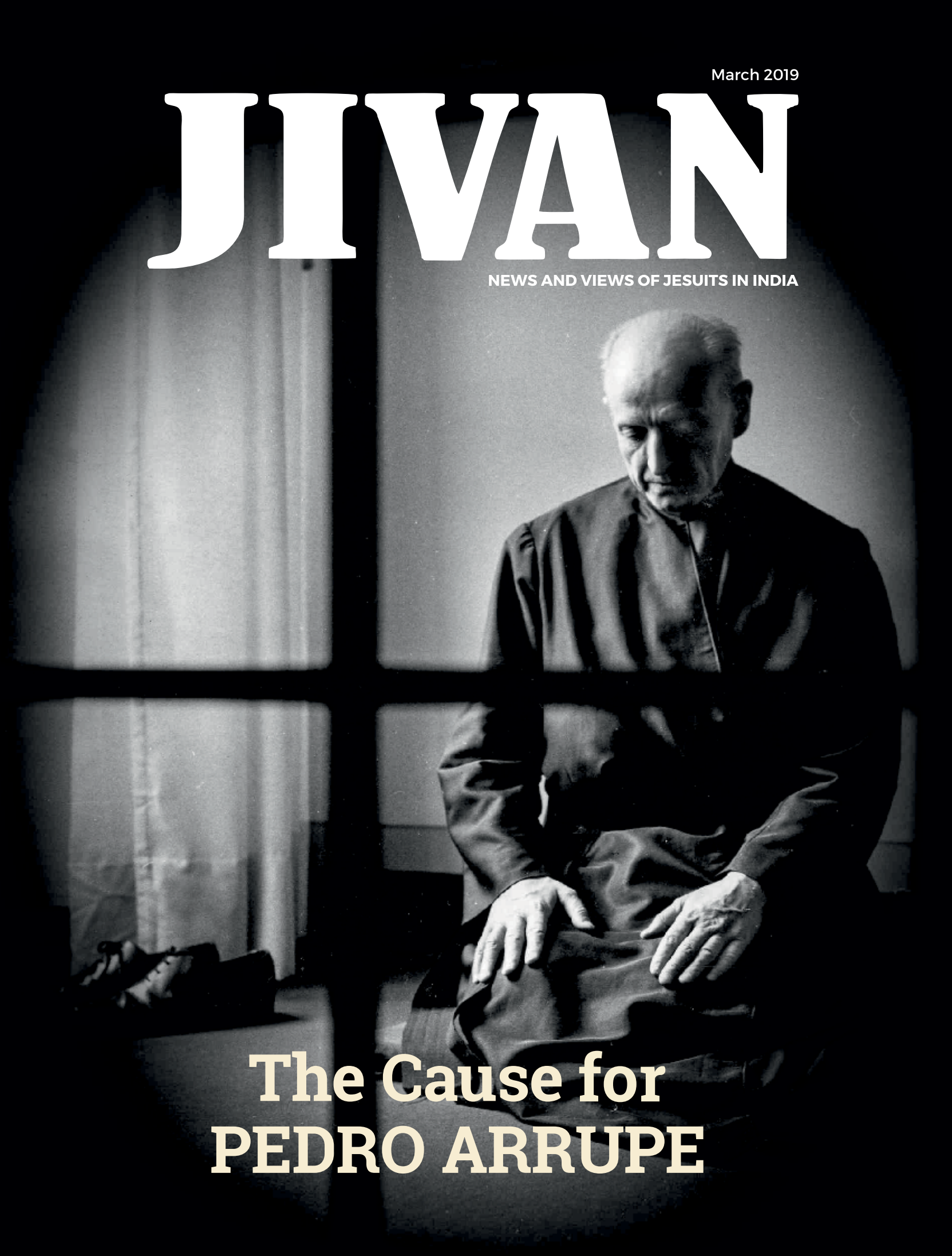


March 2019

# JIVAN

NEWS AND VIEWS OF JESUITS IN INDIA



**The Cause for  
PEDRO ARRUPÉ**

# Oh gentle wind!

Oh gentle wind, gentle whisper!  
From my window every morning  
Do enthuse me, and spur  
My being  
To sing.

Slip into me in the silence  
While I am asleep,  
When I am dense  
On foggy days  
And dark nights.

Oh gentle wind, gentle whisper!  
Be inclined to me  
To be ever pinning,  
Like your being  
To be alive and kicking,  
In all that I do and think.

Oh gentle wind, gentle whisper!  
Wont I not to you,  
'Cause of the thousands of voices that brew  
Command your power over me,  
I besiege you.

Search me when I am in the comfort  
Of my cosy cradle,  
Teach me to listen to your whisper with the heart,  
Be the dominion over the whispers of the world,  
Make me desire to have my rest in your gentle whisper  
Till my heart makes it its treasure, forever.

---

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As a service of information for the South Asian Jesuit Assistancy, 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. The Editor regrets he is unable to return any hard copies of articles or photographs sent, so please keep a copy of whatever you send for publication.

All material sent for publication may be edited for reasons of space, clarity or policy. Readers are requested to donate generously towards Jesuit ministries.

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

JIVAN renames 'Letter to the Editor' section as 'Reader's Crease' inviting you to express your opinions about JIVAN and the issues it raises. It is a space wherein we want you to express your views and all that affects you in the Jesuit world. It is your crease, enjoy whatever you are good at: batting or bowling, but score or take a wicket! Do feel encouraged to use the space to connect with the wider JESUIT audience around.

-Editor



### WELCOME

**The South Asian Assistency** warmly welcomes our Superior General, Fr Arturo Sosa, and his team for the JCSA meeting and their official visits to the Provinces of Goa, Pune and Bombay. May your visit be a time of grace for all of us in South Asia.

## JESWITS

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"Don't be discouraged, Father. REGAE also means  
-- Realising Even Governance isn't Always Easy!"



"How do you resolve this? Those who want to join us are young women - and most of those who wish to accompany them are older Jesuits!"



"Now that Pope Francis has asked you bishops to listen to us women, we can't decide whom you should listen to first!"



"So many petitions for the Synod, monsignor. How does one choose?"  
"Simple. Take only those in Latin."



## POSA Speaks

GEORGE PATTERY, SJ

### The 'extra' in the ordinary

For a long time we did not know her name. She was and is a constant presence at our back gate in Jor Bagh (New Delhi) - always with a smile, pressing freshly brought clothes, chatting with people who often drop in to collect or give clothes, eight hours or more on her feet. Earlier we called her 'ironing lady'; of late she is called 'Guddi'.

In her make-shift little space, at the junction of three roads, she has just enough space for her table - her personal space yet totally public. Anyone can come, meet, and chat with her. All too visible, Guddi is a presence that exhibits simple joy and profound peace. She is our 'security' at the back gate - our dear unofficial 'chowkidar'! She is too ordinary in her appearance, too common in her work of 'ironing' clothes - a familiar face in the neighbourhood. Yet she is extra-ordinary! She does ordinary work in an extra-ordinary way. She earns may be just enough for her family's sustenance but she gains much goodwill of people around and gives away much more than she gets.

There are so many 'Guddies' in our neighbourhood - all too ordinary and yet deeply 'extra' - diffusing joy and always welcoming. They create a community around them though they have no title or status added to their names. They build relationships across communities, castes and religions. Because they are in a public space, they are visible. They have no walls built around them; they are truly 'religious' people. They connect and resonate with others with an ease and comfort that amazes us. At the front gate to DNC in Pune there is a make-shift covering that shelters a 'muchiwala' - all too public and always with a welcoming smile.

Such people remind us of the Ignatius of Manresa days - in public places, at the goodwill of others. Ignatius the pilgrim cannot be abandoned for the sake of Ignatius the Founder and Lawmaker. It is all one piece. Have we conveniently apportioned Ignatius the pilgrim to the novitiate days? Are we comfortable with Ignatius the Founder?

We shall not abandon the ordinary and the open public space for a comfortable one, walled up and secured behind our institutions! The security of our institutions might protect us from the 'others', but in the bargain we miss out the ordinary and vulnerable people who give away much more than what they get. Xavier Melloni in Barcelona speaks of continuing the pilgrimage of Ignatius. What would the nature of this pilgrimage be in our time? How shall we retrace 'the public space' that shaped Ignatius?



## Editor's Desk

VINAYAK JADAV, SJ

### Fruits of REGAE: Spiritual cleansing, fraternal bonding and universal commissioning

A REGAE (Reorienting for Greater Apostolic Effectiveness) workshop participant said during the final evaluation that he was carrying home the art of Spiritual Conversation as the fruit of the workshop. Yes, the methodology of Spiritual Conversation did expose the oppressive aspects of human conversations. Conversations, whether inter-personal or communal, are not just part and parcel of human life but delicate in nature too. It is important that we engage in them carefully and responsibly, especially when in leadership role. One of the biggest enemies that hampers or even sabotages these conversations is prejudices. A thin, invisible film of preconceived notions and attitudes towards persons, places, events and tasks colour our judgements and statements to such an extent that in most of our conversations it matters little what was said; who said it seems more important! Thanks to the importance given by GC 36 to Discernment in Common that has brought to the surface the Ignatian wisdom of Spiritual Conversation wherein the Spirit enables us to rise above our petty dispositions of likes and dislikes, and reach to the heart of communication. Our personal conversations can be liberated from the dungeons of gossip and our dialogues can be purged of unhealthy undercurrents if they too become conversations carried out guided by the Spirit. Issues will stop getting entangled with non-issues. Spiritual Conversation helps sort our means and ends by enabling us to actively listen to the one Spirit speaking in different tongues.

The experience of Spiritual Conversation is also an experience of spiritual bonding as described by St. Paul in 1 Cor. 12:4-7 - "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

One workshop may not yield the greatest results in terms of the finality of restructuring, realigning or re-bordering our apostolic priorities or boundaries. But the process it leads us into definitely disposes us towards it. While we need to reorient our collective apostolic structures for greater effectiveness, we also need to re-examine and reclaim our lost personal effectiveness in our apostolates. As aptly put, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as there is one hope to which God has called you" (Eph. 4.4).

