



February, 2024

JIVAN

NEWS AND VIEWS OF JESUITS IN INDIA

PATHWAYS TO
HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

What did COP28 achieve? |
Can we really fall in love with God? |



Teach me to fast!

I have four weeks to shed shadows of the past
I want to, but cannot, so teach me to fast
I hear your call to watch with you and pray
So to vicious cravings I don't fall a prey

Guilty and ashamed, I wait on the hill
To see if you'd my hungry heart fill
Baptize me in the water-blood gushing from
your side,
Then, purged and purified, in you I'll abide.

Let me follow you, as I'm burdened by dross
As, although sinless, you embrace the cross
"Forgive them, Father!" I hear you pray
Forgive me now and I will not stray.

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The core message of Christmas

In the poignant reflection, "To script a new beginning" in the Nov-Dec '23 issue of *Jivan*, Fr. Valan C. Antony, SJ beautifully encapsulates the contemporary tumult of our world and juxtaposes it against the timeless message of Christmas. He adeptly captures the cacophony of global issues, from war-torn regions to climate crises, ethnic rivalries, and the divisive polarization in India. His message serves as a timely reminder of the true meaning of Christmas in the face of the challenges we confront. He eloquently emphasizes the core message of Christmas, encapsulated in the figure of Jesus Christ, who, born in poverty, chose vulnerability over dominance, motivation over oppression, and forgiveness over condemnation. The article skillfully draws the essence of Christmas as a symbol of hope, healing and divine presence.

Fr. Jesuthason, OCD | Trichy, Tamil Nadu

Its soft and gentle tone

The insightful and thought-provoking article in your Christmas issue, "To Script a New Beginning." by Valan C. Antony, SJ had a great impact on me. Its soft and gentle tone, like the cold wind that pierces the bones, kindles a desire to actively engage with the world. It inspires us to be a source of hope for the hopeless and a healer for the wounded humanity. It calls us to build bridges of reconciliation and foster peace. I agree with the importance of embracing this perspective through humility, as "all the power and glory were contained in his smallness."

Ebenezer Amalraj, B (MDU) | New Delhi

Watch this film!

Sch. Alam Parmar's review of the film 'Face of the Faceless' was truly inspiring. I was privileged to watch this movie,



which has been entered for the Oscar awards. The film does portray beautifully and powerfully reconciliation through the pursuit of God's will. It illustrates powerfully the challenges of loving an enemy. What struck me the most was that Sr Rani Maria understood that mission is not just merely work, but it consists in making Christ present to the world through personal witness. Jesus did not teach an ethic of cult but an ethic of relationship. To be religious today is to be inter-religious. Whatever you do today you should do while building positive relationships with believers of other faiths. This is what Sr Rani Maria did for the people of Udaipur.

The film also raises difficult questions like: Are we ready as religious to commit ourselves to the people who are unjustly condemned, where our presence makes a huge difference? As my companions and I were stirred by this movie, I would request *Jivan* readers to watch this film. We must encourage others to take a bold risk in depicting Christian mission in today's complicated world. Balwant Singh Dalwani said: "When I have found thee/ There is no 'mine' and 'not mine' /Everybody is mine."

Fean Almeida, SJ | Mumbai

Deeply moved

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Fr. Valan Antony, SJ for his captivating Christmas article. His eloquent prose skillfully captured the spirit of the season, leaving a lasting impression on me. I was deeply moved by your poignant exploration of the Palestinian conflict, as your words conveyed both depth and empathy. I am truly grateful for this enlightening read and appreciate the thoughtfulness with which you approached the subject.

Wesley D'Costa SJ (BOM) | Mumbai

Jivan Short Story Contest

The results of *Jivan* Short Story Contest will be announced in the March 2024 issue of *Jivan*.

- Editor





WHAT DO YOU SAY?

STANY D'SOUZA, SJ
President, JCSA

Shall we make a difference?

There is a story about emperor Akbar and his minister, Birbal. One day, when Birbal came to the court of Akbar, he found the king lost in deep thought. Birbal asked the king, 'Your Majesty, are you unwell?'. The king replied, "Nothing like that. I am perfectly fine. However, look at my palm. I am wondering why there is no hair on my palm"

Birbal knew that Akbar enjoyed some flattery. Hence, calmly he said, "Your majesty! You are a generous king. When the poor cry, you weep and you generously give them gifts. Those articles may have touched your palms and you have lost hair on your palm".

Akbar was very elated to hear this, but he wanted to take this conversation a little further and asked, "Birbal, I give gifts and hence, I don't have hair on my palm. But how come there aren't hair on your palms too?" Birbal replied, "I am also one of the recipients of your munificence. Your many gifts have touched my palms, and removed all the hair on my palm."

Akbar wanted to defeat Birbal. So, he again questioned Birbal, "I understand that I give gifts and you receive gifts, and hence we do not have hair on our palms. However, there are so many people in my court. Can I give gifts to all? How come there are no hairs on their palms?"

Birbal was unfazed. He said, "Your majesty! It is true that you cannot give gifts to all. However, the reason for the hairless palms of your courtiers is simple. When you give gifts to people like me, some of them feel happy, and clap their hands in sheer glee. Others, of course, feel jealous, and keep rubbing their hands in pure envy."

Our God is a giving God. He gives. Were God to have a body like us, God's palms would be ever open and totally hairless, for God is a generous giver. God did not even keep His only Son back. That is what St Ignatius of Loyola teaches us especially in the concluding exercise of his Spiritual Exercises on being seized by God's love.

We will soon be entering the Lenten season, a time to recall, relive, relish and rejoice in the Christ-event, especially the passion and death of Jesus, an eloquent and poignant testimony of God's kenotic, self-giving love.

Just check your palms. You will see no hair there. To keep palms bare and smooth, you need not go far away as a missionary and work wonders. You can be Godly wherever you are and make a difference just by giving joyfully, receiving gratefully, encouraging others generously and in times of failure, putting your hands together and returning to the Lord in total repentance.

Shall we make a difference in and around us? What do you say?



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

M.A. JOE ANTONY, SJ
Editor

Harnessing for God the energies of love

Is it true that we live unloved and die unmourned? Intelligent and educated though we are, do we fail to grasp something that psychologists and psychiatrists repeatedly affirm today? We choose to live single lives, but does it mean we should ignore what is crucially important to our health and happiness?

To remind yourself of these facts, please read the cover feature in this issue on p.13-15. Jose Parapully, SDB, a Salesian psychologist and writer, says, "It is our satisfying and fulfilling close relationships in the earlier years that lead to health and happiness in the later years of life. Period! Research after research has been reaching the same conclusions.... It is our close relationships that lead to health and happiness. Those with the most satisfying relationships at midlife were the happiest and healthiest at 80."

He quotes Dr. George E. Vaillant, one of the directors of the well-known research called Harvard Grant Study. His final five-word conclusion was: "Happiness is love. Full stop." When he was asked, "What have you learned from the Grant Study? Vaillant's response was: "That the only thing that really matters in life is your relationships with other people."

You have heard of Dr. Viktor Frankl and his famous book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, haven't you? If you want to know the exact moment when he learnt about 'the greatest thing in the world' you should read 'Starlight' on p.31. The passage is from a book by Dr. Alan Loy McGinnis. How does Frankl describe the fascinating moment? "For the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire... The salvation of man is through love and in love."

Dr. McGinnis goes on to say, "When we remember the primacy of love, and believe in our almost unlimited capacities for giving and receiving it, life can take on a vast joyfulness." Finally he quotes the extraordinary Jesuit, Teilhard de Chardin, who said, "Someday, after we have mastered the winds and the waves, the tides and gravity, we will harness for God the energies of love."

Some pious Jesuits may say, "Is giving and receiving love all that matters? I love God. God loves me." Read the 'Spirit Matters' article on p.9-10 by Learoy Rodrigues, SJ, who explores if we can really fall in love with God. Pedro Arrupe said, "Nothing is more practical than falling in love with God." Nothing is more rewarding, yes, but is there anything more difficult than that? What do you think?

“Our institutions and houses are to be Models of Alternative Energy”

Pic courtesy: kce.ac.in

“‘Destruction of our environment is an offence on God and His Creation,’ says Pope Francis in his recent encyclical on ‘*Laudate Deum*’. Hence we have to work resolutely and unitedly for the protection of our Mother Earth,” said Fr. Xavier Soreng SJ, JCSA conference secretary for Social Justice and Ecology.

Fr. Pedro Walpole SJ, international Coordinator for the Ecojesuit Network, spoke on the recently concluded CoP 28 and the way forward. CoP 28 ended with optional responses to climate change without time-bound obligations. Climate is changing because of the release of carbon from the use of fossil fuels. The need to reduce the use of fossil fuels and carbon output was also accepted. There was an attempt towards course correcting and mitigation, but there was no agreement on phasing out of fossil fuels. Oil-rich countries are doing very little on alternative energy. China and Australia are good examples of active promotion of alternative energy but Australia is one of the big exporters of coal. Thus, the response to climate change will not be on time.

Fr Walpole mentioned that there was a faith groups’ pavilion. People were present with their religious identities. The constructive role played by these groups in international relations and negotiations was recognized. Faith groups were very active at CoP 28 and exerted a lot of pressure, demanding not only protection of our Mother Earth but also the wealth and health of the marginalized. The presence of Catholic groups was rather strong. There emerged a network of Catholic groups (Catholic COP Network).

Following Fr. Pedro’s presentation, Ecojesuits representatives from the provinces presented the reports of eco actions completed, being carried on and future plans in their Provinces. Based on the reports, discussion and sharing, we agreed upon the following projects as common ventures, being done or to be done in our Conference: -

Identify and network with civil groups and NGOs at the province level and carry on all our eco works and take up common projects. We can also do a lot of advocacy and lobbying in terms of local commitments and eco and people friendly policies and legislations. We can demand national and local commitments from our leaders and legislators - Actively involve in awareness generation and actions in and among our educational institutions and other ministries. Our institutions and houses are to be models of alternative energy and eco friendly practices. Ecology needs to be a cross cutting theme for all our apostolates.

Bring back Teilhard de Chardin into our spirituality and move towards cosmogenesis. Spirituality is to be the motivation and backbone for all our eco actions and practices. Our higher education institutions and other research centres to be actively involved in eco friendly researches and promotions. We can also collaborate with government organizations in this area of research. Farmers and tribals can be given training in these aspects. We shall create a lot of awareness among youth and people in our ministry places on CoP 28 and disseminate *Laudate Deum* among our partners and stakeholders.

