

September, 2024

JIVAN

NEWS AND VIEWS OF JESUITS IN INDIA

Where has 'justice' gone?



| Jesuits give me hope

| JCAP Jesuits come to Bodhi Zendo

Mary

What beauty and what meaning
Lies hidden in that name.
Though many times I hear it,
It never sounds the same.

It often makes me think
Of the radiance on your face,
When the Angel Gabriel said,
“Hail Mary, full of grace.”

Or I see you smiling sweetly
At the crib where He was born,
And softly humming lullabies
On that first Christmas morn.

Sometimes I seem to sense
The joy you must have felt,
When you were crowned in glory
As before your God you knelt.

So, Mother dearest, pray for me
Lest from thy path I roam,
Keep me ever close to Jesus
And bring me safely home.

Courtesy: <https://udayton.edu/>



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

Plant love, let it sprout!

We are divided by caste, creed, colour, and country, but what unites us is love, kindness. Mr. Farhan Khan's short story titled "Against All Odds" in the July '24 issue of *Jivan* is a testament to these words. It gives us a clear image of religious discrimination and extremism in our country and helps us understand how prevalent they are, even in cosmopolitan cities.

We will be able to call ourselves Indians only when we grow in acceptance, understanding, and respect for other faiths. Only then can we claim to have 'Unity in Diversity.' Instead, what comes to mind are conflicts, honour killings, and violence against couples as a result of inter-religious or inter-caste marriages.

Farhan Khan has wonderfully narrated the plight of the children of these marriages in our society. Yet, we are aware that there are people of compassion and kindness. As the writer states, "Even in the face of hatred, the goodness of humanity would prevail, and love would eventually conquer hate."

It is of paramount importance that we let the seeds of love and kindness grow and weed out all kinds of discrimination and hate in our society. "Love and kindness are never wasted," says Barbara De Angelis.

| Alfwin Cross, SJ (CEN) | Trichy

A new dawn

The poem 'Let my country awake' by Rabindranath Tagore came to my mind as I was reading the article, 'A long-haul journey to Hope!' written by Cedric Prakash, SJ in the July '24 issue of *Jivan*. I feel soon we will have really *Ache Din*. The day of liberation from all the atrocities of cow vigilantes, hate mongers, and those who want to divide and deceive our people will come. I am eagerly waiting for the fall of the dangerous ideology spread by some groups. A new dawn will rise for the Adivasis, Dalits, migrants and the backward

classes. Let us pray with hope that our country may awake fully from its deep slumber.

| Anthony Jackson, SJ | Thiruvananthapuram

Her trials and triumphs

After reading Prof. Gigy Joseph Koottummel's article "Her Mission of Love" in the July '24 issue of *Jivan*, I was deeply moved by the portrayal of St. Mother Teresa's life and her unwavering commitment to serving the poorest of the poor. Her life reminds us of the power of love and faith in overcoming adversity. Her life-mission was marked by selfless dedication, compassion and love for others. Prof. Koottummel's reflection not only offer a glimpse into the trials and triumphs of this remarkable saint but also challenges us to look beyond ourselves and extend compassion to those in need. It is a reminder that one person's love and faith can change the world. One of Mother Teresa's quotes "We shall never know all the good that a simple smile can do" inspires me to lead a life of smiles, goodness and kindness.

| Denzil Pinto, NSJ | Bengaluru

Deeply moved

Prof. Gigy Joseph Koottummel's column on the film, *Her Mission of Love*, in the July '24 issue of *Jivan*, moved me deeply. I was struck St. Mother Teresa's life and her unwavering commitment to serve the destitutes. Her life reminds us of the power of love and faith in overcoming adversity. Her service was marked by selfless dedication, compassion and love for others. Prof. Koottummel's reflection not only offers a glimpse into the trials and triumphs of a remarkable saint but also challenges us to look beyond ourselves and serve the poorest. It is a reminder that one person's love and faith can change the world. He life continues to inspire generations of Indians.

| Jayanth Christy M, NSJ | Bengaluru

Prayer
Intentions for
September '24

FOR THE CRY OF THE EARTH

We pray that each one of us will hear and take to heart the cry of the Earth and of victims of natural disasters and climactic change, and that all will undertake to personally care for the world in which we live.



Pope's Worldwide
Prayer Network



Pic courtesy: titantreecare.org



WHAT DO YOU SAY?

STANY D'SOUZA, SJ
President, JCSA

Shepherds who care like a father

"I pray daily that you may go to hell." It was not an utterance of someone in a raging duel. No! Rather, it was what a Jesuit told his Major Superior during the Manifestation of the Conscience.

What makes some Jesuits so angry with their Superiors? Are some of the superiors so very terrible? Or perhaps is it because the Superiors demand us to be accountable?

Whatever it may be, the fact is that the superiors are often under the scanner. Their words are carefully weighed, movements closely monitored and their actions critically scrutinized.

Who, then, can be a good Superior? Some say the introverts make good Superiors because they are persons of depth, they listen more, they have greater self-awareness, sensitivity to subtleties and stronger resilience, etc.

Some others say that the extroverts make better superiors, because they are comfortable in unknown terrains, places and company, they can electrify a place just with their very presence, they tend to be more daring, etc.

Whatever be one's psychological category, what really makes one a good superior is one's attitude. Psalm 78:70-72 elucidates certain marks of an effective superior. The religious superior is chosen by God from a simple background and given a mission. Hence, the religious authority is not one's personal achievement. It is a gift from God. Therefore, the important task of religious superiors is to be shepherds with a caring attitude like a father/mother.

Responding to a question about the best quality of the greatest leader, Pope Francis said the following: 'It is to create leadership'. Good leaders do not centralize power. They delegate authority and raise a new generation of leaders.

During the farewell to his superior a Jesuit said: 'No one felt inferior in his presence'. How can one be a superior who can create such an atmosphere where all can become leaders?

Great leaders are not merely managers who govern by the rule book alone. St Ignatius is one such great superior. He raised some of the best leaders in the Church. What worked well for him was what he indicated in the Constitutions: "He should be closely united with God our Lord and have familiarity with him in prayer and in all his operations". The spiritual perspective gave him better perceptions to guide and lead people in an effective way.

All of us expect good superiors but good superiors do not fall from the sky. Let us pray for good Superiors and cooperate with them to serve our mission of reconciliation and justice. What do you say?



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

M.A. JOE ANTONY, SJ
Editor

Do you dialogue?

You must have heard of this famous Hans Kung quote: "There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. There will be no peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions."

Therefore dialogue between religions becomes indispensable for world peace. Thank God, we Jesuits seem to have realized its vital importance. If you read this issue of *Jivan* carefully, you will see that it has a lot of material on inter-religious dialogue.

I was grateful I could be a part of the meet that took place on 5-8 August '24 at Bodhi Zendo. It was actually the annual meeting of Buddhist Dialogue and Studies Group (BDSG) of JCAP (Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific). In a wise, generous gesture they decided to have it this year at Bodhi Zendo, the Zen meditation centre run by the Madurai province Jesuits, in Perumal Malai in the Kodail hills of Tamil Nadu. Read about it on p.16. On p. 17 you have excerpts from the address of Fr. Stany D'Souza, President, JCSA at the inaugural function of this meeting.

You'll see reports on a seminar (p. 20), and the meeting in Berlin, Germany for the Jesuits sent to dialogue with Muslims (p.20). This issue carries also an interview of Helene Ijaz, a Catholic writer married to a Muslim for more than 50 years (See p. 9,10).

Godfrey D'Lima, SJ does some radical reimagining, when he suggests that "membership of the Society can be more inclusive: Christian, Non-Christian, All peoples of goodwill. The type of membership we now have requires formal membership in the Catholic Church, pronouncement of traditional vows, accepting the clerical state, and living in a homogenous community. Would a change of norms of membership bring a new stimulus to the Society's identity and mission?" (See p. 11,12)

Joseph Lobo, SJ is perturbed, seeing 'justice' missing in our speech and recent documents. He thinks we now prefer "peace and reconciliation." He says, "This seems to reflect something more than what meets the eye! No one can deny the need for peace and reconciliation. However, the shift mentioned above raises a nagging question: Have we, over the decades, softened our commitment to the cause of justice?" (See p. 7,8)

Alex Mascarenhas, SJ ponders on the Vinesh Phogat issue and asks if we worry more about winning than what is morally right (See p. 15). What do you think?

Jesuits mark 30 years of service in Bangladesh

16 July 2024 will be remembered as a momentous occasion in the history of Bangladesh Jesuit Mission of Calcutta Jesuit Province because for the first time ever, two second-year novices pronounced their First Vows in the Society of Jesus at Arrupe Jesuit Novitiate, Mathbari, Gazipur. The newly-built Novitiate building was also blessed and inaugurated on the same day.

Novices Amit Rozario and Samuel Murmu pronounced their First Vows in the presence of Fr. James Arjen Tete, the Provincial of Calcutta Province, Fr Ripon Richard Rozario, the Mission Superior of Bangladesh Jesuit Mission cum Director of novices, fellow Jesuits, family members and friends.

The profession of First Vows coincided with the feast of Our Lady of Carmel, an apt moment to highlight the importance of Mary as the Mother of the Society of Jesus. During the homily, Fr. Arjen reminded Amit and Samuel that as Jesuits, we know who we are by looking at Jesus (GC 35). He invited the newly-professed to welcome and serve all in the embrace of universal brotherhood and urged them to emulate the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, just as St Ignatius did all through his life.

At the end of the Eucharistic celebration, Fr. Provincial presented them with a copy of the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, the Vows Cross and a rosary. During the reception that followed the Eucharist, the newly-professed of the Bangladesh Mission of Calcutta Province expressed their gratitude and reflected on the blessings they received during the last two years of novitiate.

Earlier that morning, the new novitiate building was blessed by Fr. Tete. The novitiate in Bangladesh had started exactly two years ago on the same day with just three novices in a very simple hut. Earlier the Bangladeshi Novices were formed in the novitiates of Calcutta and Sri Lanka. At present, there are six novices in the Novitiate.

The idea of the novitiate in Bangladesh began during the Covid-19 pandemic when the Mission could not send its novices to Sri Lanka. The growth in local vocations was another factor in the decision to put up a new building the novitiate.

This year, the Jesuits in Bangladesh mark 30 years of their presence in the country. However, it all began in the late 16th century when the Jesuit missionaries, for the very first time, brought the Gospel to this part of the then Indian subcontinent.



They built the first church in Iswaripur, Satkhira in 1600. In 1602, Fr. Francisco Fernandez, SJ, was killed and he is considered to be the first missionary to suffer martyrdom in Bangladesh.

Since then, the Jesuits have been at the service of the Church in Bangladesh in different ways. At present, there are twelve Jesuit Priests (ten Bangladeshi, a Belgian and an Indian), a Deacon and two Regents serving in Bangladesh in the fields of spiritual assistance, education, pastoral care, refugee service, faith and youth formation. Nine scholastics are in various stages of formation in various nations.