Finally, REGAE explodes the apostolic cocooning or fossilizing into our own provincial and regional needs. We look beyond at what the country and the world needs for which there is no other way but collaboration and networking. Beyond inter-provincial, inter-zonal or inter-conference collaboration, we should look at the inter-societal needs - beyond all distinctions, divisions and discriminations of caste, class, creed, race or gender.

Thanks REGAE for broadening our social, spiritual and apostolic horizons!

# The Cause for Pedro Arrupe





The cause of Pedro Arrupe (1907-1991) to be canonised has been introduced recently in Rome. This is an occasion to recall his inspiring life and work. He has been credited with re-founding the Society of Jesus after the Second Vatican Council. He was a visionary leader and an efficient administrator. He was a model Jesuit and a faithful son of St. Ignatius. Above all, he was a saintly man and a mystic. In 1991, he gave a series of autobiographical

interviews to Jean-Claude Dietsch, SJ (*One Jesuit's Spiritual Journey*). Concluding them in his own words, he wrote: "I have the impression that my life is written in a single sentence: 'It has unfolded according to the will of God.' It is summed up in 'Thy will be done' (Mt 26:42)" (p.101). In a message to the Jesuits after his resignation as General, he said: "More than ever, I find myself in the hands of God. This is what I wanted all my life from my youth. And this is still the one thing that I want. But there is now one difference: the initiative is entirely with God."

Kevin Burke has called him an 'open-eyed mystic'. He quotes J.B. Metz: "In the end Jesus did not teach an ascending mysticism of closed eyes, but rather a God-mysticism with an increased readiness for perceiving, a mysticism of open eyes, which sees more and not less. It is a mysticism that especially makes visible all invisible and inconvenient suffering, and – convenient or not – pays attention to it and takes responsibility for it, for the sake of a God who is a friend to human beings" (cf. Pedro Arrupe, *Essential Writings*, p. 33). It is not nature mysticism, based on a withdrawal from life. It is immersed in life and its sufferings, but feels responsible for it. Arrupe was deeply devoted to the Sacred Heart and to the Eucharist, experiencing the love of Jesus and sharing it with others. He often repeated: "For me, Jesus Christ is everything... He was and he is my ideal from the moment of my entrance into the Society. He was and he continues to be my way; he was and he still is my strength" (*One Jesuit's...* p. 37).

Arrupe chose to study medicine as a young man because he wanted to heal people. He got his vocation when he witnessed in Lourdes a paralyzed young man healed in an instant while gazing at the Blessed Sacrament. He was challenged by the sight of the hundreds struck by the atom bomb in Hiroshima, whom he cared for lovingly.

Arrupe became General of the Society in 1965 just before the Second Vatican Council ended. He was able to attend the final session and make an intervention on inculturation. The Council asked religious congregations to renew themselves by going back to the charism of their founders. Renewal meant, not only going back, but also going forward

to adapt themselves to the ongoing changes in the world. GC 31 did take the Council into account, but not seriously enough. As Arrupe took over the direction of the Society he felt that more reflection and planning were needed. So he called GC 32. It was Arrupe's congregation and took many initiatives. The most important was the well-known Decree 4, which affirmed that the promotion of justice was an integral dimension of the mission of the Society. What was new was not the idea, but the Society's commitment to it. In 1967, Pope Paul VI had written an encyclical on the "Progress of Peoples". In 1968, the bishops of Latin America met in Medellin and supported liberation theology that was emerging with theologians like Gustavo Gutierrez. This commitment to liberate the poor was taken up seriously all over the world. Liberation theologians were using Marxist analysis to understand the oppressive economic and political structures of society. Jesuits in Latin America and elsewhere, led by theologians like Jon Sobrino, plunged themselves into struggles to promote justice. People who thought that the stress on justice was taking away the importance given to faith accused those who committed themselves to the promotion of justice in society of being Marxist communists.

Arrupe also became an object of criticism inside and outside the Society. A group of Spanish Jesuits, opposed to his policies, wanted a separate province that would not be subject to the Superior General. Some groups of Sisters were allowed this possibility by the Vatican! Many people in the Vatican were opposed to his attempts to renew the Society in the light of Vatican II and his help, as the President of the Union of Superiors General, to many other religious congregations in their process of renewal. They poisoned the mind of Pope John Paul II to make him intervene in the normal administration of the Society by appointing a personal delegate. Arrupe must have heard rumours about such a possibility even earlier. Actually, in his autobiographical conversations he speaks about taking a lot of chiding even from Paul VI! (p. 95). It was divine providence that this delegate was a Jesuit, who enabled the Society to return to its normal procedures in about two years. Such rejection, from within



Image Source : Google

and without, must have hurt Arrupe greatly and he must have suffered much. To be able to see God's hands in all these certainly requires a mystical trust in God, and courage.

Arrupe was a man of deep prayer. Next to his office at the Curia in Rome was a small chapel, which he called his cathedral. "My position between God and the Society of Jesus, as a priest and during the celebration of the Eucharist, is that of a 'mediator between God and human beings' to govern the whole body of the Society" (Essential Writings, 63). During his last visit to Thailand, a day before he had his stroke in Rome, his message was: "Pray, pray much. Problems such as these are not solved by human efforts" (Ibid, p. 25). He called it his 'swan song', which it was. Did he have a premonition of his stroke?



Fr. Arrupe in Hiroshima in 1945



In the end Jesus did not teach an ascending mysticism of closed eyes, but rather a God-mysticism with an increased readiness for perceiving, a mysticism of open eyes, which sees more and not less. ”

One special area in which his concern for the poor had a special impact was the plight of refugees. He was struck by the boat people of Vietnam and refugees elsewhere. So he started the Jesuit Refugee Service that is still active and growing in different continents. He launched the term 'Men/Women for Others' to orient the people for the service of others, specially the poor.

Though Arrupe was deeply committed to the option for the poor and the promotion of justice, his apostolic vision was broad. In a letter on the Intellectual Apostolate (1976), he wrote: "It is a fact that we can hardly serve the poor if we do not have real contact with them and enough actual experience of their life. Still, it is equally true, for that very goal of promoting justice and serving the poor, we need to collaborate with other people besides the poor. We must have contact with those who exert influence on social structures or who have the power to

bring about social change. The point is that intellectuals are in the ranks of those who wield influence on society." To the Congregation of Procurators (1978), he said: "According to St. Ignatius, we must give preference to people and places capable of multiplying our work for others." He gives these examples: 'princes and rulers, magistrates and administrators of justice, people who are outstanding in literature or authority.' My question is: who are these multipliers, these influential people, these "magistrates and princes" of today? Are they, for example, politicians, trade union leaders, youth leaders, influential thinkers, scientists affecting the course of history, those who control the mass media?"

Arrupe was also committed to inculturation. Though GC 32 had only a small decree on it, Arrupe wrote a letter on the theme. Actually, missiologists credit him for being one of the pioneers of inculturation. He encouraged the Commission on Inculturation in Formation launched by the Provincials of South Asia and the implementation of its recommendations. He supported projects like our regional theologates. He came to bless Satya Nilayam in Chennai and Vidyajyoti in Delhi that had been shifted to the plains from the mountains in order to be closer to the thinkers and movers in society. He also started a Centre for Ignatian Spirituality in Rome which conducted annual seminars which hundreds of Jesuits attended. He himself gave the concluding talks at these seminars. The last three were significant: 1. 'Our Way of Proceeding' (1979); 2. 'The Trinitarian Inspiration of the Ignatian Charism' (1980); 3. 'Rooted and Grounded in Love' (1981). These remain classics in Ignatian spirituality. His many letters to the Society over the years add to these and fill many volumes. He had a special concern for the Brothers and autographed a book on them: The Symphony of Love.

He also made governance more collegial and relevant. Before his time, the Generals hardly left Rome. Arrupe was often on the road seeing the situations around the world for himself and animating local Jesuits. He also established the local Conferences of Provincials for regular consultations and initiated the 'school' to which young Provincials went to be initiated to their responsibilities and also know each other and be in touch with the centre.

On the occasion of celebrating his 50 years in the Society, he said that three saints were of special significance for him. "These three figures of Abraham, Paul and Xavier have been a continuing inspiration to me because they incarnate the spirit of God in a realistic interpretation of perfect indifference, the ideal of the third degree of humility. They realize to perfection the meaning of a saying of Ignatius: 'Trust in God as if the success of things depended wholly on you and not at all on God; but set to work as if God alone were to do everything and you do nothing'" (Essential Writings, p. 69).

The author is a retired Jesuit, who still keeps busy writing on theological issues.

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# Labour of Love:

## Jesuit Mission Outreach in Afghanistan



The trainees and local community celebrate Graduation Day, concluding an intensive JRS winter training program in a remote village in Daikundi.

Photo Courtesy: Paul D'souza, SJ

Fr. Aloysius Fonseca, who was part of the second team commissioned by the Jesuit Conference of South Asia (JCSA) to survey the possibilities of a Jesuit mission in Afghanistan, passed away in Kabul on 8th February 2004. His death was an unexpected setback, but not the end... Fr. Prem Kumar was released from captivity on 21st February 2015. His long captivity was another setback, but not the end... This article traces the historical development of the Jesuit presence in Afghanistan, and describes their strategies in building up the frontier mission.

### Early Jesuit presence in Afghanistan

Afghanistan has spurred the heroic spirit of Jesuits from the time of Emperor Akbar. Fr. Antonio Montserrat, a Catalan Jesuit accompanying Akbar's military expedition was the first to enter Kabul in 1581. The intense desire to minister to the ancient Christian community in Kafirstan led Fr. Gregorio Roiz, a Portuguese Jesuit, to Afghanistan in 1676. In the early 1930s, Fr. Henry Heras travelled widely in Afghanistan and wrote extensively on its history and culture. In recognition of his extraordinary contribution, King Zahir Shah honoured him with the country's highest civilian award in 1933. Fr. Stan

D'Souza served in Afghanistan as a demographer from 1971 to 1973.

