

October, 2024

# JIVAN

NEWS AND VIEWS OF JESUITS IN INDIA

**Is the apostle of non-violence  
relevant to our  
violent world?**



Pic courtesy: mir-s3-cdn-cf.behance.net

| Praying the rosary fruitfully

| Short Story Contest



## Snuffed out in the dead of night

In a land where gloom resides,  
Where brutal violence for long abides,  
Where mercy fades and justice hides,  
Screams and pleas rise to the sky.

There echoes a sad, mournful song  
Of women who've suffered so long,  
Crucified by lust and power  
That are in league with filthy lucre.

A young doctor, bright and straight,  
Was snuffed out in the dead of night.  
Crying for justice, bravehearts fight  
With torches and candles that burn so bright.

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## Friends in the Lord

The article titled, "You are wonderful" by Wesley D'Costa SJ in the August issue was incredibly thought-provoking and enriching. I am extremely grateful for the article. The article has strengthened my sense of companionship and expanded my perspective. Friendship is a wonderful bond. In a true friend I can find motherly care, fatherly concern and brotherly advice. In a true friend I can find a counsellor who will listen to me, a guide who can guide me, and a teacher who can teach me. We must remember that we are all friends in the Lord.

---

| Anish, NSJ

## Supporting the youth

Fr Prakash Louis's report titled, "Can we get rid of caste?" on the youth conclave on the principles of Dr. Ambedkar in the August issue had a profound impact on me. I find Dr. Ambedkar's life to be incredibly inspiring, and he remains one of the most influential figures for me. His relentless efforts to speak up for the rights of Dalits are truly motivating. Being part of a Jesuit community, I have abundant opportunities to contribute in various ways to support the youth, allowing them to ask questions, seek answers, and showcase their talents in diverse ways. The conclave makes us feel optimistic. I want to commend the Jesuits of Patna province for instilling confidence and courage in the youth.

---

| Noha Veigas, NSJ

## Positive mindset

After unwrapping the August 2024 issue of *Jivan*, I carefully selected an article to read. As luck would have it, I came across "Boundless Joy and Unexpected Challenges" by Fr. Bala Kumar Bollineni S.J. This article helped me realize the importance of embracing unexpected challenges in life. It encouraged me to approach opportunities with a positive mindset rather than rejecting them, reminding me of the significance of saying 'Yes' with wisdom. I am grateful to *Jivan* and especially to Fr. Bala Kumar for this deeply impactful article.

---

| Roshan Pinto, NSJ

## Heaven on earth

"Angels walk on this earth, dirtying their feet, bringing a little bit of heaven here." This profound sentence from Fr. Sajeev Painukal's short story, "Christmas in the red lanes" in the August '24 issue of *Jivan* inspired me a lot. His Christmas celebration with the sex workers resonated with the initial ministry established by our founder, St. Ignatius, in Rome, "Casa Santa Marta". This establishment tried to provide care and spiritual assistance to 'fallen' women. Consequently, some were able to quit their previous lifestyle and embrace a new life in Christ. The inspiring story reminded me that it is our responsibility to make all people aware of their right to become children of God.

---

| Kiran P.R, NSJ

## Faith and forgiveness

Prof. Gigy Joseph Koottummel's article on the film 'I can only imagine' poignantly captures the importance of faith and forgiveness in overcoming personal challenges and exhorts readers to reflect on their own lives. This article serves as an uplifting reminder that reconciliation and love can bring deep healing and tranquillity, regardless of the severity of past hurts. Prayer and introspection can free us from bitterness and make us embrace the peace that comes from being reconciled with God and others.

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| Akshay D, NSJ

## Importance of spiritual practice

The article "Cultivating Spiritual Practice" by Rev. Dr. Meath Conlan in the August issue deeply resonated with me. I was moved by the author's depiction of two influential church figures, St. Monica and St. Augustine, as exemplars of patience in their spiritual practice. The article highlighted how their prayers had the power to inspire conversions and heal hearts. It emphasized how even a small glimmer of light from a spiritual practice can illuminate one's life and create a sense of union. The article made me understand that spiritual practice can cultivate positive vibrations in us and others, fostering self-acceptance and transformation.

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| Lestern Prajwal D'Souza, NSJ

(All the letters here are from Novices in the Jesuit Novitiate at Mount St. Joseph, Bengaluru)



## WHAT DO YOU SAY?

STANY D'SOUZA, SJ  
President, JCSA

### God's munificence

This could happen only in the fabulous kingdom of Arabia. It was the inauguration of a golf course in the middle of the desert. Many celebrities were there at the invitation of the king. One of them was Mr Arnold Palmer, the great golfer. At the dinner after the opening ceremony, the king asked Arnold: "Arnold, what can I do for you?" Taken aback, Arnold was initially speechless. But recovering quickly, he said: "how about a club?". The king said. 'OK.'

Days and weeks passed by. But there was no word from the king. But just as Arnold was beginning to forget the whole episode as an empty dream, he received an envelope. When he opened it, he could not believe his eyes. It was the title deed of 500 acres of land for a "club".

The word 'Club' could mean a golf stick, or a golf play field. Arnold asked for just a golf stick, and the king, being king, gave him an entire golf field.

I remembered this short WhatsApp story about the munificence of an earthly king as I was thinking as to how best we, the Jesuits of South Asia, could seek from God, the heavenly king, as we embark on the ambitious process of 'Re-imagining and Restructuring the Society of Jesus in South Asia' (RRSJSA). I believe, God, being God, will lavish on us gifts and graces far surpassing what we may even dare to hope for and care to ask.

The munificence of God was the core experience of St Ignatius and is the sap of his charism. When his knee was shattered in Pamplona and he was confined to his sick bed in Loyola, the restless Inigo must have been persistently pestering the Lord to put him back on his feet again so that he could walk, dance, ride, and go to war all over again. But God being God, made him instead a pioneer in spiritual warfare and religious life, and a trendsetter with a new pathway to God, helping souls in their thousands.

That is why in the Formula of the Institute, St Ignatius asks us Jesuits "... first of all to keep before his eyes God and then the nature of this Institute which is, so to speak, a pathway to God; and then let him strive with all his effort to achieve this end set before him by God..."

Therefore, as we commence the journey of RRSJSA let us not embarrass God by thinking small and asking him for trivial trinkets. Let us, with "grande animoy liberalidad" (Sp.Ex 5) dream impossible dreams, strive to reach the unreachable stars, and be audacious enough to ask for astoundingly great things from our infinitely munificent God, so that we may leave behind a Society, which is stronger, healthier, and apostolically more vibrant than the one we have inherited. What do you say?



## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

M.A. JOE ANTONY, SJ  
Editor

### The month that reminds me of...

I have talked about this earlier. The moment someone mentions the name of this month – October – I think of two women. One is, actually, Mother – the woman God chose to be the mother of his Son - the woman his Son chose to be our Mother. This is because the month of October is called the month of the Rosary. And Rosary is a prayer that she herself has recommended through the visionaries at Fatima and other places.

Is praying the rosary effective? Among hundreds of testimonies from people who have experienced the extraordinary benefits of praying the rosary, what stands out in my memory is the miraculous way in which eight Jesuit priests were protected from the deadly effects of a man-made disaster.

The day was one of the darkest days in recent human history – 06 August 1945. The atomic bomb, dropped on the city of Hiroshima in Japan, killed around 80,000 people instantly. More than 130,000 people died in the days that followed.

But in the midst of all this devastation, eight Jesuit priests miraculously survived. Their house was near the hypocenter of the attack and yet nothing happened to them. They were missionaries from Europe who had chosen to work in Japan. Doctors, who examined them after the blast, warned that radiation poisoning, to which they had been exposed, would cause serious lesions, illness and even death. But nearly 200 medical exams, done in subsequent years, showed no ill effects whatever.

Fr Hubert Schiffer, SJ, who was a member of the Jesuit community when the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, attended the Eucharist Congress held in Philadelphia, U.S., in 1976. Speaking to thousands who had gathered for the Congress, he affirmed that a protective shield from the Blessed Mother protected him and his fellow Jesuits, who prayed the rosary daily, from all radiation and ill-effects.

Right at the beginning I said October makes me think of two women. Who is the other one? My mother. The feast of Our Lady of Rosary, 7 October, is her feast day. What she carried in her name she always carried in her hands. Even during her last days when she was unconscious, she would not part with her rosary.

No wonder this issue carries an article by Fio Mascarenhas, SJ on how to pray the rosary fruitfully. Read also the Gandhi Jayanti Special by Stan Alla, SJ, and the World Students Day Special by Vinod Fernandes, SJ.

## Jesuit NGO organizes Forest Food Festival

Although every year Maharashtra Prabodhan Sewa Mandal (MPSM), an NGO of the Bombay Province, celebrates the Forest Food Festival, called *Prabodhan Aranyotsav* (PA), this year's celebration was truly special. MPSM (Maharashtra Prabodhan Sewa Mandal) of the Bombay Province is an NGO working predominantly with the advasi farmers in Maharashtra.

The event was celebrated with gaiety and gusto on 17 August 2024 in Ambatha, Surgana. Fr Paulraj and his team made every effort to make the Utsav a success by coordinating with Fr Joel and his team at MPSM.

The guests and dignitaries were welcomed with a beautiful tribal dance accompanied by music produced by traditional local instruments. Around 1,000 people attended. The participants were predominantly women. A few Jesuits from the Province and women and men religious from other congregations attended. The Pre-novices and a few scholastics contributed immensely. They worked hard and in concord with MPSM's senior staff and the new recruits.

