, Shyamaiah walked towards the main road. Suddenly

there was a flash of light for a second. Before anyone could comprehend what had occurred, on the road lay a lifeless Shyamaiah, charred black in an instant. A live wire had come in contact with his wet shirt. Instead of loud singing and cheers, there was loud wailing and mourning.

"Ayyo! Misfortune!" was resounding in the house. The bride was blamed for bringing ill-luck even before the wedding. Charan's parents thought they now had a reason to break the marriage. However, Ramaiah was the one who stood steadfast during this crisis. It was not because Ramaiah thought progressively that he didn't want the marriage to be called off, but for the desire of seeing his great-grandchild. Moreover, calling off the wedding after borrowing so much of money is nothing less than foolishness. However, the wedding was blessed without any omens and inauspicious occurrence.

"I wish I was able to take you for a honeymoon!" muttered Charan. Latha didn't have any expectations. She got married to the man of her choosing; this was a great thing in itself. Therefore, the newlyweds didn't mind staying back in that dingy room. "I feel like eating meetha paan", said the girl. In order to satisfy her needs, Charan got off in a jiffy. His footsteps on the slushy water, which had become like muck, were like walking on an amphibian's body. Ramu Bhai Paan Wala's stall was just 253 metres from Ramaiah's house.

He sold some of the most aromatic paans in the area.

Charan was in a hurry, and he slipped and fell down, hurting his spine. From that day he has remained paralysed from his waist. Latha could have got married again, but she believed it was her duty to take care of her husband. People were amazed to see her working like a maid to look after her husband.

Now confined to a wheelchair, and sipping hot tea from his sipper-tumbler, Charan tells Latha, "All things have changed... all... but you". ❖



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“We invite all Jesuits to listen carefully and courageously to the experience of women”

Next year, 2025, will mark the 30th anniversary of Decree 14. In 1995, delegates from the Society of Jesus met in Rome for the General Congregation 34, and one of the outcomes was the Decree on Jesuits and the Situation of Women in Church and Civil Society.

as we participated in discerning how best to address the task at hand. Honestly, I felt as though I was in the wrong place and reaching into the fog trying to grasp what my role was as the only layman on the Commission.



Pic courtesy: onlineministries.creighton.edu



Pic courtesy: onlineministries.creighton.edu

Similarly, in 2019, the role of women in the Church was a question that continually surfaced from women participants at the International Congress while marking the 50th anniversary of the Society of Jesus' Secretariat for Justice and Ecology.

Three years later, in 2021, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Fr. Arturo Sosa, created the Commission on the Role and Responsibilities of Women in the Society of Jesus, commonly known as the Women's Commission.

As we began in the Commission to find our way towards the realities of women in the Church in 2021, we stumbled and yet helped each other move forward. We put ourselves in the hands of the Spirit

However, a pivotal moment for me arrived on 5 May 2022. The Women's Commission moderator at the time, Dr. Donna Andrade, invited the original authors of Decree 14 to meet with us via Zoom: Gerry O'Hanlon, SJ (Ireland), Joel Tabora, SJ (Philippines), and Bill Uren, SJ (Australia). (Pat Howell, SJ (USA), deceased, was also one of the original authors). Dr. Margo Heydt, a researcher at Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio (USA), also joined the panel. She has done a significant amount of research on Decree 14.

“ Many women feel that men simply do not listen to them. There is no substitute for such listening. ”

As shared by the authors of Decree 14, during the General Congregation 34, 16 Commissions were initially set up, one of which was the Justice Commission. A number of authors were on this

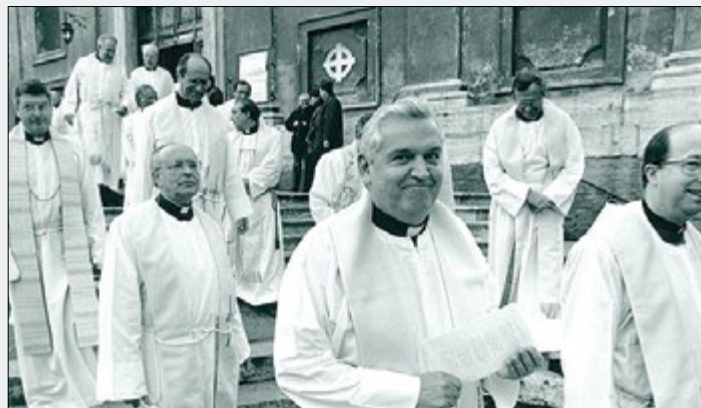
Commission, including Gerry O’Hanlon, SJ, and Joel Tabora, SJ. The authors shared the origins of this document and multiple stories of how it eventually became a singular Decree. The conversations and ideas were compelling to the Commission. Bill Uren, SJ, and others agreed that the inclusion of women was essential at that transitional time in the world, especially after a group of Irish women encouraged them to address this issue. Many supporters were encouraging them, and women and men from around the world expressed their support.

by-pass the real concerns of women and to confirm male condescension and reinforce male dominance. Listening, in a spirit of partnership and equality, is the most practical response we can make, and is the foundation for our mutual partnership to reform unjust structures”.