From 1979 onwards Afghanistan has been ravaged by conflicts involving a range of international and local armed groups, the most oppressive being the Taliban. Decades of violence have left behind devastation, traumatised and a highly vulnerable population. After the fall of the Taliban regime the Jesuit Mission Outreach (JMO) started in Afghanistan in order to provide humanitarian aid. Beginning in Herat, the JMO soon extended to Kabul and to the remote areas of Bamiyan and Daikundi.

1. Herat Technical Institute new building inauguration by Deputy Minister of Technical & Vocational Education and Br. Noel Oliver.

2. The Jesuit team, Herat University Computer Science students and the software trainer, a volunteer from Pune, with the rented Jesuit residence in the background.

3. Sch. Jayaseelan with his Bamiyan University Agri Club students for a field training session in the Agriculture Department plant nursery.



Photo Courtesy: Paul D'souza, SJ

## The Jesuit Mission Outreach

Because of the conflicts and political instability, millions of Afghans had fled to neighbouring countries. Nearly six million have returned over the past seventeen years in spite of the ongoing violence. The present government has little control over the country and is unable to provide even the basic services of water, sanitation, electricity, health care and education.

In 2002, a JRS international fact-finding team visited Afghanistan. The JCSA commissioned two teams, in February 2003 and in August 2003, to explore the possibilities of a Jesuit mission in Afghanistan. Fr. Aloysius Fonseca, who was a member of the second commission passed away in Kabul on 8th February 2004, just a day before he was to return to Delhi. A new milestone in the history of the Jesuit presence in Afghanistan began when Fr. Antony Santiago of Andhra Province and Br. Noel Oliver of Pune Province arrived at Kabul on 28th April 2005 to start the Jesuit Mission Outreach. They went there as 'humanitarian aid workers.' In order to establish this identity, the Jesuits began by engaging and living in the midst of the local community, supported by like-minded NGOs. As a humanitarian organization, the JMO was brought under the JRS umbrella and officially registered as "JRS Afghanistan" in September 2005.

## The men on frontier mission

Since 2005 over 50 Jesuits from different Provinces with a variety of expertise and experience, socio-cultural backgrounds, and age groups have served in Afghanistan. With the JRS focus on education for capacity building, the Jesuits have played important roles as educationists, teachers, trainers, technical experts, researchers, advisors and, above all, as humanitarian aid workers. Their goal was to reach out to and work with people in great need, and to strengthen the process of transformation for a sustainably developed and peaceful Afghanistan.

## Strategies for winning over the trust of the people in Afghanistan

When JRS began its interventions, it had to establish itself as credible international non-governmental organisation (INGO). Local conservative communities did not welcome foreign educational programs, especially for girls. The government questioned their motives and wished to keep their resources to a small closed circle. The Jesuits devised strategies to build the mission and gain the confidence of the communities and the government.

### 1) Solidarity with the marginalized

The pioneering team moved about freely – walking, cycling or using public transport to the classroom or the market. There were no guards to protect their house. They were happy when their students said, "Teacher, you are one of us!" Through their students, they developed close and trusting relationships with the communities and their leaders.

### 2) Rooted in the local culture

In spite of restrictions on their movements, the Jesuits opted to be with the people. For them, learning about the land and assimilating the local cultural ethos was indispensable for developing their strategies. In the spirit of the GC 35 they felt called to reach out fearlessly to unknown frontiers. They sought to serve all, especially those whose need was greater.

By adopting the local ways of living and mixing with people everywhere they were able to build a rapport with local communities. This greatly helped the planning and implementing of programs. One of their students describes their close bonding thus: "During the Eid celebrations, we were welcomed into their house, and I was surprised to see that they (Jesuits) had served the same eatables that we offer relatives and friends in our culture for Eid... We did not even feel that they were from another country."



Photo Courtesy: Paul D'souza, SJ



Photo Courtesy: Paul D'souza, SJ

### 3) Sustained and long-term commitment to the mission

JRS is perceived as an organization that is truly committed to long-term service in Afghanistan, to making a qualitative difference in the lives of those living on the margins of society, and to the development of the country. In 2014-2015 when Fr. Prem Kumar was abducted and in captivity for almost eight months, JRS went through a long process of discernment to decide if they should continue or pull out. Drawing inspiration from Fr. Pedro Arrupe, the founder of JRS, they decided to continue. It was their love for the people, and their sensitivity to the local culture and religious traditions that helped them remain positively engaged in the difficult politico-religious environment and hostile situation.

### 4) No strait-jacket approach

In the uncertain and volatile situation of Afghanistan JRS decided to adopt a flexible approach instead of taking a strait-jacketed one to implement its programs. The Jesuits were seldom able to decide beforehand how to move forward. They continually discovered new opportunities and found innovative ways to move forward.

### 5) Dialogue and persuasion

One of the key JRS strategies was to be 'present in this troubled land as catalysts, enabling the local community to bring about a transformation for a brighter future.' The aim was to introduce phased structural change through dialogue and persuasion rather than confrontation. As a rule a needs assessment of the most vulnerable people and communities preceded new programs. Besides, at each stage of any given program, relevant government departments, community leaders and parents were taken into confidence, and their concerns addressed. This facilitated mutual trust and support in subsequent interventions.

### 6) Collaboration and networking for mission

From the very beginning, collaboration has been a core strategy used in order to succeed in achieving the JRS mission effectively. Empowered by volunteers and working with government institutions, JRS networks and partners with

non-state actors and institutes in education and healthcare to train and motivate local leadership. Promising JRS staff and students are supported to pursue higher studies and professional training, especially in India. Such ventures would not have been possible without the help of generous donors.

### 7) Engaging the government with the mission

Collaboration with the government has helped in gaining people's acceptance. Government support for project implementation is crucial for humanitarian work in order to avoid being misunderstood as working against local faith traditions. The government, in turn, appreciates the long-standing JRS commitment by facilitating and supporting its capacity building initiatives. JRS rapport with the government has also helped in establishing bases in remote regions like Bamiyan and Diakundi that remain largely inaccessible.

## A shared dream

Looking back, there is a sense of fulfilment - the seeds once planted are sprouting! JRS believes that the students trained over the years are taking up ownership of the mission and will eventually bear abundant fruit. However, the lack of Jesuits volunteers remains a crucial challenge for the future of the mission. Security issues are real and a serious deterrent. But, JRS and South Asian Jesuits need to discern whether to continue. JRS Afghanistan must be owned as the common frontier mission and those in leadership must provide men for it.

The Jesuit Year Book 2009 carried the JRS call for a shared dream: "In living out our pledge to accompany and assist the Afghan people in their endeavour to rebuild their devastated lives, society and nation, we have a God-given opportunity to share the abundant blessings and resources of the South Asian Assistency with a neighbour in dire need. We would like to share our dream with you, because with Dom Helder Camara, we believe: When you dream alone, it remains but a dream. When you dream together, it is the beginning of reality..."

The authors are currently working at Indian Social Institute, New Delhi and are engaged in Impact Assessment of JRS Interventions in Afghanistan.

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# The non-Christian initiatives for inter-religious dialogue



Image Source : dalailama.com

Soon after the Second Vatican Council (Vat. II) inter-religious dialogue reached its peak. Church documents kept encouraging Christians to enter into religious dialogue with the non-Christians. Theological periodicals published numerous articles in praise of this apostolate. Many ashrams and dialogue centres mushroomed throughout India. One often met saffron-clad Christian sadhus around, some of them walking about as Parivrajaks (wondering sadhus).

During this period of enthusiasm for the dialogue ministry some Jesuits asked, “Is this emphasis on dialogue a response to our need or to that of the non-Christians?

They do not seem to take any initiative in this matter.” Some others said that over-enthusiasm for this ministry would kill it as such over-reaction had almost done away with the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

## Dialogue Advocacy by Non-Christians

Today, however, such apprehensions are disappearing. In fact it is the non-Christians who are the enthusiastic advocates of dialogue. Recently, a Jesuit was invited to represent Christianity at an inter-religious conference organized by the Ramkrishna Mission and the BHU

in Varanasi. It was to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. The said Jesuit experienced a lot of sincerity and enthusiasm especially during the question-answer session.

A well-known guru in Gujarat, Morari Bapu, used to organize inter-religious dialogue seminars quite regularly. Another enthusiast for organizing such seminars is Dr. Nitin J. Vyas. Once he organized an inter-religious prayer seminar in Vadodara. Some 10 Jesuits joined. Muslims are not far behind in their eagerness to organise such ventures. A few years back, Muslim leaders organized a day-long inter-

religious seminar (Sadbhavna din) in Surat after a positive response from non-Muslims to a similar program in Ahmedabad.

## Ram-Rahim Nagar

What has kept me enthusiastic and interested in inter-religious dialogue is a particular locality called Ram-Rahim Nagar in Ahmedabad. This township is in a communally sensitive area on the eastern of the river Sabarmati. There are a little over 25,000 people live here - 60% are Muslims, 35% are Hindus, and the rest belong to other religions. When this township was registered under the Society Act, both Hindus and Muslims almost spontaneously chose to call it Ram-Rahim Nagar. When Ahmedabad was burning in the flames of communal hatred and violence in 1969, 1985, 1992 and 2002 this place was an oasis of peace, harmony and cooperation. How did they achieve this? What was the secret behind the communal harmony? 'Common Sense!' This is the one word that was used time and again by local leaders. The municipal corporator of the area said: "It is common sense that the strong should protect the weak, the majority community protect the minority."

## A bird's eye-view of the evolution of post-Vatican II dialogue

What were the reasons for the slow decline in the enthusiasm for inter-religious dialogue that was seen immediately after Vat II?

## Dialogal Liberation

The dialogue ministry was the ministry par excellence for some years after Vat II. Then South American Liberation Theology hit the shores of India with its 'option for the poor' mantra. It opened the eyes of the Dialogue Theologians to the reality of the poor and oppressed millions of India. The liberationists pointed out that the dialogue activities thus far had been between Christian scholars and the rich and high-caste Hindus; the poor, lower castes and marginalized had been neglected. Before long, however, they too realised that a handful of them were by no means equal to the task of liberating the oppressed millions. They felt the

need to cooperate with those belonging to other religions and regions. This led to the idea of 'Dialogal Liberation.'