Ms Amruta from *EcoSatva* spoke of the urgent need for Bio-Diversity Conservation. She called for an immediate and urgent action for the restoration of degraded eco-systems and underscored the need to maintain a Bio-Diversity Register. Milind Thate, a forests rights activist, talked about the rights of tribal people and made an impassioned plea to protect the forests. He focused on the two important legislations – the Forest Rights Act that gave the forest dwellers their rights and the Bio-Diversity Act that makes provision for the preservation of threatened biodiversity. He told the tribals that he is willing to join hands with MPSM to engage with them.

Shervari, a well-known nutritionist, talked about the importance of fibre for adequate nutrition needed for good health. She stressed the importance of vitamins that come from food. Deepali Chandok was full of praise for the work MPSM was doing and for the thinking it was generating in terms of improving agriculture and livelihood opportunities of the farmers. She applauded the '*vichar manthan*' that was going on at the festival.

Leena, IAS emphasized the importance of developing livelihood opportunities. While she appreciated the subsistence economy of the tribal people and their self-sufficiency, she felt that they should look beyond and go also for a cash economy by producing and selling



their surplus in the markets. She told the participants that since their products are organic, they deserve to get higher prices for their produce. She also talked about the need to engage in tribal tourism and elaborated on the concept of 'Immersive Tourism.' Kashiram Sevre, an ayurvedic physician, who goes in search of 'herbs that heal', spoke confidently about the effectiveness of herbal remedies. He said there was no need for rushing to the allopathic doctors and incurring unnecessary expenses and side effects.

After the main event in the mandap, the dignitaries and participants made their way to the hall to taste the various types of food items prepared by the tribals from the forest produce. The variety of food items, some of them being medicinal in nature, was remarkable. There was *bhaker* made out of rice, *nagli* and other grain, tasty *chutnis*, and a host of other preparations. Almost everyone was seen tasting the food and expressing their joy and admiration.

Pooling resources towards a worthy cause, coordinating with several stakeholders, collaborating and networking with various NGOs, government agencies, production of quality publicity material, Joel provided skilful leadership. We realize that activities such as the 'forest food festival' align organically with some important Apostolic Preferences of our Society. ❖

Joel & Tony



## Is the apostle of non-violence relevant to our violent world?



Pic courtesy: static.theprint.in

Announcing the death of Mahatma Gandhi to the nation and the world, Jawaharlal Nehru said that Gandhiji has been a light to guide the nation, and, this light will continue to illumine it, its peoples and thoughts and mindsets, for a thousand years to come. Seventy five years on, several continue to admire and study and follow Gandhian thought, while some are indifferent to it and others even opposed to it. Love him or hate him, the apostle of non-violence will be around, guiding human thoughts, locally and globally. Marthin Luther King Jr and Nelson Mandela are among the many who acknowledged his influence.

Gandhiji spoke of truth and non-violence and the critical importance of embracing them in order to direct our individual and collective lives. It is possible to argue that ‘truth’ has become more blurred in this era of post-truth and that non-violence is in need of a booster dose to re-capture people’s imagination and engagement.

Sadly, violence is as old as human history and it takes multiple avatars to wreck lives. Illustrated in Cain’s killing Abel or in the cousins fighting among themselves as noted in the Maha Bharatha, violence marked our collective life and memory in a big way.

At the same time several cultures and spiritualities tried to cultivate and promote non-violence. Naming it a cardinal virtue, most prophets and mystics and the enlightened ones spoke on the importance of non-violence. Sections of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus asks to 'show the other cheek,' puzzled many of Jesus' followers then and now. Admonition to Peter to 'put his sword back in its place' appeared to have closed all options of appealing to violence, even if one thinks that it is required.

For several centuries, Christians struggled to make sense of violence that marked daily lives and pondered how to avoid it. When military inscription was mandatory, under Roman rule or in other contexts, the Christians struggled to find ways to escape it. They thought that being a Christian and serving in the military was incompatible: how can one be a Christian and be a soldier, 'dutifully' indulging in violence?

For a long time, violence meant domestic violence and the violence that one witnessed in the socio-political and religious context in which one lives. With the advance of time and technology, violence has expanded, spreading its monstrous tentacles into the modern and post-modern era. Huge populations continue to suffer globally as victims of violence.

The violence portrayed in the media could arguably numb our capacity to be sensitive and sensible. When the violent attacks are live-recorded, are shared and watched, repeatedly, it is possible that several of us get acclimatized to it. Normalization of violence or indifference to violence, inflicted on any but more importantly on the innocent, defence-less victims, is an extremely worrisome feature of our times.

While most of us may theoretically oppose the use of violence in general, when institutions and nations sponsor or support violence - whatever be the justifications for it- we remain clueless. Same is the case when the state machinery comes heavily on the poor who are discriminated and whose dignity and rights are violated.

Another worrisome feature is the way kids and youth get used to violence. Various kinds of games, played on the phones or on other gadgets quietly introduce violence into our lives. What will be the impact of these violent virtual games on the children, who are



**“With the advance of time and technology, violence has expanded, spreading its monstrous tentacles into the modern and post-modern era.”**

Photo courtesy: dailypioneer.com

addicted, and who love to shoot and kill and destroy and defeat the others, their imaginary screen-enemies? A paradigm that proclaims that one has to win at any cost which involves defeating and destroying many in the process, needs to be confronted and alternatives be found.

Violence, actual or online, is here to stay and we need to confront it. Becoming aware of various types of violence operative in and around our society is an initial step. Teachers and pastors can bring violence and non-violence into the conversations and find ways to promote non-violence among them. Promoting spiritualities that cultivate non-violence is required more than ever. The Mahatma who upheld non-violence all through his life continues to be relevant, although the challenge is greater and more complex now. As Rig Veda says, 'may noble thoughts come to us from all directions!'



*Stanislaus Alla, SJ, (AND) hailing from Warangal, Telangana, teaches at Vidyajyoti College of Theology, Delhi. He got a Licentiate in Moral Theology from Alfonsiana, Rome, and a doctorate from Boston College, USA.*





## Enthusiasm and initial fears over RRSJSA

Reimagining and restructuring is nothing new to the Society of Jesus. While adhering to the original charism, vision and mission, the SJ has renewed itself constantly. Capturing the renewal that took place after the General Congregation (GC) 32, Pedro Arrupe highlighted some of the changes. “There was change, indeed, from a Society of fortress to a Society of leaven in the dough... from ascetical individual poverty to solidarity with the poor and from a Society seeking to reform the individual to a Society seeking to modify social structures.”



GC 35 Decree 5 under the title ‘Governance at the Service of Universal Mission’ called for discernment and action on the following: Our governance structures and ways of proceeding should flow from a perspective of greater universality. Constantly evolving context calls for greater and better coordination and cooperation among Provinces at the service of our universal mission. With a view towards better serving our universal mission, the GC requested the General to initiate a process of reflection on Province structures which will lead to adapting our governance to today’s realities.

In 2011 Fr Adolfo Nicolas wrote a letter, ‘the Renewal of Province Structures in the Service of Universal Mission’ which set in motion a process of restructuring with a clear mandate to all the Provinces: a) Go through a spiritual process to come to Ignatian indifference which allows us to go beyond personal interests, ideologies, or disordered attachments; b) Review the apostolic viability of the Jesuit provinces.



He reiterated the following aspects: “This entire process requires the Ignatian indifference or spiritual freedom which allows us to go beyond personal interests, ideologies, or disordered attachments, so that we can see and embrace God’s will. At the same time, this process calls us to deepen our Jesuit

identity... Resistances to restructuring that come from primarily political, racial, ethnic or ideological reasons are distractions. Anything that is not apostolically motivated or weakens our common vocation in the one mission of Christ is to be rejected”.

The Jesuit Conference of South Asia (JCSA) at Pesama, 2014 declared that the Spirit is decisively challenging and leading us to move into the next level of restructuring in South Asia. In response to Fr General’s directive, South Asian Conference initiated, REGAE -1 (2014 to 2017), and REGAE -2 (2017 to 2024).

An assessment of REGAE reveals the following: 1. JCSA in 2014 gave a push to “enter upon a process of Ignatian discernment to take up frontier missions. But very little has been done. 2. There was an expectation that boundary lines between provinces would be redrawn, and disappointment arose when this did not materialize as anticipated. 3. Multiple discernment processes were happening simultaneously like REGAE, UAP and Province Apostolic Planning, which led to fatigue. 4. REGAE 1 and 2 were planned to be spread over a period of ten years. Meanwhile many major superiors changed which dampened the spirit.

GC 36 (2016) asked General Arturo Sosa to review and evaluate the restructuring of provinces and regions that has already taken place, so that what has been learned can be applied to ongoing and future reconfiguration. Fr General, writing in 2019, ‘On the Restructuring of Provinces’ highlighted these factors: 1) Province resources are not exclusively for a province but for the mission of the whole Society. Each apostolic work and each Jesuit forms part of the universal apostolic body. 2) In the current organizational set-up of the Society of Jesus, a province is a unit that administers human, economic and organizational resources for the local, regional and universal mission. 3) The SJ has been a successful administrative organization for hundreds of years because of an efficient system of communication and sharing of resources.

The latest in this process is the appointment by JCSA of the RRSJSA Team in March 2023 with the following terms of reference: - Study the process and product of the REGAEI - Review the multi-faceted context of South Asia - Examine the demographic changes and challenges to the ministries - Suggest pathways to re-imagine and renew our life-mission based on apostolic preferences, possibilities and procedures for opening, closing and managing apostolates - Explore possibilities and procedures for formation of Jesuits and collaborators - Propose models of governance in the province and conference to promote collaboration and networking.