“14. It would be idle to pretend that all the answers to the issues surrounding a new, more just relationship between women and men have been found, or are satisfactory to all. In particular, it may be anticipated that some other questions about the role of women in



Pic courtesy: onlineministries.creighton.edu



Pic courtesy: jesuits.global

I have found deep insights into Decree 14, particularly on listening and advancing justice. That pivotal day of 5 May 2022, with Gerry O’Hanlon, SJ, Joel Tabora, SJ, and Bill Uren, SJ, pointed me more deeply into the exercise of attentive listening. Paragraphs 12 and 14 from Decree 14 have deepened my understanding of what the essence of Decree 14 is all about and what work still needs to be done. If you haven’t read them, I encourage you to do so.

civil and ecclesial society will undoubtedly mature over time. Through committed and persevering research, through exposure to different cultures and through

“Listening is the foundation for our mutual partnership to reform unjust structures.”

reflection on experience, Jesuits hope to participate in clarifying these questions and in advancing the underlying issues of justice. The change of sensibilities which this involves will inevitably have implications for Church teaching and practice. In this context we ask Jesuits to live, as always, with the tension involved in being

“12. In the first place, we invite all Jesuits to listen carefully and courageously to the experience of women. Many women feel that men simply do not listen to them. There is no substitute for such listening. More than anything else it will bring about change. Without listening, action in this area, no matter how well-intentioned, is likely to

faithful to the teachings of the Church and at the same time trying to read accurately the signs of the times”.

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Why should we never forget Chernobyl?

On 8 December 2016 the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution, designating 26 April as ‘International Chernobyl Disaster Remembrance Day’.

The reason is that the world should never forget the Chernobyl disaster which occurred on 26 April 1986. It is thirty-eight years now, since the world’s worst nuclear disaster took place in the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, which was then part of the Soviet Union and ironically enough, in today’s war-torn Ukraine.

A backgrounder from the United Nations states, “A routine 20-second shut down of the system seemed to be another test of the electrical equipment. Seven seconds later, a surge created a chemical explosion that released nearly 520 dangerous radionuclides into the atmosphere. The force of the explosion

spread contamination over large parts of the Soviet Union, now in the territories of Belarus, Ukraine and Russia. Thirty-one people died immediately and 600,000 “liquidators,” involved in fire-fighting and clean-up operations, were exposed to high doses of radiation.

“Nearly 8,400,000 people in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine were exposed to the radiation, which is more than the population of Austria. About 155,000 sq. km of territories were contaminated, which is almost half of the total territory of Italy. Agricultural areas covering nearly 52,000 sq. km, which is more than the size of Denmark, were contaminated with cesium-137 and strontium-90, with 30-year and 28-year half-lives respectively. Nearly 404,000 people were resettled, but millions continued to live in an environment where continued residual exposure created a range of adverse effects”.



Pic courtesy: taskandpurpose.com

In its resolution, the General Assembly recognized that three decades after the disaster there remains persistent and serious long-term consequences and that the affected communities and territories are experiencing continuing related needs. The General Assembly invites all Member States, relevant agencies of the United Nations system and other international organizations, as well as civil society, to observe the day.

The observance of 'Chernobyl day' must be viewed on the broader canvas of nuclear proliferation and the imminent danger this poses to our common home and to all of humanity. In a path-breaking move, the United Nations in July 2017, adopted "The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons" (TPNW). This treaty prohibits States from developing, testing, producing, manufacturing, acquiring, possessing, or stockpiling nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Signatories are barred from transferring or receiving nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, control over such weapons, or any assistance with activities prohibited under the Treaty.

States are also prohibited from using or threatening to use nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. Lastly, States Parties cannot allow the stationing, installation, or deployment of nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices in their territory. In addition to the Treaty's prohibitions, States Parties are obligated to provide victim assistance and help with environmental remediation efforts.

Pope Francis has led the way by unequivocally condemning nuclear weapons. On 10 November 2017, in an address to participants in an international symposium on 'Prospects for a world free of nuclear weapons and for integral disarmament', held in the Vatican he emphasized that, "the escalation of the arms race continues unabated and the price of modernizing and developing weaponry, not only nuclear weapons, represents a considerable expense for nations. As a result, the real priorities facing our human family, such as the fight against

poverty, the promotion of peace, the undertaking of educational, ecological and healthcare projects, and the development of human rights, are relegated to second place".