In Bangladesh where 91.1% of the total population is Muslim and only about 0.4% is Christian, the presence of the Jesuits has increased the hopes of the local Catholics. Jesuits are committed to serve the Lord despite various difficult situations in this part of the globe. Young souls like Amit and Samuel are rays of that hope. ❖

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

Eliash Sarkar SJ



Where has ‘justice’ gone?



raises a nagging question: Have we, over the decades, softened our commitment to the cause of justice? It would seem so, because the Superior General, Fr Arturo Sosa Abascal himself, in his recent masterly encapsulation of the State of the Society of Jesus, generally called, *De Statu Societatis* (DSS), appears to lament that the preferential option for the poor no longer seems to enthuse and energise most of the Jesuits today, some of whom would prefer to work in posh and prestigious institutions rather than live among, like and for the poor (cf. Chapters III & V), and he dearly longs for a renewed passion and compassion for the peripheries in the Society.

“**Prophet Jeremiah had cried out: “They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, ‘Peace, peace’, when there is no peace” (Jer 6:14; 8:11).**”

Recently I have seen a glaring change in the Jesuit vocabulary. We seem to have moved from the “Service of Faith and Promotion of Justice” (GC 32) to “Our Mission: Justice, Culture and Interreligious Dialogue” (GC 34), and then to “Justice and Reconciliation” (GC 36). A more recent option seems to be “Peace and Reconciliation,” which I have heard in some Jesuit forums. This seems to reflect something more than what meets the eye!

No one can deny the need for peace and reconciliation. However, the shift mentioned above

Indeed, GC 32 defined the intrinsic relationship between faith and justice: faith that does justice and the biblical justice as an authentic expression of one’s faith. It called for the “service of faith and of that justice which the faith itself demands”. GCs 34 and 36 explicated broader dimensions of both faith and justice: dialogue and a three-fold reconciliation respectively. However, the more recent talk on “peace and reconciliation” in some Jesuit forums, which is gaining ground, despite indicating the dire need of the hour, nevertheless, seems to indicate a typical bourgeoisie concern.

If by 'peace' is meant absence of all conflict, tranquility despite everything, and serenity of the graveyard, then it is not something we can promote. President John F Kennedy once put it, "not the peace of the brave but the silence of the grave", that is, peace at any cost, even turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to the outrageous exclusion and exploitation of a huge majority of the oppressed, then the shift mentioned above should certainly ring an alarm. If, on the other hand, 'peace' is a faithful translation of biblical *Shalom*, then, that is another name for justice – a concept that seems to steadily slip away from our vision and mission statements, except for the famous three-fold reconciliation of GC 35.

In every epoch of human history, the ruling elite desire peace, which is an absence of all opposition and hindrance to their avaricious amassing of the earth's resources at the expense of the impoverished masses. The Pax Romana - and its modern avatars - is the metaphor for such peace. Such a 'peace' can comfortably co-exist with injustice, exploitation, genocide, ecological depredation, colonisation of whole continents and obliteration of whole populations – the foundation stones of many an empire.

It is against such peace that Prophet Jeremiah had cried out: "They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, 'Peace, peace', when there is no peace" (Jer 6:14; 8:11). The ruling elite, both across the globe and within each nation, certainly would promote such peace, so that their "buying and selling" (Rev 13:17) – the systemic injustice, exploitation of the poor, pernicious populism, poisonous polarization and pervasive post truth manipulation – can go unabated and unchallenged.

In this context, it is relevant to inquire, if several 'peace initiatives' and 'peace studies' of our times truly address the justice issues at all! In other words, are they merely treating the symptoms or addressing their

root causes? In fact, many a modern-day government organizes myriad types of entertainment for its citizens, so that they may sedate and de-sensitize the oppressed by diverting their attention from the burning issues of the day. Thereby they ensure the 'peace and tranquility' that such entertainments offer, as a convenient climate in which they can continue the 'buying and selling' unquestioned. This 'peace' is in fact a monstrous caricature of the Lord's Shalom.

Indeed, the Risen Lord offered peace to his disciples; but they recognized him only when he showed them his wounded hands and feet (Lk 24:36-39). The Peace of the Risen Lord is by no means bereft of pain, but is gifted to us precisely in the midst of pain and conflict. This paradox of the Cross needs to be maintained as long as we live in history and have not reached the eschaton.

Are we Jesuits, then, walking into a trap of the exploitative and evil empire by steadily and gradually diluting, devaluing and downgrading justice from our vocabulary, seminars,

workshops, vision and mission statements, province options, and so on? Should we not instead re-visit the justice of the Gospel, and renew our commitment to its cause in both words and deeds? Or has the commitment to the cause of justice become so big a price to be paid in recent years that we tend to go for more 'comfortable' and less daring, difficult and dangerous options?

More importantly, have some of our works covertly or overtly, by design or by default, aligned with the 'buying and selling' of the empire, and we have learnt to use the language of the empire, perhaps without even being aware of it? Some serious introspection is certainly due! ❖

Joseph Lobo, SJ (KAR) is the former director of Karnataka Regional Theological Extension Center (Bangalore), former director of Human Resource Development Center (Bangalore). Currently teaches systematic theology at Jnanadeepa Institute of Philosophy and Theology, Pune.

The ruling elite, both across the globe and within each nation, certainly would promote such peace, so that their "buying and selling" (Rev 13:17) – the systemic injustice and exploitation of the poor can go unabated and unchallenged.

How can interfaith marriages thrive?



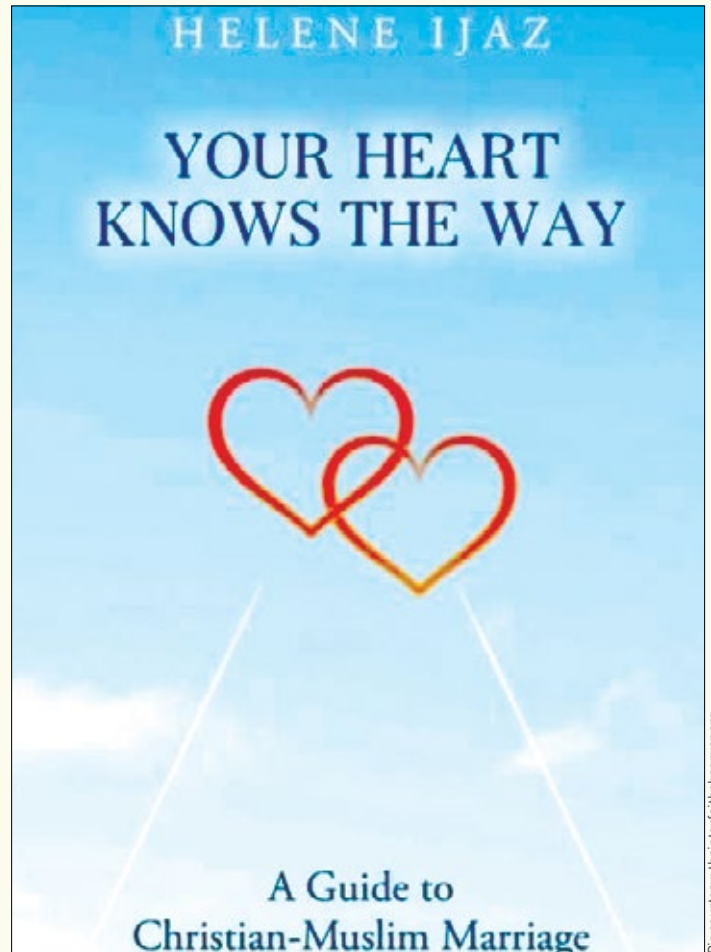
Helene Ijaz, Ph.D., is an educator, mediator, and consultant in cross-cultural, interracial, and interfaith relations. A Roman Catholic Christian, she has been married to a Muslim for over fifty years. In her conversation with **Joseph Victor Edwin, SJ**, she shares the graces and challenges of interfaith marriages that involve Christian and Muslim partners.

In your book, *Your Heart Knows the Way: A Guide to Christian-Muslim Marriage*, you explore the significance of interfaith marriage in the Western world. Could you share insights on the book's relevance in the context of Western society?

As a result of globalization, there has been a shift in the population of many Western countries from culturally, religiously, and racially largely homogenous societies to multicultural, multireligious, and multiracial societies. This has created greater opportunities for people from different religions and cultures to interact, get to know each other, and intermarry. Some people have become more open to and accepting of religious and cultural diversity and intermarriage.

However, others continue to adhere to exclusivist religion and ethnocentrism. They view interfaith marriage as a threat to their religion and cultural identity. Christian-Muslim marriages are widely frowned upon due to the long-standing adversarial relationship between the two faith communities. Stereotypes about Muslims abound and are constantly fueled by events at a local, national, and international level. Religious leaders in Christianity and Islam discourage interreligious marriage out of concern about the long-term effect on the faith life of members of their religion. Many Muslim immigrants to the West discourage their children from marrying outside their faith for fear of losing their identity, including their language, culture, and religion.

These social dynamics create much pressure and tension for interfaith couples. The book analyzes various religious and social factors that can impact a Christian-Muslim marriage, their sources, and ways of addressing them. It argues that emphasizing human differences creates division and conflict among people. By opening ourselves to people different from us and learning about their values, beliefs, practices, and traditions we become enriched and grow as a human being.



Living in an interfaith context can significantly influence your commitment to your own faith. How has your marriage shaped your faith?

Living in a Christian-Muslim family has shifted my focus from unquestioning obedience to Church teachings about Jesus and related religious precepts and practices to seeking to live by the spiritual teachings of Jesus: his message of God's love for all of God's creation, including all human beings, regardless of religion, ethnicity, gender, and social status; his calling us to search for a deeper awareness and understanding of God's ways and thereby grow as human beings; his focus on human relationships instead of religious laws,

and mutual love and respect, compassion, fairness, and justice, and mercy and forgiveness as guiding principles.

I have discovered similar teachings in the Qur'an and its call to surrender to God and recognize there is no compulsion in religion (2:256). I believe God is greater than any one religion. The goal of religion is to help us grow and become transformed into the human beings we are meant to be. Much of mainstream Christianity and Islam follow the exclusivist approach to religion. But this conflicts with the core spiritual teachings of Jesus and the Qur'an. It is profoundly divisive and has a particularly negative impact on interfaith couples.

What would you identify as critical elements contributing to a successful interfaith marriage?

Critical elements contributing to a successful interfaith marriage include a couple's mutual love and respect, the equitable treatment of their religions, and a shared focus on God. Spouses must be authentic in their faith, open to otherness, and willing to learn about, respect, and honor each other's faith traditions. Their relationship needs to be internally not externally driven. It is important for both sides to critically reflect on the implications of the religious rules on intermarriage in their own and each other's faith community and how they can maintain religious integrity, given potential pressures by their partner to surrender their faith and engage in a false conversion.