In today's 'global village' (i) to be religious is to be inter-religious, and (ii) preferential option for the economically poor and the socially marginalized (the anawim), is a non-negotiable in the Christian mission. The first statement



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refers to traditional dialogue ministry, and the second refers to socio-economic developmental activities among the poor and the marginalized inspired by the ideals of Liberation Theology.

## The non-Christian way of re-reading their Scriptures

Some time ago a seminar was organised in Bangalore by Hindus, especially the NRIs. They had been accused that they had no concern for the poor and the oppressed. Western scholars insisted that Hindu Scriptures, especially the Manu-Smriti, hardly teach anything about mercy and compassion for the poor, the outcastes and the untouchables. The seminar was meant to identify passages in Hindu Scriptures that promote mercy and compassion. It was an effort by Hindu scholars - both NRI and residential

- to re-read their Scriptures in the Indian context.

They came across many texts that emphatically teach the virtue of mercy and compassion (karuna and daya). So, inter-religious dialogue today implies cooperation with non-Christians to re-read Scriptures like the Bhagavad Gita and the Holy Quran in the context of the oppressed and the marginalised.

## The wake-up call to us Jesuits

There is no compromise with regard to the Christian imperative that all Christians are called to be evangelizers. Similarly, the Jesuit identity as a "man on a mission" is asserted again and again by the GCs. In India today, the most viable way of living this mandate is to enter into inter-religious dialogue, learning to re-read not only the Bible but also non-Christian Scriptures.

True, in many parts of the world the very mission command of our Lord Jesus Christ has become dormant if not dead. In fact, for some missionaries the sermons and the activities of the Apostles described per longum et latum, in the Acts of the Apostles, look very strange if not irrelevant. However, fringe groups in various Christian denominations, the Charismatic groups, the Jesus Youth, etc., still keep the spark of evangelization alive. This is indeed a wake-up call to mainline missionary bodies like the Society of Jesus.

Jesus and his message are as relevant today as before. The message is still the one of Christ's Kingdom Ideal and the personification of this Ideal - Jesus himself - who was called by the Fathers of the Church, Auto-basilea. In the spirit of inter-religious dialogue this ideal is often interpreted in terms of Vasudaiva Kutumbakam (world family). A missionary endowed with the spirit of dialogue is not merely a talker but also a listener, not only the subject of the mission but also its object.

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# The Lenten Triangle



Image Source : huffingtonpost.com

The liturgy is not simply worship but also catechesis. It instructs us not only through words, but more specifically through symbols, symbolic space and time, symbolic actions and narratives. Hence, it is very important that we see Lent not just as a liturgical season, but an attitude that ought to shape Christian life all through the year. The Latin liturgy for all the three cycles has the same readings for Ash Wednesday. In the first reading Prophet Joel announces God's appeal to his people: "Come back to the Lord; let all fast and pray." In the Gospel, Jesus tells us how we ought to go about alms-giving, praying and fasting.

These three acts of piety have been

part of Jewish spirituality and are also essential to Islamic life. The three constitute a triangle. What is specific of a triangle is that all the three sides touch each other indicating their mutual inter-related character. True fasting is possible through and leads to prayer and alms-giving. Real prayer needs genuine fasting and authentic alms-giving. Sincere alms-giving is nurtured by and promotes unaffected fasting and deep prayer. In other words, a healthy relation to God, to our neighbour and to ourselves is one basic commitment. Through prayer we open our minds and hearts to God. In alms-giving we express our concern not only for other humans, but also for all God's creation. By fasting

we discipline ourselves so that we can reach out to God and to others.

There are many ways of understanding what we mean by prayer. Before Lent starts, the parish priests encourage their congregations to attend daily Mass, not to miss the Way of the Cross on Fridays, and to recite the family rosary more regularly. All this may well be words and words. Real prayer is the search for the depth within us. "Deep calls to deep" (Ps 42:7).

As we sit in silence we listen to our heart. It is full of resentment and anger, pride and passion, fears and anxieties, likes and dislikes. All this blocks our

freedom. We think we are acting in freedom, but we are pushed about by our subconscious. As we become aware of the upper level of our subconscious, we do not condemn ourselves, but try to understand: "Why am I what I am?" We go deeper into our past and discover that we have been wounded in many ways and the wounds have not yet been healed. We are slaves of our past. A look deeper makes us aware that we can still love and care in spite of all those wounds. We go still deeper and discover the one spring that is the source of all joy and peace. We discover God.

Real prayer makes us deep, sensitive and warm. Pope Francis cautions us: "In a consumerist society, the sense of beauty is impoverished and so joy fades. Everything is there to be purchased, possessed or consumed, including people. Tenderness, on the other hand, is a sign of a love free of selfish possessiveness. It makes us approach persons with immense respect and a certain dread of causing them harm or taking away their freedom. Loving other persons involves the joy of contemplating and appreciating their innate beauty and sacredness, which is greater than my needs" (Amoris Laetitia, 127). We discover the God. We cannot discover God without discovering ourselves. We cannot discover ourselves without discovering God. Similarly, if I understand my heart, I will be able to understand the heart of my neighbour. In my struggle to understand my neighbour I will get a better insight into my own heart. This is one aspect of the Lenten Triangle.

Fasting is not just abstaining from some food or drink. Pope Francis warns us: "The great danger in today's world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience. Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the

poor. God's voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades" (Evangelii Gaudium, 2).

Today, not only lay people but even bishops, priests and religious spend much more money than they actually need to. We want the latest smart phones, four-wheelers, cameras and computers. It is a matter of comfort and prestige. "The presence of constantly new gadgets, the excitement of travel and an endless array of consumer goods at times leave no room for God's voice to be heard. We are overwhelmed by words, by superficial pleasures and by an increasing din, filled not by joy but rather by the discontent of those whose lives have lost meaning" (Gaudete et Exsultate, 29). We spend a lot of money on our consecrations and ordinations. Religious professions, during which people vow evangelical

were asked about their ordination golden jubilee. They said that they did not intend celebrating it, but requested that the money that would be spent be given to them for the poor. Their request was turned down!

Fasting also means that we discipline ourselves. Without a sustained commitment to productive work we are not really Christian (1 Th 4:11; 2 Th 3:11-12). We are happy doing the minimum that is required of us by our office and for our survival. We forget the call to magis. The persons who have left their mark on human history were not all naturally gifted people. Only those who work hard make time for others and for the Other - the Triune God. Our dependence on modern facilities makes us lazy and less inclined to undergo hardships. Our great missionaries in the past went about on foot or on cycles. Today we have better means of transport than they had.

Alms-giving is symbolic of that concern for the needy which defines a disciple of Jesus (Mt 25:31-40). The poor widow gave not the surplus she had, but "out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on" (Mk 12:44). Christian

alms-giving is an incarnational mystery: we empty ourselves to share in the pain of the under-privileged.

"We cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice in a world where some revel, spend with abandon and live only for the latest consumer goods, even as others look on from afar, living their entire lives in abject poverty" (Gaudete et Exsultate, 101). All that we are and have is built on a foundational gift we have received - life! Our life is a gift from him who is Life. God, who is for us, invites us to be for others. This is the challenge of Lent. The Lenten Triangle takes us deeper into the Triune Triangle.



poverty, are becoming more and more costly day by day. Sometimes people ask: "From where do you bishops, priests and religious get the money you spend so freely?"

Our hunger for consumer comfort makes us forget the poor and the needy. Once again let us listen to Pope Francis: "Hedonism and consumerism can prove our downfall, for when we are obsessed with our own pleasure... we will find it hard to feel and show any real concern for those in need... when we allow ourselves to be caught up in superficial information, instant communication and virtual reality, we can waste precious time and become indifferent to the suffering flesh of our brothers and sisters" (Gaudete et Exsultate, 108). Let me share with you a real case that illustrates very well what Francis is warning us about. Two senior priests

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# THOUSAND WORDS



“

Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size... For if she begins to tell the truth, the figure in the looking-glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished.”

**VIRGINIA WOOLF**

( Chapter 2, A room of one's own)



# Mary Magdalene: Re-reading a 'sinful' woman

Arguably, the one most misrepresented woman in the Bible is Mary Magdalene. Her characterisation in the Gospel narratives is fuzzy, and if one only went by her legendary confused, suppressed identity, she could well be the prostitute that the church portrays her to be. And yet, this Mary - whether she was from Magdala or Bethany - gives the impression of someone behind the 'purdah'. Her half-hidden identity peeps out through hints here and there. Even though the edited Gospels we read today lack in the detail of her character, yet Jesus' response to her, and her undeniable presence simply cannot be ignored.

Mary Magdalene, as a 'sinful' female character in the Bible, stands the scope of being understood differently. The judgmental understanding of female characters in Christian exegeses as sinners does not stand in the light of a liberal, feminist and equitable reading of them.

Would a re-reading of the Biblical text today bring about an alternative way to perceive Mary Magdalene? Does the text offer space and scope to read her character inversely, in a non-gendered manner? Would this new reading bring about a change in the way women are understood in Christianity and in the world? With these questions, we begin the following discussion.

In the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, and John she is introduced as the 'woman with the alabaster jar'. (In John's account, she is named.) At the Jewish dinner at Bethany, with Christ at the centre, we could imagine an all-male, formal gathering, where 'the woman' enters with her alabaster jar. In this sense she corresponds symbolically with

feminists in her daring to enter as a woman into an arena that was male dominated, not imitating men, but instead establishing her presence through her womanhood - however stereotyped: her long hair, her perfumed ointment and her assumed silence. Is it her male-like courage to enter the male domain, or her female-like fragrance, appearance and silence, or her androgynous persona that makes Christ foretell her eternal memory in posterity? "...wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her" (Mt. 26:13).