He highlighted that "If we also take into account the risk of an accidental detonation as a result of error of any kind, the threat of their use, as well as their very possession, is to be firmly condemned," and "the false sense of security", they provide!

Today ninety-three countries have signed the 'Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons'(TPNW) and seventy have ratified it. India does not figure in that list; neither does Pakistan! However, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka have joined the TPNW. India abstained from voting on the UN General Assembly resolution in 2016, that established the formal mandate for states to commence negotiations on a 'legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.' In 2017, India did not participate in the UN deliberations of the TPNW.

India today possesses more than one hundred and sixty nuclear weapons. Due to lack of transparency, the expenditure incurred in India's nuclear programme is unclear; however, just in 2022, it was estimated that India spent more than US \$ 2.7 billion to build and maintain its nuclear arsenal!

Fr Pedro Arrupe, of revered memory, lived in the midst of the nuclear holocaust that enveloped Hiroshima in 1945. Twenty-five years later, in 1970, when he was Superior General of the Society, he wrote, "it is not just a memory, but a perpetually vital event outside history which does not go away with the ticking of the clock"; adding, "the only sure guarantee that they will not be used is their non-existence."

As we remember the horrors of the Chernobyl disaster, we are called to pledge, that we will do all we can for the elimination of nuclear weapons from this world. ❖

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Mary, Mother of the Society of Jesus



Pic courtesy: mutualart.com

Mary, Ignatius, and Jesuits: Even a quick glance at the life of St. Ignatius of Loyola would amply attest to Mother Mary's presence and significance in his call, conversion, and mission. It is therefore little wonder that key moments in Ignatius' life unfolded on the feast days of the Blessed Virgin and/or at the holy sites dedicated to her.

For instance, the pilgrim's (his favorite self-description) vigil at Montserrat transpired on the eve of the Annunciation in 1522. Twelve years later (in 1534), the feast of the Assumption marked his first vows at Montmartre, Paris. Then, four years later (1538), at the architectural masterpiece of the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, Ignatius celebrated his first Mass.

Following on the same Marian-dotted footsteps of the founder, the first companions of Ignatius and the subsequent generations of Jesuits have continued to love the Blessed Virgin, and invite her to be a part of their life and mission.

A Unique Feast: Mary, Mother of the Society of Jesus: In clear contrast to most of the key events in the life of Ignatius and of his followers, which occurred on the days dedicated to Mother Mary, the feast that the Jesuits celebrate on 22 April appears to be an odd one out. Historically, on 22 April 1541, Ignatius joined his first companions to pronounce their solemn vows in the Society of Jesus. This key event occurred in another architecturally significant basilica in Rome: St. Paul outside the Wall. It was not a Marian feast day, for sure! Mary, however, was certainly present.

At the altar of her assumption, the first companions professed themselves to be perpetually available to the missions both far and near. Thus, the vowed Society was born on that day. Since then, the day has been commemorated as the feast of Mary, Mother of the Society of Jesus.

On this feast day, it might be worth our while to reflect on the reason for the importance of Mary in the

life and ministry of Ignatius and his followers and its implication for us, today.

Reason for Mary's Importance and Its Implication: At the Church of the Gesù, on 31 July 1988, Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach mused on the importance of Mary in the life and ministry of Ignatius. "In his Spiritual Diary Ignatius called the Virgin 'gate and part of grace.' She is the gate, and so Ignatius always wanted to hear from her, first of all, how he should speak to her Son Jesus and how to turn to God the Father." The same legacy is given to every exercitant as the colloquy to Mary forms part of the Spiritual Exercises.

The scene that the gospel reading for the feast presents may be the composition of place. It might help to place ourselves at Golgotha, under the cross. New Testament scholar Gail R. O'Day draws our attention to the fact that Mary and the disciple are so close to the cross that they can hear Jesus speaking to them. He addresses them in near parallel words. To Mary, "Woman, here is your son!" To the disciple, "Here is your mother!"

"From that hour, the disciple took her into his own home." The implication of that act has enormous significance. O'Day points out, "At the heart of Jesus' ministry is the creation of a new family of God. The creation of this family is symbolized here when the beloved disciple takes Jesus' mother to his own home (19:27). The new family that is born at the foot of the cross is marked by love and trust."

We need to always remember that we belong to this family born at the foot of the cross. And we need to do what John did – keep the Blessed Mother in our hearts and homes. ❖

“ The feast calls us to reflect on the reason for the importance of Mary in the life and ministry of Ignatius and his followers and its implication for us, today. ”

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#MysticBanter

“I had joined college but was going through one of the darkest phases in my life. Everything was happening so fast that it overwhelmed me to the point where I started panicking. I was trying to find myself, seeking attention from a world that was too busy to notice me. I was losing meaning and purpose in life. But then I happened to meet Fr. Andres.