The RRSJSA Team reviewed the documents. It prepared 'pointers' for the Major Superiors to focus on our life-mission. It reflected on the outcome of REGAE I and II. It reflected on redrawing boundaries, the demographic changes and challenges, formation and collaboration and prepared a structure for a programme of action for RRSJSA. Based on this, the Team animated the Major Superiors in Pune in October, 2023, where the scheme was accepted for implementation.

The programme of action agreed upon was: 1) To restructure units of apostolates, 2) To work out viable and concrete programme of collaboration at the provincial, inter-provincial, zonal and conference levels, and thus maximize the use of our resources: human, infrastructural and financial; 3) To revisit our formation programs, to instill in our men a greater passion for Christ and His Universal Mission, 4) To take forward the process of redrawing the province boundaries for greater apostolic availability.

The reasons for RRSJSA are: - to engage in a spiritual process that deepens Jesuit identity and availability - to distribute human and financial resources more effectively in a world with fewer Jesuits - to undercut provincialism and underscore the universality of mission - to assist provinces/regions that are not viable as independent units - to shake up stagnant

communities and call into question longstanding practices that are no longer suitable - to go beyond national and ethnic identities - to develop a culture of collaboration and networking at all levels.

The deliberations, discernment, spiritual conversation and a road map for RRSJSA at the province cum region, zonal and conference level follow a well discerned course of action. These are: - spelling out the objectives and overview of RRSJSA - internal and external context that influence our life-mission - demographic changes, challenges and opportunities - priorities for RRSJSA at the Province/Region, Zonal, Conference levels - possible model for RRSJSA - planning for Pre-Process, Actual Process and Post-Process of RRSJSA.

**What has been repeatedly affirmed: it is a spiritual and professional exercise - it is a personal and collective exercise - it is the Holy Spirit who is the origin, the author and inspirer of RRSJSA.**

What has been repeatedly affirmed: it is a spiritual and professional exercise - it is a personal and collective exercise - it is the Holy Spirit who is the origin, the author and inspirer of RRSJSA.

As someone who has helped at RRSJSA sessions in quite a few provinces, I can say for certain that RRSJSA has created immense enthusiasm among the Jesuits. I have sensed also some initial fears. But once the Jesuits come to know, understand and accept the urgent need for RRSJSA, they wholeheartedly plunge into the

process. But as it happened earlier, if there are too many processes going on simultaneously, it would lead to fatigue. But learning from past experiences, I think the Jesuits at all levels are putting in place the needed systems and mechanisms to take the RRSJSA to its logical conclusion.

So, yet again, this 'Universal Body for a Universal Mission' is invited to become a prophet who listens to the word of God, reads the signs of the times, and discerns how to live and serve at present, and move confidently into the future. ❖

*Fr. Prakash Louis, SJ (PAT) is a human rights activist and an author. He can be contacted at prakashlouis2010@gmail.com.*

# Is Islam a threat to European way of life?



Here are excerpts from an interview given by **Prof. Tobias Specker SJ**, Professor for 'Christianity in the Face of Islam' to **Joseph Victor Edwin SJ** on the sidelines of 'the Jesuits Among Muslims' meeting in Berlin, July 2024.

**In Germany, although the significance of churches has declined, religion continues to be an influential factor. Those who align with a specific religion view it as a private matter. How has this perspective impacted the evolution of interreligious dialogue?**

The secularisation of European societies manifests itself in various dimensions. It is closely linked with the pluralisation of religions, the diminishing influence of Christian churches, and particularly in the eastern regions of Germany, a notable increase in the number of people who do not affiliate with any religion.

Additionally, secularisation impacts religious practices themselves: individual choice has gained prominence, with personal life increasingly becoming the central point of reference. Consequently, affiliations with religious communities are becoming more flexible and less automatic. It is crucial to understand that this phenomenon affects all religions including Islam. Among Muslim believers, a significant secularisation is also underway. On the one hand, this can lead to greater openness towards other religions; often coupled with a desire for an authentic and profound spiritual experience. Thus, more and more Muslims and Christians feel the need for a closer integration of religion with their personal lives. On the other hand, religious plurality and secularisation can also foster exclusive identities that seek to distance themselves from other religious believers and society at large.

In such cases, visible markers of belonging, such as clothing, language, and group rituals, assume a major role. The traditional, inwardly-oriented forms of religion, such as personal prayer or reading the Qur'an, lose importance. Islamic theologian Mouhanad Khorchide refers to this as "shell identities," where the rigid outer form of religion makes up the religion, but the spiritual core becomes hollow.

This trend presents a challenge for interreligious dialogue, as traditional institutions are becoming less and less a point of contact for people, and Christian communities often find themselves preoccupied with other concerns. So we need to strengthen structures for dialogue on a spiritual level and this could be done by creating spaces where individuals can share personal spiritual experiences.

**According to a report, 52% of the population in Germany view Islam as a threat to European culture and way of life. How can Christians and Muslims who embrace diversity address this perception?**

In addressing the fear of Islam, we must first consider what the German sociologist Aladin El-Mafaalani describes as the "integration paradox" the more immigrants of the second or third generation integrate and become part of German society, the more conflicts arise. This occurs because the younger generation, having grown up in Germany, naturally have higher expectations of the country and, in some ways, are less inclined to conform. To some extent, the increase in conflicts is thus a normal phenomenon. However, the global political climate, experiences of discrimination, and the influence of foreign states on Islamic communities have also contributed to a situation where the younger generation of Muslims feels less at home in Germany than their parents did. This is a matter of concern.

In confronting the fear of Islam, the roles of Christian and Islamic institutions are distinct. On the Christian side, it is important to differentiate: which forms of Islam genuinely pose a threat to society, and which social problems are due to religious traditions and which to social causes? On the Islamic side, a self-critical examination of one's tradition is beneficial, involving a critical analysis of the relationship between

religion and power and a firm stand against tendencies towards segregation.

On a practical level, I remain convinced that personal encounters are the most effective way to dispel fears. At Sankt Georgen, we have organised several trips involving mixed groups of our students along with an Islamic group. Not only did the jointly-prepared presentations foster a deep encounter, but so did sharing daily life. The participants were assigned rooms in such a way that there was always a mix of Muslim and Christian participants. As an example, I would like to quote a Muslim female participant: “One moment I will never forget is when my friend Klarissa, a Christian, woke me up for morning prayers in Andalusia. I quickly went to the bathroom, performed the ritual ablution, and then prayed. In retrospect, I realised that it was my Christian friend who woke me up to pray, not a Muslim one. This thought warmed my heart, and I realised how natural it can be to adapt to the everyday rituals of our friends.”

**At Sankt Georgen in Frankfurt, you hold the chair of ‘Christianity in the face of Islam’ and your centre is involved in a project called ‘Intertheology.’ Could you explain what it is and how it is being developed?**

Intertheology refers to a research project developed collaboratively by Jewish, Islamic, and Christian theologians in Berlin, Potsdam, Hamburg, and Sankt Georgen. Intertheology aims to re-examine the history of Christian-Islamic relations as a history of transitions and overlaps. Historical studies reveal numerous instances of interdependence and cooperation. Much research has been conducted in this area, yet there has been little systematic exploration of what this means conceptually and - as we are narrative and poetic beings - what imagery can capture these relationships. The images that depict segregation have dominated for thousands of years and are deeply ingrained: Muslims as harbingers of the Antichrist, idol worshippers, heretics; Christians as falsifiers of the Scriptures, and crusaders. However,

the alternative path remains largely unexplored: What biblical, Qur’anic, or traditionally rooted images adequately reflect the reality of interdependence?

In the Intertheology project, specific case studies illustrate examples of interdependence to show how the religious ‘other’ is always present when considering and formulating one’s self-understanding. To do this, we need to first look into the specific areas where these interconnections manifest in distinctive ways. For example, the role of music in interreligious prayers, shared religious spaces, or interfaith marriages. Above all, Intertheology seeks to systematically understand how and in what terms these interrelations have been and can be conceptualised.

Beyond academic research, the Intertheology project also has a significant social mission. It emphasises that the central question for successful coexistence is not about similarities and differences. Common understanding often holds that the more similarities exist, the better the understanding. While recognising similarities can indeed be the first step to enabling an encounter, similarities do not guarantee peaceful coexistence in the long term—consider the conflicts between siblings.

Differences, too, are not necessarily conflictual; they can be enriching. In this context, the idea of Intertheology is that, it is not similarities and differences that are at odds, but rather isolation or segregation and relationship that distinguish unsuccessful from successful encounters. The central question is that of segregation versus relationship. Segregation views Christianity and Islam as entirely separate systems. In practice, this means that lived overlaps must be kept apart—think of joint celebrations, shared spaces, practical and intellectual cooperation, or even interfaith marriages.

In contrast, the logic of relationships recognises and considers connections as constitutive: the self is realised in the encounter with the other. Thus, the Intertheology project is more than just research; it is a foundation for dialogue. ❖



Pic courtesy: neueskulturworte



## HOW CAN WE PRAY THE ROSARY FRUITFULLY?

The Rosary needs no introduction. Every Catholic from childhood onwards and every Jesuit at least from the Novitiate (and presumably till today!) has been praying daily for a few minutes with a rosary in his/her hand. But for the sake of improving our prayer life, let us re-examine its purpose. Is the Rosary mainly a prayer focused on Mary, or a prayer focused on her Son Jesus? Is it not meant to be primarily a “contemplative” prayer on the whole life of Jesus? So, is the common practice of rushing mechanically through 50 or more Hail Marys, without application of mind to one of the Mysteries of the Life of Jesus, to be encouraged?