Luke's declaring the woman a 'sinner' in the narration of the same incident is probably a misconstruction of her character. Writing about Mary Magdalene as a supposed sinner from whom seven demons were cast out by Jesus, Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza says that Jesus acknowledged that there were dehumanizing powers in this world which are not under our control. He often casts out these 'demonic' powers from the many possessed people who came to him for healing, with the liberating, unlimiting power of God. If Mary Magdalene is identified as the one from whom seven demons were cast out (Mk. 16:9, Lk. 8:2), then "she is not thereby characterized as a 'sinner', but as someone who has experienced the unlimited liberating power of the *baseleia* [kingdom of God] in her own life."

Another reason for considering Mary Magdalene as a signifier of feminism is in her assertion of her own independent identity as a bold, self-supported and unaided woman. She emerges as one who did not need a man's socio-economic

support. Without attempting to become like the men she intrudes upon, nor agreeing to fit into the slave-like mould destined for the women of her times, she carves her own niche.

It seems as if Jesus encourages such a feminist attitude in women. He does this when he urges a woman to break out of her socially assigned stereotypical role during his visit to the two sisters, Martha and Mary (Lk. 10:38-42). The narrative writes about how Mary sat at the feet of Jesus listening to him, while Martha was cooking in the kitchen. Jesus is reported to say at the end, 'Martha, Martha,' he said, 'you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part, and it is not to be taken from her' (Jn. 12:3).

It is typical of the Gospels not to tell us details: did Martha too leave her chores and go to listen to Jesus with her sister? What exactly was the wisdom that Jesus was imparting to Mary? Did they finally have a meal together - Jesus, Mary and Martha? Who prepared the meal? We have no answers in the text. All that one can see here is the prerogative of the woman that Jesus highlights.

Image Source : diocesan.com





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Could this be read as the reversal of the sin of Eve? In the Genesis text, Eve was punished because she wished to be wise. Here, the 'Son of God' himself imparts wisdom to Mary even when he is reminded by Martha that the former's duty is to serve him and perform her womanly roles. Eve was punished for desiring knowledge; Mary is exemplified for the same. Jesus not only subverts the Genesis verdict of punishing the woman who desired knowledge, but promotes it as the 'right choice.'

Much has been written about Mary Magdalene's 'relationship' with Jesus. Whether these are discarded as truth, imagination or 'sinful' there is no doubt that Mary Magdalene was intelligent and had a unique connection with Jesus. Take for instance the 'Noli me tangere' scene after the resurrection, where Jesus merely utters her name in a certain way, and she recognizes him (Jn. 20:14-17). Being the first one to encounter what is the biggest mystery of Christianity – the Resurrection – strongly suggests the close connection between Jesus and Mary Magdalene.

If she could recognize him by the way he called out her name, couldn't one

assume that he must have called out her name numerous times before? Would any other disciple have recognized Jesus by the way he spoke her name? In fact, there are many instances in the Gospels wherein the disciples do not recognize Jesus even though he is right in front of them. (The disciples on the road to Emmaus - Lk. 24:13-21; the disciples in the boat - Mt. 14:26; the disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee - Jn. 21:1-13; Thomas who only believes it is Jesus after he physically confirms it - Jn. 20:26-29) The male disciples of Jesus need to see him, touch him, and use their senses to identify him. The Magdalene identifies him without the human sense organs. The male disciples of Jesus definitely had more access to his physical presence than Mary Magdalene, and yet, it is only the Magdalene who recognizes him by the way he called her name.

## Conclusion

To be judged and read negatively is an oppressive structure, as is the subjugation of women. Christ has shown that the only release from oppressive constructs is through love and compassion. Paulo Freire, in *The*

*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, writes about the same necessity of love in the fight against an oppressive structure. The only way to break out of the cycle of oppression and condemnation is through compassion, acceptance. Therefore, instead of rejecting the Magdalene for what Christianity has only imagined her to have done, could we not perhaps read her compassionately for who she could possibly be? Mary Magdalene, who has been branded a prostitute without much textual evidence, who was eliminated from discipleship even though she was loyal, close to Jesus, and the first one to whom the resurrected Christ appeared, certainly merits compassion. More importantly, she merits acceptance as a fearless woman, unafraid to step into a man's domain, as one who desires knowledge and goes for it, and as one who does not flinch from a public display of her emotions nor shies away from accepting her position as a vulnerable person who needs her God.

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# Do Women Count?

## A Teilhardian Perspective



Teilhard de Chardin proposes a dynamic evolutionary theory in which the universe is evolving towards a final point – the Omega Point. He identifies Christ as the Omega Point in whom and towards whom the universe as a whole is marching. It is a communitarian march that requires human cooperation, responsibility and contribution. In Teilhard's scheme of things, everyone is important – young and old, man and woman, weak and strong. Teilhard makes us realize how women, along with the rest of humanity, have an important role to play. In reality they are not allowed to play it. Women who make up half the population have not been able to play their part to the full. Throughout history they have been left out, discriminated against, and pushed to the periphery. They have not been allowed to realize their potential through education and development of skills. Thus, women like caged birds with their wings clipped, could not and cannot hope to contribute substantially to the onward march. This piece is an effort to reflect on the idea of complementarity keeping the above at the back of our mind.

Complementarianism is a theory that seeks to promote the equal dignity of man and woman besides recognizing a significant difference of the two sexes. It states that men and women are ontologically equal though functionally different. They have different but complimentary roles and responsibilities in society. Being functionally different does not make one superior to the other. Complementarians, like other feminists, want to eliminate the discrimination and violence that women face.

In Man-Woman Complementarity: The Catholic Inspiration Prudence Allen highlights the three understandings of gender throughout history: gender polarity, gender unity, and gender complementarity. Traditional gender polarity considered man to be superior to woman. Its reversed gender polarity looked at woman as superior to man. Unisex theory or gender unity argues that there are no significant differences between man and woman and it upholds their equal dignity. Gender complementarity is of two types: 1) fractional complementarity which argues that man and woman are two halves of a whole, and 2) integral complementarity which holds that each man and each woman is a complete person. When man and woman enter into interpersonal relations something greater than two wholes is generated. The best option, according to Allen, is the integral

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complementarity position.

Like other feminist theories complementarianism emphasizes the need to uphold the woman's dignity. A woman is a person and must be treated as such. The problem arises when she is looked upon as a possession of man. That position makes her vulnerable to all sorts of discrimination and exploitation. She is no longer seen as an end in herself but as a means at the disposal of man. When she is thus objectified and commodified, there is no way she is going to receive respect and dignity in life. In society, she becomes a secondary citizen; in marriage, she must give pleasure to her husband and bear him children; in the church, she must decorate the altar and obediently listen to the priest; in the work place, she must put up with her perverted boss... And the list goes on.

For complementarity to be real, this thinking has to be questioned. The decision-making process is one major area that women must be involved in. Sadly, we know that even in the family the wife does not have much of a say; it is the husband who calls the shots. As a person the woman has the right to speak her mind and man, as the complementary other, must listen to her and understand her. The world must respect her choices in life. Some women, for example, may not learn to cook well and be 'good' wives. They may rather be doctors or pugilists. They must not be condemned for it.

In this context, it is worth reflecting on Mr. Barack Obama's invitation to "...recommit ourselves more broadly to ensuring that our daughters have the same rights and opportunities as our sons: the chance to attain a world-class education; to have fulfilling careers in any industry; to be treated fairly and paid equally for their work; and to have no limits on their dreams. That is what I want for women everywhere."

Things are changing today. More and more women are coming out of the four walls hungry for education, change and freedom. They are participating in public administration and in the political decision-making process. Women are showing that they have an undying spirit by overcoming obstacles put forth by patriarchal ideologies. The appointment of three women by Pope Francis as consultants to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith as part of his ongoing effort to give a greater role to women in the Roman Curia is a historic change and decision, and a response to this march of women.

However, not all respond to these demands in the same manner.



Teilhard de Chardin

Women have a tremendous potential to make families and communities more humane. But their fight for dignity and equality is and will be met with resistance; yet the struggle must go on. The onward march to the Omega Point requires that everyone - men, women and others - do their best to contribute to it. This in turn demands that we recommit ourselves to improving the situation of women in the here and now.

Most of the women today continue to be deprived of even basic human rights - the right to dignity of life, right to education, right to personal freedom, right to equal pay for equal work, right to freedom of expression, and so on. This has to change. Women should be provided wide, secure and liberative open spaces to grow. They must be given incentives and motivated to actively participate in all spheres of private and public life, especially in decision-making processes.

Gender equality is an indispensable pre-requisite for true progress and development, and peace. Gender equality is a matter of human rights; each one of us must consciously speak out in its favour. This necessarily requires a change of heart from all. Men, first and foremost, must change their negative outlook and attitude towards women. They ought to acknowledge that women have an inalienable right to equal respect and dignity. It requires certain humility to say, "We are not superior to women." Conversely, a change of heart is required in women too. They too must change the way they perceive themselves. They should recognize themselves as persons who have a lot to offer to humanity. They must stand up against male chauvinism and fight for

their rights. Put simply, women themselves must strive to improve their lot worldwide - this must be their personal mission.

Men and women are like the two wings of a bird. If one is underdeveloped and fragile, humanity's flight towards prosperity, peace and harmony will remain but a dream. Women's role in, and contribution to, the onward march is unique and indispensable. If each one of us were to feel responsible for the cause of women and acts on it, humanity would certainly have a better story to tell.

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# Counterculture Education

One could call the way of Jesus Christ, a counter-culture movement because in many ways it contrasts with what the world considers human advance or fulfilment. The opponents of Jesus who tried almost successfully to eliminate him and his disturbing message are similar to historical groups that today within and beyond the Church keep opposing the dynamism of Christ's Gospel. The Gospel offers a way of living with universal possibilities of human advancement through radical love of God and neighbour. The opposition limits the ways and means to meet basic needs either by appropriating limited resources or by establishing systems of development that exclude greater well-being.

Keeping this in mind we could ask whether our educational strategies (as with any other of our services) bear the mark of a vibrant counter-culture witness which the Gospel of Jesus inspires and enables.