These were chosen as Zonal level coordinators: Fr. Antonysam (MDU) for the South Zone. Fr. Frazer (BOM) for West Zone. Fr. Basil Toppo (DAR) for East Zone, and Fr. Prabhat Kennedy (RAN) for Central Zone. WE decided to have our next meeting offline at the Zonal level. The zonal coordinators will consult the zonal provinces ecojesuits and decide on places and dates for the meeting. The meetings could be from February to March, 2024. Fr. John Kennedy, Ecojesuit Coordinator for the JCSA, will attend all these zonal meetings. Ecojesuits from Kerala, Andhra, Hazaribagh, Patna provinces and Nepal region could not attend the meeting.



- SM. John Kennedy, SJ (MDU)



In the war-torn West Asia Christians should be agents of peace

Some recent statements of quite a few priests, religious and lay persons give the impression that they see Israel-Hamas war as a war between innocent Jews and terrorist Muslims. Some even go to the extent of saying that Muslims may be planning to attack St Peter's Basilica. These unfortunate statements tend to identify all Muslims with Hamas, which is, in fact, a terrorist organization. But Hamas does not represent all Palestinians.

Secondly, the assumption in these statements is that all Palestinians are Muslims. In

reality 25 percent of Palestinians are Christians.

The third is the confusion between Judaism and Zionism. Many of those who make these statements

“Judaism is a religion, but Zionism is a fascist ideology. Similarly, while Islam is a religion, Jihadism is a fascist political formation.”

keep asserting the right of the Jews to be in Israel which very few

question. The real issue is not the right of Jews, but Zionism which is a fundamentalist, imperialist, fascist ideology. Judaism is a religion, but Zionism is a fascist ideology. Similarly, while Islam is a religion, Jihadism is a fascist political formation. Hinduism is a religion, but Hindutva is a fascist ideology. Christianity is a religion while Christendom, supported by Evangelical Christians today, is an imperialist ideology.

Those who identify Muslims with terrorists are called Islamophobes, who view the Hamas-Israel war as one



Pic courtesy: newarab.com

between Jews and Muslims. The war should instead be seen in the light of the statement of the UN Secretary General, Mr. Guterres who condemned unequivocally both the Hamas terrorist acts of 7 October 2023 and the disproportionate Israeli retaliation of indiscriminate bombing of civilian areas, hospitals and schools.

He added that Hamas is a product of Israeli occupation of Gaza and of other Palestinian territories for 56 years, suppression of its people, and the illegal takeover of the land that belong to the Palestinians to create Jewish settlements. Many do not know that Israel has turned Gaza into what some call the biggest open air prison in the world. The Zionist Apartheid state recognizes full citizenship and rights of Jews alone inside Israel and treats Christian and Muslim Palestinians as second class citizens without full rights. Hamas is the product of such discrimination inside Israel and of their suppression in the Gaza strip and West Bank.

What can be the response of Christians be to this situation? It is easy to take sides in a war but such a stance takes us nowhere. The Christian response should begin with the message of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5.1.8): "Blessed are the Peacemakers". This peace has to be based on justice and reconciliation, not the destruction of one party to the benefit of the other as is happening at present and has happened in Palestine in the past.

It is true that enormous historical injustice was done to

"Many do not know that Israel has turned Gaza into what some call the biggest open air prison in the world."

the Jews by many in Europe who discriminated against them for more than a thousand years. That discrimination reached its climax in the form of the Nazi 'permanent solution' and the Holocaust, during which nearly 5.8 million innocent Jews were killed by Hitler's Nazi government. But after the end of World War II, in which the Nazi Germany was defeated by the Allied Forces, the colonial Europe found a way of getting over its guilt by finding a colonial solution. It handed Palestinian land over to the Jews to form a new country called Israel. More than 700,000 Palestinians were expelled from their land and tens of thousands were killed.

Today 80 percent of Israel's present inhabitants are called Sabras i.e. born in Israel, though their parents and grandparents might have migrated from elsewhere. Like any other group of immigrants they have a human right to live in the country of their birth and cannot be expelled.

But what about the right of the Palestinians who have been denied a state of their own by the colonial powers - the Ottoman Empire at first, the British later, and Israel after them?

Real peace is not possible without recognising the right of Palestinians to be a people in their own right and to have a state of their own. Some Arab states that have

not recognized Israel are ready to recognise it as soon as Israel would recognise the right of the Palestinians to have a viable state of their own.

This is called the 'two State solution' which the Vatican, India and many other countries support. If and when this happens, the two peoples can live in peace with each other as equals. Some others propose the idealistic solution of a single state from the Jordan river to the Mediterranean sea in which Christians, Jews and Muslims will have equal rights. The idea behind this proposal is good but it is not realistic.

Most Islamophobes ignore these intricacies and take sides between the warring parties and condemn one side. If we know all the facts, we will not easily condemn the Jews or Muslims - or the Israelites or Palestinians. Zionist fundamentalism that rules Israel now and suppresses the Palestinians has led to Islamic fundamentalism and terrorist organizations like the Hamas.

Amid such injustice, Christians have to agents of peace – peace based on justice and reconciliation not on hatred and war. They have to work for the two state solution of two democratic states with equal rights. If Christians, fully aware of all these intricacies, would work for a lasting peace based on justice to both Jews and Palestinians, then they will be truly blessed, as Jesus affirmed. ❖

Fr. Walter Fernandes, SJ, (KHM) founded the North Eastern Social Research Centre (NESRC) in 2000 and resumed charge as the Director in 2020. He can be contacted at walter.nesrc@gmail.com.



Can we really fall in love with God?

Several people these days, ask, perhaps implicitly, whether it is possible to fall in love with God who is beyond our senses?' In other words, 'Is it meaningful to have an intimate relationship with God whom we cannot reason with nor fully engage with through our senses?'

Well, we might dare to declare that we indeed are able to fall in love with God precisely by using

And this deep faith conviction impels us to uphold in our daily lives what is good, humane, moral, and just.

This personal love of God is also fueled when we notice God's action in the world. Archbishop Fulton Sheen once said that, 'God created the world with a sense of humour.' What he meant was that, just as a humorous or witty person has that happy knack of seeing through external narratives and noticing the



Pic courtesy: naturewise.com

“ When the love of God consumes us, we want to do things differently. We begin to see the world through a new lens. ”

our senses, and in a way also by transcending sense perception.

First up, we know we are in love with God when God matters to us. At a personal level how do I know that God matters to me? It is generally a hunch, a yearning, a deep faith conviction, which often has its basis in a believing and practicing faith community.

hidden meaning within, we too are called to encounter God by looking through created reality, and noticing God labouring within.

So for instance, when we look at a flower we are invited to look through it and notice the beauty and the daintiness of God. In a friend we are meant to come face to face with God's companionship. In the suffering

poor we are to notice perhaps the deep anguish of God. In the Sacraments of the Church, we encounter most powerfully a God who labours with us in the world.

Our love for God is also made evident when we stay open to the transformative power of God's love. Love changes things around, and once we have encountered God, our lives are never the same again.

What could be some of the characteristics of ordinary people who have fallen in love with God? I will list just three.

a. Knowing that love of God transcends feelings

Love has much to do with volition. It has much to do with the will. It is not only about having delicate feelings towards God and neighbour. Love is often a decision. Our love for God often urges us to love when it is difficult and painful to love. I am thinking here of a mother who spends her entire life caring for her child who has cerebral palsy. She foregoes probably every personal pleasure and gain in order to live selflessly for the sake of her challenged child.

Or think of Gladys Staines, who chose to forgive her husband's murderers. Such acts of forgiveness are hardly human. They stem from a deep conviction that God lends purpose to our existence, even when the goings-on in our lives do not pan out the way we would want them to. Such gracefulness amidst excruciatingly painful feelings can only come from God.

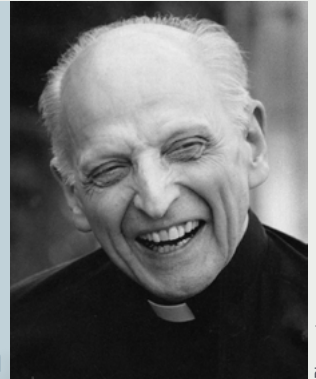
b. Noticing what lies beneath

When we are consumed by the love of God, we begin to connect with those aspects of life that often remain unspoken, untouched, and unattended to. In our relationships we begin to notice what the other is not saying. We learn to connect with the pain of another person.

Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, speaks of love in the family. In chapter 7 he gives us guidelines on how to deal effectively with young people. He says, "Constantly ask, 'where are our people existentially?' In other words he is urging us to notice peoples' inner worlds. Try to connect with their yearnings, their anxiety questions, their dreams, their moments of embarrassment, their successes, and even their failure.

One wise Jesuit, Fr Federico Sopena, would often

“**Fr Pedro Arrupe, former Superior General of the Jesuits, is said to have lived by the conviction that ‘nothing is more practical than falling in love with God.’**”



Pic courtesy: cruxnow.com

say to me and my group of Jesuit formees, "Notice people. Listen to their beating hearts. You never know what you might find there." I would add that in all likelihood we might find there a resonance of our own beating hearts.

c. Living life on a new plane of existence

When the love of God consumes us, we want to do things differently. We begin to see the world through a new lens. We imagine or perhaps re-imagine how things could possibly be, or how our Lord himself would have acted in certain situations. This strong urge makes us shed old habits and live life on a new plane of existence.

A friend of mine, Anita, was a very accomplished teacher at St Paul's Jesuit school in Belgaum. Amidst her successful teaching stint she felt a call to move out of regular teaching and start a home for abandoned people and for those with disabilities. It just brought her contentment of a different kind, and renewed hope to so many forsaken people.

In a more recent example, Fr Stan Swamy chose a path less trod, all because of his love for God and his people in North India. His was probably among the broadest expressions of love; kenotic and truly Christ-like.

Fr Pedro Arrupe, former Superior General of the Jesuits, is said to have lived by the conviction that 'nothing is more practical than falling in love with God.' When we live by such a conviction, God becomes for us not just an ethereal reality. Rather, our senses become alive to the wonder of God's action that takes place in every single moment in time. ❖

Fr Learoy Rodrigues, SJ (BOM) is currently the Dean of Studies at the Mumbai Juniorate. He can be contacted at learoyr@gmail.com.