It was as though God had sent him to me. We talked for a while in general, but nothing special. But he took the initiative to introduce Jesuit spirituality to me. It was perfect for someone who was all lost. He helped me anchor myself in God’s presence. Then, he became my spiritual director, helping me discern my future, belong to a community and help serve the community. I found my purpose when I underwent the Spiritual Exercises. It was one of the best experiences I have had. Without those spiritual dialogues, which I call Mystic Banter, I would have shut my door to the Spirit.

I still have questions about religion, God, and other things. I have realized that ‘to question’ is an intrinsic characteristic of being spiritual. In addition, I am convinced that I am a pampered child of God, and that conviction helps me find joy in helping the needy. These spiritual dialogues put me on a quest to realise human rights and dignity. I believe that you Jesuits are the masters of the heart. And I hope you believe this too!”

Our role as we accompany the young is to help them realise their purpose in life. Teachers, spiritual directors, campus ministers, social animators, and counsellors are as important as administrators. More Jesuits who can teach and animate the young is a non-negotiable requirement for a hopeful future. They say a Jesuit can only aspire for two positions— Novice director and Minister. The time is ripe to add another to the list— Spiritual Director/Campus Minister.



I hope the provincials, vice-chancellors, principals, and program directors are listening. ❖

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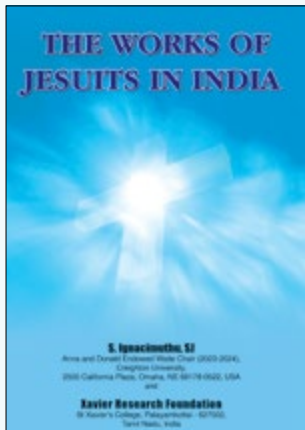
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All that we do here in India

Fr. S. Ignacimuthu, SJ talks of his new book



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Price: ₹ 220/-

What made you think of such a book?

I thought of writing this book mainly because at present there is no book available containing details related to the topic. Both for the Jesuits and others I wanted to give in a nutshell the various works of Jesuits in India

How did you manage to gather all the needed information for such an exhaustive book?

Many people helped me collect the necessary information. I requested concerned persons to provide details related to each topic. They cooperated very well. For some topics, I myself collected the details from books, websites, and other sources.

It is important that non-Jesuits come to know about the Jesuit contributions to the nation. But how do we get people of all religions to read this book?

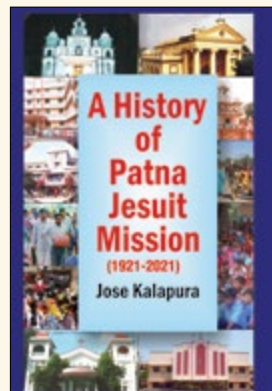
I am aware that many people in public life, particularly those belonging to other religions may not get a chance to read this book. I intend to send the book for review to important dailies like *The Hindu*, *Times of India* and *the Statesman*.

Fr. S. Ignacimuthu, SJ (MDU) is Director, Xavier Research Foundation, St Xavier's College, Palayamkottai. He can be contacted at imthus@hotmail.com.



100 years of Patna mission

Fr. Jose Kalapura, SJ talks of his new book



A History of Patna Jesuit Mission (1921 – 2021)
By Jose Kalapura, SJ
Patna Jesuit Society
Price: ₹ 150/-

What made you come up with this book?

I have been studying and researching on Christian History for over two decades. Also, I have been teaching Jesuit History at various tertianships for over 20 years. Naturally, my provincials asked me to write a history of Patna Jesuits for which I have been working for the past 10 years. This book is the result of this effort.

What do you feel while looking back at the 100 years of the Patna Mission?

Looking back as the Patna Jesuit Mission completed 100 hundred years I feel great satisfaction of having highlighted in my book, the signal contribution of Patna Jesuits in the management of Patna Diocese from 1921-2022, and making it a self-sufficient Church.

Does this history contain lessons for Jesuits in India? Mention two of them.

Two important lessons this book offers for Jesuits are: a) Jesuits are entrusted with a mission area in order to develop the mission into a church: Patna Jesuits did precisely this and thus four more dioceses emerged from one Patna Diocese over the past 100 years; b) The mission mandate was to build the church and so from a situation when the Jesuits managed all the churches and institutions of Patna Diocese in the earlier years, they are just one among several religious orders now working in Patna Archdiocese, managing only a few institutions and churches today—they have lived the gospel mandate, “He must increase, I must decrease”.

Fr. Jose Kalapura, SJ (PAT) is the former Director of Xavier Institute of Social Research. He is currently Archivist in Patna Jesuit Archives, Patna. He can be contacted at jkalapura@gmail.com

PLEASE NOTE:

The next issue of Jivan will be the combined holiday issue, dated May-June 2024. It will be posted in the month of June 2024.