Education today has become a process of elimination pretending to quality that really discriminates against a vast majority of human beings. Its institutions for formal learning are restricted to a section of human society that can economically afford such a service. Much of its quality consists of expensive décor, costly gadgetry, fancy uniforms, knowledge systems totally emulative of affluent western content, heavily financed co-curricular activity, association with elite national and foreign institutions, enabling third-world to first-world migration of students, awarding certification that has high emoluments disproportionate to the socio-economic contribution for the well-being of society. In other words, education is moving towards total commercialization of its product – the student.

The above educational process succeeds in eliminating the demands for sufficiently compensated employment of the majority with a manipulated structure of competence only achievable by a minority. It also induces vast sections of the population to consider themselves inferior intellectually and socially as compared to those who have made it “to the top!”

The support of the Government, industrial houses, religious societies and others to such education has obstructed the design of educational systems that are more accessible, offering possibilities of development and fulfilling the aspirations of the majority of the citizens.

The elite, hypercompetitive and economically restrictive type of education has become a model to be emulated even by poorer sections of the population as is observed in rural Maharashtra where, for instance, the necktie, socks and shoes are needlessly imposed as part of the school uniform that could well be a simple kurta and pyjama or shorts, more hygienic for functioning in the harsh Indian summers. The vegetarian imposition on school diets (and general food habits) of the politically powerful classes



is also seen in the midday meals of the poor where even an egg or milk is hard to come by, leave alone the supply of healthy meat products. Clean toilets and leak-proof classrooms are difficult to find. Some electronic equipment is fitted in classrooms without planning for dependable electricity or maintenance services. The syllabus is heavily loaded in favour of students who have to pursue ‘further’ studies which means complicated, rapidly upgraded, unintegrated and abruptly sophisticating levels of learning without mastering the basics. To mediate (teach or communicate) this content of education would require access to tutorials or ‘coaching’ which elite sections have access to.

The Indian State struggles to afford a universally accessible system of education. The State working in vast territories with varying logistical problems tries providing more classrooms, supplying stationery, text and copy books, teaching aids, mid-day meals, uniforms, better qualified teachers, demanding detailed records and reports of the educational processes. The State sets up residential schools for tribals and other marginalised sections. But these resources cannot match the inputs for education commandeered by the elite from classroom space, furniture, teaching aids, supply of electricity and, above all else, the massive alternative schooling support structures that are prohibitively expensive for the vast majority of learners. The State's handicapped efforts are wrongly compared with the elite and exclusive educational systems that form public expectations of what real education is all about.

Along with State efforts to reach education to all there are also notable ventures by men and women of goodwill ‘from every tribe, nation and tongue’ to discover ways of addressing wider educational needs of the population. Some of these ventures



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are within the formal system, others emphasise some or other educational need. For the size of the task every effort to improve educational access and quality is valuable.

The counter-culture educational ventures will have to offer a greater service to countries like India and link them with other such movements in South-Asia, Africa, the Americas, wherever the scarcity of educational resources has to be used creatively, economically and effectively for masses of learners. Some characteristics of counter-culture education can be stated as:

- Education that is accessible to all not only economically but in terms of its socio-cultural content.
- Education that does not use competition to attain distinction but is distinguished for the wide spectrum of human attainment it promotes.
- Education that makes knowledge more easily comprehended and communicated.
- Education that facilitates productivity at the service of human needs.
- Education that has universal values.
- Education that fosters creativity, freedom of expression, happiness of the individual and social commitment.

While the above desireables seem abstract they can serve to mould any system of education for the common good.

Some practical applications of the above guidelines that Jesuits could undertake are as follows:

- Developing more accessible systems of education.

- Collaborating with similarly striving women and men of goodwill.
- Linking education with economic productivity.
- Doing research and showcasing findings from such educational experiments nationally and internationally.
- Raising resources in terms of finances, skilled personnel, other institutional supports (e.g., Media for Education, Art, Technology for Education, etc.) for a wider outreach.
- In India, developing the SANKALP-like concepts to their optimum strategic limits.
- Internationalising the counter-culture education movement.

In conclusion one realises that the Church has made great efforts to educate people in every sphere of society. The Gospel of Jesus has given inspiration to educational ventures down the centuries in every country. Evangelisation has supported education as an expression of human development that the Gospel desires. The counter-cultural impetus for education however is not the exclusive field of action that the Church or any political system can claim. It is inspired by the Gospel of Jesus as well as the many, many persons of goodwill who feel responsible to make sure the goods of the earth are shared by and benefit every human being.

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# Ignatius, an Alumbrado?

Alumbrados and the heresy surrounding them is an important key to understand the person of Ignatius and his writings. The persecutions that Ignatius and the early Society endured, the Society's spiritual doctrine, especially the method of prayer adopted by the new order, all these aspects cannot be adequately understood if they are not seen with the Alumbrados in the background. Ignatius underwent eight Inquisitorial processes, as he himself testifies in his letter to King John III of Portugal of 15th March 1545.<sup>1</sup> It is hard to find another saint who passed through as many ecclesial trials untainted!<sup>2</sup>

Alumbradismo is a religious phenomenon that originated in the early 16th century in Castilian region of Toledo, Spain. Alumbrados were a group of devout people who sought a pure love, beyond expressions of external works. Their origins had no links with Erasmism or Lutheranism. They were largely converts from Judaism. Their way of perfection closely resembled that of the recollected (recogidos) Franciscans, but the latter clearly dissociated themselves from the Alumbrados in their Provincial Chapter of 1524.

The Alumbrados lived simple lives, renouncing the earthly goods, much like some Indian sadhus. A good many of them were even learned men and women.<sup>3</sup> They lived inactive lives, dedicating time to silent prayer, despising vocal prayer. For this reason, they were also called *dejados*, i.e., reclusive or withdrawn. They attached undue importance to mystical phenomena such as visions. The word *alumbrado* could mean 'enlightened' or 'illuminated.' They maintained that they were illuminated by the Holy Spirit, to the extent that they considered all other meditations – the Church, sacraments, priests, images, ascetic practices, and good works – redundant. They gathered in secret in small groups. Their lives were morally lax as they believed that, being illuminated by the Spirit, they were immune from sinning.<sup>4</sup> Though they practiced *Lectio Divina*, it was only of secondary importance, direct illumination by the Holy Spirit being primary.

Ignatius had known the Alumbrados and had relationship with them during his years in the courts of Arévalo and Najera. He arrived in Alcalá, not far from Toledo, in 1526. The Alumbrados were condemned as heretics in the preceding year by the Inquisition in Toledo. Ignatius's lifestyle provoked immediate suspicion and the Inquisition was alerted. He and his companions dressed in sackcloth and for this reason they were called *ensayalados* (AB 58). Among his followers there

were women, assisting his catechetical instruction, which he gave even though he had not studied theology. He went around barefoot (AB 59). In practice, he resembled an alumbrado though in reality he was not.

In the spiritual doctrine of Ignatius, there are elements having affinity with the teachings of Alumbrados. Here are a few examples: SpEx (15) speaks of the Creator dealing directly (and without mediation) with the creature. This is the principal tenet of the Alumbrados. Further, in the Principle and Foundation (SpEx 23), Ignatius speaks of indifference. Some contemporaries of Ignatius associated this with the inactivity or "doing nothing" of the Alumbrados. At one point Ignatius says, "if there were no Scriptures to teach us these matters of faith, he would be resolved to die for them, solely because of what he has seen" (AB 29). Drawn out of context, this sounds like Alumbradismo.

The reason why Ignatius places the "Rules for Thinking with the Church" at the end of Spiritual Exercises can easily be inferred. He was aware that his teaching could be easily mistaken for that of the Alumbrados. In all likelihood, Ignatius began formulating these rules in Paris where he also came to know of Lutheran heresies. He was accused, not only of being an alumbrado, but also a Lutheran. These rules declare categorically Ignatius's fidelity to the Church and his faith in her mediation.

In his letter to King John III (March 1545) Ignatius declares, "Schismatics, Lutherans, or Alumbrados, persons I never associated [conversé in the original] with or knew". Is Ignatius lying? No, he is not. He is telling the King that after the Alumbrados were declared heretics (1526), he had no association with them. At the time of writing the letter, many were criticising the Spiritual Exercises as a suspicious method of promoting silent prayer. He did not want the King to have misgivings about them, which would prove a hindrance in getting the Pope's approval of them (he did so in 1548).

Modern forms of Alumbradismo (e.g., several New Age movements) abound and there is no Inquisition to hunt them down. We, Jesuits, continue to vow allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church, especially through our Fourth Vow. How do we hold a true attitude of mind within the Church today? (SpEx 352).



Image Source : jesuitsestois.org

The author is a Jesuit of Gujarat Province. He teaches Spiritual Theology at the Gregorian University, Rome.

Contact: pinto@unigre.it



## Assistancy Appointments Between 1st Aug 2018 – 31st Jan 2019

### JDV Pune:

Fr (Dr) Jesuraj Rayappan SVD	Appointed to Theology Faculty, Dept. of Historical Theology, JDV Pune, wef, 1st June, 2018.
Fr Ilanko Xavier M (MDU)	Permission for Doctoral Studies in Ign. Sp. at JDV, along with other works wef, Sep 2018.
Sr (Dr) Fabian J. Kaviyil UMI	Appointed as Lecturer in the Spirituality Dept. of JDV Theology Faculty, wef, 8th Oct, 2018.
Fr Dolichan Kollarath, SJ (KER)	Permission to continue as Associate Research Professor of Boston College, USA. 14th Oct, 2018
Sr (Dr) Patricia Santos RJM	Appointed as Lecturer in the Pastoral & Moral Dept. of JDV Theology Faculty, wef. 1st Jan, 2019.