Sri Lanka: Navigating a Rocky Road to Recovery

Sri Lanka, nestled in the cerulean embrace of the Indian Ocean, prepares to celebrate its 76th independence day on 4 February 2024. Yet, the festive air is choked by the lingering stench of its worst economic crisis since 1948.

Years of reckless debt accumulation, unsustainable policies, and rampant corruption culminated in a perfect storm. The pandemic unleashed the tempest, crippling tourism and remittances, pushing Sri Lanka into a quagmire of shortages, crippling inflation, and a rapidly depreciating currency.

is underway, but concerns about fairness and exacerbating existing inequalities abound. The shadow of corruption continues to loom, casting doubt on Sri Lanka's commitment to genuine change.

The Parliament, still populated by remnants of the Rajapaksa regime, displays little appetite for real reform. These parliamentarians, it is alleged, demand ministerial portfolios from Wickremesinghe to maintain their support, highlighting the persistent culture of corruption and lack of accountability.



Daily essentials became elusive, queues extended into oblivion, and citizens bore the brunt of economic implosion. Power outages plunged businesses and households into darkness, further stifling economic activity. Public frustration erupted in the 'Aragalaya' protests, culminating in the dramatic flight of President Rajapaksa in July 2022.

His successor, Ranil Wickremesinghe, inherited a monumental task. The \$2.9 billion lifeline from the IMF came at the cost of painful austerity measures and critical reforms. Domestic debt restructuring

Military expansion in the north and east fuels tension, as security forces and the army continue their surveillance, intimidation, and harassment of civil society organizations, the media, and dissenters. The draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act, a stain on Sri Lanka's human rights record, remains unchanged. Without substantial strides in accountability, political reform, and economic recovery, Sri Lanka risks plummeting back into despair.

Reconciliation efforts remain tepid, lacking concrete steps. Repressive legislation threatens freedom of

expression and basic human rights. Dissent is met with the cold steel of water cannons and the sting of tear gas. Sri Lanka's democracy is under siege.

Beyond internal struggles, Sri Lanka navigates a delicate geopolitical dance. India, driven by its 'neighborhood first' policy, has emerged as a steadfast supporter, providing crucial lines of credit, currency swaps, and diplomatic backing. This increased engagement reflects India's regional strategic interests and desire to counter China's growing influence.

China, Sri Lanka's largest bilateral creditor, presents a stark contrast. Despite offering limited support, its reluctance to actively participate in debt restructuring raises questions about its motives and commitment to the island nation's well-being. Sri Lanka walks a tightrope, seeking economic assistance from Beijing, while wary of falling prey to debt-trap diplomacy.

Navigating this intricate geopolitical landscape will be crucial for Sri Lanka's long-term stability. Balancing India's proactive support with China's cautious engagement demands skillful diplomacy and a clear vision for the nation's future.

However, Sri Lanka's true salvation lies within. The next two years will be a crucible. Presidential elections in late 2024 and parliamentary elections in 2025 offer a glimmer of hope for 'system change' – but a change in mindset is even more critical. Voters must break the cycle of 'same old apples' and choose decent leaders based on policies and values, not fleeting promises and empty rhetoric.

The concept of 'system change', often championed by politicians and echoed by the public, faces the crucial challenge of moving beyond theoretical definitions to practical, tangible outcomes. In an attempt to concretize this nebulous notion, specific actions need to be taken. Advocating for a secular state, overhauling political structures, treating elected officials as public servants, implementing stringent anti-corruption measures, and streamlining defense and public sector expenditures are essential steps.

The question is whether the people and politicians of Sri Lanka are genuinely prepared for the profound

changes such proposals entail. A sincere commitment to action, not mere words, is the defining force behind genuine 'system change'.

Does that mean there is no hope for this country? Not necessarily, at least not in the immediate future.

“
But by addressing the root causes of the crisis, dismantling the structures of corruption, and embracing genuine good governance, Sri Lanka can rise from the ashes of its turbulent year and build a brighter future for its people.
”

2024 may hopefully see improved governance by more decent politicians compared to the disastrous reign of corrupt, self-serving leaders under whom the country has suffered. But that would be a far cry from genuine system change!

The road to recovery will be long and arduous, paved with economic hardships and political challenges. But by addressing the root causes of the crisis, dismantling the structures of corruption, and embracing genuine good governance, Sri Lanka can rise from the ashes of its turbulent year and build a brighter future for its people. The journey ahead will be a test of Sri Lanka's resilience, adaptability, and unwavering commitment to progress. Only by confronting its demons head-on, both internally and externally, can the island nation truly emerge from the shadows of the past and reclaim its rightful place as a beacon of hope and prosperity in the Indian Ocean.

But from a philosophical perspective, the task ahead is daunting. In a world marred by moral decay, where humanity often stands alienated from its ethical core, to envision nations undergoing such radical social and political regeneration is a hope tinged with uncertainty. Yet, it is in this glimmer of hope, however fragile, that Sri Lanka must find its strength. For only by daring to believe in the possibility of change, and relentlessly striving towards it, can the nation carve a path toward a brighter dawn. ❖

Fr. Milroy Fernando, SJ (SRI)) is a writer, and Socius to the Provincial of Sri Lanka Province.



PATHWAYS TO HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

3 R's: Relationship, Reconciliation and Relaxation

What is it that contributes to health and happiness in the later years of life? The answer to this question is something that psychology has been searching for years. The answer is now clear, with conclusive data from research.



Relationship

It is our satisfying and fulfilling close relationships in the earlier years that lead to health and happiness in the later years of life. Period! Research after research has been reaching the same conclusions. Let me cite the most famous of them all.

The Harvard Study of Adult Development, known as the Grant Study, is the longest running longitudinal study ever. It was begun in 1938 and is still continuing. The study began with two groups of men. The first consisted of a group of privileged young men: 268 students from Harvard University. The second group consisted of 456 young men from Boston's poorest families. Around 60 of these men are still alive and continuing to participate in the Study.

These men were followed year after year, with questionnaires and interviews, psychological and medical tests that collected every kind of data. Analysis of accumulated data has led to some very definite conclusions: it is our close relationships that lead to health and happiness. Those with the most satisfying relationships at midlife were the happiest and healthiest at 80. Those who were isolated from others, who had no friends or satisfying marital relationships, were less happy and less healthy. More importantly, it is the quality of close relationships, and not the number of relationships that matter.

Having a few really good close relationships is more helpful and protective than several not so close or healthy ones, observes Dr. Robert Waldinger, the current and fourth Director of the Study. Waldinger's predecessor as Director of the Study, Dr. George Vaillant, has published four books (*Adaptation to Life*, 1977; *Wisdom of the Ego*, 1993, *Aging Well*, 2002; and *Triumphs of Experience*, 2012) based on the findings from the Study. In them Vaillant had already confirmed what Waldinger found: "Warm, intimate relationships are the most important contributing factor in the establishment of a good life." Vaillant's five-word final conclusion: "Happiness is love. Full stop." (*Triumphs of Experience*, p. 52)

In an interview in March 2008 Vaillant was asked, "What have you learned from the Grant Study?" Vaillant's response: "That the only thing that really matters in life are your relationships to other people." Close relationships pave the pathway to health and happiness. It is good to ask ourselves: Do we have



Pic courtesy, outreachmagazine.com

Lack of forgiveness and reconciliation takes a toll on our health and happiness. Chronic anger resulting from unforgiveness is linked to heart disease, stroke, poorer lung health, and other problems.

some close relationships? If we have, how good are they? If we don't, what's the invitation the research data are giving us?

Reconciliation

If we want to have healthy relationships, we need to be disposed toward forgiveness and reconciliation. It is inevitable that relationships involve disagreements, conflicts, mistakes and misunderstandings. This is because as humans we are frail, fragile and vulnerable. Despite our best efforts, we do hurt others and are hurt in return.

It is easy to hold on to grudges, to ruminate over and over unintended slights and words and actions that hurt by intention or otherwise. Ruminating over, rather than letting them go creates and maintains high levels of stress. This undermines our immune system, leads to all kind of illness and disease, and negatively affects our health and happiness.

Herbert Benson, the author of the bestselling *Relaxation Response*, and head of the Mind/Body Medical Institute at Harvard University observed: "There is a physiology of forgiveness. When you do not forgive, it chews you up." In other words, it destroys us from within. Lack of forgiveness and reconciliation takes a toll on our health and happiness. Chronic anger resulting from unforgiveness is linked to heart disease, stroke, poorer lung health, and other problems.



“**For us to feel grateful we need to cultivate what Albert Einstein called a sense of “awe and wonder” - our ability to be amazed by the daily miracles that happen around us.**”

Hence there is personal benefit for physical and psychological wellbeing in forgiveness and reconciliation. When we forgive and reconcile, our stress levels come down, reducing anxiety and blood pressure, leading to calmness and peacefulness. These contribute to our health and happiness.

Relaxation

A relaxed lifestyle contributes to health and happiness. Close and satisfying relationships and the ability to let go of hurts and live in peace all contribute significantly to a relaxed lifestyle.

There are also other important contributors such as rest (sufficient sleep), exercise of body and mind, hobbies, recreation, and spending time with friends and family. All these can be summed up as the practice of a Sabbath Spirituality – taking time off regularly from our hectic activities, to relax and recreate, and especially to give thanks.

Psychological and medical research has found that gratitude is a virtue that has enormous consequences for physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. For example, it has been found that grateful people fall less often sick, and even when they fall sick, they recover much faster than ungrateful people. And more important, grateful people live significantly longer than the ungrateful ones.

Gratitude is much more than saying “thank you” to someone who has given us a gift or helped us in some way, or to God for a blessing received. Gratitude, as defined in research literature, is “the capacity to feel the emotion of thankfulness on a regular and consistent basis, across situations and over time.” In other words, gratitude is a disposition that accompanies us through good times and bad; when things go well and when things go wrong, through success and failure.

The reason for the health benefits of gratitude, research tells us, is that gratitude is seen as the disposition that most creates positive emotions in us. These positive emotions, in turn, strengthen our immune system and help us to ward off disease. Positive emotions also lead to healthier patterns in cardiovascular activity. In other words, positive emotions protect the heart.

For us to feel grateful we need to cultivate what Albert Einstein called a sense of “awe and wonder” - our ability to be amazed by the daily miracles that happen around us. He wrote, “Those who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe is as good as dead.” Further, “There are only two ways to live your life: as though nothing is a miracle, or as though everything is a miracle.”