- Editor



Life of an exceptionally gifted neurosurgeon

Film: Gifted Hands (2009)

Director: Thomas Carter

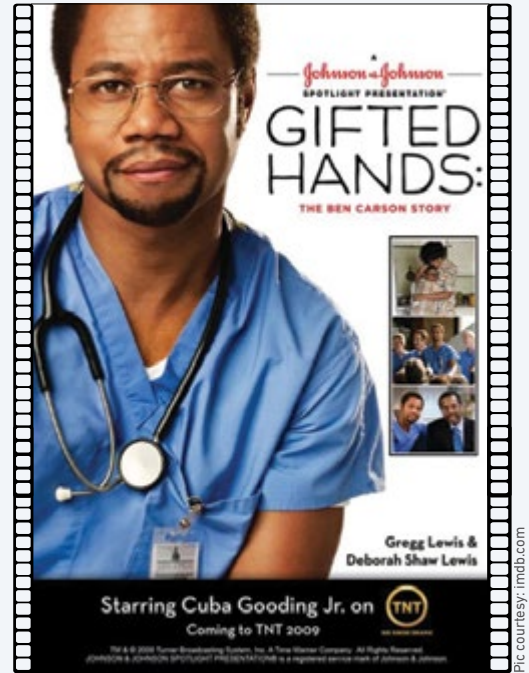
Run time: 86 minutes

Adapted from the autobiography of Dr Benjamin Carson Sr. A famous pediatric neurosurgeon, distinguished academic, and author, this biopic is a tale of faith, dedication, perseverance, compassion and determination that make miracles possible. Carson grew up in a desperately poor colored family in a crime-ridden ghetto in Detroit, under the care of an illiterate mother, whose husband had deserted them.

Sonya, the mother, struggled heroically against poverty and racial discrimination. She instilled in her boys her abiding faith in God and compelled them to get educated, even when they thought they were no good. The hot-tempered Ben was considered as the dumbest in the class by his classmates, partly on account of his race and partly because of his behaviour and poor grades. His delinquency almost landed him in jail for a stabbing attempt.

But Sonya would not let go of him and insisted that he was smart enough and could do whatever he wanted to be in life. She taught her boys the power of imagination. As a charwoman in a professor's house, Sonya understood the importance of a library and reading which she passed on to the children. She encouraged them to read and developed in them a passion for knowledge. Sonya's persistence changed Ben's academic performance and his whole life. Dreaming of becoming missionary doctor, Ben found his way to Yale, eventually landing in the prestigious Johns Hopkins University, Maryland, specializing in neurosurgery. It is there he met his future wife, Candy.

Ben bloomed into what God had wanted him to be - an exceptionally gifted neurosurgeon, whose eye-hand coordination made him the best. The movie presents two of his celebrated surgeries, capturing the suspense and tension involved both for the patients and the doctor. His successful hemispherectomy on a four year old child in 1984 involved the removal of the half of the brain of a four-year-old child, who suffered repeated convulsions after the procedure. But he saved the child. As this was going on, his wife Candy was recovering from her miscarriage.



In 1987 Carson performed the first successful surgical separation on occipital cranio pugus twins (Siamese twins joined in the head) born to a German couple. Ben struggled to think up a safe procedure for this daunting task for four months. He receives a divine revelation while playing billiards and goes on to lead his team to separate the twins safely during a 22 hours procedure. Carson's philosophy of life is summed up in his words: "It's my belief that God gives us all gifts, and special abilities that we have for the privilege of serving Him and humanity." ❖

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



Anthony Crasta, SJ (KAR)

Br Anthony Crasta departed from this life for his heavenly abode on 2 March 2024, after a prolonged illness. He was 77 years old, a Jesuit for 60 fruitful years.

Born in 1946 at Kayyar, Mangaluru, Br Anthony joined the Society of Jesus at the age of 17. He went through an Infirmarian's training course at St. Martha's Hospital, Bengaluru and completed his B. Com degree at St Aloysius Evening College, Mangaluru. He worked as an administrator and teacher at Loyola School, Jakhama in Nagaland mission, where he touched the lives of many a student and teacher.

In 1985 Tony, as we fondly called him, was chosen to work in the Treasurer General's Office at the Jesuit Curia in Rome, where he remained at this post for almost 30 years. He quickly learned accounting and financial matters of the entire Society of Jesus and was known

for his efficiency, honesty, and integrity. While in Rome he founded the Konkani Kutam, an informal association of Konkani-speaking people – both religious and lay – whom he loved and cared for. Br Anthony was a man of deep faith and prayer. His humility and simplicity, his compassion in words and deeds, his committed and dedicated life and his love and generosity attracted many people to him, and through him to Jesus his Master.