The early Christians did not know about the Rosary. (Nor is it mentioned in St Ignatius’ famous Spiritual Exercises.) It was only in the 15th century that Pope Sixtus V officially approved the practice of reciting the Rosary as an aid for illiterate people. Greeting Mary so many times was compared to offering her a crown of roses, hence the name, “Rosary.” Then in 1571, Pope Pius V instituted the

Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary (7 October). And more than 400 years later, in 2002, Pope St John Paul II added five new mysteries (the Luminous Mysteries) to the Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries, so as to complete the whole life of Jesus Christ.

It is interesting that more recently, from the late 1960s, the Popes have been emphasizing that the Rosary must be prayed as a “contemplative prayer.” Pope St Paul VI in *Marialis Cultus* said that he “intended to encourage the restoration, in a dynamic and more informed manner, of the recitation of the Rosary, by emphasizing the importance of a further essential element, namely the element of contemplation. Without this, the Rosary is a *body without a soul*, and its recitation is in danger of becoming a *mechanical repetition of formulas*.”

Pope St. John Paul II too described the Rosary as a prayer which concentrates “all the depth of the Gospel message in its entirety.” In proclaiming a Year of the Rosary (Oct 2002-03), he invited

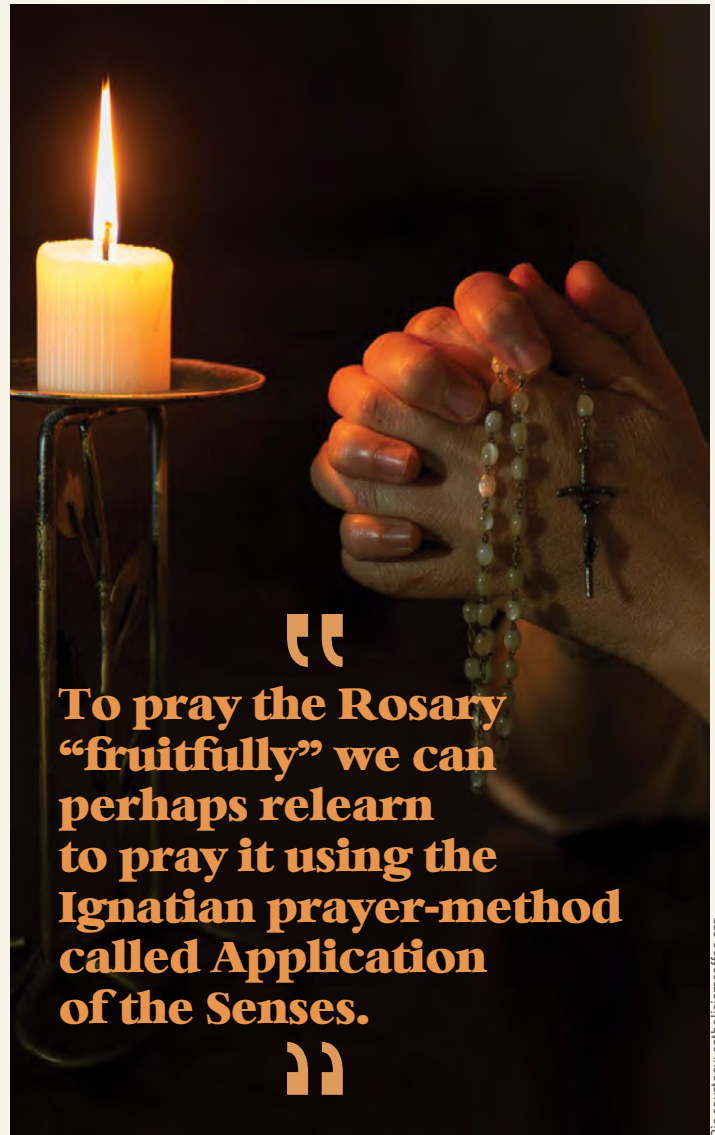
the faithful to “contemplate with Mary the face of Christ.” And Pope Benedict XVI has declared: “The Holy Rosary is not a pious practice banished to the past, like prayers of other times thought of with nostalgia. Instead, the Rosary helps to put *Christ at the centre.*”

Our own Pope Francis in October 2018 declared: “I would like to emphasize the beauty of this simple contemplative prayer, accessible to all. In the Rosary we turn to the Virgin Mary so that she may guide us to an ever closer union with her Son Jesus, to bring us into conformity with him, to have his sentiments, and to behave like him. Indeed, in the Rosary, while we repeat the ‘Hail Mary’s, we meditate on the Mysteries of Christ’s life, so as to know and love Jesus ever better.”

Pope Francis renewed the invitation “to contemplate together the face of Christ, with the heart of Mary” in 2020: “I invite everyone to rediscover, especially during this month of October, the beauty of the rosary and to carry it in your hands or in your pockets. The recitation of the rosary is the most beautiful prayer we can offer to the Virgin Mary; it is a *contemplation*, with Mother Mary, on the stages of the life of Jesus the Saviour, and is a weapon that protects us from evils and temptations.”

Therefore, to pray the Rosary “fruitfully” (rather than only mechanically), we Jesuits, and those who are our spiritual directees, can perhaps relearn to pray it using the Ignatian prayer-method called Application of the Senses. “To contemplate with Mary the face of Christ” (John Paul II), “To contemplate with Mother Mary the stages of the life of Christ the Savior” (Pope Francis) while praying the Rosary must mean that we can no longer just rush through a Rosary and “have it done” in maybe 10 minutes! One suggestion is to take just one or two of the Mysteries and practise a determined application of mind on those one or two, instead of five ...!

Finally, many people do use a quick Rosary as a prayer of intercession for some urgent need - rather than as a prayer of contemplation on some aspect of the Life of Christ. Here too, perhaps we



“  
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”

could shorten the 50 ‘Hail Mary’s to just three, and pray them slowly, with deliberation, remembering Jesus’ advice, “And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name...” (Matt 6:7-9). This “Lord’s Prayer” taught by Jesus himself is so succinct! Surely, the Rosary could also be prayed as a real gift of “roses” for our Mother? ❖

*Fr Fiorello Mascarenhas, SJ (BOM) is a retired bible teacher still available for retreats during his current Sacerdotal Golden Jubilee Year. He can be contacted at [frfiomas@gmail.com](mailto:frfiomas@gmail.com).*

## Pope's trip to build religious harmony

The Holy Father visited Asia, going to four countries, three of which are in the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific. Noteworthy in this trip is the religious diversity among these countries: Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority country; Timor-Leste, where about 96 percent of the population is Catholic; and Singapore, known as the most religiously diverse nation.

Pope Francis arrived in Jakarta from Rome on 3 Sept '24 on a trip that highlighted interreligious harmony. The Pope met with religious leaders from all six recognised religions in Indonesia, and together with the Grand Imam of Istiqlal, Nasaruddin Umar, signed a joint declaration on fostering religious harmony for the sake of humanity. The two religious leaders also visited the "Tunnel of Friendship," which connects the Istiqlal Mosque with Jakarta's main cathedral.

Pope Francis spent time with marginal communities, including migrants and refugees, supported by Jesuit Refugee Service, orphans, the elderly, and the sick. As is customary during his apostolic trips, he held a private meeting with the local Jesuits. He concluded his three-day visit with a Mass at the Gelora Bung Karno Stadium, drawing a crowd of about 100,000 people, whom he urged to be "builders of unity and peace".

From Indonesia, the Pope proceeded to Papua New Guinea spending three days in the cities of Port Moresby and Vanimo. His next stop was in Dili, Timor-Leste, where



Pic courtesy: catholicnewsagency.com



Pic courtesy: aljazeera.com

the Jesuit mission has played a significant role in nation-building. Among the highlights of his visit from 9 to 10 September were meeting children with disabilities, local clergy, his fellow Jesuits, and some 4,000 young people. But the main event was the closing Mass at Taci Tolu that saw an estimated 600,000 people, nearly half of the country's population. They braved the afternoon sun to celebrate the Eucharist with the Pope. Many of the attendees were young, and many parents were seen holding their babies and keeping their children close. "Indeed, you are a young country, and we can see every corner of your land teeming with life," the Pope said during his homily. He emphasised the importance of taking care of children, but also elders, "who are the memory of this land".

The final leg of his trip took Pope Francis to Singapore, where he spent two days, meeting with his fellow Jesuits, meeting with government authorities, civil society, and diplomatic corps, a Mass at the Singapore Sports Hub National Stadium, a visit to a group of elderly and sick people, and an interreligious dialogue with young people. ❖

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

# This year, it's a different kind of contest



We are happy to announce the Jivan Short Story Contest for 2024.

The contest is open to all - Jesuits and non-Jesuits, men and women, young and not-so-young. All these years you could come up with your own story – your own plot, your own characters, dialogue etc.

This year it is a different kind of short story contest. The beginning of the story is on next page (p.17). You need to develop the story and bring it to its logical conclusion. The protagonist (the hero) is Shyam, a student, who, after, hearing what his teacher tells him about his conduct in the past year, storms into the principal's room, with tears flowing down his cheeks and shaking all over. From that instant, you can develop the story anyway you want and conclude it appropriately.