Life is full of little miracles that should truly make us stand in awe and wonder. Unfortunately, we take too many things for granted and only see them as very mundane events rather than amazing miracles. Moreover, it is so much easier for us to see the dark clouds than the silver linings.

One means to cultivate gratitude is the daily practice of the Examen of Consciousness that is at the heart of Ignatian spirituality. We take a few minutes at the end of the day to sit quietly and allow memories of the good things – the little miracles - that have happened during the day to come into awareness and we let our heart fill with thankfulness. Gradually we will become more and more sensitive to these blessings and live gratefully – and enhance our physical and emotional wellbeing.

Keeping a Gratitude Journal, listing a few blessings daily, has also been found to have enormous positive impact on health and happiness. ❖

Jose Parappully a Salesian priest, has over 25 years of experience as a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist. He is founder-director of Bosco Psychological Services, New Delhi and Sumedha Centre for Psychospiritual Wellbeing at Jharmari, Punjab.



Lourdes: a byword for healing and hope

Thousands of apparitions of the Virgin Mary have been reported by Christians across the world, from fourth-century Asia Minor, which is now Turkey, to contemporary California. Of all of these, the most renowned are the visions of Our Lady of Lourdes, reported in the mid-19th century by a teenage girl in the French Pyrenees mountains.

Ever since, devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes has gripped the Catholic imagination. Lourdes is one of the very few apparitions the Vatican has officially commended as worthy of belief, with its own feast day, Feb. 11, in the Church's annual liturgical calendar.

Some 6 million pilgrims come to the shrine in Lourdes, France, each year to pray and seek healing. This popular pilgrimage is one of the most visible examples of the devotion of many Catholics to Mary. I am a Jesuit priest and theologian whose research focuses on Mariology, the academic study of ideas about Mary in Christian history.

The Lady in the Grotto

In 1858, a 14-year-old girl named Bernadette Soubirous reported having 18 visions of a beautiful "young lady" in a cave near Lourdes, which was then a provincial town. Soubirous said that the figure identified herself as "the Immaculate Conception" and instructed the girl to dig into the earth and drink the water she found there. In other messages, the lady asked for a church to be built there so priests could come in procession.

Reports of the events drew large crowds who believed them to be apparitions of the Virgin Mary, and many people began attributing healing properties to the waters of the spring. These extraordinary events soon attracted the notice of the Parisian press and gained the support of the French imperial court.

Many Catholics interpreted the apparitions as confirming the doctrine of Immaculate Conception, which Pope Pius IX in 1854 had declared to be an essential element of Catholic faith. This teaching holds that Mary, as the mother of Jesus, was conceived without original sin – something that all people are born with as a result of Adam and Eve's disobeying God in the Garden of Eden.

Church officials were quickly alerted to Soubirous' experiences and were initially concerned about the truth



of her account. After investigating, the local bishop became convinced that Mary had indeed appeared to the young woman. Popes later encouraged veneration at Lourdes, and in 1933, Soubirous herself was canonized as St. Bernadette.

Catholic churches, schools and hospitals soon began to be dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes, and replicas of the cave, or "grotto," are today found throughout the world. These sites are built for worshippers who cannot make the pilgrimage but who seek to share in the experience of Lourdes.

Lourdes water

Researching popular Catholic devotions has taught me that apparitions attract skeptics as easily as they do crowds of enthusiastic believers. They also stir up religious and political controversy.

From the start, church officials at Lourdes sought to deny claims of direct supernatural intervention for cures

that could be scientifically explained instead. Today physicians at the International Medical Committee of Lourdes run a rigorous process of investigating claims of miraculous healings there.



Pic courtesy: flickr.com

Most reported healings turn out to have purely natural causes, but if the committee does not find a medical explanation, it refers the case to the local bishop for investigation. Since the 1860s, church officials have formally declared 70 of the Lourdes healings to be miracles. The most recent case, which they confirmed in 2018, involved the healing of a French nun who had been using a wheelchair and suffering severe pain for almost 30 years, but recovered soon after her pilgrimage to the grotto.

Over the course of the 20th century, the number of new miracles confirmed in Lourdes has gradually slowed because of growth in scientific understanding.

In 2006, church officials declared that, beyond “miracles,” they would recognize three additional categories of healing at Lourdes: “unexpected,” “confirmed” or “exceptional” healings. The new categories relax the previous strict division between “natural” and “supernatural” healings, with the

implication that even in cases that cannot be strictly called ‘miracles’ God does intervene to restore someone’s health.

Devotion goes digital

If the number of officially recognized miracles has declined, grassroots faith in Lourdes is as strong as ever. An understanding that sickness and healing involve psychological, emotional and spiritual aspects as well as physical ones helps explain some of Lourdes’ continuing appeal for many contemporary Catholics.

Devotional practices involve the sensory experiences of seeing, touching, tasting and hearing. Visitors travel from all over the world to light candles in the grotto, touch the rock where Soubirous said the Virgin appeared, join in the chants of the twice-daily processions, attend Mass, take Communion, and bathe in and drink the holy waters of the spring.

Psychologically, being in the company of large crowds of fellow believers strengthens social faith identity, as does seeing sick pilgrims treated with dignity and honour. Members of the family, friends, spiritual advisers and volunteers from international Catholic organizations, such as the Order of Malta, accompany visitors too ill to travel alone. The physical work of caring for the sick affects people spiritually. I have visited Lourdes several times as both helper and chaplain and heard many confessions there. I know that many of those who volunteer their time as helpers – including people who are not practicing Catholics or even Christians – return home with deeper gratitude for their own health and a livelier faith.

For two months in 2020, the shrine at Lourdes closed for the first time in its history because of the pandemic. Since then, live-streaming of the grotto has attracted an even wider audience. Its dedicated YouTube channel and other social media are 21st-century virtual equivalents of the replica grottoes built in church grounds, schools, hospitals and homes around the world.

Skeptics may continue to dispute claims of miraculous healings and apparitions of the Virgin Mary. For millions, however, Lourdes will indisputably continue to be an important faith symbol of comfort and care, and a byword for healing and hope. ❖

Courtesy: The Conversation, 9 Feb 2022

Fr. Dorian Llywelyn, SJ, who got his Ph.D. in Theology from the University of Wales, is President, Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies, USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences. Previously at Santa Clara University, he directed the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education.

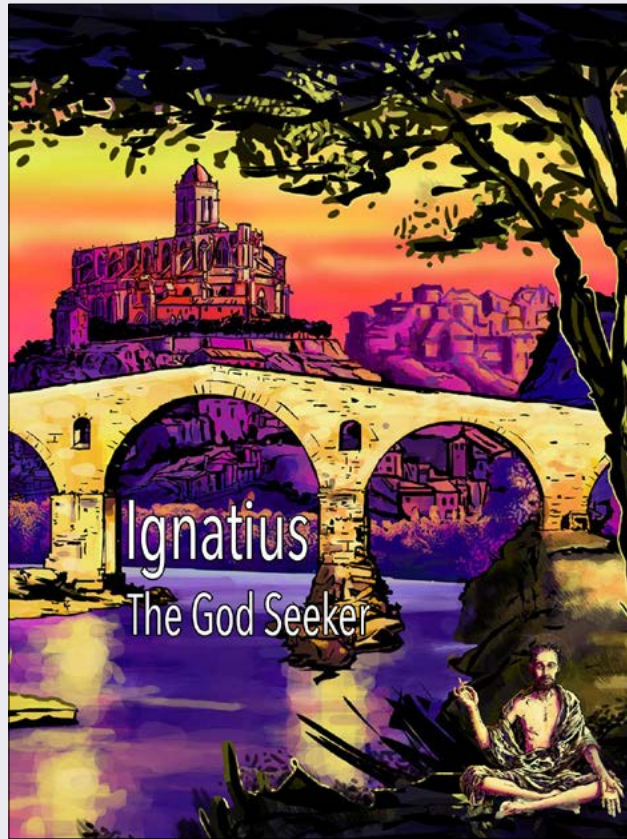
IGNATIUS – THE GOD SEEKER

What moves the Jesuits at their core? The classical answer to this question is: “The Spiritual Exercises” of St Ignatius. But what are they about? What happens in the Spiritual Exercises? The film *Ignatius - the God Seeker* attempts to answer these questions with both educational information and compelling imagery and narratives: it speaks to the mind and to the heart.

In his radical quest for God, Ignatius discovers in his mystical experience at the Cardener river in Spain that God speaks to him not only in scripture and tradition but is truly present in everything. Ignatius systematizes his experiences in his Spiritual Exercises into a path for all seekers of God. To this day, the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises are not only the spiritual foundation of Jesuits worldwide but have shaped the relationship with God of thousands of people.

This new and beautifully animated documentary about the founder of the Jesuits reveals his inner quest for God for a broad audience and invites the viewers to become spiritual seekers themselves. God is not to be found by withdrawing from the world, but in its discovery, appreciation, indeed in its loving embrace. This has been the message of the Jesuits through the centuries, a message that can change the Catholic Church to this day, so that it becomes more mystical, more open, more embracing, and above all, more loving.

Can you really find God in everything? How do I find God's will for me? The film *Ignatius - the God Seeker* takes up the essential insights and processes of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises and translates them into a compelling and sometimes provocatively vivid visual



language. In his Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius asks the retreatant to make use of all mental faculties, especially the imagination. True to this Ignatian method, the film uses artistic imagination to activate all mental faculties. There is a theoretical background in psychology at work in this approach. It is the thesis that our subconscious mind is not good at understanding propositional language. It does, however, understand symbols and pictures.

It can be argued that Ignatius in his exercises discovered this psychological fact long before Carl G. Jung spoke about the collective archetypal unconscious, or before more modern psychological approaches discovered the holistic, non-linguistic subconscious information processing in the right hemisphere of the brain. The pictures in the film are meant to speak to the unconscious mind. They are partly based on images created by great painters of Ignatius' time, like Titian and El Greco. More than trying to intellectually grasp the meaning of those images, the viewer should let them sink into the subconscious mind which is so important for religious knowledge. The rational mind will get nourished by the expert interviews that provide essential knowledge about the Spiritual Exercises.