To build a harmonious relationship, husband and wife must feel free to be and grow as who they are. At the same time, they must find a fit between their different ways of seeing and experiencing the world and their different religious beliefs and practices. This is often not easy.

A couple can build mutual understanding and trust through effective communication. Cooperation and

joint problem-solving promote a strong partnership and bring issues out in the open before they seriously affect the relationship. For an interfaith couple to effectively communicate entails moving back and forth between their own world and their partner's world and actively engaging with each other's beliefs, practices, and experiences.

I believe God is greater than any one religion. The goal of religion is to help us grow and become transformed into the human beings we are meant to be.

Different rules, norms, and social practices in the faith traditions of husband and wife can affect a couple's daily life. If one partner insists that theirs is the only right way and must be followed, this can lead to tension and conflict. To build a loving, harmonious relationship, spouses must distinguish between what is essential and nonessential to the practice of their faith, balance

each other's religious requirements and needs, and be willing to compromise on nonessential issues. The many spiritual values shared across Christianity and Islam can provide a source of unity for husband and wife.

In a society where family structures are increasingly vulnerable, how can interfaith families serve as a refuge that upholds faith values?

To build a loving, harmonious relationship, spouses must distinguish between what is essential and nonessential to the practice of their faith.

My experience suggests that interfaith couples that succeed in effectively managing their many challenges rely primarily on principles such as mutual love and respect, the fair, equitable, compassionate, and caring treatment of everyone involved, and paying due attention to their needs and aspirations, regardless of the faith tradition to which they belong. These principles are foundational to a religiously and spiritually informed life. They

reflect universal human values that positively impact any relationship. They transcend dualistic thinking and any effort to promote oneself or assert one's superiority. They affirm and honor otherness, while acknowledging the interconnectedness and interdependence of all human beings and striving for unity, balance, peace, and harmony. Such an approach may well serve as a model for other families with vulnerable family structures. ❖

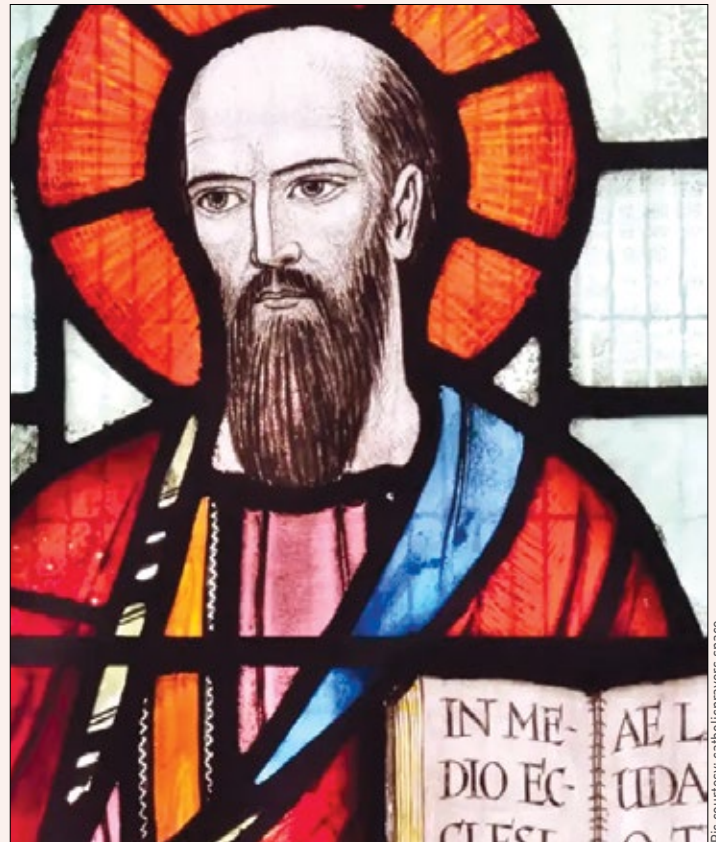


Can non-Christians become Jesuits?

Reimagining & Restructuring



Pic courtesy: northmebourncatholic.org.au



Pic courtesy: catholicprayers.space

The talk about reimagining of the life and mission of the Society of Jesus comes from a variety of perceptions of our identity and mission. Some say, our numbers are falling so it is time to organize differently. Some point to the need for greater relevance in our apostolic efforts, some even suggest that an organization need not exist for ever and it can be closed once its effectiveness and relevance are over.

Different developments are possible for the Society of Jesus to witness to its charisms and place these at the service of the human family. These are some of my reimaginings of the Jesuit life and mission:

Membership of the Society can be more inclusive: Christian, Non-Christian, All peoples of goodwill. The type of membership we now have requires formal membership in the Catholic Church, pronouncement of traditional vows, accepting the clerical state, and living in a homogenous community. Would a change of norms of membership bring a new stimulus to the Society's identity and mission? The norms and types of membership should have more to do with Gospel values and needs of God's world than the practices inherited from a bygone age.

However, the resources of the Society as they are now deployed for the training and well-being

of present day Jesuits will not suffice to take care of all the needs of a widening membership. The economics of such plural membership will prove challenging. In a way we have to promote more Societies of Jesus with different kinds of persons participating than one monolithic organization. The synodal spirit that the Church fosters today makes possible reimagining a religious organization with varied membership centred on the mission of Jesus.

Mission of the Jesuits: General Congregations have called upon Jesuits to focus on different goals ranging in the near past from working for faith and justice, to culture, to indigenisation, or making community the locus of mission, etc. Jesuits are appreciated for their range of aptitudes. Popes recognise that Jesuits can be pioneers.

But the question is: what is the mission going to focus on today? What do the life and teaching of Jesus tell us about our identity and ministry? In the light of the needs of today's world what are Jesuits going to work at? If we don't present a corporate thrust to and merely drift along, filling ad hoc roles that are defunct, will we attract new membership? Today is there a cause worth living and dying for which affects human survival. It is not enough to say among ourselves: We think youth or spirituality or psycho-spiritual wellbeing is our priority. Is there some Gospel inspired task related to urgent human needs in the Magis perspective which means the greater need for the greater glory of God?

Reimagining our wealth and possessions: Like all formal institutions of the Catholic Church, Jesuits too possess land, properties, and finances all over the world. Can we make a radical commitment to use these as common resources to alleviate human need rather than hold them for some nebulous future plan which may never see the light of day? How does our wealth help us in dynamic service of humankind? Or are our possessions a scandal to those who see us sit on disproportionate assets with no determination to use them for alleviating mass human deprivation?

Re-organising our "territories": This is another constant refrain that we hear. Europe has consolidated, America too, so shouldn't we in India follow them? There are strong opponents to this thinking. Forming combinations of provinces without regard for the socio-cultural specifics of different regions may not result in apostolic effectiveness. Small task forces that inculturate and immerse into the challenges of specific areas may be more apostolically effective than bigger and generalized organisational units.

Reimagining our territorial organisation should lead us to strengthen the old practice of sharing local Jesuit expertise with any other province in need of it rather than one administrative bureaucracy being amalgamated with another.

Role of centralized structures: Reimagining the Society may imply re-examination of the role played by the centralized structures in the Society. Can we move to greater autonomy of different Jesuit groupings rather than depending on a remote administration? Is a more decentralized Society the need of the hour? Have we to set up more effective indigenous leadership systems based on contextual needs?

If local Jesuit communities cannot reimagine a new apostolic identity and strategy, there is very little the superstructure of Jesuit administration will be able to do.

Reimagining has to incorporate robust social analyses – not mere prayer services. The apostles had their debates and disagreements. We cannot escape these human processes by taking ourselves to idyllic surroundings to discern without debate and discussion.

Reimagining must be down to earth. So it will respond to the here and now possibilities as God guides us to respond. We must take our cue from the living Gospel of Jesus and the voice of the Spirit in humankind. ❖

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We are called to prepare the world's leaders

(Michael J. Garanzini, SJ, President, Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) talks to our Roman correspondent)

Michael J. Garanzini, S.J. began his tenure as president of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) on 1 July 2020. Earlier he served as Secretary for Higher Education of the Society of Jesus, and Chair of the Board of Directors for the International Association of Jesuit Universities (IAJU). Fr Garanzini served as president of Loyola University, Chicago, for 14 years from 2001 to 2015. Under his leadership, Loyola grew in national recognition as an innovator in higher education, thanks to the establishment of Arrupe College, the first Jesuit community college in the United States. Fr Garanzini entered the Society of Jesus in 1971 and was ordained as a priest in 1980.



It was a scholastic who was in studies at the University who, one day, asked me what I planned to do after graduating and I responded that I wanted to be a teacher, perhaps in high school. “Anything more?” he asked, rather innocently. That began a conversation which pushed me to explain “the more” that I wanted in life, not just becoming a teacher, but someone who takes knowledge seriously and has a passion for imparting it. I wanted to help people, young people, in any way I could and thought being a counselor would also be a way to be more and do more.

He suggested in that conversation I might think of “doing it all.” By the end of senior year, the possibility that I might do many things and become someone with the ability to impact people’s lives was possible in the Society of Jesus, like the teachers and administrators I admired.