Your contribution should be original and inspiring, giving us hope for the future. The beginning of the story on the next page has about 360 words. Your contribution can have **about 600 – 650 words.**

There are **three prizes: The first prize: Rs 4,000. The second prize: Rs 2,500.**

## The third prize: Rs 1,000.

1. Send soft copies of entries, with a forwarding letter with your full name and address and a brief description of your background to: [jivanmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:jivanmagazine@gmail.com). The subject title should be “*Jivan* story contest 2024.
2. The entries should reach us before 15 November 2024. The results will be announced in the February 2025 issue of *Jivan*.
3. *Jivan* is not responsible for any loss or damage in transit. Entries will be acknowledged on receipt by e-mail.
4. Entries cannot be returned and all entries become the property of *Jivan*.
5. A person can send only one short story.
6. The decision of a two-member Jury will be final.

The cash prizes to the winners come from a generous grant offered in 1997 by the family of Fio Mascarenhas, SJ and his brother, Frazer Mascarenhas, SJ in memory of their beloved parents – Francis and Flora Mascarenhas. ❖

- Editor





## Short Story: The Beginning

**S**hyam was a smart young boy with great ambitions studying in a semi urban school. He fared well in studies and was quite liked by his teachers and classmates. Stepping into school finals, his one consuming desire was to make his last year in school eventful. He wanted to be acclaimed and remembered as a hero. Eager to draw attention to himself, he began sporting a punky hairstyle, get dressed in gaudy colours, and was seen hanging out with the town's riffraff. Boisterous and defiant, he soon acquired notoriety.

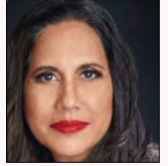
Shyam started skipping classes, attracting attention to himself for all the wrong reasons. Those who knew him thought that an intelligent, affable student was slowly but surely heading to perdition.

As the year was coming to a close, his class teacher, when preparing his character certificate, left a blank against the column: character. "I know you have performed consistently well in your studies in the past. Twice you were elected class captain and had led many group activities. You were a diligent

sportsman winning medals, at least till the last year. My concern is about what you have turned out to be this last quarter. There have been many and frequent complaints about you. Some negative remarks mentioned include defiance, absenteeism, aggression, challenges teachers, disturbing class."

"Shyam, I don't really know how to grade your character. Last year I would have readily awarded 'Excellent' for your character. But your recent conduct has been diametrically opposed to what you have been all these years. I don't know what to do. Therefore, I am leaving this column blank. I shudder to think of the consequences of the label 'Poor' against your character. It's a stigma you'll carry all your life. Opportunities would be denied, all doors will be closed. I don't want your future ruined. Yet, in conscience I can't help you. So, I'm forwarding all our records of your years in this school to the principal. Let the principal take the call."

Shyam took some time to process what his teacher had said. With tears flowing down his cheeks and shaking all over, he stormed into the principal's room. ❖



# The Jesuit Tryst with Women

On International Women's Day 2021, the Jesuits started delivering on a promise made to women more than 25 years ago. Superior General, Arturo Sosa, SJ announced the creation of a Commission on Women, whose first objective would be to evaluate the relevance of Decree 14 today, and its impact, if any, on the Society's apostolates.

## Origins of the Document:

That Decree 14 is still relevant 29 years after its publication is a bit of an oxymoron! If Jesuits could write a document on their relationship with women, with such sensitivity and humility, surely by now their struggles related to women's issues should be a thing of the past?

The answer to this riddle is provided by Margo Heydt who interviewed the authors of Decree 14 - Gerry O'Hanlon, SJ from Dublin, Patrick Howell, SJ from Seattle and Bill Uren, SJ from Melbourne. She discovered that for the first time in the 'history' of the Jesuits, women were consulted by the General Congregation because these men decided that, "as men, they should not presume to write a document concerning women without women's voices." As a result, Cathy Molloy and Edel O'Kennedy of Ireland and Sister Helen Clarke of Australia were asked to contribute to the ten drafts of Decree 14. Also consulted were post Vatican II, 'Signs of the Times' groups who Phil Harnett, SJ brought to Ireland from South America.

**Women's Concerns Must be Central to Jesuit Mission:** What is remarkable is that the 223 Jesuits from 80 countries that attended GC 34 owned this document. They not only recognized a "general rise in consciousness" concerning the "unjust treatment and exploitation of women" (361.1) as a sign of the times, but significantly,

acknowledged the situation of women as "a central concern of any contemporary mission which seeks to integrate faith and justice." (361.1).

In the years since Decree 14, Jesuit theologates in India have opened their doors to a sizable number



of women students, and have women in their faculty. Feminist theology itself has graduated from being a marginalised elective to a graded subject. I know Jesuits who pray to a Mother God, publish articles using inclusive God-language, and celebrate creative Eucharistic liturgies that are inclusive of women.

My most vivid experience of Jesuit solidarity however, was in 2018, when the Vatican objected to two speakers invited for an International Women's Day event, making their exclusion a condition to giving permission for the venue inside the Vatican. The Jesuits stepped in and hosted the event at the Jesuit General Curia, making it possible for the women to welcome all at our table and maintain our dignity, integrity and credibility.

**More women in decision-making bodies:** Having said this, I must admit that I have frequently found myself to be the lone woman in a room full of Jesuits deliberating and discerning on matters of importance. While I feel privileged at this inclusion and have on occasion brought in more women, I have often wondered if I was merely the ‘token’ woman.

If women are to make a difference, a critical mass is needed. Studies have shown that “at least three

of clericalism which has reinforced male domination with an ostensibly divine sanction.”

Expressing the desire “to change this regrettable situation” (369.9) is admirable, but are Jesuits willing to give up the privileges and absolute power that come with clericalism? Are they ready to deconstruct the current theology of cultic priesthood, one that encourages a belief of moral, intellectual and spiritual superiority and infallibility, and develop instead a new theology of ministry built on the servanthood of Jesus?



Pic courtesy: jesuits.global

**Stepping Out of the Jesuit Box:** Being in solidarity with women can be a complex endeavour for Jesuits for it requires not only getting out of the ‘man box’ with its limiting gender stereotypes, but also stepping out of what I have identified as, the ‘Jesuit box,’ drawn from my experience of over 3 decades of working with the Jesuits in India in various capacities.

1. *Obedience:* The vow of Obedience, emphasized in the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, implies the Jesuit hierarchy that is meant to enable a well-organized institution. While this works for the Jesuit community, it can be problematic in a partnership with non-Jesuits, because the line of control lies outside the partnership.

women” must be included to interact and influence board working styles, methods, and duties. Jesuits therefore need to ensure this minimum threshold for them to enjoy the advantages of having gender diversity at every level of decision-making and in ecclesiastical institutes of learning.

**Not a Women’s Problem but a Jesuit Problem:** Perhaps one of the reasons Decree 14 seems to have taken off to a slow start is the universal perception that anything concerning women is a ‘women’s problem.’ Decree 14 therefore calls Jesuits to introspect and take the initiative, in a sustained and systemic manner, to address the ‘Jesuit problem.’ It observes that Jesuits “have been part of a civil and ecclesial tradition that has offended against women” and “contributed to a form

of control lies outside the partnership. When there is conflict in a decision-making body, the Jesuits cease functioning as individuals. I have witnessed Jesuits remaining silent in a group, choosing loyalty to their oath of obedience to their Jesuit superiors, over dissent based on intellectual, moral or ethical considerations.

What is worse, the Jesuit members of the team sometimes conduct their own discussions and discernment process, which exclude their mission partners. This creates a parallel decision-making process that leads to en bloc voting of the Jesuits in the management team. It works against the unity of the Jesuit-non-Jesuit Management team and destroys trust among its members. In the end it results in a fractured team.

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2. *Power and Control*: The Jesuit need for power and control is another obstacle to partnership with women. According to Rudolf Heredia SJ, in the South Asia Assistancy, Jesuit collaboration generally involves “co-opting the lay collaborator in an unequal partnership, i.e. senior and junior partners, ...always on the terms of the Jesuits, even when negotiated together.” (Rudolf Heredia S.J., “Need for Lay Collaboration: New Thinking, New Models” *Jivan*, Oct 2011, pp. 25-26).

Jesuits own the institutions and the projects, define the vision and make the decisions, and the collaborators are expected to unquestioningly follow orders. Very rarely is authority delegated to non-Jesuits or are they empowered and given real responsibility. Rarer still is it to see Jesuits working under a woman.

True collaboration, however, demands that Jesuits sit in a circle with non-Jesuits, not above or outside it. For most Jesuits, however, ‘power with’ and ‘power for’ cannot be separated from ‘power over’ because there is an unshakeable belief that the Jesuits know best. Consequently, collaborators are frequently treated like privileged employees without salaries, and forgotten the moment their term of voluntary service is over. They can never take for granted a place in the Jesuit family.

3. *Competition*: The lure of power and status that is attached to positions of authority in prestigious Jesuit institutions that attract the rich and powerful is another element in the ‘Jesuit box.’

Often the coveted ‘Jesuit brand’ that brings accolades and recognition is valued more than the quest for humanising communities. This can hinder genuine collaboration and sharing of power with women. “At the pastoral level hostilities can arise when ‘parishioners recognise, respect and appreciate the service activities of the sisters.” (*It’s High Time: Women Religious Speak Up on Gender Justice in the Indian Church*, edited by Hazel D’Lima, DHM, Cletus Zuzarte, Pallavi Xalxo, A Study Commissioned by the CRI (Women), 2021.) A recently published report of a survey conducted by the women’s section of the Conference of Religious of India (CRI.) Teamwork in such an environment is difficult.