The film is available in four language versions which were independently produced with experts from the different traditions: English, Italian, Spanish, and German. It was produced in 2023 under the direction of Fr Christof Wolf SJ and Siegmund Warnecke at Loyola Productions, Munich. The film has a website: www.ignatius-godseeker.org

Jesuit Communications Office



Did your heart leap for joy?

Something unprecedented will take place on International Women's Day this year, 8 March 2024. The Commission on the Role and Responsibilities of Women in the Society of Jesus will complete three years of discernment and study toward our four mandates.

In the first phase, the Commission worked with a research team from the Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines, to design and field a global survey covering a wide range of attitudes, perceptions, and practices. Data was collected in 2023 through a global survey of more than 1400 women and men, lay and religious,

effective practices of integration and solidarity, including formation and structural changes.

Discernment is a time-honored practice of deep and holy listening to movements of the heart. The Spiritual Exercises' Rules for Discernment are widely known and practiced. Together with the Examen, discernment with a spiritual director and trusted companions helps lead individuals to make important life-choices. But what about the Jesuit communities?

My own work within the Society of Jesus leading discernment-in-common for ministries, the Province,



to help understand (1) the appropriation of Decree 14 of General Congregation 34, "Jesuits and the Situation of Women in Church and Civil Society" and (2) the level of women's participation at all levels of the institutions and works of the Society.

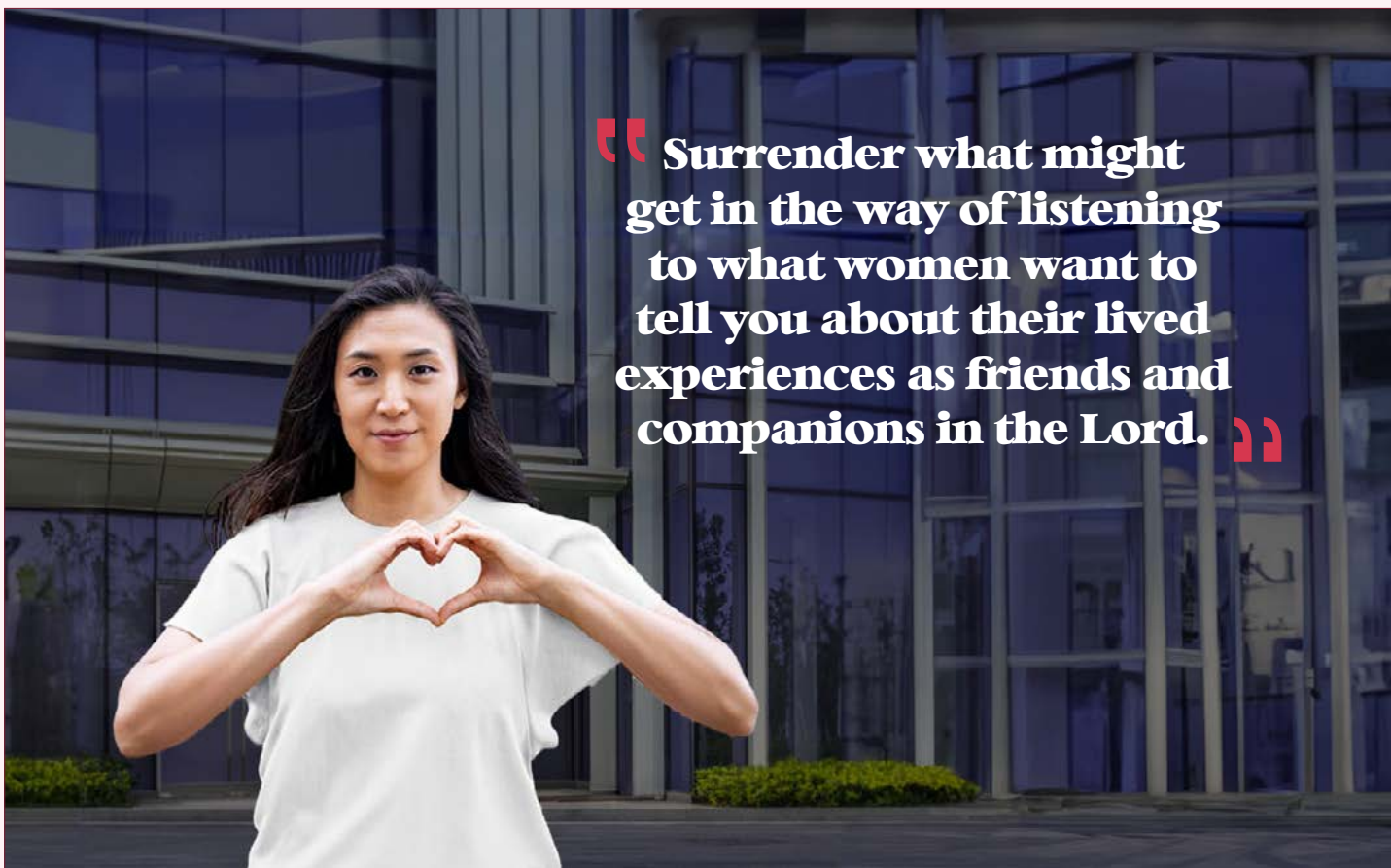
We have entered a new phase in 2024. Listening groups with women and Jesuits in each Conference will help the Commission discern, transforming knowledge into wisdom that will guide recommendations for (3) strengthening the mission of the Society of Jesus, and (4) promoting

Recall when you first heard about the Women's Commission. Did your heart leap for joy? Or did the doors of your heart start to swing closed with anxiety or fear?

and Jesuit Conference has been influenced not only by the Spiritual Exercises, but also the Constitutions, especially the work of Fr. Richard Baumann, S.J. (Baumann, S.J., RW; *Our Jesuit Constitutions: Cooperation as Union; Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 49/4, Winter 2017;

Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States).

One of Fr. Baumann's passions is helping Jesuits appropriate the Constitutions as a book of wisdom to support them through the ups and downs of



Pic courtesy: internationalwomensday.com

vocation to religious life in the Society, experiencing “cooperation as union” with God. Just as with individual discernment, through prayer - individual and communal – and spiritual conversation (speaking and listening from the heart), communities begin to notice what God is already up to, so they can do more of that.

Cooperating more fully with the direction God is already headed, fueled by gifts of the Holy Spirit, we find ourselves drawn deeper into the Body of Christ, making Love more present in the world.

The Women’s Commission itself is an example of discernment in common, responding to a movement of the Spirit. In November 2019 at the 50th anniversary celebration of the Secretariat for Social Justice and Ecology, Fr. General Arturo Sosa asked participants to consider “the place of women in our institutions and our apostolic priorities.” Several women present at the meeting met with Fr. General to propose formation of an official commission to study this important topic.

Some of you readers may have participated in the 2023 survey. You may also receive an invitation to reflect

on the results with your Conference commissioners, or you may read about them in a future issue of *Jivan*.

As one of the first steps of discernment is to pray for interior freedom, I invite you to your own holy noticing. Recall when you first heard about the Women’s Commission. Did your ‘heart leap for joy’? Or did the doors of your heart start to swing closed with anxiety or fear?

As you consider the Commission’s mandates now, what about the survey and discernment process increases your sense of hopefulness for the role and responsibilities of the women in the Society of Jesus? You might also be experiencing some resistance. Pray for the graces you need to name and surrender what might get in the way of listening through the survey results to what women want to tell you about their lived experiences as friends and companions in the Lord. ❖

Jenéne Francis, based in Chicago, Illinois, U.S. is a member of the Women’s Commission formed by Fr. General in 2019. She worked earlier in the Jesuit Midwest Province as Provincial’s Assistant for parish, retreat, and spirituality ministries. She is also the Vice Chair for the Ignatian Ministries, whose vision is to renew the Church by forming leaders in the Ignatian way.



What did COP 28 achieve?



Pic courtesy: indiatoday.in

The context: For the past three decades, the discussion on climate change and global warming has taken center stage on the world's platform. Ever since the 2015 Paris Agreement, limiting global temperature rise to within 1.5 degrees Celsius above the preindustrial average global temperature has been a central tenet of this discourse. The global average temperature is rapidly approaching the critical threshold.

Fossil fuels, deeply entrenched in the global economy, are the primary culprits behind 75% of

global greenhouse gas emissions and 90% of carbon dioxide emissions, making them the principal contributors to global warming. At present, approximately 80% of the energy consumed in the world is derived from fossil fuels. In 2022, oil accounted for 30% of the global energy sources, coal constituted 27%, and gas made up 23% of the overall energy mix.

Phasing out or at least drastically reducing our global reliance on fossil fuels is essential to avoid exceeding the crucial 1.5-degree Celsius global warming threshold. This threshold

signifies a tipping point beyond which climate change becomes increasingly catastrophic, with intensifying extreme weather, rising sea levels, and widespread ecological disruption. The global scientific community unanimously emphasizes the need for a 43% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and a 60% reduction by 2035, compared to 2019 levels, to give us a fighting chance at reaching net-zero emissions by 2050 – the target that offers the best hope of keeping the planet on a sustainable path.

The consequences of exceeding 1.5 degrees Celsius are nothing short of catastrophic. Even at current warming levels of 1.2 degrees Celsius, the global repercussions are already alarming. In 2023 India witnessed a brutal cycle of heatwaves, droughts, and floods, causing widespread crop failures, water shortages, and infrastructure damage, as reported by the Center for Science and Environment. These extreme weather events are a stark reminder of the escalating climate crisis and the urgent need for action.

Achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 is not just a strategic necessity but also a moral imperative. We owe it to future generations to act now and avert the worst impacts of climate change. This is not just about protecting our environment; it is about safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of millions.

Time is running out. As we inch closer to the critical 1.5-degree Celsius warming threshold, the need for a global transition from fossil fuels to renewable green energy sources becomes increasingly urgent.

COP 28: Therefore, among the various topics deliberated at the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP 28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), two specific issues took center stage. First was the question of phasing out the use of fossil fuels. Second was the question of providing financial assistance to vulnerable countries to cope with the adverse impacts of climate change and to build resilience against climate impacts.



Picture courtesy: timesofindia.indiatimes.com

Transitioning away from fossil fuels: Despite widespread expectations for a commitment to phase out fossil fuels, COP28, held in Dubai from 30 November till 13 December 2023 did not yield such an agreement. Instead, the agreement was centered on a commitment to “Transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade, so as to achieve net zero by 2050 in keeping with the science.” The agreement states that ‘unabated coal’ will be phased down, and the abated coal whose emissions are captured at the source will continue to remain in use. Despite its undersides, this agreement is a call to reign in the unbridled consumption of fossil fuels, marking the commencement of the end of global dependence on fossil fuels. It holds historic importance as the first climate agreement calling for such a transition.