### VJ Delhi:

Fr Caesar D'Cunha (GUJ)	Appointed as Acting Minister of VJ, Delhi wef, 22nd Jan, 2019.
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### ISI-B:

Fr Joye James K, (KER)	Sec. JHEASA residing at ISI_B Community
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### ISI-D:

Fr Ravi Sagar (KHM)	Appointed to the Legal Cell of ISI-Delhi wef 16th Jan, 2019
Fr Ryan S. Rodrigues (KAR)	Begins Postgraduate Studies in Sanskrit & Pali at Pune Univ. residing at Loyola Pashan.
Fr Martin Puthussery (CCU)	Appointed as coordinator of Displacement & Migration, for Global Ignatian Advocacy Networks (GIAN), for SA.
Fr David M. Solomon (DUM)	Appointed as coordinator of Governance of Natural and Mineral Resources, for GIAN, for SA.
Fr Swaroop K. Lumnesh (KAR)	Appointment as coordinator of Ecology for GIAN, for SA. w.e.f. 1st Dec, 2018 for three years.
Fr Joseph Sebastian (PAT)	Appointment as coordinator of Right to Quality Education for All, for GIAN, for SA, w.e.f. 1st Dec, 2018 for three years.
Fr Jagdish Parmar (DAR)	Appointed as co-ordinator PWPB & EYM for SA, wef, 13th July, 2018

### Assistancy Seminar on Interculturality Organizing Team:

Fr Joe Arun (MDU) Co-ordinator; Team members: Fr Ajit Tirkey (RAN), Fr M.K. George (KER), Fr Nitin Monteiro (KAR). Appointment on 16th May, 2018.

### Addition to Core-Team on Fundamentalism:

Frs Vincent Shekhar (MDU) JSD Sec.; Arun Kumar (KAR) JEPASA Sec. wef, 4th Jan, 2019.

### Assistancy Secretaries:

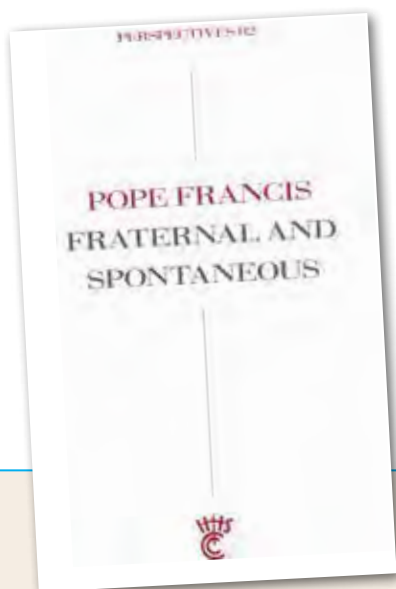
Fr Arun Kumar (KAR)	JEPASA Secretary w.e.f. 1st Dec, 2018. For 3yrs
Fr Brian D'Souza (BOM)	JYMSA Secretary w.e.f. 1st Dec, 2018. For 3yrs

### JRS:

Fr Jeyakumar (HAZ)	Assigned as additional support to JRS TN, Finance Team, till 31st Dec, 2018
Br Sandesh Gonsalves (GUJ)	Assigned to JRS Mission wef 25th May, 2018, residing at Jor Bagh, N.Delhi.

### Gratitude of services rendered to Common Houses and Works:

Fr Xavier Soreng (RAN)	GIAN for Mineral Resources, as Coordinator SA Level.
Fr Anthony Dias (BOM)	GIAN for Displacement & Migration as Coordinator at SA Level.



To read, copy the Link on a web browser:  
<https://laciviltacattolica.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Conversations-with-Jesuits.pdf>

## How Pope Francis interacts with Jesuits

Immediately, directly, intuitively: this is how the message of Pope Francis touches people. His ability to communicate is rooted in a pastoral experience that naturally tends to create authentic relationships. His authority is never expressed rigidly, as if spoken by a statue. Rather, his personality flows into the people with whom he is speaking. This volume gathers some of the conversations that Francis has had with Jesuits during his apostolic journeys. It is clear how the Pope tunes into the appropriate wavelength for each group. You can see it in his approach, in his greeting and body language. Francis relaxes with the Jesuits; he feels at home. Ever since his very first papal trip to Brazil, whenever possible, Francis has enjoyed meeting the Jesuits of the country he is visiting. That encounter can take various forms: a mass, a personal greeting for a group, a dialogue... Obviously, these are "private" words, not meant for widespread circulation. Following the Pontiff on his apostolic trips, I have always joined in these meetings. I record his words with my Smartphone, transcribe them and then hand them to Francis so that he can read them. If he thinks it opportune, he approves them for publication in La Civiltà Cattolica.

■ Courtesy: Fr. Antonio Spadaro, SJ, La Civiltà Cattolica

## A text book for study on Indian religious traditions

Pathways to Peace is a compilation from varied sources on different religions. The book has 11 units on as many as nine religious traditions of India, including Sufism and Lingayat traditions. It has come out as a ready-made text book for a course in religious traditions of India. Every unit has a definite structure with sufficient material to get an overview of each tradition and some critical questions at the end for discussion and debate.

Though this is a compilation, what is striking is the dispassionate approach the author has taken to look at all traditions with respect and not intercept them with long-held biases and prejudices. It is this quality which will go a long way in making this book an important source for teachers to help students in cultivating mutual respect among religions.

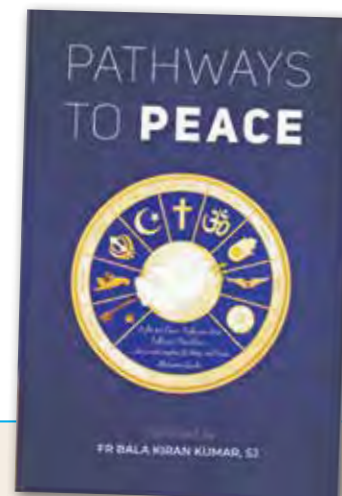
### Some delicate issues

While the book has been compiled with utmost care, a couple of issues may seem somewhat unnerving to people who are sensitive to recent developments. One is the recent issue of the Veerasha and Lingayat controversy in Karnataka. While the author has attempted to define what both these terms actually are, much more clarity is required. Veerashaivism existed

in India much before the emergence of Lingayatism by Basavanna in the 12th century. While Veerashaivism had Shiva as the deity of worship, Basavanna's Shiva is not. The Shiva of Veerashaivism is the cultic deity while that of Basavanna is a universal god.

While debating Hinduism, the author puts Ramayana and Mahabharata as segments of 'Itihasa' in the Smriti tradition. Itihasa may simply refer to 'history'. The term 'Itihasa' in the Vedic context is not merely history; it means 'historical legend' which is different from chronology.

The author has suggested questions to ponder at the beginning as well as at the end of each unit. The questions at the beginning help to gather the reader's prior knowledge of each religion. One question at the beginning of the unit on Islam (Unit 10) caught my attention: 'What is your impression of Islam?' It is an important question, perhaps for different reasons than what the author would have intended. It is a fact that the one religion that carries the burden of everyone's prejudice in India is Islam. Thankfully, the unit does more than just ward off most of our pre-conceived ideas of Islam. The author has indeed looked at Islam with utmost objectivity and tried to



Title: PATHWAYS TO PEACE  
 Author: Fr. Balakiran Kumar, SJ  
 Publication: ATC Publisher, Bengaluru (2019)  
 Price: RS. 180

separate the real from the false.

What gives even more weightage to this mini compendium is the fact that it has crossed several seasoned hands before it has reached the press. Hence, each unit has a standard structure which is presented in a highly readable style.

■ MELWYN PINTO, SJ

# International Symposium on Stephen Hawking and God



Photo: Vijay Macwan

Wide consensus exists that the existence of God cannot be established conclusively on logic or science alone. But attempts at establishing the non-existence of God on purely logical or scientific basis have been even more unsuccessful. Stephen Hawking, one of the greatest scientific minds ever, an avowed atheist whose first death anniversary falls on 14th March this year, understood this enigmatic predicament, and so set out to establish the dispensability of God for our universe and its activities. In his international bestseller, *A Brief History of Time*, he proposed his “No-Boundary Theory” in which he concludes that our universe is finite but unbounded in 4-dimensional space time, analogous to a 3-dimensional sphere. Such a body has no “boundaries,” no starting point or end point, no moment of creation or final termination. If no creation, then no creator needed. So we are left with a job-less, form-less and name-less God, which is as good as no-God. In his second international bestseller, *The Grand Design*, he goes further to claim: “It is not necessary to invoke God [to explain anything].” Although Martin Rees, former Astronomer Royal, who knew Hawking closely for over 40 years, has cautioned us not to “attach any weight to his views on this topic,” since he speaks not only for himself, but for many an avowed atheist, his views cannot be bypassed easily.

In response to Hawking, Indian Institute of Science & Religion (IISR), Delhi, along with Xavier Research Foundation (XRF) and St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad, organized an International Symposium on “Creation without a Creator: Critical Perspectives on Hawking's God,” from 8th to 10th February 2019 in the College campus. Attended by more than 100 scholars from India and a few from abroad, the days offered a rare opportunity to listen to scholarly papers

by internationally reputed scholars belonging to different scientific disciplines, religions and ideologies. The speakers included Prof. Kathleen Duffy, a physicist from Philadelphia, USA, Prof. John Selvamani from Fu Jen University, Taiwan, Prof. Raghavan Rangarajan, scientist and Dean of Ahmedabad University, Prof. Francis Parmar, former Principal of St. Xavier's College, Prof. Vincent Braganza, Founder-Director of XRF, Prof. Kuruvilla Pandikattu, Director of JDV Centre for Science-Religion Studies, Pune, Prof. Job Kozhamthadam, Director IISR Delhi, Prof. Dhruv Raina, JNU, New Delhi, Dr. H.N. Saiyed, former Director of National Institute of Occupational Health, Dr. Kamaladevi Kunkolienker, Goa University, etc. In addition to the excellent presentations, there were group discussions and personal sharing of the experience of the Divine by several scholars. Since matters of religion touch the personal dimension also, certain pertinent aspects of Hawking's personal and family life were also looked at in some depth, particularly by psychiatrist-professor Dr. Sally John, who made an insightful presentation of Jane Hawking's heroic and self-sacrificing role in reviving Hawking's despair-ridden spirit and reorienting his scientific career. This crucial experience could have been an entry-point for the “supra-scientific” in Hawking's life, but the divine dimension remained an ever-elusive blind-spot for him. Finally, it was pointed out that, although God's existence can neither be proved, disproved or dispensed with scientifically, both scientists and theologians should continue their search because this will shed more valuable and clearer light on our understanding of the being and nature of the unfathomable Divine.

| JOB KOZHAMTHADAM, SJ



Pope Francis greets Father Arturo Sosa Abascal, superior general of the Society of Jesus, before a meeting with editors and staff of the Jesuit-run magazine, La Civiltà Cattolica

Arturo Sosa, S.J., the superior general of the Society of Jesus, today made public the four main reference points, known as “universal apostolic preferences,” that are to guide the life and work of the Jesuits over the next 10 years. He said Pope Francis has approved these four preferences and entrusted them to

## Pope Francis approves four priorities for the Jesuits’ next decade

the Jesuits as their “mission.”