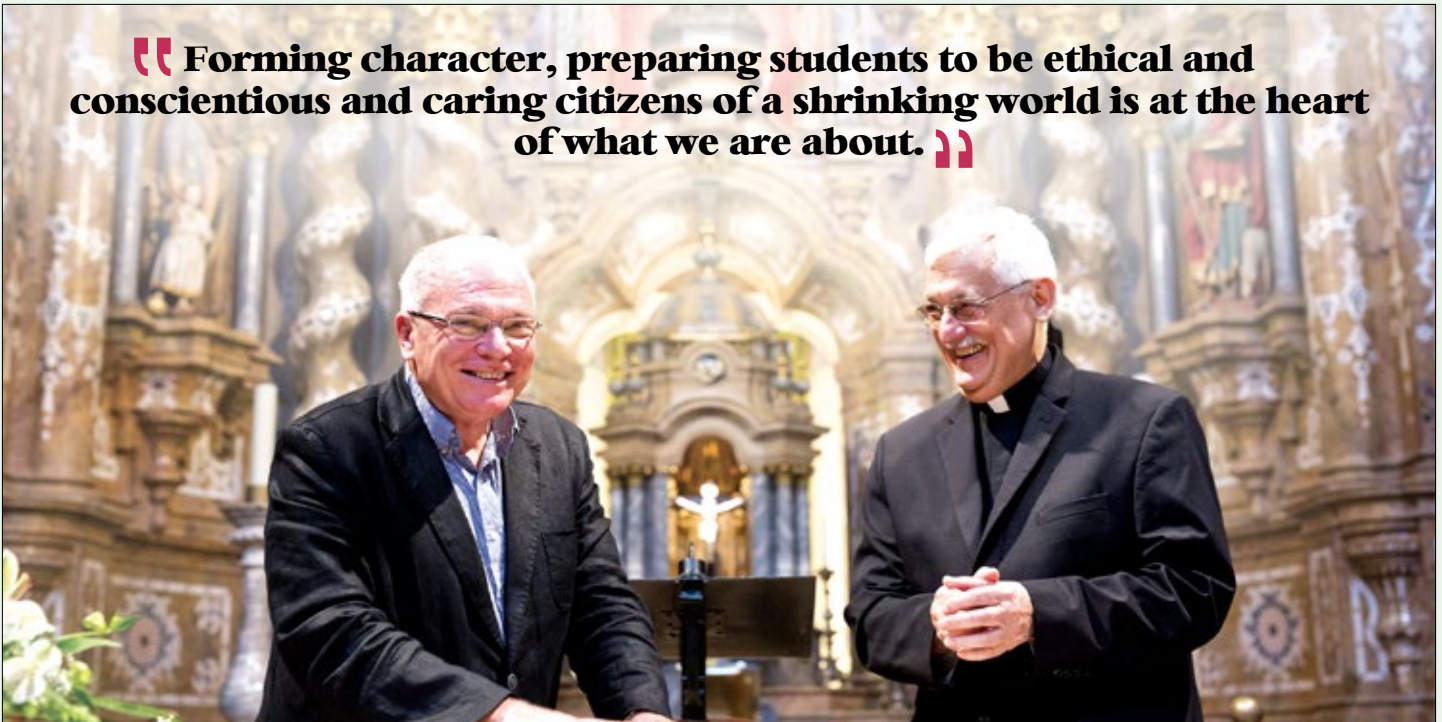
What made you choose Higher Education as your field of apostolate?

After graduating, I entered the Novitiate and learned more about the Society’s long-standing commitment to the education of young people, and the Spiritual Exercises that keep one grounded. The young Jesuits in the formation program with me, as well as the younger Jesuits ahead of us in

What made you join the Society of Jesus?

When I was an undergraduate student at St. Louis University, I was fortunate to become involved in student causes and worked with several of the University’s Jesuit administrators. I had several Jesuit professors, who were excellent teachers and they inspired me, too. I was not sure how they lived -Jesuit communities were more restricted in those days - but I was attracted to their intellectual depth and their sense of “common cause,” a sense that they were all working for the same thing: us students.

Forming character, preparing students to be ethical and conscientious and caring citizens of a shrinking world is at the heart of what we are about.



formation, communicated a real sense of purpose and an enthusiasm for depth and risk-taking. We were being prepared to develop all our skills and take a chance on trying something new.

Over the years, as a graduate student, then studying for the priesthood and finally being prepared professionally to not only do counseling and therapy but also to teach it, the opportunity to impact the lives of students has simply expanded. The meaning and evidence of the “Magis” became clearer and clearer.

What do you think are the real benefits of Jesuit education?

The Society’s assignments have expanded my awareness of the essential features and benefits of a Jesuit education. Forming character, preparing students to be ethical and conscientious and caring citizens of a shrinking world is at the heart of what we are about. This work is fundamentally grounded in a faith that God is at work in each member of the community and in the world that is handing us new challenges each day, as well as perennial challenges, like living a life of meaning and impact. Those of us in education work to achieve this every day and have the benefit, the fortune, the grace to see this extended through



the lives of the students we send out from our institutions.

What are Jesuits called to do today?

Looking around the world today, with its social, political, moral challenges, it is clear to me that the world is hoping for a new generation that is courageous enough to stand up for truth, to reject the arbitrary use of power and to insist that we take care of those who have less resources and much less power to build a life of dignity for themselves, their family and community. We’re called on to do what we have been doing for 450 years, preparing the world’s leaders, only to do it better. ❖



Should We Win at Any Cost?

The media have made us feel that the failure of Vinesh Phogat to win a medal in the Paris Olympics is an injustice done to her. With that mood prevailing, anyone who disagrees with this theory may be made to feel that he or she is an anti-national by the troll army. The craving for medals, the need to win, acquiring name and fame may have made us blind to see the harsh reality of falling morality in sports.

Media are highlighting the point that disqualifying Vinesh for just 100 gram overweight in the 50 kg category wrestling is cruel, if not wrong. They completely ignore the fact that someone else was disqualified for 50 gram overweight earlier. Is it because that the other one was not an Indian?

The media have let us know that Vinesh's average weight was always around 57 kg. In all the bouts prior to the final she managed to bring her weight down to 50 kg or less before the bout but failed to do so for the finals. Can she blame anyone else for this failure? Doesn't everyone know that wherever you fix a cut-off, the possibility of missing it by a whisker is never ruled out?

The media's next line of defense is that she has won all the previous bouts up to her final match without violating any rules. So, she deserves at least a silver medal. Though the logic sounds right, prevailing rules disqualify the participant with a retrospective effect. So, there was no injustice done to her at all. It is the prerogative of the Court of Arbitration of Sports (CAS) to decide and its decision is final. But we have just learnt that CAS has dismissed her appeal.

But it will not settle the moral debate involved in such actions. The real issue in this entire episode is morality in sports. Nowadays one can make a career in sports and so there is a lot of professional training involved. The high cost of training makes 'winning at any cost' the main objective and makes sports people lose morality in the bargain. That has made 'use of unfair means' to win acceptable, as long as you are not caught. Some argue that everyone is doing it. If one is caught, they try to justify their actions by pointing an accusing finger at everyone else, with the media converting it into a nationalism issue.

Let us face the moral question straight: Is it morally right if a person of average weight of 57 kg is allowed to compete in 'Under 50 kg' category by reducing their weight artificially? Is it not unfair to all those participants whose average weight was always less than 50 kg naturally or to all those who were above 50 kg but could not afford the cost of artificial weight reduction? If her average weight was 49 kg and she weighed 50 kg just before the finals, she can at



Pic courtesy: indiatoday.in

least have our sympathy, though she still would have been disqualified under the prevailing rules.

I remember reading once that some of the women athletes go for pregnancy just before the event and then go for abortion soon after. The logic behind doing so is that their energy level goes up in such a process. Can this be justified?

During my days as a school teacher in Jharkhand I found it difficult to believe what I saw with my own eyes. In district level tournaments, many school teams would have ex-students too in their teams! Players would not hesitate to get the wisdom tooth extracted to cheat on their age. This happened eight years ago. In the 'Under 14 Football' team of my own school there were two students studying 12th std. When I confronted the headmaster and asked him how it was possible for an under 14 student to be studying 12th std, the answer I got was "Everyone is doing it." His answer was right, but his action was wrong. I recall that in one such event, a Jesuit school's football team had half the team made up of ex-students!

What is sad and shocking here is the compromises we are willing to make for the sake of name and fame, forgetting the fact that when the truth comes out, we will be the villains. We were the torch-bearers of morality in our schools once upon a time. Our schools have a good reputation mainly because of our commitment to morality and discipline. We must have the courage to say what is wrong is wrong, even if everybody is doing it and what is right is right even if nobody is doing it. It is better to lose a match and win the hearts of people than win a match and lose our hard-earned reputation. ❖

A former Province Treasurer, Alex Mascarenhas, SJ (JAM), is currently the Treasurer at Xavier's, Chaibasa, Jharkhand. His book, Silver Lining, was published by GSP, Anand.

JCAP Jesuits come to Bodhi Zendo

Compare a meeting in which all the Jesuit-participants were from your own province to a meeting at which Jesuits from two or more provinces participated. The former might have been more enjoyable, because you know everyone. But certainly the latter would have been more enriching and enlightening, because there would have been more opinions, more perspectives that stem from varied experiences.

Imagine how enriching a meeting would be, if the participants are from two different Jesuit Conferences. That is what happened at Bodhi Zendo, the Zen Meditation Centre run by the Madurai Jesuits, at Perumaal Malai, in the Kodaikanal hills in Tamil Nadu. The members of the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (JCAP)'s Buddhist Studies and Dialogue Group (BSDG) chose to have their annual meeting this year at Bodhi Zendo on 5-8 August 2024. Fr. Mathew Cyril, SJ, Director, Bodhi Zendo and the local organizer, had invited a few Jesuits from India to attend the meeting. Venerable Buddha Pragash, an Indian Buddhist monk based in Chennai, and an Australian Zen Master joined the meeting.

At the inaugural function on 06 August morning, Fr Cyril, the host, welcomed everyone. Fr Stany D'Souza, SJ, President of the Jesuit Conference of South Asia, delivered a well-prepared speech on the three pathways to effective inter-religious dialogue (*See p.17*). Fr. Thomas Amirtham, SJ, Provincial, Madurai Province, spoke of the pioneering initiatives in dialoguing with other religions undertaken in the province, beginning from the efforts of De Nobili. Stephen Muthu, SJ, administrative staff at Bodhi Zendo, proposed a creative and lively vote of thanks.

The meeting included input sessions by four individuals. Fr Mathew Cyril, SJ shared the story of Bodhi Zendo, founded by Fr. Ama Samy, and his own inspiring journey to Zen that has led to his becoming a Zen Master and Director of Bodhi Zendo. Dr Rao S. Mallampati, a doctor who discovered the healing power of Zen, and a long-time associate and friend of Bodhi Zendo,



spoke on pre-Buddhist philosophical ideas and traditions that existed in India which influenced Buddha. Fr Leo D. Lefebure, a diocesan priest from the Archdiocese of Chicago and a professor of theology, and president-elect of the American Theological Society shared the findings of a survey he did in the U.S. on the impact of Buddhist meditation on Christian prayer. Archbishop Marco Tin Win of Mandalay shared his experiences of inter-religious dialogue in a troubled country.

Unlike other meetings, this one included regular Zen meditation sessions, along with the daily Eucharist. Ari C Dy, SJ, president of Ateneo de Naga University, Philippines and co-ordinator of BSDG, said, "In what felt like an irony, it was the first time for the group of Jesuits engaged in Buddhist Studies and dialogue with Buddhists in JCAP to spend so much time meditating together. We found the experience very powerful - to be united in silence, sitting together in quiet meditation."

What did the Jesuits from JCAP feel about the meeting? In the words of Ari Dy, SJ, "The group dispersed after three days, feeling joyful and renewed, after having shared in the deep silence, spirituality, and hospitality of Bodhi Zendo, the support of fellow travellers on the road of dialogue with Buddhism, and the deeper appreciation of the power of just sitting quietly together as a response to the sufferings of the world." ❖

MAJA

Three pathways



How can we use the power of religion to be able to further justice and reconciliation, so that we will enjoy peace?

Friendship: Friendship has a remarkable power to transcend the boundaries set by culture, nation, or faith tradition. Throughout history, countless stories and films have celebrated the alliances between individuals who have bravely crossed these barriers. We should view interreligious friendship as a virtue in itself. Interreligious friendship, like any other form of friendship, requires a combination of shared values and skills.