During the summit, more than 100 countries, including the United States, the European Union, and many developing nations, advocated

“**Starved of adequate financial support from developed countries, developing countries find themselves crippled in their fight against climate change.**”

for the gradual phase-out of the usage of fossil fuels. Conversely, notable oil-and-gas-producing countries such as Saudi Arabia and Russia insisted that the summit’s emphasis should be on reducing emissions rather than on the phasing out of fossil fuels.

Since India depends on its major reservoir of fossil fuel, coal, for generating 70% of the country’s electricity, it insisted that it had no choice but to continue relying on coal for electricity generation in the foreseeable future, despite rapidly expanding its renewable energy sources. In fact, at COP 26, India emphasized the concept of phasing down the reliance on coal



Pic courtesy: ersnet.org

instead of phasing out. Throughout COP 28, India advocated for the gradual reduction of all fossil fuels to accelerate climate action.

Striking a common ground between these conflicting stances was essential in making substantial headway toward addressing climate change effectively. Therefore, the summit did not advocate for the phasing out of the global reliance on fossil fuels but for a transition away from them.

Towards renewable energy:

The envisaged transition away from fossil fuels necessitates a shift towards renewable energy sources. During the summit, participating countries agreed to triple their use of renewable energy sources and double their energy efficiency by 2030.

Climate financing, involving financial investments to address challenges related to climate change and promote sustainable, low-carbon development, plays a crucial role in achieving global climate objectives. An essential component of climate financing

is the Loss and Damage Fund (LDF), established in a 2013 agreement at COP 19 in Warsaw. This fund is designed to provide financial and technical assistance to developing countries bearing the brunt of climate change. Due to insufficient financial pledges from developed nations, disputes over eligibility criteria, and logistical challenges, the fund faced obstacles in its implementation. Nevertheless, during COP 28, significant progress was made as the LDF was activated, with member nations collectively pledging over \$700 million, even though this amount is just a drop in the ocean.

The highly anticipated Global Stocktake report during COP 28 downplayed the significance of the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR), a fundamental tenet of the Paris Agreement. CBDR recognizes that developed countries, historically the largest emitters, bear a greater responsibility in reducing emissions and providing financial and technological assistance to developing countries. The critical

issue of transferring funds and technology to help developing countries in mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change hinges on CBDR. The downplaying of CBDR not only exposes developing countries to increased vulnerability but also compels them to shoulder an inequitable burden of climate action without the requisite resources.

At COP 15 in Copenhagen, developed countries committed to contributing \$100 billion annually for climate-related initiatives. However, they fell short of reaching the pledged annual target. The cumulative amount provided by developed countries to date ranges approximately between \$70 and \$80 billion.

Starved of adequate financial support from developed countries, developing countries find themselves crippled in their fight against climate change. Not only are their Mitigation and Adaptation programs hampered, but their essential transition to renewable energy remains stalled, casting long ominous shadows of global consequences.

As we grapple with the complex realities of a 'just, orderly, and equitable transition,' let us hope that beyond rhetoric, concrete action will be taken in terms of phasing down fossil fuels, investing in renewable energy, and climate financing. At present, this remains the only path to a sustainable future for all on Earth, our common home. ❖

Fr Sacaria Joseph, SJ (CCU) teaches at St. Xavier's College, Kolkata. He can be contacted at sjosephsj@gmail.com.

Jesuit students of theology interact with Muslim missionaries

Fatima Sarah and a team of Muslim brothers and sisters from the Bangalore Chapter of the Centre for Peace and Spirituality (CPS) came to the Jesuit Formation Centre for Theology (JFCT) in Bangalore for a theological conversation with Jesuit students on the 4 January 2024.

Joseph Victor Edwin SJ, the course instructor, introduced Sarah and her team as Muslim missionaries and said that they were here to bear witness to their faith and to engage with Christian brothers and sisters. Their mission (dawa) is to call people to submit to God by surrendering themselves to the will of God. Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was given this mission 'to call the people to submit to God' and 'to establish a community (umma) of those who have submitted to God and who have thereby become an effective bearer of dawa for all time to come'.

Sarah pointed out that after the finality of prophethood, Muslims were to carry out this mission on behalf of the Prophet by imitating what he did during his life. She said that "to carry out this task correctly, it is imperative to awaken the missionary consciousness within Muslims. They must be informed that the relationship between Muslims and other nations is that of the caller and the called, not of one nation against another".

Edwin pointed out what Prof. Christian W. Troll SJ, had told him once. Historically the umma had gone beyond this mission of invitation to submit to God. It became politically active and began giving an ultimatum to others by saying: "Accept Islam or submit to Muslim authorities by paying jazia [a special tax for non-Muslims]. Otherwise, be ready for battle". It is not uncommon to find the traces of such past practices in some groups of Muslims even in our own times.

Sarah pointed out that Muslims should earnestly pray to God almighty that they would fulfil their missionary responsibility as mandated to them by the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

Edwin said that it was wonderful to meet missionaries of other religious traditions as we Christians know the centrality of mission in our lives by 'bearing witness to the Risen Lord and to the coming of the Holy Spirit'.



Sarah pointed out the rationale for submitting to God was to proclaim the plan that God had in creating the world. She noted that God created human beings with an innate desire for eternal happiness. We will find this happiness in Paradise where we will be free from all limitations, difficulties, fear and pain and free from any kind of imperfection. As imperfect human beings, we cannot enter the Garden of eternal life before becoming perfect by undergoing many tests and trials. The world is a place where we would be tested. God has placed all of us in this imperfect world to bear witness to God, to follow God's commandments and to experience tests and trials, thereby preparing ourselves for the Final Judgement. We must remain steadfast during these trials by trusting in God and obeying God's will. In this way, human beings will prepare themselves to stand before God, trusting in God's mercy (Qur'an 6. 54) and hoping for the reward of eternal happiness.

Edwin pointed out that, in the light of the explanation given by Sarah, Christians can notice a profound difference in the way that Christians understand 'eternal happiness'. The Church teaches that God, in His goodness and wisdom, has revealed Himself to us through Jesus Christ, who is the Word made flesh. Jesus Christ has taught us that we can all enter into a relationship with God, the Father through the Holy Spirit and that we can receive a share in Divine Life (cf. D.V., no. 2). Clarity on such profound differences was necessary for any sincere dialogue to take place, he said.

In conclusion, it was pointed out that differences need not become sources for conflict but could lead to mutual enrichment. ❖

Joseph Victor Edwin, SJ (DEL)



All of them became her children

Film: Lena: My 100 Children (1987)

Director: Edwin Sherin

Run time: 105 minutes

Producer: Ellwood Kieser

This docudrama is adapted from the memoir of Lena Kuchler-Silberman (1910- 1987), the underground Jewish resistance volunteer during the Nazi Holocaust. Her efforts helped to save the lives of hundreds of children victimised by the Nazis in Poland and elsewhere.

Silberman who was born and brought up in Wieliczka, Poland, after her studies in philosophy, psychology and pedagogy, became an educator, psychologist and teacher trainer. She lost her infant daughter and her husband. Later during the Nazi occupation of Poland she narrowly escaped being sent to the extermination camp at Belzec.

Lena dedicated her life to smuggling Jewish children from the infamous Warsaw ghetto, while living underground incognito as a Polish Catholic. When her identity was discovered by the Gestapo, the Nazi secret police, she escaped to eastern Poland and lived there till the end of the war. Her sister became one of the victims of the Nazis while the war was ending. In the spring of 1945 after the end of the war she went looking for her lost family at a refugee center in Krakow.

There she came across a number of Jewish children with no one to take care of. In them she finds her surrogate family. These children bore the trauma of the Holocaust. They belonged to different age groups - from toddlers to teenagers, living in hunger and horrible conditions with behavioral disorders, distrustful and delinquent. The situation was aggravated by the fact that the anti-Semitic prejudices still prevailed even after the war. Lena bravely undertook this challenge. With little resources for support except the good will of a few friends she assumed the role of a mother, gathering these together and offering protection, comfort and education.

Her skills as a teacher and psychologist are employed to great advantage in the mission. She is unable to get help from the elderly refugees who too are in a similar condition. From among them a woman named Bella assists her, supervising the children's comforts. Gaining the confidence of the children she struggles with the official confusions, hostilities of an anti Semitic social environment in post-war Poland under Soviet control. She finds a home to settle the children. The children are bullied and abused by the locals, but the Soviet authorities do not help. She moves the children to Zakopane, where again they are not safe. When the home is attacked, the



young refugees are provided with weapons for self defense against attackers besieging the orphanage. Seeking safety, Lena takes her wards on a long trek through the border forests, bribes the guards with money and vodka and takes her children on board a train to Czechoslovakia, and from there to France.

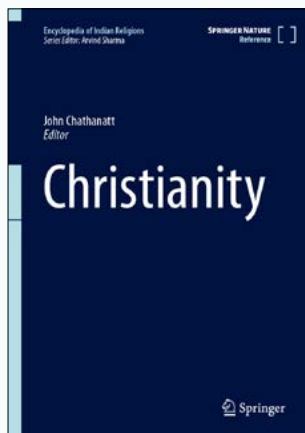
She finally arrives in their 'Promised Land' - the new nation of Israel in 1948. Lena's children grew up to become normal citizens of Israel, serving the country in various capacities. Lena's story is the tale of a woman's heroism and enduring, unconditional love that saved hundreds of tender lives and made her a heroine of Israel. ❖

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.



2000 years of Christianity in India in 800 pages

John Chathanatt, SJ talks of a volume on Christianity which he edited for an Encyclopaedia on Indian Religions.



Christianity
Ed. by John Chathanatt, SJ
Springer Link
770 pages

Fr. John, is the book you edited part of a series of Encyclopaedia?

Yes. The volume I have edited is part of a series of Encyclopaedia of Indian Religions. There are six volumes in the series - two on Hinduism and Tribal Religions, one each on Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism, Islam, Judaism and Zoroastrianism, and Christianity. This volume on Christianity was published in December 2023.

Who have contributed to this venture?