Br Anthony suffered much in his last few years, especially after his return from Rome. He bore his pain with patience and courage, surrendering himself to the will of God. We thank God for the gift of Br Anthony who enriched our lives with his presence, example and service. May his soul rest in peace!

— Melwin J Pinto, SJ



Mathew Chandy Pazhayaveedu, SJ (CCU)

Fr P. C. Mathew S. J. passed away on 11 Feb 2024, at 84. A former Provincial of the Calcutta Jesuit Province and Principal of St. Xavier's College, Calcutta, he was born in Kerala in 1939 and ordained in 1969.

As a Jesuit, he dedicated his entire life to Higher Education. Fr Mathew was known for his optimism, faith, and ability to turn dreams into reality. He made things happen. He was a man on fire, inflamed, in his own unique way, with the love of Christ which propelled him forward with a compulsive, inner urge to commit himself single mindedly and wholeheartedly to his mission. He took any opposition as a greater challenge and opportunity to bulldoze his way ahead. He initiated the process of College Autonomy, organized and inspired the Alumni Association and built a group committed to

philanthropy and support for the underprivileged. He was basically a simple, humble man, whose only joy and satisfaction, he once told me, was to make people happier.

We are thankful to Fr P.C. Matthew for the trail he blazed, for the ardour and zest he brought to everything he did. If there is a single adjective to describe him, it must be 'restless'. The prayer of St Augustine should be on our lips when we think about him. "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee" May Fr. P. C now find his eternal rest with Jesus whom he loved and served with such unswerving fervor and loyalty!

— Patrick Walsh, SJ



Peter Savarimuthu, SJ (DUM)

Fr Peter Savarimuthu SJ was born in a fervent and faithful Catholic family at Sengulam in Madurai District of Tamil Nadu on 28 February 1946. He joined the Santal Region on 14 August 1968 at XTTI, Patna, and took his first vows on 15 August 1970. After completing his formation, he was ordained a priest on 22 April 1981 at Dumka. He pronounced his final vows on 08 September 1987 at Majlispur.

Fr Peter was quiet, somewhat shy but sociable. He was open and broad minded. The early formation instilled in him a love for the Santal people and their language, and a desire to serve the people as a zealous pastor. He accepted with equanimity any mission that was assigned to him and went about doing his best. He tirelessly devoted himself to his mission, be it as an assistant Parish Priest at Sohorgati, Majlispur,

and Mariampahar, or as a Parish Priest at Asanbani, Mariampahar, Tinpahar, Nichamari, and Majlispur.

Undeterred by his frail health, he continued to give his best to pasturing his flock and to attend to their spiritual and pastoral needs as Father-in-charge at Nunbatta, and later at Mariampahar. He acquainted himself with his parishioners through family visits and paid attention to their faith formation. He trained the catechists and involved them to help him in the pastoral activities. When he was entrusted with the responsibilities of a local superior at Majlispur, he exercised the ministry of leadership with love, care, and authenticity. The Lord called Fr Peter on 21 February 2024 to his eternal reward. May Fr Peter enjoy God's eternal presence and peace!

— Stany Pinto, SJ





No one could make him unhappy

Khejok Tulku Rinpoche was one of the diminishing numbers of “old teachers” in the Tibetan tradition. Born in the 1930s, he was installed as Abbot of the second oldest monastery, Dhe Tsang, in Eastern Tibet. Later, while trying to escape to India, Rinpoche was arrested and imprisoned by the Communists.

Despite two years of hard labour, Rinpoche maintained his daily spiritual practices. He helped many fellow inmates spiritually and medically. Eventually a guard helped him escape from prison. Rinpoche crossed the Himalayas, and finally arrived in Australia in 1986.

I met Rinpoche soon after his arrival and we were firm friends until his death in 2013. I thrice accompanied him to his monastery in Tibet. I observed his daily practices of meditation, chanting and prayers. Many sought his advice which he cautioned was beneficial, only if one practiced it: “My advice must be etched into your heart - not merely as words recalled by the mind. Then your actions, thoughts, and speech will reflect those qualities of which I speak and practice. Even unconsciously, every single word you utter, every gesture you make, will be your teaching to the world, and the world will benefit, just by your mere presence.”

Rinpoche taught the Dharma with unfailing humility and serenity. All who sought his advice wanted inner peace, though, reflecting with me once, he found it curious how people talk about finding peace of mind: “Peace of mind has always been there. One only has to realize it. People go to all sorts of places to find peace of mind. If you do not have it within yourself, you can go to the end of the world but you’ll never find it.”

I always found him eminently practical and grounded. His advice was often tinged with good humour. He once talked about happiness: “The key to a happy life is to be

grateful for everything. Sickness gives you the opportunity to appreciate health. Problems give you challenges to find solutions. Loneliness gives you time to reflect. Company gives you teachers to learn from. Failures also give you lessons to learn. And old age brings wisdom!”