By embracing interreligious friendship, we enrich our own spiritual journeys and contribute to a more united and understanding world. James L. Fredericks, a theologian and scholar in interreligious dialogue, posits that friendship is integral to interreligious dialogue, as it allows for genuine connection and mutual growth. Consider the example of St. Charles De Foucauld, who lived among the Muslims in Algeria. He said his mission was to “strengthen the confidence of these souls, to make them comfortable with me, and if possible, to become friends.” His approach is an attempt to dissolve suspicions and prejudices about the religious ‘other.’

These friendships are essential for creating a world where religious diversity is not just tolerated but celebrated.

Hospitality: Hospitality is a profound way of opening ourselves to others, fostering empathy and genuine connection. Spiritual author, Henri Nouwen eloquently describes this concept, stating, “Our vocation is to convert the ‘hostis’ into a ‘hospes.’” For

Nouwen, hospitality means “the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place”.

The idea of hospitality invites us to create environments where strangers feel welcome and safe, allowing for the possibility of transformation. It’s about providing a space where differences are respected, and personal growth is nurtured.

Learning: Hindu theologian, Anantanand Rambachan, underscores that “learning from another tradition is a deep and slow process requiring humility, openness, discernment, trust, and empathy. This engagement of both head and heart is essential in interreligious learning, a commitment through which we discover the wisdom of other traditions that enrich our spiritual lives.”

Christians could learn from specific Buddhist traditions and teachers about meditation, mindfulness, and the virtues of *ahimsā* (non-violence), and *karuna* (compassion) and conversely, Buddhists can glean insights from the Christian concept of the Crucified God, appreciating the value of human beings and responding to the suffering of humanity. Such mutual learning is essential, for without an awareness of issues related to justice, mindfulness can become excessively self-centered.

We are a community of life. Diversity is our strength and beauty. Let this conference enlighten us to be friends, hospitable, and learners, so that we are able to foster fraternity (*bandhutva*) among us! ❖

(excerpted from his speech at the JCAP-JCSA meeting at Bodhi Zendo. See p. 16)

A Day in Viragalur to celebrate the legacy of Stan Swamy

On 6 July 2024 the quiet village of Viragalur in Tamil Nadu, the birthplace of Stan Swamy, came alive with reverence and respect as it commemorated the third Stan Swamy Day. This event was spearheaded by the Social Action Commissions of the Madurai and Chennai Jesuit Provinces under the banner of the Stan Swamy People's Federation-TN, in collaboration with local villagers and the Stan Swamy Youth Association of Viragalur.



The day began with a special Eucharistic celebration led by Bishop Jeevanandam of Kumbakonam. He was joined by Fr. Thomas Amirtham and Fr. Jebamalai Raja, Provincials of the Madurai and Chennai Provinces respectively, along with around 25 priests who gathered to honour the legacy of Stan Swamy. The Stan Swamy Youth Association, established just a year ago, took charge of the arrangements and choir, working closely with the parish priest, Fr. Augustin and local Sisters to ensure a solemn and meaningful service.

Following the Mass, attendees congregated around the relics of Stan Swamy, a crucifix and towel he had used in his final moments, which have been displayed in a decorated box in the church for public honour. This poignant moment allowed all present to pay their respects to the martyr of our time.

A highlight of the event was the inauguration of the Stan Swamy Square, featuring a pillar for floral tributes, located just in front of the church. The bishop, provincials, priests, and religious leaders, along with village leaders, youth, and civil society leaders from various parts of Tamil Nadu, participated in this ceremony. The bishop, in the



presence of Fr. Thomas Amirtham, Fr. Jebamalai Raja, and other leaders, blessed and laid the foundation stone for a bust of Stan Swamy to be installed in the church campus.

At the public meeting Mr. Kalidoss, the Politburo Member of CPI-TN and Mr. M.H. Jawahirulla, the President of Manithaneyya Makkal Katchi and a sitting MLA, spoke on the heroic struggle of Stan. A book titled, *Hidden Truth and Denied Justice*, the Tamil translation of the forensic report by the Arsenal Computer Forensic Lab, published by LAAS, the Jesuit legal centre at Madurai, was released at the function. The first copies of the book were received by the bishop, Mr. M.H. Jawahirulla, and the village youth.

Cultural performances also enriched the day's events, with a troupe of volunteers from AHAL, PALAVAI, ITI at Ranipet, and AICUF-TN performing a street play titled, 'I Am Not a Silent Spectator', depicting the life and sacrifice of Stan Swamy. This troupe had toured neighbouring villages, inviting people to join the memorial event and distributing leaflets detailing Stan's life and legacy. The Jesuit pre-novices from Veerama Munivar Illam (VMI), Vilangudi portrayed the sacrifice of Stan through a song.

Stan Swamy Day in Viragalur was a moving tribute to a man who devoted his life to justice for and the upliftment of the marginalized. The collaborative efforts of religious leaders, civil society, and the local community gave all hope that his spirit of activism and compassion will continue to inspire future generations. ❖

Santhanam A, SJ (MDU)



What I have learnt as a formator

This marks my third consecutive year in formation. As the vocation promoter and the director of a pre-novitiate, it was my joy to be with young hearts and minds with a little yet unwavering flame of desire of following Jesus, the vineyard master. Now I'm promoted to the juniorate - a promotion in the Society of Jesus. Here too, I witness young, energetic and generous men, going through an intense programme in English and literature. These are things I have learnt as a Formator.

Digital natives: The young people entering formation houses today are significantly different from those of previous generations. These are digital natives, accustomed to instant communication and information access. Understanding this characteristic is crucial for all formators.

Spiritual development: One of the primary concerns within formation houses is the need to foster a strong sense of spiritual well-being among the young aspirants and candidates. The overall well-being of young individuals includes a heightened sense of belonging and connection, increased awareness and awakening, and the adoption of a more holistic way of living. But there is a need for a clear roadmap that defines the concepts of spiritual development and spirituality. Formation houses must be equipped with the necessary tools and resources to effectively address the diverse spiritual needs of the young candidates and scholastics. We need trained and updated spiritual directors who can guide the candidates and scholastics of today.

Community Life and Interpersonal Relationships: We live in an individualistic world. As a religious, learning to live in a community is a fundamental aspect of formation. We need to teach young people about the values of cooperation, empathy, and mutual

respect. We need to strongly encourage communal living through shared activities, community prayer, and collective responsibilities.

Providing a supportive environment: Another task for formators is the need to empower the candidates and scholastics so that they are able to explore their core developmental issues. This includes providing them with a safe and supportive environment, where they can engage in self-reflection, address their motivations and focus, and cultivate a multi-sector engagement that nurtures their growth and development.

After-effects of the pandemic: COVID-19 has significantly impacted various aspects of life. As education shifted to online platforms and social interactions were limited, many youth experienced challenges in maintaining focus and engagement. This period of disruption has had lasting effects, influencing their concentration levels in several ways. Therefore, most of them are unable to do serious work at the desk.

By addressing issues such as secularism, mental health, and vocational discernment, and by emphasizing holistic intellectual rigour, community life, spiritual formation, and mentorship, formators can effectively guide young individuals on their journey. If they address these critical needs, formators can serve as beacons of hope, guiding the youth towards a future filled with purpose, resilience, and a profound sense of connection to the divine and the world around them. ❖



“If they address these critical needs, formators can serve as beacons of hope, guiding the youth towards a future filled with purpose.”

Pic courtesy: thepotterywheel.com

Fr Anush D'Cunha SJ (KAR) is currently Dean of Studies at Vidyaniketan, South Indian Common Juniorate, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. He can be contacted at anushdcunhasj88@jesuits.net

Jesuits sent among Muslims meet in Berlin

In June 2024, a group of twenty-five Jesuits gathered at the Katholische Akademie in Berlin for the Jesuits Among Muslims Meet. The event, which took place from 30 June to 6 July '24 was skillfully organized by Jean-Marc Balhan SJ, Felix Koerner SJ and his team.

The opening event was a specialised guided tour through Berlin under the question how the city symbolises the (un) making of democracy. In the first session, Mansur Dogan, a German doctoral student with Turkish roots, provided a sociological overview of Muslims in Germany. Subsequent sessions led by German Muslim scholars delved into the development and expansion of Islamic Theology in Germany. These presentations set the stage for the Study Day, which revolved around the current state of Quranic Studies in Germany.

The in-depth conversations we engaged in during our study day following the lectures on Qur'anic research by Professor Angelika Neuwirth and Dr. Tugrul Kurt shed light on the valuable lesson of respecting the sacred texts of others. Studying the intertextuality between Bible and Qur'an reveals an opportunity to understand both scriptures more profoundly without imposing judgments of superiority or inferiority.



This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of shared origins while acknowledging the distinctiveness of each text.

In the next session 'Encountering Muslims – Encountering Islam' members of JAM from different Conferences shared their experiences. At the heart of their conversation one recognised the Jesuits sent Among Muslims as Christ's conscious collaborators are deeply aware that their mission opens up in the threefold function of *koinonia* (fraternal communion), *diakonia* (humble service) and *kerygma* (witnessing to the good news) among Muslim brothers and sisters around the world. ❖

Joseph Victor Edwin, SJ (DEL)





Jesuits give me hope

Rooted in the Ignatian Examen, I am reflecting on 21 years of my Ignatian formation. I find two constants in this inner dialogue: a pedagogical paradigm rooted in faith and justice and women who have accompanied and supported me in my vocation to advance justice through Jesuit education.

I have shared with many women the intense pain of the injustices in the world. We have protested side by side for a less violent and unjust world. We have joined the cries of mothers of the disappeared people due to violence in Mexico, and we have joined the demands for justice in Central and South America. We have engaged with urban, migrant, indigenous, and rural communities to promote encounters prioritizing human dignity above any interest. We have rooted our academic work in spirituality and directed our research toward sustainable solidarity.

Amidst all this collective work, we have embraced each other, celebrated our unique personalities, grown and matured together, and shared our deepest joys. We are women who rejoice and create space across generations to grow and dream together. We are women whose lives, commitment, and collaboration uphold the

aspirations and dreams of St. Ignatius of Loyola, Pedro Arrupe, Ignacio Ellacuría, and Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, but above all, of all those women who have joined this educational project.

During this meaningful journey, we have also come face to face with the enduring legacy of a world that perpetuates injustices against women, as highlighted in many women's testimonies but also in Decree 14 of General Congregation 34 of the Society of Jesus: "The dominance of men in their relationship with women has found expression in many ways. It has included discrimination against women in educational opportunities, the disproportionate burden they are called upon to bear in family life, paying them a lesser wage for the same work, limiting their access to positions of influence when admitted to public life and, sadly but only too frequently, outright violence against women themselves."