The volume has 111 entries, authored by 85 eminent scholars. They deal with various aspects of Christianity in the Indian context. As we know, Christianity is present in this peninsula right from its inception. The volume focuses on the history, origin, organizations, belief system, worship practices, rites and rituals, Christian life, contributions, spirituality, doctrinal teachings, and various engagements of Christianity in the Indian sub-continent.

What, in your view, is special about this volume?

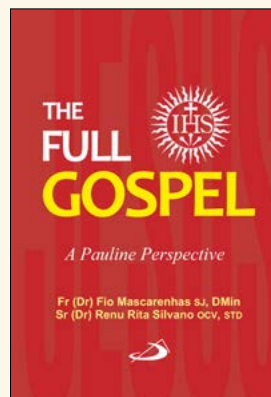
Right from Christianity's entry into India at 52 AD, with the arrival of St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, to the present moment, covering a span of 2000 years, this volume tries to give, so to say, an aero-plane knowledge of Christianity in India. A pioneering probe into the antiquities of Christianity in India is attempted here. Emphasis is given to the historical life and growth of Christianity in India prior to its division into Protestant denominations starting with the Koonan Cross (bent Cross) episode in 1653. To cover 2000 years in about eight hundred pages or so is a herculean task; it will have its own drawbacks and shortcomings. In spite of that, a rather comprehensive view of Christianity would be attained from this volume, especially for a person of another faith or for one who is not that familiar with Christianity in India.

Fr. John Chathanatt, SJ (DEL) is Professor Emeritus and former Principal of Vidyajyoti College of Theology, Delhi.



St. Paul completes the four Gospels

Fr Fio Mascarenhas, SJ talks about the new book he has co-authored with Dr. Renu Rita Silvano, OCV.



The Full Gospel
Fr Fio Mascarenhas, SJ &
Dr. Renu Rita Silvano, OCV
St. Paul's, Mumbai
128 ; ₹ 150/-

Why the name 'The Full Gospel'?

Because, for the practice of authentic and fulfilling Christian spirituality, the 4 Gospels must necessarily be completed by St Paul's teachings, which are like the "Fifth Gospel." Other Christians, accusing us Catholics of not being sufficiently biblical, glory in titles like "Full Gospel Evangelical Church," "Full Gospel Baptist Church," "First Full Gospel Church of Christ," etc. So we decided to

boldly title our new book meant for Catholics primarily, "THE FULL GOSPEL – a Pauline Perspective."

Are you personally very fond of St. Paul?

Yes, we both are! We find very many texts from St Paul's Letters to be personally very inspiring and thought-provoking. Moreover, our actual experience is that his Letters are truly the life-giving "word of God" for they fulfil Jn 6:63 in a special way, making come true in a deep way the words of Jesus, "My words are spirit and life."

What will be the main aspects of a 'Pauline spirituality'?

Like with many Saints, especially Ignatius of Loyola, one main aspect of biblical Christian spirituality is "falling in love with Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Risen human-divine Person," and living this love in the circumstances of one's daily life. To put it differently, Pauline spirituality means to actually experience "the spirit of sonship, crying out Abba Father" and of thereby being transformed "degree by degree" into "a co-heir with Christ" (Rom 8:15-17). Many of these aspects are beautifully summed by St Ignatius' "Take O Lord and receive..."

Fr Fio Mascarenhas SJ is a retired Bible teacher, and is available for retreats and seminars. He can be contacted at frfio@gmail.com.

Joseph Chittooparambil, SJ (KER)

Born on 8 Dec 1928, at Cheranalloor, in the diocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly, Fr Joseph Chittooparambil, SJ was ordained a priest on 11 March 1958. A year after his Ordination, he joined the Jesuit Novitiate at Beschi College, Dindigul. He took his Final Vows on 29 December 1971, at Christ Hall. He was engaged in a variety of ministries. A Pastor in different parishes of the undivided Kozhikode Diocese in Kannur, Kozhikode and Wayanad Districts, he streamlined Nirmala ITC and started NCVT courses at Pilathara in 1976. He was also Hostel Warden, Minister and Superior.

In cash and kind he helped the young and old, men and women, from all walks of life. He travelled round the globe to ensure support for his ministries. From 2015,

he was at Christ Hall Infirmary, leading an exemplary life, doing a lot of manual work. He was available at the Confessional any time of the day. Fr Chittooo will be ever remembered for his ability to adapt and adjust to persons, places, and ministries. He cheerfully endured his ailments and the limitations of old age. He was also known for his perseverance in his commitments. Known for his simplicity of life, he was a true devotee of Our Lady. He desired to die on a Saturday. I believe that the Blessed Mother came to his deathbed on Saturday, the eve of the Feast of Christ the King, 25 November 2023 and carried him to our heavenly Father at 0.20 hrs, on 26.

|| Jose Thaiparambil, SJ



Joseph Karunaidass, SJ (AND)

Fr. Joseph Karunaidass Durairaj was born on 29 May 1946. He entered the Novitiate on 20 May 1963; was ordained a Priest on 2 May 1976 and took his Final Vows on 3 Dec 1981.

He worked as Superior, Minister, Principal and Warden in various schools, carrying out these official ministries with a personal touch for students and staff, while insisting on their disciplined behaviour. As the Minister of the house, he was generous and would gladly spend time for the community - himself cleaning, re-arranging or sweeping. He served as a Parish Priest, as well. As Administrator and Treasurer he served in ISI, Bengaluru, Papal Seminary, Pune and Loyola Academy, Alwal. Wanting to help people pastorally and spiritually he served both at Marian shrines in Velanganni and then at Poondi. He considered this

service as more fruitful than all his administrative and other contributions!

Fr. Karunai was a man of principles. He was always known for his commitment to religious life never known to compromise or to neglect. He lived a good, faithful and contented life as a Jesuit, ever grateful to Jesus and our Blessed Mother for his vocation and for his life. His life exhibited a serene attitude and a quiet peace within. He was wise and pleasant, polite and prudent, friendly and benevolent.

In July '23 he was taken to St. John's Hospital in Bengaluru because of heart problems and in spite of the best efforts of the doctors he went back to his Creator on 29 Nov 2023. His mortal remains lie buried at Loyola Academy cemetery, Alwal, Secunderabad.

|| Joseph Sandanasamy, SJ



Mathew Kannadan, SJ (KER)

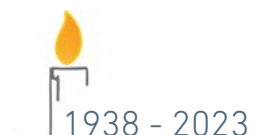
Fr Mathew Kannadan was born on 16 December 1938, in Nedumgapara, Ernakulam District. Joining the Society of Jesus on 17 May 1958, he did his Novitiate at Beschi College, Dindigul and pronounced the First Vows on 5 June 1960. He was ordained on 26 March 1972.

Fr Mathew's diverse ministries included teaching at AKJM School, Kanjirapally, serving as Director, Sneham, Anjengo, Parish Priest at Lady Immaculate Church, Ottappalam. He was the Student Counsellor at Pius X ITI, Edathua, Pastor at St Xavier's Church, Navarangapura, Gujarat, and Spiritual Ministry at Prasanthi, Pachilakad and Ignatian Retreat Centre, Pariyaram. Fr Mathew was transferred to Christ Hall,

Kozhikode in December 2022, for medical treatment. He peacefully passed away on 9 December 2023, and the funeral service was held the following day at Christ Hall. Chapel and Cemetery. The ceremony, officiated by Fr Provincial, E.P. Mathew, included a heartfelt homily by Fr Raju Augustine, who emphasized Fr Mathew's commitment to a life of poverty and simplicity.

Fr Mathew, hailing from a humble village, was a true sportsman, approaching every aspect of life with fervour and dedication. Fr Mathew's life was marked by trust in the Lord, and commitment to the Gospel values, and reflected the joy of the Gospel.

|| Raju Vattaparambil, SJ



Peter Marandi, SJ (DUM)

Fr Peter Marandi was born at Dumria near Bounsi in Bhagalpur Diocese on 22 June 1946. He entered the Society of Jesus on 02 February 1970 at St Stanislaus, Sitagarha, Hazaribagh, to be a Jesuit Brother. Later, in 1984 he felt the call to be a priest and after completing the required formation, he was ordained a priest on 27 April 1989 in Hatimara. He pronounced his final vows on 31 October 1997.

Fr Peter served as sub-hostel prefect and teacher in Guhijori and Tinpahar, as Formator of Catechists at CTC, Torai, and as Assistant Parish Priest in Mariampahar and Hatimara, Parish Priest in Hatimara and Murguni, in-charge of Krusvir in Mariampahar, and as Father-in-charge of the new mission centre of Numbatta, where he tried to foster prayer through an Ashram-type spirituality.

Fr Peter was a mature, talented, and people-friendly person. He loved the poor, regularly visited families, and tried to form groups of praying Christian families. He had his music training and a diploma in Communication, and he made full use of it in animating the charismatic praying groups, forming Small Christian Communities (SCC), and promoting tribal culture and music. His notable contribution to the Santal Church and culture is his hymns, which were published as a book called, Nawa Rar. His other compositions were published in Koejon Puthi.

We thank God for the person of Peter Marandi SJ, a simple, prayerful, and holy priest deeply in love with the Lord and his people. May God welcome him to his eternal abode!

|| Stany Pinto SJ



Vijay Kumar Ekka, SJ (MAP)

Fr. Vijay Kumar Ekka, SJ was born on 24 November 1962, in Khijurbahar, and he grew up with two brothers and a sister. Fr. Ekka dedicated the major portion of his life to the educational apostolate. His service extended beyond the confines of the classroom, as he was also the Assistant Parish Priest and Parish Priest, guiding people with compassion.

A man of diverse talents, he was gifted with a rich, melodious voice, with which he captivated the hearts of people at prayer gatherings. Despite his stout physique, Fr. Ekka was known for his gentle, soft-spoken nature. His ability to connect with people endeared him to many, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts of all who knew and lived with him.

In 2019, Fr. Ekka faced health challenges that required medical treatment and rest. Khrist Milan Ashram, Namna, became his home, providing the spiritual milieu he needed to navigate his health journey.