Pic courtesy: iblp.ca

While teaching meditation, he drew on his own lifelong practice. Showing me his bent fingers, he shared with me something of his years in the Chinese prison, where guards broke every finger in his hands. He said: “People can torture you; they can insult

you; they can take away all you have; they can put you in the darkest prison and starve you. If you are determined to be happy anyway, no one can take that smile off your face.” With kindness and patience, he made friends with his guards. Reflecting on this he told me: “A hostile person is your teacher of tolerance: rejoice

when you meet one. It is not every day that you have the perfect opportunity to practice your patience.”

In 1987 I took Rinpoche to the Benedictine monastery near Perth, Australia. Remarkably every monk attended his talk-demonstration of meditation, following his instructions exactly. Somehow they recognised an authentic, deeply joyous human being. I shared my astonishment with him over the full attendance. He remarked, “Happiness is like a lamp. When a lamp is lit, it does not need to say to the dark corners of the room, “Let me illuminate you and dispel your darkness,” or make any other effort to make the room bright. The dark corners of the room simply become bright as soon as the light is lit. When your life is filled with happiness, the lives of those around you will be also brightened, without you needing to do anything.” ❖

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



"This time we've got such a wonderful new Provincial. He is a compulsive talker. During the whole manifestation of one hour I didn't have to open my mouth at all!"



"Do you think the Rector will allow me to have someone from another congregation as my spiritual director?"



"I understand why you are concerned about the lack of vocations. You are worried about who will look after you when you are bed-ridden!"



"I think I'm losing my memory. May be, God is just answering my prayers. For years I have been praying, 'Take and receive, O Lord, my liberty, my will, my memory'"

**Intention
for
April, 2024**

FOR THE ROLE OF WOMEN

We pray that the dignity and immense value of women be recognised in every culture, and for the end of discrimination that they experience in different parts of the world.



**Pope's Worldwide
Prayer Network**



Pic courtesy: Google



The most staggering light

has a wonderfully revealing passage that describes Jesus' first appearance to the whole community after his resurrection. It tells us that on the evening of Easter Sunday the disciples (representing here the Church) were gathered in a room with the doors locked because of fear. Jesus comes to them, passing right through their locked doors, and stands in the middle of their huddled fearful circle and says to them, "Peace be with you!" And after saying this, he breathes on them and says: "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Note the parallels to the original creation story. For the writer of John's Gospel, this huddling in fear behind locked doors is the darkness of Good Friday, a moral "formless void". And Jesus brings light to that darkness in the same way light was brought to the original creation, through God's word and God's breath. Jesus' words, "Peace be with you!" are the resurrected Jesus' way of saying, "Let there be light!" Then, just as at the original creation God's breath begins to order the physical chaos, Jesus' breath, the Holy Spirit, begins to order the moral chaos, continually turning darkness into light – hatred into love, bitterness into graciousness, fear into trust, false religion into true worship, ideology into truth, and vengeance into forgiveness.

Good Friday was bad long before it was good. We crucified God and plunged the world into darkness at midday. But God created light a second time, a light that cannot be extinguished even if we crucify God – and we have never really stopped doing that! Good Friday still happens every day. But, beyond wishful thinking and natural optimism, we live in hope because we now know God's response to any moral darkness, God can generate, resurrection, the creation of new light, life beyond death.

The renowned mystic Julian of Norwich coined the famous phrase: *In the end, all will be well, and all will be well, and every manner of being will be well.* To which Oscar Wilde added, *and if it isn't well, then it is still not the end.* The resurrection of Jesus has brought a new light into the world, one that proclaims against all counter claims that light still triumphs over darkness, love over hatred, order over chaos, and heaven over hell. ❖

Courtesy: www.ronrolheiser.com

The earth was dark twice. Once at the original creation before God first created light. But later there was an even deeper darkness, on Good Friday, between the 6th and 9th hour, when we were crucifying God, and as Jesus dying on the cross cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!" Utter darkness. In response to that, God created the most staggering light of all – the resurrection.

It is interesting to look at how Scripture describes the creation of original light. The Bible opens with these words: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth. Now the earth was a formless void and God breathed over the waters. God said, 'Let there be light' and there was light." A combination of God's breath and God's word produced the first light. The ancients identified God's presence very much with light. For them, God was the antithesis of all darkness and, indeed, the symbol of God's fidelity was the rainbow, namely, refracted light, light broken open to reveal its spectacular inner beauty.

But it got dark a second time! The Gospels tell us that as Jesus hung on the cross, though it was midday, darkness beset the whole land for three hours. We don't know exactly what occurred here historically. Was the entire earth plunged into darkness? Perhaps. After all, the earth was crucifying God, and God is light! Irrespective of how literally or not we take this, what happened on Good Friday triggered a different kind of darkness, a moral one – the darkness of godlessness, hatred, paranoia, fear, misguided religion, cruelty, idolatry, ideology, and violence. This is the most blinding darkness of all.