As women collaborating in Jesuit educational institutions, we have encountered profound challenges in a global society that restrains the advancement of justice and equity, particularly concerning gender, race, age, culture, and traditions. The prevalence of everyday prejudices, perceptions, and decisions undoubtedly exacerbates these challenges.



Pic courtesy: jesuits.global



Pic courtesy: jesuits.global

Amidst this context, I find great hope in our Jesuits - religious men committed to a faith grounded in God’s love and justice through concrete actions. These are men who recognize their privilege and are willing to commit to the Gospel grounded in the signs of the times.

They say, “In response, we Jesuits first ask God for the grace of conversion. We have been part of a civil and ecclesial tradition that has offended against women. And, like many men, we have a tendency to convince ourselves that there is no problem. However unwittingly, we have often contributed to a form of clericalism which has reinforced male domination with an ostensibly divine sanction. By making this declaration we wish to react personally and collectively, and do what we can to change this regrettable situation ... We invite all Jesuits to listen carefully and courageously to the experience of women... Without listening, action in this area, no matter how well-intentioned, is likely to by-pass the real concerns of women and to confirm male condescension and reinforce male dominance.”

“Above all we want to commit the Society in a more formal and explicit way to regard this solidarity with women as integral to our mission. In this way we hope that the whole Society will regard this work for reconciliation between

women and men ... We know that a reflective and sustained commitment to bring about this respectful reconciliation can flow only from our God of love and justice...” (Decree 14, GC 34)

Being part of the Commission on the Role and Responsibilities of Women in the Society of Jesus has been an opportunity to witness the complexity of seeking honest and genuine dialogue from the perspective of faith, justice, diversity, and reconciliation in a changing, anxious, and polarized world. The Commission’s work has provided an opportunity to understand the complexity of the presence of the Society of Jesus in the world, beyond the educational apostolate.

In this Ignatian examen, the presence of God becomes evident in the commitment of each member of the Commission, with regard to their time and dedication. It is also seen in our colleagues around the world who responded to the global survey and are participating in formal and informal conversations. Together we need to walk towards embodying our global Jesuit mission through a radical commitment to justice that translates into gender equity. ❖

Ana Karen serves as the Sr. Program Director of Immersions at Santa Clara University and is a doctoral student at the University of San Francisco. She collaborated at Ibero Puebla, USFCA, and the International Association of Jesuit Universities.



Voice of the martyrs

Film: *Tortured for Christ* (2008)

Director: John Grooters

Run time: 65 minutes

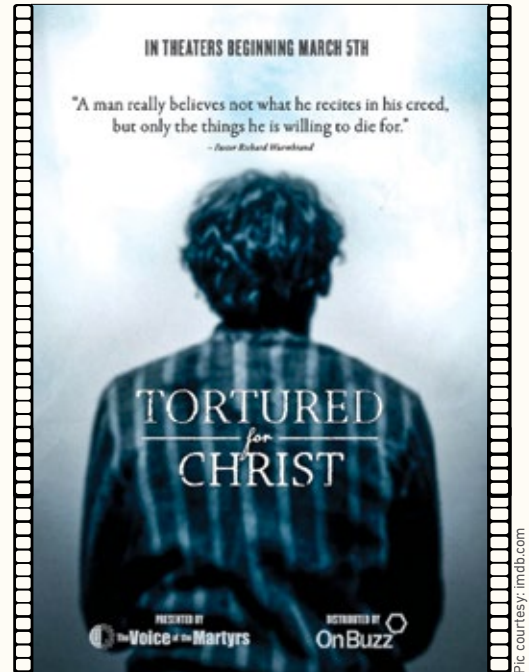
This movie authentically recreates the heroic life-story of the Lutheran pastor, Richard Wurmbrand, the founder of the 'Voice of the Martyrs' and his family under Communist persecution as depicted in his autobiography

The trials of the Wurmbrand family typify the condition of Christians under East European Communism. The Jewish Wurmbrand was a Communist, who led a dissolute life. In 1938 his meeting with a devout carpenter in a Rumanian mountain village changed him. Joining the Anglican Church, Richard preached Christ among Jews. After the World War II Romanian religious persecution began under the Soviet Communists. Richard and his wife Sabina openly resisted.

Pretending tolerance, the Communists attempted to wipe out religion through propaganda and intimidation of Church leaders. The Soviet soldiers often robbed the people of their possessions such as watches in the streets and would demand high prices for their retrieval. But Christians used this opportunity to preach to them regardless of language barriers. Wurmbrand made enemies of the Communists when he boldly declared in a public meeting supervised by the Soviet agents that Communism and Christianity were incompatible. Against the imposed ban he distributed Bibles, cleverly masking them with the picture of Karl Marx on the covers. On 29 February 1948 while going to his underground church the secret police arrested him.

Intense torture and attempts at brainwashing followed for 14 years. For 17 hours a day, he was told to repeat the phrases: "Communism is good. Christianity is stupid! Give up. Give up!" They even broke his bones. In the face of prohibition and death-threats, the Christians never ceased praying and singing hymns together. Their "chains became musical instruments." In the midst of these dire conditions, they preached to the torturers. Some of the converted Russian soldiers suffered martyrdom.

A Christian named Forescu is forced to watch his son tortured so as to make him reveal the identities of fellow Christians. Forescu refuses, and his son courts martyrdom. Soon Sabina, his wife, too is imprisoned and sent to a slave labour camp in the Danube Canal Project for three years. Their surviving son Mihai lived like an orphan on the streets. The couple released in 1953, returned to their underground mission. Wurmbrand was re-imprisoned. Sabina was mentally tortured by deliberate misinformation about



Richard's death in custody. Richard broken in body, infected with T.B. and misinformed about Sabina's death, is sent to stay in a death-ward in a prison.

Here too Richard preached and served his fellow patients. Many atheists and even some prison doctors were converted. In 1964 the Norwegian Lutheran Church secured Wurmbrand's release.

The reunited family resettled in Europe where they started 'Voice of the Martyrs' to help persecuted Christians. Testifying to his faith in his autobiography, Wurmbrand speaks of his prison days as a privilege because he was "with heroes of great faith" like the first Christians. ❖

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.

Research Seminar at DACA

A research seminar was held at Doctor Ambedkar Cultural Academy (DACA), Madurai, Tamil Nadu on 10, 11 August '24 in honour of Dr. Fr. Antony Raj SJ, who founded DACA in 2000. His vision was to start a women's university to empower the rural and marginalized women. The theme for the seminar was: 'From Hierarchy to Equity – Subaltern Insights into the Tamil Cultural Milieu.'

In his keynote address Rt Rev Bishop Devasahayam, Bishop Emeritus of CSI Madras Diocese, focused on racial inequality, untouchability, and dimension of hierarchy and equity to transform organizations and to accommodate all people. Dr Selvaraj Arulnathan SJ spoke on 'Socio-Political and Religio-Cultural Situation of Dalits: The Contemporary South Indian Scenario', Dr Anand Amaladass SJ on 'Art and Option for the Poor: Creating Space', and Dr Maria Arul Raja SJ dwelt on 'From Anarchy into Harmony: Glimpses into Subaltern Spiritual Energies.' The Tamil cultural milieu was highlighted by Dr Karu Arumuga Tamizhan who spoke on the way of Vallalaar (Ramalinga Swamigal), Dr Clement Joseph CSsR on 'Ethical Sensibilities of the Tamil Cittars,' Dr Gnana Patrick on 'Emancipatory and Democratic Potentials of Ayya Vazhi), and Dr Yesu Antony on Iyothee Thass Pandithar's Pedagogy for Dalit Consciousness and Agency.

Dr Francis P. Xavier SJ spoke on 'Option for the Dalits and the Jesuits in Tamil Nadu' and Dr Josephine Mary



SSAM on 'The Space of the Dalit Religious Women in Indian Church.' Tributes were paid to Fr Antony Raj SJ by Frs S. Marianathan SJ and Vargheesh Antony SJ. Dr Dominic Davidappa spoke on 'Dalit Movement: Contribution to Dalit Liberative Consciousness from Karnataka,' and Dr John Jayaharan on 'Life after Violence: Dalit Powers for Transformation.'

Each presentation was followed by lively, fruitful discussion. It was decided that the research papers would be published and DACA research seminar would be an annual feature to build up social research.

Francis P. Xavier, SJ (CEN)

Seminar on Human Fraternity in Chennai

On 20 July 2024, the Human Fraternity Movement, Gandhi Peace Foundation, Chennai, and Arul Kadal, the regional theologate in Chennai collaborated to organize a seminar titled, "Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together." The event was hosted by Fr. Raj Irudaya SJ, the community leader of Arul Kadal, and was attended by a diverse group of participants, including students, educators from various schools. In his address, Fr. Raj Irudaya, SJ underscored the significance of the "Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together," a document endorsed by Pope Francis and Grand Imam Sheikh Ahmed Al Tayyeb, the Rector of Al-Azar University, Cairo, in 2019.

This document invites all individuals and groups of people of goodwill to come together to advocate justice and peace for all and to foster interfaith understanding and cooperation to create a more peaceful, just, and harmonious world for all. Fr. Cyril Antony SJ, who facilitated the program, highlighted the establishment of the 'Human Fraternity Forum' in several schools across Tamil Nadu as a testament to drawing inspiration from the document. Ms. Jahan Ara, a prominent



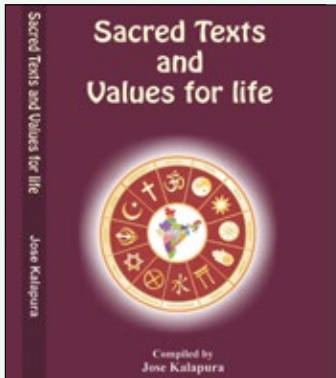
speaker from the Henry Martin Institute in Hyderabad, Moulavi B. M. Khaleelur Rahman, the Imam of a local mosque, and Dr. S. Kulandai Samy from the Gandhi Peace Foundation emphasized the importance of nurturing a culture of peace in the hearts of children. The interaction that ensued between the student participants and the resource persons was constructive. The students seemed to understand that being peacemakers is one of the most critical tasks in our fractured world.

Sch. Jenith Xavier, SJ (CEN)



Scripture texts from various religions

Jose Kalapura, SJ, talks about his book



Sacred Texts and Values of Life
Compiled by Jose Kalapura
Published by Patna Peace
Mission, Patna
Price: ₹ 400/-

What made you think of coming up with such a book?

Having been engaged in inter-religious dialogue ministry for many years, I was often challenged to speak about values in various religions to a multi-religious student audience.

Hence I wanted to compile a source book containing inspirational scriptural texts of all religions to make it inclusive.

What is unique about your book?

The book is a compilation of scriptural texts from various religions on universal, human, moral, desirable, ethical, sublime values. Hundreds of values have been arranged thematically in chapters and each value has supportive citations from multiple scriptural texts or gurus, with further references and an index of themes at the end.