4. *Inability to Listen*: Decree 14 draws attention to one more aspect of the ‘Jesuit Box’ - the inability to listen. “Many women feel that men simply do not listen to them.” (372.12). When the women dare to draw attention to this blindness, they often experience a defensive reaction from men.” (363.3). GC34 therefore invites “all Jesuits to listen carefully and courageously to the experience of women” because “more than anything else, it will bring about change.”

Do not trivialise, ignore, avoid or attack women who challenge patriarchal beliefs, teachings and practices, just because it makes you feel uncomfortable. At meetings be alert to men who will restate a woman’s ideas in different words and in a louder voice.

Recognise the woman’s contribution and ensure that women’s voices are not left out of recorded minutes, or attributed to a male. These small steps help to build a foundation of mutual partnership needed to reform unjust structures.

**Feminist Consciousness:** And finally a word about the need for a feminist consciousness among Jesuits and their collaborators. “Where are the women?” “How have they been depicted?” “How is this going to affect women?” These simple questions asked in Jesuit mission, ministries and institutions, will lead to Jesuit structures that are open to women, to women being elected as academic representatives by Jesuit seminarians, (Jesuits and Gender Equality by Shalini Mulackal PBVM, *Jivan*, September 2020, pp. 10-11) to theology that is not androcentric, to publications that are gender inclusive, and to listening that is not blocked with preconceived notions and plans.

They will also give a feminine face to the Jesuits’ universal apostolic preference “to walk with the poor, (and) the outcasts of the world” already emphasized in Decree 14’s recognition of the “feminization of poverty” and the “feminine face of oppression” (364.4).

It is time perhaps for ‘solidarity with women’ to become as much a defining quality of the Jesuits as their ‘option for the poor.’ ❖

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*Dr. Astrid Lobo Gajiwala is a scientist, writer, activist, and a feminist theologian.*



Pic courtesy: sbs.com.au

## What do today's students expect from their teachers?

In 2003, when I was a student of St. Joseph's College, Trichy, Dr Kalam visited his Alma Mater. He was fond of this Jesuit college where he studied physics. A down-to-earth person, Dr Kalam invited us to pray for peace and made us recite the well-known prayer attributed to St Francis of Assisi, "Lord make me an instrument of your peace." Though known as "the Missile Man" of India, he wanted a world where people live in peace and harmony.

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, a Bharat Ratna awardee, whose birthday (October 15) is celebrated as "World Students' Day," is a beacon of hope for students who strive to live their dreams. Dr. Kalam, as a scientist as well as the President of India, has inspired millions of students through his interactions with them, especially through his books, *Wings of Fire* and *Ignited Minds*.

In today's fast-changing world, how can teachers aspire to become inspirational, like our beloved Kalam? How are teachers responding to the needs of students as they struggle to navigate a complex world? How are the students' expectations changing with the changing times?

Today, students look for a healthy teacher-student relationship which helps them to trust their teachers and their guidance. One of the biggest roles of a teacher is to be a mentor who helps students make the right decisions, not just about their careers, but also in all other aspects of life, including their relationships, lifestyle, priorities etc. In a fast-paced, technologically advancing world, students need to be taught the importance of human values and skills like agility and resilience which will help them bounce back after every failure.

All students have big dreams. However, not all know how to make those dreams become a reality. They need emotional support and empathy as they go through crises and conflicts within themselves, with their parents, with the school's rules and regulations and also with the world at large.

This, in my opinion, is a serious challenge: Our students face tremendous pressure as they try to achieve success in academics, which is a necessary stepping stone towards their future careers. Sadly, they get lost and many feel burnt out due to the intense pressure from the coaching classes which

help them prepare for competitive exams, such as NEET, JEE, CUET, CLAT, SAT etc. Unable to balance between what is expected by their school, their coaching institutes, their parents, as well as their own expectations, many go through emotional and mental agony, often leading to depression and suicidal tendencies. In such situations, teachers need to accompany their students or even handhold them, gently guiding them to face competitions with a positive spirit, while simultaneously showing them the difference between success and happiness. Teachers need to show students how best to achieve success in all the exams they face, without compromising on the little joys of student life and their friendship with peers.

While teaching students to achieve success and realise their dreams and aspirations, teachers also need to make them aware that human power alone cannot solve all the problems of the world. They need to show students the path to God and spirituality.

In a world which is becoming a global village, students expect teachers to promote inclusivity and respect for diversity. Students also expect their teachers to be fair and impartial. They often lament the fact that some teachers show favouritism towards those who come to them for tuition, which has become a huge menace in many cities.

School is a place where students develop their personality as well as their “identity.” At a time when they are trying to build healthy relationships with their peers, developing their talents and skills, and taking up leadership roles, they face numerous

conflicts, often in the form of bullying and abuse by other boys and girls. This leads to a gradual withdrawal from social life, resulting in anxiety, depression and various forms of addictions. In such a situation, students expect their teachers to be patient listeners, to show empathy and to give unconditional support as they fight their own personal battles. Academic failure, heartbreaks in relationships and uncertainties of future careers, when faced with courage and determination, will make the students strong and resilient persons who can boldly face a complex and challenging world. This is why teachers are expected to equip students with important life skills.



Students want their teachers to make them aware of serious global issues, such as ecological degradation, social injustice, and intolerance. Above all, students expect their teachers to be good and happy human beings and role models who lead the way, walk the talk and become

Gurus who give *gyan* (wisdom), rather than *shikshaks* who give *shiksha* (knowledge).

“The purpose of education is to make good human beings with skill and expertise.... Enlightened human beings can be created by teachers” said Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam. So, today, teachers need to imbibe the spirit of Dr Kalam as they guide students and train them to develop skills and multiple intelligences that will nurture them to prepare for an unpredictable yet promising future. ❖

*Fr. Vincent Vinod Fernandes, SJ, (JAM) is the Principal of Loyola School, Jamshedpur. He has a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from Fordham University, New York.*



# Real life story of a modern exodus

**Film:** *The Red Sea Diving Resort* (2019)

**Director:** Gideon Raff

**Run time:** 130 minutes

This is the real life story of a modern Exodus, set on the coast of the historic Red Sea involving Israel. Ethiopia's association with Israel goes back to the Old Testament. Jewish settlements have been there till the modern times. During the 1983-85 famine, caused mainly by the Eritrean civil war, one million Ethiopians perished. Nearly 7000 Jews died. Some ancient African Jews, known as Beta Israel, who lived there fled to Sudan where they faced both hunger and persecution.

This prompted Israel to launch the 'Operation Moses' to rescue these ancient Jews from persecution and poverty in Sudan under Gaafar Nimeiri. They took advantage of the much-publicized Red Sea holiday resorts on the Sudanese coast. Mossad agent Ari Levinson, leader of the team, an Ethiopian Jew and an Israeli agent pose as Swiss entrepreneurs before the Sudanese, offering to renovate a rundown hotel into a diving resort for tourists. They bribe Sudanese bureaucrats to procure the resort. Americans also help in the operation.

The Red Sea diving resort becomes a secret embarkation point for Jewish refugees, secretly rescued from across the country. They would be ferried in boats across the red sea to freedom. When their publicity material attracts actual European tourists who patronize the resort, the agents persuade them too to help with the clandestine operation, using them as a plausible disguise before the Sudanese Islamic regime. At night the agents conduct the refugees in boats to an Israeli ship anchored off the coast.

However the corrupt Sudanese Colonel Abdel Ahmed intimidates a batch of refugees to betray the local collaborator Bimro, after which the refugees are massacred. Following this, the soldiers conduct a surprise raid on the resort after a dispatch of refugees. Ari and his colleague are taken and tortured, but they survive and are released. Now under surveillance, they consider cancellation of any further operations, but decide not to give up entirely. When Colonel Ahmed and soldiers raid



the resort during a night party, a soldier sneaks into the hideout of a new batch of refugees. Israeli agent Rachel Reiter kills the soldier and sends the refugees into hiding. Not giving up on the plan, the team comes up with a more daring plan.

With the help of a CIA officer, Ari arranges a secret cargo plane to land in an abandoned British airfield to whisk them away. The climactic moments are hair-raising as the team, with the refugees on board, has to evade Sudanese machine guns as they take off for Tel Aviv and to freedom. ❖

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

## Let his legacy thrive!

His path of peace we tread,  
In every act, his teachings spread.  
Even at night Truth, our beacon, gleams,  
Unites our voices, ignites our dreams.

Let non-violence be our steadfast creed,  
We rise against hatred, plant love's seed.  
In our land of chaos, where hate takes its toll,  
We need to hear his timeless call.

Gandhi's vision calls us to open the door,  
Empower the weak, uplift the poor,  
Compassion and service can heal our soul,  
And Truth can truly make us whole.

With his values let's walk hand in hand,  
Marching together in this sacred land,  
Through us all let his legacy thrive,  
For in love and truth, we truly arrive.

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## “I am on the way to becoming a modern-day digital Jesuit!”

Under the inspiration and guidance of the Conference JESCOM, a weeklong communication course was organized for the Jesuit Juniors in Kolkata from 18- 24 August '24. JESCOM coordinator, Fr. Vernard Antony SJ (DUM) and film expert, Fr Vijay Sultani SJ (AND) conducted the first three days of the training program at Dhyana Ashram, the Jesuit Juniorate, Kolkata where 15 Juniors from seven provinces are pursuing our studies. The next four days were spent at Chitrabani, the well-known Jesuit communication centre in Kolkata, where Fr Vivekananda James SJ and his team of experts led us in our digital journey.