Fr. Vijay Kumar Ekka's passing on 30 December 2023, due to a severe brain haemorrhage, leaves a void in the lives of those who cherished him as a spiritual guide, mentor, and friend. His legacy of selfless service, kindness, and dedication to his faith will be remembered for ever. May his soul find eternal peace in the divine embrace, and may his memory continue to inspire us all to live with purpose and compassion!

|| Henry Lakra, SJ



Xavier S. Arockiasamy, SJ (MDU)

Br. Xavier S. Arockiasamy (92), the oldest member of the Jesuit Community of St. Joseph's College, Trichy, was his usual self at supper on 2 December 2023. However, the next morning, the cook who went to his room with a cup of coffee, found him lying on the floor. Immediately, he was rushed to the Child Jesus Hospital, where it was confirmed that he must have passed away before 6.00 a.m. due to cardiac arrest. He passed away on the feast of his patron, St. Francis Xavier.

The Funeral Mass was celebrated on the same day in the evening by Bishop M. Devadoss Ambrose, D.D., nephew of Br. Xavier, and Fr. Thomas Amirtham, Provincial. After the Mass, the mortal remains of Br. Xavier were interred in the crypt below the College Church of Our Lady of Lourdes.

Br. Xavier entered the Society as a Brother in 1955 and pronounced his Final Vows in 1965. As he was efficient in shouldering the work given to him in the Province, he was asked to work in the Roman Curia for 11 years. After returning from Rome in 1983, he served for 30 years as the Bursar at both Loyola College, Chennai, and St. Joseph's College, Tiruchi. He was known and appreciated for his simplicity, cheerfulness, calm demeanour, extraordinary memory and his warm and deep appreciation for any kindness received. To the joyful surprise of anyone, his reasoning was superb, his eyesight and hearing were intact, and his ability to adapt to the changing times was amazing. He was a model to the community members; he was normally the first one in the domestic chapel for the daily Eucharist. May he now rest in peace!

|| Emmanuel Arockiam, SJ





Spirituality demands selflessness

Kiran is just 29. But he is a very different young man. He looks forward to a challenge. He is ready to explore closely other religious traditions. He has discovered a sense of transcendence through the fulfilment that can be found in selflessness.

Kiran's university studies are very demanding, yet they help him achieve his ultimate goal which is to become his own man. In his own words, he felt he was giving "his all" and only this mattered. Kiran judges his performance first by his good intentions and honest efforts, rather than his results.

"There is," Kiran says, "inner satisfaction for me knowing that "my all" goes into everything that I do. I'm completely mindful. My 'all' must surely be my inner spirit. There are many times, when, despite my efforts, there is mental resistance. I have to work hard to overcome negative biases and to construct reality instead of accepting it as it comes."

Spirituality demands selflessness, he says. One has to make sure that the arrogant, greedy ego does not have the upper hand. The team spirit is what counts. He has transformed himself through simplifying his life, strong self-discipline and commitment to achieving the best he can. "Reducing my life to essentials is the first step to realizing my spiritual goals," he says.

Kiran finds himself becoming more tolerant of others' views and characters. He says, "At the end of the day, I strive honestly to fulfil my capacity, whatever it may be, and that will be through my attentive mindfulness.

Through the mindfulness I give to my everyday activities I reveal my sacred self. "

At this time in his life Kiran has discovered the benefits of meditation. Recently he completed a ten-day Buddhist vipassana meditation retreat. It was based on the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Noble Path. It teaches observation of the body and thoughts in the minutest detail. He felt it has the capacity to develop the sort of life he wants for himself. Kiran, born a Catholic, did not hesitate to explore what Buddhism has to offer. "Buddhism was a wonderful revelation to me, and it gave me new insights. In the old days at church nobody taught me the ways to accomplish inner peace and mindful balance."

"Attending the vipassana retreat was like being given a map to point me in the right direction. It expanded my life in eight steps, all of which were dependent on one another as a way of achieving the goal, which, for me, is selflessness and feeling that there is 'something more,' something far greater and more wonderful than my limited self. Yet I know that I am part of the greater, 'the more' for which I seek. I want to know myself as an intimate part of 'the more.' I want to get beyond my limited self and reach out to others in my life. It's hard to explain simply, and I'm not sure I understand it myself yet, but anyway, I have a sense that I want to keep chipping away, daily, whatever will hinder me from being able to see myself as a part of the 'something more'."

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

"The most beautiful discovery true friends make is that they can grow separately without growing apart."

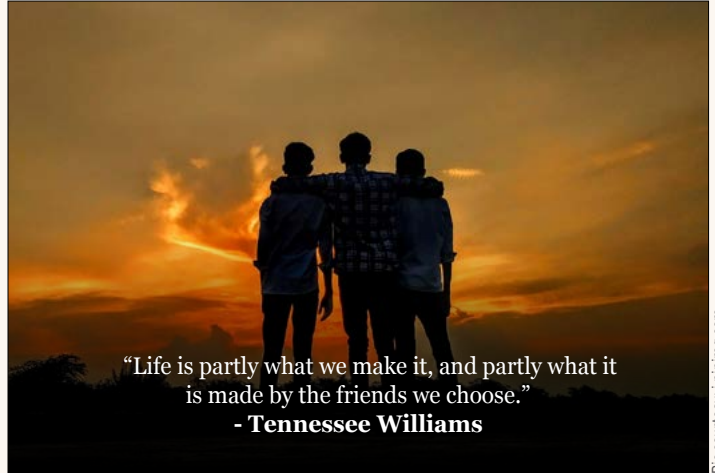
-Elisabeth Foley



Pic courtesy: spixabay.com

"Life is partly what we make it, and partly what it is made by the friends we choose."

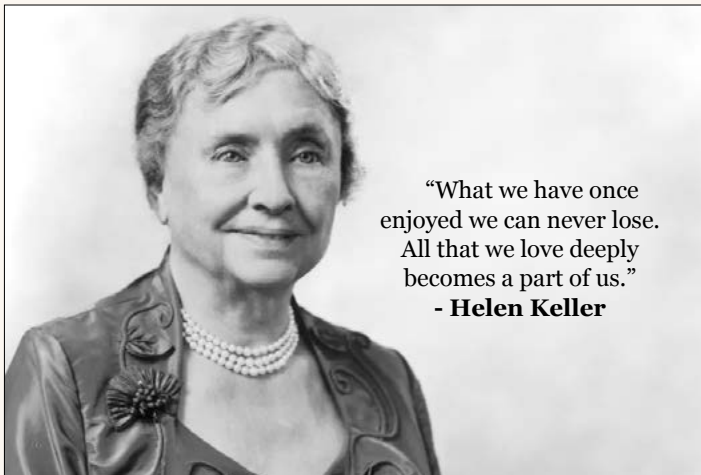
- Tennessee Williams



Pic courtesy: i.pinimg.com

"What we have once enjoyed we can never lose. All that we love deeply becomes a part of us."

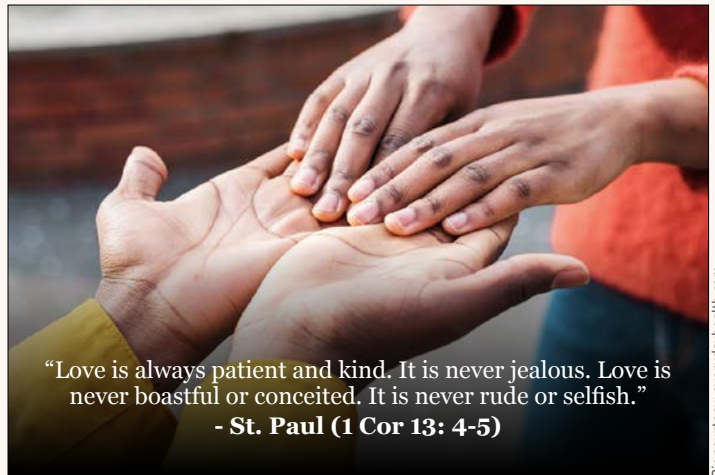
- Helen Keller



Pic courtesy: jagranjosh.com

"Love is always patient and kind. It is never jealous. Love is never boastful or conceited. It is never rude or selfish."

- St. Paul (1 Cor 13: 4-5)



Pic courtesy: everydayhealth.com

**Intention
for
February, 2024**

FOR THE TERMINALLY ILL

We pray that those with a terminal illness, and their families, receive the necessary physical and spiritual care and accompaniment.



**Pope's Worldwide
Prayer Network**



Pic courtesy: independent.co.uk



“We can live if we have love”



Pic courtesy: quora.com

Henry Drummond once wrote a celebrated essay on love which he titled ‘The Greatest Thing in the World’. I have never met anyone who disagreed with the axiom that love is the greatest thing in the world, but I frequently talk to people who despair of ever finding it. They are convinced that they are unlovable and indeed their track record seems to bare out that conviction.

But in years of counselling I have never met a person who was permanently disabled for love. It is possible that you have developed some rough edges which complicate your relationships and get you into trouble, but at the core you are fully capable of loving and being loved.

You can have a life filled with love. No matter how lacking in the social graces, no matter how poorly suited you feel that your personality is for friendship, you can become lovable. You can establish deep and lasting connections with other people. Love comes not to those are merely good looking or talented. Beauty and talent alone never make for lasting relationships. Love is something you do, and if you will employ the basic rules, you can have great friendships.

Karl Menninger said, “Love is the medicine for the sickness of mankind. We can live if we have love.”

The same message comes from another psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl, a Viennese Jew, who was interned by the Nazis for more than three years. He was moved from one concentration camp to another, even spending several months at Auschwitz....Their bodies wasted

away on the daily fare of meager amounts of bread and thin gruel.

One morning as they marched out to lay railroads in the frozen ground, the accompanying guards kept shouting and driving them with the butts of their rifles. The man next to Frankl, hiding his mouth behind his upturned collar, whispered: “If our wives could see us now! I do hope they are better off in their camps and don’t know what is happening to us.”

Frankl writes, “That brought thoughts of my own wife to mind...I clung to my wife’s image, imagining it with an uncanny acuteness. I heard her answering me, saw her smile, her frank and encouraging look....A thought transfixed me: for the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire...The salvation of man is through love and in love.”

When we remember the primacy of love, and believe in our almost unlimited capacities for giving and receiving it, life can take on a vast joyfulness. Teilhard de Chardin once wrote, “Someday, after we have mastered the winds and the waves, the tides and gravity, we will harness for God the energies of love, and then for the second time in the history of the world man will have discovered fire.” ❖

Alan Loy McGinnis (1933 - 2005) was an author, a psychotherapist, and a Presbyterian minister. Today there are over 3 million copies of his books in print

WELL SAID

“Happiness is love. Full stop.”
- George Vaillant



Picture courtesy: happyfamilies.com