Who will benefit from this book?

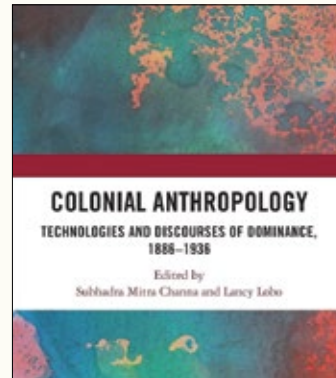
The book is intended to benefit school principals, teachers, youth leaders and those in education or in dialogue ministry, while addressing a multi-religious audience in assemblies, other gatherings or during prayer services. ❖

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



How they managed to divide and rule

Lancy Lobo, SJ, talks about this book that he edited along with Subhadra M. Channa



Colonial Anthropology
Ed. by: Subhadra Mitra
Channa & Lancy Lobo
London and New York: Routledge
Pages: 200
Price: \$120; The South Asia
edition: ₹ 1300

How did this book come about?

The Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay 1886-1936 is a goldmine for ethnographic details which have provided a benchmark to study Indian society and culture. This is the sixth book and the earlier were: on suicide, religious pluralism, Parsees, Indian anthropology, and explorations in East and South-East Asia.

When you examine the ways in which the British managed to subjugate India, what strikes you as the most cunning and devious means of dominating an entire population?

The British gained knowledge of Indian society and culture through census, survey land and settlements, cartography, ethnography, archaeology, native languages and literature, religion. Exploration of knowledge of this vast region and its people helped them divide the people and maintain their rule in India through coercion and violent oppression. Even after Independence different regimes have used and abused such technologies to stay in power is what this book is connecting to.

Who will benefit from this book?

Students of anthropology, sociology, public administration, history, colonial studies, religion, law, demography and others. ❖

Fr. Lancy Lobo, SJ (GUJ) is the Research Director at the Indian Social Institute (ISI), Delhi. He can be contacted at drlancylobo48@gmail.com.

Have we become servants of the world?

I was listening to an interview in the You Tube. A person called Ganesh reported that he studied in the Delhi IIT, where the prevalent atmosphere was atheism or agnosticism. He said that the IIT students swim in an atheistic sea. I wonder if our Jesuit education is not that different. Our Jesuits teach secular subjects. Our educational institutions have become business centres, catering to aspiring business-oriented pupils. Is that our Jesuit mission, to foster agnosticism? Where is God and religion in our education work?

Leave out God or religion. Education should be primarily the quest for the meaning of life. What meaning do our students get? Get rich, become powerful and find pleasure and fame? The Holocaust survivor, Viktor Frankl wrote a small book, *Man's Search for Meaning*. He mentions that the whole of human life is a quest for meaning. It is not for pleasure as Freud taught, it is not pleasure or power as another colleague of Freud, Alfred Adler taught. Power, wealth and pleasure are the traditional goals of an agnostic world. We Jesuits have become servants of that world.

The problem is that most of our Jesuit educators and teachers are not qualified to explore with the students such serious questions. They do not even ask basic questions about our country and its direction or values. Our educators can be replaced by robots.

Joan D. Chittister says, "Prayer that is regular confounds both self-importance and the wiles of the world. It is so easy for good people to confuse their own work with the work of creation. It is so easy to come to believe that what we do is so much more important than what we are. It is so easy to simply get too busy to grow. It is so easy to commit ourselves to this century's demand for product and action until the product consumes us and the actions exhaust us and we can no longer even remember why we set out to do them in the first place."

| Ama Samy, SJ, Perumal Malai, | T.N.

My advice to young Jesuits

I was happy to read my old friend Emma Arockiam's Holiday Special article in the May-June '24 issue of *Jivan* (Holidays can make us normal humans and saner Jesuits). In our busy, stressed, and workaholic life, holidays and relaxation are often neglected. We need to take time off to sharpen the axe so that we can perform better. We don't need to be a William Wordsworth or a

St. Francis Assisi to enjoy the nature. Spending some quiet moments with the nature, playing a game, or doing any other physical exercise has to be a part of our daily routine. In our old age this will reduce the medical bills also! My advice to scholastics and young Jesuits is, pick up a game or a sport that you can continue on even in your old age. Besides our break for annual retreat, a two-week holiday (quinzaine of novitiate days) has to be a part of our annual schedule.

| Mathew Assarikudy, SJ | Nepal

What do we tap into?

It is always very pleasing to know that the Eucharistic Lord is alive and active, changing the lives of people and giving them fresh new hope. The Soul Care article, titled "Food for the soul" by Meath Conlan was a joy to read. The Eucharist harbours great transformative power, one must learn to 'tap into' the boundless reservoir of spiritual energy that God is. I recently finished reading the book *Treasure in Clay* - the autobiography of the first Catholic televangelist, venerable Fulton J Sheen. He stresses on the importance of spending time in adoration of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. He called it "The Hour" and he says that it has helped him to persevere in his vocation. Blessed Carlo Acutis used his computer skills to begin a web site dedicated to the Eucharistic miracles. These examples and, of course, this beautiful article made me ask myself this question. 'What or where do I 'tap into' for my strength? Is it God or some folly of the world'?

| Edmund Sequeria, NSJ | Bengaluru

Soul-stirring story

As I was browsing through the May-June 2024 issue of *Jivan*, the story "A time to be born" by Ashish Kumar Beero, SJ caught my attention. The story was a soul-stirring one. It is said that "the real experiences always touch one's heart and change one's life." This story had a great impact on me. I was spiritually reinforced by the heart-touching encounter of the woman with the statue of Pieta and her acceptance of life's catastrophes. The lessons we need for our life are learnt through our experiences. Life is like a double edged sword: hate-love, pain-gain, hurt-heal, strengths-struggles etc. As Mother Teresa says "Life is beauty, admire it. Life is a struggle, accept it." Jesus tells us in Matthew 9:2 "Take heart, son." Indeed, I need to take heart to accept and confront life's tussles with inner strength. The story teaches me that when life takes its terrible turns, I should just accept them and move on, because God brings good out of evil all the time.

| Anish, NSJ | Bengaluru

Kerala Jesuits' Response to the Wayanad Tragedy

The Calamity: Massive landslides struck Kerala's north-east area known as Wayanad district in the early hours of 30 July '24, burying a large area under debris, with around 500 losses of lives, and leaving around 250 injured. Around 100 people are yet to be traced. There are nearly 5000 people in around 90 Relief Camps. Huge boulders rolled down the hills, hindering the rescue workers. Several hilly regions in Wayanad district, including Mundakkai, Chooralmala, Attamala, and Noolpuzha villages, have been affected by a series of landslides, with the most significant impact observed in Mundakai and Chooralmala.

Response of the Government: Five ministers were camping in Wayanad focusing on coordinating the rescue operations in the affected areas. 82 relief camps have been set up in the Wayanad district, housing around 9000 people. In total, 118 relief camps have been established across Kerala. The Chief Minister suggested all humanitarian agencies to coordinate with the district collector's office for humanitarian responses. The Food and Civil Supplies Department has launched steps to supply food grains and other essential supplies to relief camps.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh for the next of kin of the deceased in the landslides. The State Government has also declared a compensation package to the affected population.

Response of Jesuits: The Kerala Jesuit province has a long-standing involvement in Wayanad. We run a state-supported school with nearly 1500 students, a well-known social work centre known as TUDI (Tribal Unity for Developmental Initiatives), Prashanti, a centre for family counseling and the Pre-novitiate. These are around 25 miles away from the area of the landslide.

The restrictive situation affected our visits to Meppadi area, which is the area most affected. Relief and help were extended to the people in the camps. There is a camp in Sarvodaya School run by us. Visits were taken up to the tribal habitats (Ooru) which are affected by floods. Trauma counselling was taken up for the affected population. This was taken up in the areas where TUDI is in operation.



The Migrant Outreach Team of the Kerala Jesuits visited the relief camps and came across 406 migrant workers, interacted with them and helped them to be at ease. Coming from different north Indian States, they were all working in different locations. Some were in the hospital. We undertook the following activities: - Some of the employers were not willing to give them their wages and to pay for the train tickets for those who wanted to travel home. This issue was sorted out through our intervention. We visited hospitals in Kalpetta/Mananthavadi. We met and listened to migrants' stories, ate with them and identified emergency cases.

Guided by camp staff, Jesuits interacted with Jharkhand and Assamese natives and helped women and children recover from trauma.

The Kerala Forum (Forum for Justice and Peace of the Religious) is headed by a Jesuit. The Forum has submitted a petition to Syro Malabar Synod to request that this issue be urgently discussed in this coming Synod and practical decisions and further steps be taken.

The way ahead: As the rescue and the emergency phase is settling down, short term and long term plans are to be worked out for the recovery and rehabilitation phase. This phase could focus on livelihood restoration, repair and construction of houses, educational support and trauma counselling to the affected population, especially children.

The Kerala Jesuits understand that their role should be beyond relief and even rehabilitation and realize they should be proactive and futuristic in their approach. ❖

Joe Mathew, SJ (KER)



Anmol Lakra, SJ (MAP)

Fr Anmol Lakra, SJ was born on 1 April 1986 in a simple, big family. He entered the Society on 20 June 2005 and was ordained on 10 October 2020. I was with him at St. Xavier's community, Pathalgaon for a year, when he was a regent. Anmol was a true Jesuit. He was disciplined and committed, which won the admiration of all. He carried out his responsibilities with an open mind and heart.

He was the assistant hostel prefect and Maths teacher at St. Xavier's English Medium School, Baramkela. Students were really fond of him for his simplicity and intelligence. A year after his ordination, he was diagnosed with TB. The needed treatment and medication continued for a long

time and he improved a lot. Seeing he was better, the superiors sent him for tertianship to St. Stanislaus College, Sitagarha. He was there for around 4 months. The sad news of his father's death brought him to his place. But as his sickness relapsed, he could not go back to complete his tertianship. Every possible treatment was given, but his condition worsened and he passed away on 26 June '24.

Anmol was just 38 when God called him, but his memories shall never fade. Our loss is huge, but we feel consoled that he has gone to be with the Lord who called him.

| Bernard Ajay Ekka, SJ



Mathew Puthiedom, SJ (KER)

Born on 1 October 1934, at Eachome, Br Mathew Puthiedom dedicated his life to serving others. He joined the Society of Jesus in 1954 as a novice at Christ Hall, followed by two years of Juniorate. After his Tertianship in Shembaganur, he pronounced his final vows in Christ Hall in 1966. He served the Society with remarkable energy and resourcefulness in various institutions, including St. Michael's, Kannur, L.F. Orphanage, Mattool, Vimala Estate, Vellarikundu, Loyola School and Boarding House, Trivandrum, AKJM, Kanjirapally and the Bishop's House, Kozhikode.

Notably, he served as Minister of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Jerusalem, Israel, for many years.