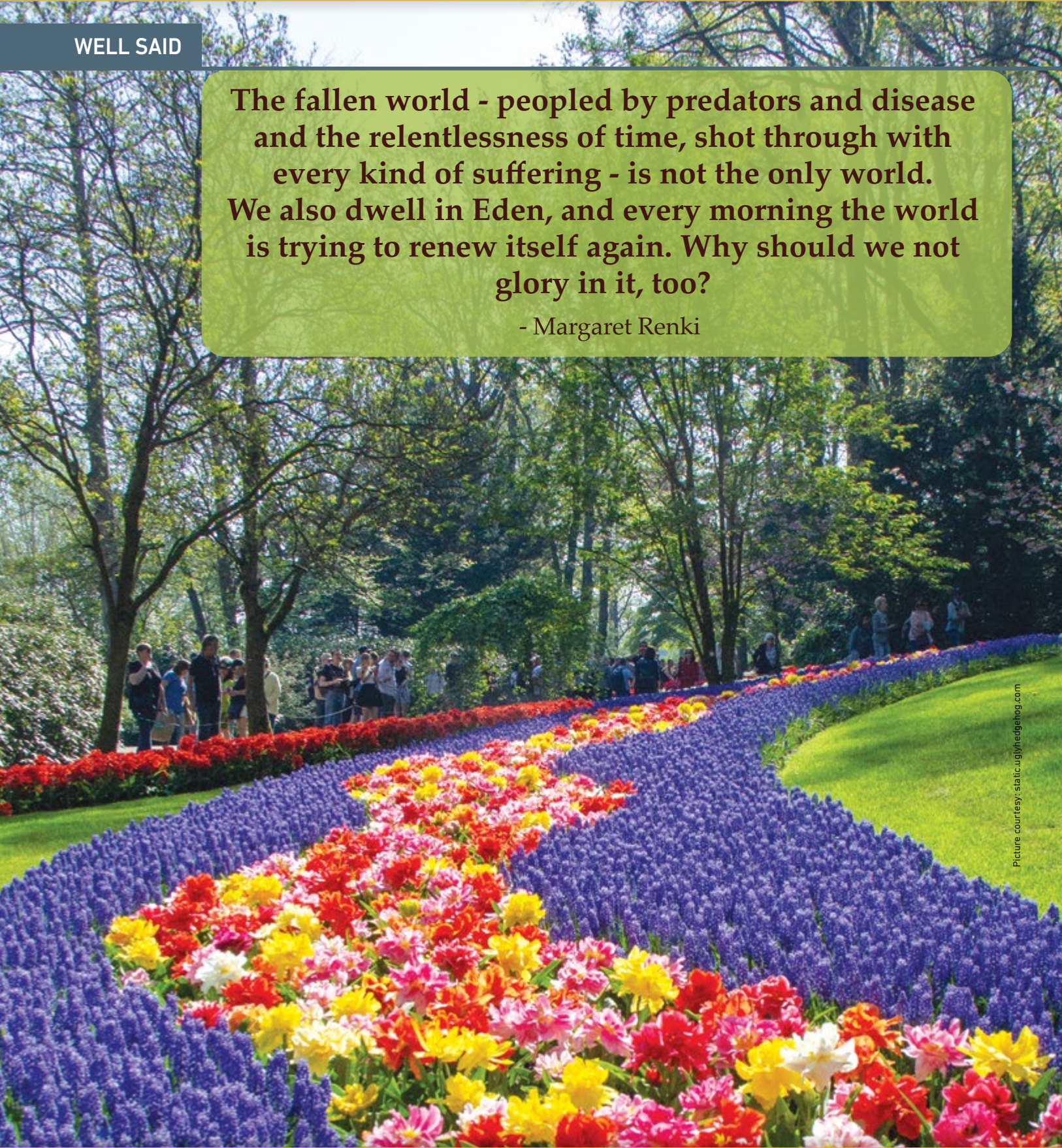
What was God's response? God's response to the darkness of Good Friday was to say a second time, *Let there be light!* The resurrection of Jesus is that new light, one which at the end of the day eclipses all other lights.

It is interesting to compare how Scripture describes God creating the new light of the resurrection with how God created the original light at the origins of creation. The Gospel of John

WELL SAID

The fallen world - peopled by predators and disease and the relentlessness of time, shot through with every kind of suffering - is not the only world. We also dwell in Eden, and every morning the world is trying to renew itself again. Why should we not glory in it, too?

- Margaret Renki



Picture courtesy: static.uglyedgehog.com