The purpose of this workshop was to give the basic knowledge and idea of the modern-day communication skills and techniques, especially social media, so that we youngsters may learn to use it for the growth of our mission. The comprehensive training program included sessions on digital film making, script writing, video making, photo shoots and introduction to AI.

Under the expert guidance Fr Vijay, the juniors explored the fundamentals of short filmmaking,

including camera operations and video editing. “His classes on script writing gave us the basic skills in crafting interesting narratives and stories with simple but valuable ideas. We learned about story structure, dialogue and character development,” said Francis Beck (JAM). “In the video making sessions we gained a firsthand experience in planning, shooting and editing videos. Our photo shooting training was focused on capturing a good photograph with fine composition, light and aperture,” explained another junior.

In the session on ‘Church and Media’ we learned how media can be greatly useful and effective in our church services and in ministries. “With today’s communication technology we can do great things,” said Shashikanth (CEN). For Vivek Toppo (MAP) the good news is that “I was far behind till yesterday; today I feel I am able to catch up with it, even if partially. I can now say with pride I am on the way to becoming a modern-day digital Jesuit.”

However, the thrill of digital media has not blinded the juniors about the dangers lurking behind. They are aware they have to choose what is life-giving. Overall, this communication course has equipped the juniors with valuable skills and knowledge,

improving their ability to effectively communicate our spirituality through social media. ❖

Pingal Baxla, SJ (RAN)



## Moving story

While flipping through the July '24 issue of *Jivan*, I came across a captivating short story penned by Farhan Khan. The story genuinely moved me. It made me realize the significance of having courage and being willing to take risks when necessary. Additionally, it deepened my understanding of the importance of love and unity in facing life's challenges. The most valuable lesson I gleaned from this story is that in today's digital era, nothing is inherently good or bad it all boils down to how I choose to utilize it.

| Anthony Sujay, NSJ | Bengaluru

## Even closer

When I had the August issue of *Jivan* in my hand, I directly flipped to the last page and found, to my joy, the Starlight article by Jimmy Akin titled "Her Heavenly Glory". This article beautifully answers some of the questions about Our Lady's assumption. What touched me the most was the last paragraph, which highlighted the motherly concern of our glorious Mother. She may have been assumed into heavenly glory, but she did not leave us. The exact opposite happened. When she ascended to heaven, she grew even closer to all of the followers

of Christ and the entire humankind, taking her place as the Mother of all. I asked myself this question: How privileged am I to have a mother in heaven who takes care of me with such compassion?

| Edmund Sequeria, NSJ | Bengaluru

## Bitter truths of our society

Reading the short story of Fr. Sajeev, SJ (CCU), "Christmas in the red lanes" (*Jivan*, August 2024), I found the true meaning behind the mystery of so called 'city of joy'. The struggles of Chando, a religious woman who works for the daughters of sex-workers in red lanes, giving them education and spiritual nourishment as her apostolate, hammered my conscience and I felt the love and joy hidden behind the bitter reality of the world. The type of apostolate which she does for such people in such places is incredible for me and it is inexplicable in mere words. The truths which Fr. Sajeev has highlighted about human society and women's safety aroused a deep sense of concern for the vulnerable sections of our people. I appreciate this initiative of making people aware of the bitter truths of our society, as our country faces several shameless crimes against women's safety, their dignity, and human rights.

| Salmon Lakra, SJ (MAP) | Kolkata

Prayer  
Intentions for  
October '24

### For collaboration between different religious traditions.

Let us pray that believers in different religious traditions might work together to defend and promote peace, justice and human fraternity.



Pic courtesy: dreamstime.com

## “God loves the province of Vietnam!”

In most countries of the world, vocations to the religious life are few and far between. There is, however, one notable exception to this trend: Vietnam. The number of young Vietnamese entering the Jesuit novitiate each year has been stable for a long time. There are usually over 15 novices. This is also the case in several other religious congregations of men and women.

Before entering, these novices from Vietnam undergo a highly structured and demanding process known as the candidacy programme. This usually lasts from two to four years, during which the young man interested in joining the Society is accompanied not only by a Jesuit but also by a Jesuit community. Those taking part in the programme may be aged between 18 and 40, but in most cases, they are university students who are continuing their studies, while nurturing and strengthening their desire for religious life. Some have had a professional commitment for a few years before choosing religious life.



In their final year, the candidates live together in a community, called ‘Our Lady of the Way,’ in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). Some years before the pandemic, there were more than 150 candidates enrolled in the programme; now there are about 100, of whom about 30 are at the pre-novitiate stage, the year during which final discernment is made regarding entry to the novitiate.

The pre-novitiate’s director, Fr Pham Duy Anh, says, “Our team meets potential candidates to ascertain their inner motivations, and whether these motivations can be reconciled with the Ignatian way of life. Between 1975 and 2007, the conditions were not favourable and we discreetly received only three



to five candidates each year. There was a liberalisation of the context from 2007 onwards, but it was after the election of Pope Francis in 2013 that the number of candidates was much larger. Many young people applied: the Pope has been an extraordinary promoter of vocations for us! Since the pandemic, however, there have been fewer candidates.

“The majority come from traditional Catholic families. If young Catholics live in large modern cities, their priority is often finding a good job – not religious life. Those who come from the countryside will find it easier to continue practising their faith even when they are studying in the city. The fact remains that, although I can’t fully explain it, the Province of Vietnam has many vocations. God loves the Province of Vietnam!” ❖

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

Pierre Bélanger, SJ



## Joseph Podimattam, SJ (KER)

Fr Joseph Podimattam, SJ passed away in Calicut on 30 August 2024. He was laid to rest on the next day in a service officiated by Rt. Rev. Dr Varghese Chakkalakkal, Mar Remigiose Inchananiyil and the Provincial Fr. E.P. Mathew. His younger brother attended the funeral, but the older brother, 100 years, though in good health, couldn't travel all the way to Calicut.

Joseph was born in 1928 in Marangattupally, central Kerala, joined the novitiate in Calicut in 1950, was ordained in 1962, and took the Last Vows in 1967. He worked in mission stations and parishes till 1994. From then his life was giving the Exercises in religious houses, and spiritual guidance in various minor seminaries. He retired to Christ Hall, Calicut, in 2021.



A dedicated pastor for about 30 years, then a knowledgeable spiritual guide and confessor for another 20 years, Joseph was a Jesuit in the classical mould: regular in work and prayer, modest in needs to the end, and doing good to souls. He kept updating himself by reading, exercised himself by walking, and relaxed in recreations with an ever ready hearty laughter, and playing hymns on a children's keyboard in his room. About 15 years ago Fr John Vattanky observed about him: 'A man growing old gracefully.' Late in his life he insisted he should be called Joseph and not Podimattam or Podi.

And during the last three years he serenely ebbed away like the tolling of a church bell at dusk.

**Joseph Pulickal, SJ**

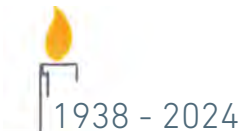


## Peter Ankush, SJ (PUN)

Fr Peter Ankush was born on 9 March 1938, at Loni. His father, Luis Ankush, later settled in Haregaon, where Fr. Peter completed his primary education. He entered the Society on 20 June 1960 and was ordained on 23 December 1972. He pronounced his final vows on August 15, 1977.

Soon after his ordination, he was appointed Assistant Parish Priest at Sangamner, Kopargaon, Shevgaon, and Newasa. Fr. Peter served as Parish Priest at Tilaknagar, Sangamner, Songaon, Rahuri, and then back at Pathardi. A veteran pastor, he reached out to serve the faithful in distant villages.

A zealous missionary and a good preacher, he visited parish village sub-centers regularly to celebrate Mass. After an active ministry in various mission stations,



he was assigned to Loyola Sadan, Shrirampur, in 2021. Fr. Peter developed the Pathardi mission campus that was started by Swami Andrade. He worked tirelessly to level the land, build the Church, boys' hostel, girls' hostel, Sisters' residence and Jesuit residence. He was always cheerful, smiling, friendly and welcoming. This won him a big circle of friends and well-wishers. His younger Jesuit brother, Fr. Paul Ankush (GOA), visited him regularly, especially to celebrate together the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul.

Fr. Peter passed away peacefully at Loyola Sadan, Shrirampur, on 13 July 2024. The next day Emeritus Bishop Lourdes Daniel celebrated the funeral Mass at St. Mary's Church, Sangamner, along with Fr. Agnelo Mascarenhas, Provincial, Fr. Paul Ankush, and others. Fr. Peter's body was laid to rest in St. Mary's cemetery.

**Anil Chakranarayan, SJ**

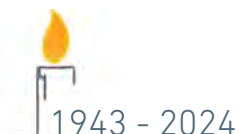


## Thomas Salve, SJ (PUN)

Fr. Thomas Salve was born in Kendal – the first Mission station of Pune Province – on 6 July 1943. He entered the Society of Jesus on 20 June 1961 and was ordained a priest on 23 December 23, 1972.

After his Bachelor in Education studies, he taught Marathi and English in the Juniorate at Xavier Training College, Belgavi. He served as Vice Principal of Loyola High School, St. Vincent School and as Principal of St. Joseph Night School. He served also as Principal of St. Xavier School, Kolhapur where he started a hostel for rural boys. He helped the Maharaja of Kolhapur to start an English medium school. For three years he served as the Principal of Our Lady of Grace High School, Bicholim, Goa and Loyola High School, Margao.