His dedication and service were inspiring. Throughout his life, Br Mathew demonstrated unwavering commitment, selflessness, and compassion.

He was called back by the Divine Master on 29 July 2024. His legacy will live on through the countless lives he touched and the communities he served. As he enters the joy of his master, we remember his remarkable life and service, and we take comfort in the knowledge that he has fulfilled his mission on earth. This Gospel verse perfectly encapsulates his life: "Well done, my good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your Master!"

| Syriac Panjikaran, SJ



Valentine Ekka, SJ (MAP)

Fr Valentine Ekka, SJ, passed away on 5 June 2024, in Ambikapur, leaving behind a legacy of 52 years of devoted service as a Jesuit. His vocation began in July 1969 when Fr. Thomas Chakkalackal, S.J., invited him to join the Jesuit community in Gholeng, marking the start of a profound intellectual and spiritual journey that defined his life.

Fr Valentine dedicated a significant portion of his ministry to Satya Nilayam, Faculty of Philosophy in Chennai, where his teaching and mentoring impacted young Jesuits. Known for his expertise in philosophy, he taught subjects ranging from Epistemology to Contemporary Indian Christian Thought with clarity, thoroughness, and an openness that encouraged intellectual inquiry among his students. His homilies were celebrated for their deep spiritual insights, reflecting his integrated approach to life and faith.

Beyond academia, Fr. Valentine's contributions extended to pastoral work and cultural activities. He co-founded the 'Chotanagpur Cultural Association' in Chennai, which enriched the tribal community. His meticulous attention to detail and mastery of English, evident in his proofreading skills won widespread respect. Fr. Valentine exemplified discipline, simplicity, and asceticism in all aspects of his life, navigating physical challenges from polio and stroke with unwavering faith and commitment to his Jesuit calling. He was esteemed as a perfect gentleman—a warm, sincere companion whose humility touched all who knew him.

As we mourn his passing, we celebrate the enduring impact of Fr. Valentine Ekka's scholarship, kindness, and spiritual guidance, which will continue to inspire future generations.

| Henry Lakra, SJ





Love yourself, love others!

In George Bernanos's novel, *The Diary of a Country Priest*, the priest, aged about 40, discovers he has terminal cancer. He goes to the slums of Paris and finds a former friend who has left the priesthood and is living with a woman. He comes to an understanding of all this and to a profound compassion for all the sinful and weak things he has experienced in his ministry. The last entry in his diary runs: "...*The strange mistrust I had of myself, of my own being, has flown, I believe, forever. That conflict is done. I cannot understand it any more. I am reconciled to myself, to the poor shell of me. How easy it is to hate oneself! True grace is to forget. Yet if pride could die in us, the supreme grace would be to love oneself in all simplicity — as one would love any of those who themselves have suffered and loved in Christ*".

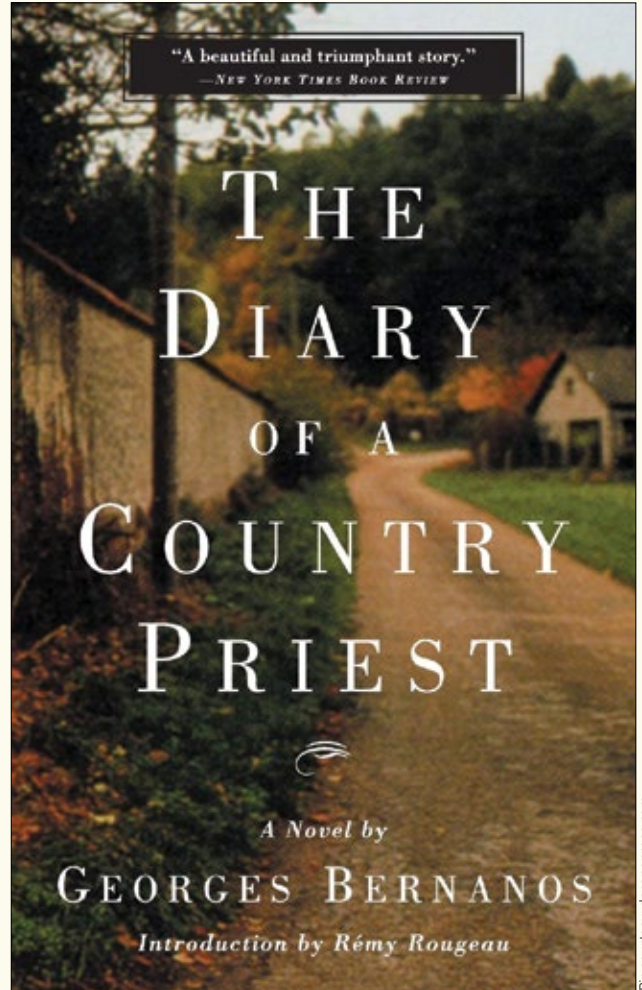
And now, listen to the words of the Buddha on loving oneself and loving others:

"I shall protect myself": with that thought the foundations of mindfulness should be cultivated. "I shall protect others"; with that thought the foundation of mindfulness should be cultivated. By protecting oneself one protects others; by protecting others one protects oneself.

And how does one, by protecting oneself, protect others? By repeated practice of mindfulness. And how does one, by protecting others, protect oneself? By patience. By a non-violent life. By loving kindness. And by compassion.

Listen to your heart and follow the call of coming home to yourself; of becoming your authentic self. This call, however, will lead you finally to die to yourself, to lose yourself into the void and abyss, into the unknown and mystery. This is the great fear and anxiety for us all. Nothingness and darkness face us, death and bottomless abyss are our resting place. But this letting go of oneself into the void and emptiness is actually awakening to the infinite and the deathless. It is coming to abide where there is no-abiding, to find our home in infinite openness; it is the realization of one's self as boundless openness and mystery. In this boundless openness all the world will find its home in your heart-mind. But first there is death and abyss.

In the Zen way, the ascent, in a sense is easy. It is the descent that is the more difficult. It means that the phase of letting go of everything and of detachment in the search for awakening, as well as the awakening to no-self and to emptiness, is not that difficult if only one is willing and ready. But after awakening one returns to the world of relationships



and attachments. One enters the marketplace with empty hands of compassion and caring. It is not enough to be sitting on a mountain top. One has to step forth from emptiness and detachment into the world of love and caring, wanting and needing, desire and hope, work and labour, failures and despair, suffering and death—this is walking on the roads of the world while abiding in Emptiness . . . In this stage of descent, one comes into maturity and integration in terms of human relationships, and in caring for oneself and for society and world - a life-long task. ❖

Ama Samy, SJ (MDU) is the Founder-Director of Bodhi Zendo, the Zen Meditation Centre in Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu. He founded the Bodhi Sangha, the international community of his disciples in 1986. He can be contacted at amasamy@googlemail.com.



"Yes, true, three transfers in three years. Finally, I found a community that will accept me as I am with all my weaknesses."



"If I ever become a saint, the credit will go to my community members for making me one."



"Instead of paying attention to the readings, you are busy with your mobile phone in the chapel."

"Yes, Father, that is exactly what I do. I go through the daily readings in my phone."



"You talk about women's empowerment! Look at my staff members."

"But why do all the women you have recruited have to be young and unmarried?"

Melwyn Pinto, SJ (KAR)

JESUIT HUMOUR

Sharp as a razor

The frail and feeble figure of the late Fr Elias D'Souza and his voice that sounded soft and timid, did not, in any way, lessen the command he had over his students, even an unruly bunch of them. His spoken word was clear and unambiguous, and his wit was prompt and razor-sharp - much like the mathematics he taught in degree classes. That, perhaps, was the secret of his sure command over the awkward situations or challenging situations that he encountered every now and then as the principal of the college. His superiors were not averse to his preference when he opted for rural ministry after retirement. So, he was appointed chaplain to a community of Sisters, who ran a secondary school in a small town in Karnataka.

On one of his rare visits to our city community, he was asked how he liked his new ministry. "Well," he replied in his typical diminutive voice, "The children are good and their parents are even better." "And what about the Sisters?" asked one of his listeners. "About the Sisters," declared Fr Elias with a trace of a smile on his lips, "I don't know."



The flower of the field & the lily of the valley



Pic courtesy: pixabay.com

The Catholic Church celebrates the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary on its traditional fixed date of September 8, nine months after the December 8 celebration of her Immaculate Conception as the child of Saints Joachim and Anne.

The circumstances of the Virgin Mary's infancy and early life are not directly recorded in the Bible, but other documents and traditions describing the circumstances of her birth are cited by some of the earliest Christian writers from the first centuries of the Church.

These accounts, although not considered authoritative in the same manner as the Bible, outline some of the Church's traditional beliefs about the birth of Mary.

The *Protoevangelium of James*, which was probably put into its final written form in the early second century, describes Mary's father Joachim as a wealthy member of one of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Joachim was deeply grieved, along with his wife Anne, by their childlessness. "He called to mind Abraham," the early Christian writing says, "that in the last day God gave him a son Isaac."

Joachim and Anne began to devote themselves extensively and rigorously to prayer and fasting, initially wondering whether their inability to conceive a child might signify God's displeasure with them.

As it turned out, however, the couple were to be blessed even more abundantly than Abraham and Sarah, as an angel revealed to Anne when he appeared to her and prophesied that all generations would honor their future child: "The Lord has heard your prayer, and you shall conceive, and shall bring forth, and your seed shall be spoken of in all the world."

After Mary's birth, according to the *Protoevangelium of James*, Anne "made a sanctuary" in the infant girl's room, and "allowed nothing common or unclean" on account of the special holiness of the child. The same writing records that when she was one year old, her father "made a great feast, and invited the priests, and the scribes, and the elders, and all the people of Israel."

"And Joachim brought the child to the priests," the account continues, "and they blessed her, saying: 'O God of our fathers, bless this child, and give her an everlasting name to be named in all generations' . . . And he brought her to the chief priests, and they blessed her, saying: 'O God most high, look upon this child, and bless her with the utmost blessing, which shall be forever.'"

The *Protoevangelium* goes on to describe how Mary's parents, along with the temple priests, subsequently decided that she would be offered to God as a consecrated Virgin for the rest of her life, and enter a chaste marriage with the carpenter Joseph.

St Augustine described the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary as an event of cosmic and historic significance, and an appropriate prelude to the birth of Jesus Christ. "She is the flower of the field from which bloomed the precious lily of the valley," he said.

The fourth-century bishop, whose theology profoundly shaped the Western Church's understanding of sin and human nature, affirmed that "through her birth, the nature inherited from our first parents is changed."

WELL SAID

**It's not about winning at the Olympic Games.
It's about trying to win. The motto is faster, higher,
stronger - not fastest, highest, strongest.
Sometimes it's the trying that matters.**

- Bronte Barratt

Australian swimmer and 2008 gold medalist



Picture courtesy: people.com