He started an Association of Headmasters there at the tehsil level, which was replicated in many other tehsils. He also organized youth festivals at the



tehsil level. The Government of Goa appointed him as consultant for its Ministry of Education. Through his intervention, Konkani was introduced as a compulsory language at the primary level in English medium schools in Goa and the primary sections of private English medium schools in Goa received government aid. Thanks to him the primary school teachers started receiving government salaries. He served his Alma Mater, Dnyanamata Vidyalaya Junior College, as Rector and Principal. This is when he established Dnyanamata Convent School with the bilingual (Marathi and English) concept. The then Maharashtra Government appreciated his innovative idea very much and planned to implement it across government schools in Maharashtra.

After retiring from schools, he held several important responsibilities. He passed away peacefully on 24 July 2024, in Pune.

**Bhauasheb Sansare, SJ**

## “Since we co-exist, we are co-responsible for harmony”

A two-day training workshop on Inter-religious Dialogue (IRD), held at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre, Santhome, Chennai, was a unique experience to all the 44 participants from 17 dioceses across Tamil Nadu. It was the first collaborative venture of three commissions, namely, Tamil Nadu Catholic Bishop’s Conference’s Commission for Evangelization and Inter-Religious Dialogue, Chennai-Mylapore archdiocese, and Spirituality and Dialogue Commission of the Jesuit Chennai Province. Fr Robin S. Seelan, SJ (CEN) was the facilitator of this workshop.

Fr Benedict Barnabas, the Regional Secretary of TNBC commission for Dialogue and Ecumenism, in his introduction at the Eucharist, pointed out the need for us to have IRD in today’s context for harmonious living. IRD is a pro-active and pre-emptive response in the emerging contexts of polarization and hatred. This is the only way forward to peace across the globe, despite the obstacles. Fr E. Manuvel, the Secretary of Evangelization and Inter-Religious Dialogue Commission, Chennai-Mylapore Archdiocese, pointed this out in his homily on the first day.

The workshop went into the various aspects of training that is needed for dialogue to be effective. The first day was spent in understanding our contexts, different worldviews, and the basics of religions. It is important to understand these aspects as well as one’s own religion quite well before venturing into dialogue with other religions. On the second day a few Church documents on IRD, the various kinds of dialogue, its dynamics, and the concrete ways to engage with other religions were discussed.

The workshop stressed our co-existence and co-responsibility. We need to co-exist with one another. Since we are interrelated beings we need to relate to others, knowing very well that they are not like us. Secondly, we need to take up responsibility for ensuring peace and harmony.

In the concluding Eucharist presided over by Bishop Lawrence Pius of Dharmapuri, the Chairman of the TNBC commission for Inter-Religious Dialogue and Ecumenism, the Bishop pointed out that we should not

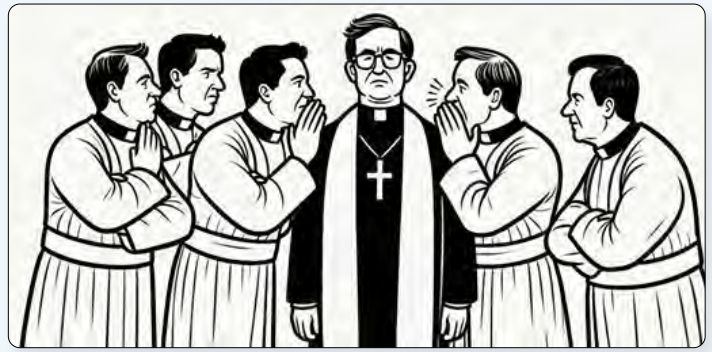


miss out on the wisdom that is found in other religions too, and it is the level of our openness and willingness to learn that determines how much we gain. The two-day workshop was well coordinated by Frs Benedict Barnabas, E. Manuel, and Robin S. Seelan, SJ, the coordinator of Spirituality and Dialogue Commission of Jesuit Chennai Province. ❖

Robin S. Seelan, SJ (CEN)



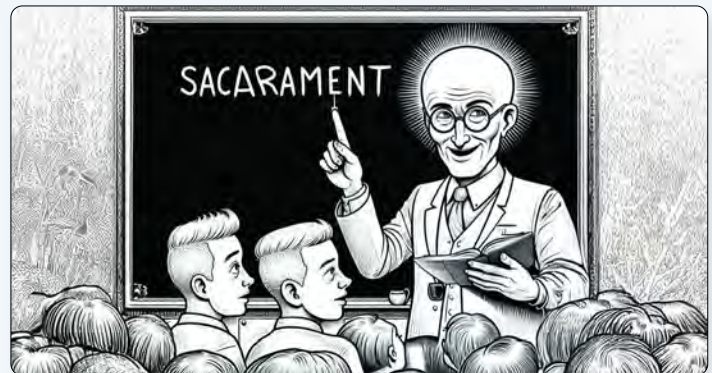
"Our young priest belongs to many vibrant communities: Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, WeChat, Twitter... The only community he is not a vibrant member of is the local SJ community."



"Why are the Golden Jubilarians arguing with the Fr Provincial?"  
 "After 50 years of vowed life, they demand a jubilee gift: three months of vows holiday."



"Our brilliant Eschatology professor has designed the exact route map for how human beings can reach heaven."  
 "True! But after the class, our cook guides him every day to reach the local railway station."



"You say you understood Symbols and Sacraments just by looking at him. How?"  
 "His shining bald head! Exterior sign of interior emptiness!"

Melwyn Pinto, SJ / Pradeep Sequeira, SJ

JESUIT HUMOUR

## VOW OF POWER-TEA

The sense of humour of the late Fr. J. B. Prabhu seldom went beyond alliterations or jumbled words. Sometimes he introduced himself as BJP by jumbling the initials of his name. Fr. Jaybee, as we used to call him, was the parish priest of Chikkakammanahalli, a small village about a mile or two from Mount St. Joseph, often a destination of the novices' evening walks. Fr. Prabhu was happy to have the company of the young novices, even if it was only for a few minutes. For want of a suitable topic for conversation, I - still a novice then - asked him if the church had any property attached to it. "What a question to ask!" he retorted with feigned annoyance, "I have no proper tea, and you are asking me about property!"





## Exploring Various Spiritual Paths

In 1984, I got a sabbatical leave and travelled throughout Asia, living in ashrams, meditation centres, Tibetan gompas and Thai wats. I took Vipassana meditation instruction from the Burmese Buddhist teacher, Sri S. N. Goenka, and a yoga course with Swami Amaldas, who was Fr Bede Griffiths' senior disciple. I took *brahmacharya* with Fr Bede in 1985. I sat in zazen meditation with Jesuit Zen Masters Ama Samy and Hugo Enomiya Lassalle. It was a sabbatical of saturation in the Asian-Hindu-Buddhist world, which I entered as fully as I could.

I wondered if I could realize what my maternal grandfather had indirectly taught me in the way he related to people and all of Nature. As John Scotus Eriugena said, "Every visible or invisible creature is a theophany or appearance of God."

Later, returning to rural parish life in Australia, I noticed significant shifts had taken place during my sabbatical. Becoming more at ease with myself and others, I had more energy. I felt effortlessly drawn to a simpler lifestyle, with a regular practice of meditation. I saw in my inter-spiritual journey, a transformation of consciousness, a new mode of awareness and of being. Meditation practice for me has evolved with elements from several sources. Sitting up to sixteen hours daily on a ten-day Vipassana meditation course, I learnt from the Burmese Buddhist teacher, Sri Goenka simple awareness of sensations in my body, just attending to these sensations without either clinging to them or pushing them away.

While new to me, this practice dovetailed with earlier practices of meditation and prayer. In reading *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and then the writings of St. John of the Cross, I found descriptions, in a Christian framework, of a kind of awareness much like that of the vipassana. I had learned methods of stilling the restless, scattered "monkey mind" (St. Teresa of Avila refers to this as "the fool in the house"), thus allowing the emergence and awareness of reality deeper than words.

I identified with descriptions by the twelfth century Carthusian Prior, Guigo II. He tells us, "Reading is an exercise of the outward senses, meditation is concerned with the inward understanding, prayer is concerned



Pic courtesy: kimkim.com

with desire, contemplation outstrips every faculty. The first degree is proper to beginners, the second to proficient, the third to devotees, the fourth to the blessed." The goal was to come to the simple wordless state which Guigo calls contemplation, in which there is an "arousing of affections" like sorrow for sin, gratitude, adoration, and more especially love, similar to the strong Bhakti tradition in Hindu piety, the cultivating of absolute trust in Pure Land Buddhism, and the Buddhist practice of *metta*, or loving-kindness meditation.

Through contact with Asian practice I first moved toward the goal of prayer, beyond just words and concepts. By such simple practices as watching my breath, observing sensations in my body, practicing hatha yoga with emphasis on simple immediate awareness, and by repetitive silent repetition of a "mantra" with no analysis of the words, I felt it possible to move into the later stages of the process Guigo described.

Secondly, love emerged out of awareness, without making its cultivation the first object of concern. Love emerges in various ways. In the East, much attention is given to developing awareness and non-attachment, neither clinging to what is there nor trying to get rid of it. This is central to Zen which is my central daily practice, and for which I remain deeply grateful. ❖

*Rev. Dr. Meath Conlan is a Counsellor and Adult Educator. He travels frequently to India. He can be contacted at [meathconlan@icloud.com](mailto:meathconlan@icloud.com)*

WELL SAID

**“Everyone can always learn something. Every country has different riches. For example, in Timor-Leste, I saw so many children. In Singapore, I didn’t see very many. Maybe that’s something to learn from. Children are the future. Think about that.”**

**- Pope Francis**



Picture courtesy: globetimes.com