Father Sosa presented these four universal apostolic preferences in a letter to Jesuits worldwide, which was released today. They are:

1. To show the way to God through discernment and the Spiritual Exercises;
2. To walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice;
3. To accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future;
4. To collaborate in the care of our Common Home.

The Venezuelan-born Father Sosa, 70, who

was elected superior general of the Jesuits on Oct. 14, 2016, during the 36th General Congregation, explained the background and significance of the U.A.P.s at a briefing at the Jesuit Curia in Rome on Feb. 16.

He recalled that the 36th G.C. asked him to continue “a process of discernment” and to review the preferences that had been approved in 2003 and “to update their specific content and to develop plans and programs that can be monitored and evaluated.” His Dutch predecessor, Peter Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., had carried out a similar discernment and in 2003, with Pope John Paul II’s approval, prioritized ministries in China, Africa, the intellectual apostolate, the Roman houses and among migrants and refugees.

Source: jcsaweb.org

## Asteroid Kikwaya named after Congo astronomer

Fr. Jean-Baptiste Kikwaya, SJ, is a member of the Vatican Observatory, a scientific body for astronomical research entrusted to the Jesuits.

“My astronomical research focuses on what are commonly referred to as shooting stars, which are not really stars but meteors,” says Fr. Jean-Baptiste Kikwaya, who is originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Fr. Kikwaya has studied celestial bodies, including asteroids and comets that have recently passed by the Earth, for more than 10 years. Indeed, even as a child, he liked to gaze at the sky.

“I was very interested in religion,” he recalls. “When I looked at the sky, I felt a kind of closeness to God and I was seeking that proximity.” The popular explanation for meteors in Congolese culture failed to satisfy the curiosity of the future astronomer. “In the popular imagination, shooting stars were regarded as vehicles used by sorcerers in nocturnal expeditions,” he says. “Clearly, that was as frightening as it was attractive to a child.”

After becoming highly involved in the Catholic Church as a teenager, Jean-Baptiste decided to join the Society of Jesus upon

completing high school. He was sent to study at the Cyangugu novitiate in Rwanda before moving to study philosophy at the St. Peter Canisius Institute in Kimwenza, south of the Congolese capital, Kinshasa. After a year at the University of Kinshasa, his superiors enrolled him at the University of Namur in Belgium, where he continued his mathematics studies.

### Passion for the stars

While preparing for his Master’s there, he found an opportunity to re-develop his passion for the stars. He then decided to specialize in celestial mechanics, which brought him a step closer to astronomy. After completing his Master’s, however, he was forced to temporarily abandon his scientific studies to pursue his training for the priesthood, studying theology at the Catholic Institute of Paris from 1994 to 1997. He then taught mathematics and computer science at the Agro-Veterinary Higher Institute and at the St Peter Canisius Institute in the DR Congo for two years. In 1998, he was ordained a priest before beginning his career



in astronomy a year later. The Vatican Observatory was seeking to rebuild its team and recruit younger staff. When it asked Jesuit communities to propose candidates, Fr. Kikwaya’s profile quickly stood out.

Following his diploma of advanced studies in astronomy at the Paris Observatory and a Master’s in theology, he enrolled at the University of Western Ontario in Canada, obtaining a doctorate of astronomy in 2009.

Over the years, Fr. Kikwaya has collaborated with many astronomers and gained international recognition in the process. A joint research project with the U.S. National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA) added to his renown in the field, resulting in an asteroid being named after him. “The work I was carrying out was recognized as an important scientific contribution to astronomical research,” he says. “That is why they named an asteroid after me.”

LUCIE SARR

Source: <https://international.la-croix.com/news/asteroid-kikwaya-named-after-congo-astronomer/9159> (January 4, 2019)

# Pilgrimage to the shrine of a Jesuit Martyr



Jesuit students of theology from Tarunoday, the Regional Theology Centre (RTC) of Ranchi made a pilgrimage to the 'mazar' (tomb) of the Jesuit martyr Fr. Herman Rasschaert.

Fr. Rasschaert, SJ, was a Belgian priest who served the people of Chotanagpur from 1947 till the day he was martyred on 24th March 1964.

Fr. Jailas Kullu, one of the priests at Gerda Parish where Fr. Herman Rasschaert, SJ was martyred, briefed the pilgrims: "When Fr. Rasschaert was at the Kutungia Parish, presently in Simdega Diocese, on Holy Week Tuesday his parishioners alerted him of a communally critical situation developing in Gerda, one of the mission stations of his Parish. He was informed that several hundred Muslim refugees had taken asylum in a small mosque at Gerda and they were facing impending massacre by communally charged mobs."

"Fr. Rasschaert rushed to the spot to save the hapless Muslims. The mobs killed him and a number of Muslims, and burnt the mosque.

His supreme sacrifice for peace and harmony is remembered by all and his courageous act is particularly relevant in the present context of many engineered communal conflicts," he further noted.

We spent quiet prayerful moments at the place where he was martyred, at the burnt mosque in Gerda, and at his tomb in Kutungia. "As a pilgrim, I felt that Fr. Rasschaert SJ, who came to do the will of God as a missionary to India, surrendered to God totally in the courageous act of dying for others. His martyrdom is a great source of inspiration for me," said Samir, a second year theology student.

A number of students reflecting on the motivation to visit the shrine of the martyr said that they had a deep desire to pray at the mazar of Fr. Rasschaert, to draw inspiration and strength to serve effectively in the Chotanagpur region which has become communally divisive and intolerant.

Many students shared that their faith was strengthened, and they felt the 'barkat' (blessings) of Fr. Rasschaert at his tomb. They also felt spiritually enriched and energised. This pilgrimage was part of the intensive course on Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations.

The Jesuit Director of Tarunoday, Fr. Francis Minj said, "We have obtained permission from the Bishop of Simdega Diocese for the process of the beatification of Fr. Rasschaert. Preliminary work has already started with the formation of the Commission. Efforts are going on to gather evidences." Fr. Jailas Kullu added that the Diocese has made every effort to record the statements of witnesses, both Christians and Muslims, and submitted these to the Commission. He also added that God willing, the announcement of Fr. Rasschaert as 'Servant of God' might come by March 2019.

■ VICTOR EDWIN, SJ

## LOCAL NEWS

# Pilgrimage to Khaidkona

Khaidkona is a popular pilgrimage centre in Jashpur diocese of Chhattisgarh. It is in Ajdha Parish. It is the birth place of Christianity in Jashpur. On 21st November, 1906 Frs. Van der Linden, SJ and Bressers, SJ offered the 'first Mass' in Jashpur. Fifty six villagers were baptized after Mass. To commemorate the event Christians have been coming to Khaidkona every year since 2001. This year more than fifteen thousand gathered to pay homage to the ancestors. The number of pilgrims is increasing every year.

Bishop Emmanuel Kerketta said in his homily that our ancestors received the great blessing of faith. It has to be handed down to the coming generation so that they too live lives according to Christian values. It will make families better. Fr. Kalyanus Minj, the Jesuit Provincial of MP, said that Khaidkona is the centre of our faith. This faith brought a tremendous change in the life of the Kuruxs. What are the changes that could be seen in

the lives of the ancestors? They became fearless. They did not fear threats to life that came because they had embraced Christianity. In fact they grew in self-confidence. The pilgrimage provides various opportunities for the formation and strengthening of the faith. But today it is becoming more of an occasion for the youth to have fun. It is also leading to anti-social activities. All this needs immediate attention.

A pilgrimage provides an opportunity for coming together. This has its own importance and significance. Coming together symbolizes the power of unity. But this unity needs to be given direction. The pilgrimage to Khaidkona should be looked at holistically. The service of faith should automatically lead to promotion of justice.

■ YACUB KUJUR, SJ



1956–2018

## Fr. Tej Kumar Ekka, SJ (MAP)

Fr. Tej Kumar Ekka, SJ, known as a 'vaedya' meaning 'herbal doctor', after healing numerous of different diseases like cancer, TB, diabetics, BP, etc., left for heavenly abode on 15th December 2018 at the Holy Cross Hospital, Ambikapur. His kidneys having failed, he was on dialysis for a few months. He was 62 years old when he passed away - 25 years a priest, and 38 years a Jesuit.

He joined the Novitiate at Boirdadar/Raigarh on 20th June 1980. From 1982-1983 he did his Juniorate studies at St Stanislaus College, Sitagarh, and his college studies at Hamidia College, Bhopal. He went on to do his Philosophy at Sacred Heart College, Chennai from 1985-1987. He completed his theology studies at Vidyajyoti, from 1989-1991 and was ordained by Bishop Victor Kindo at St Xavier's Church, Pathalgaon on 19th May 1993. He did his tertianship at Sacred Heart College, Shembaganur in 1998 and took his final vows at Nirmala Ashram, Jhingo on 2nd February 2002. He was an obedient Jesuit. He humbly accepted all the appointments given by his

Provincials. He was given various ministries - co-pastor in three different places for five years, pastor in four different places for eight years. He also served the Jesuit communities as assistant minister and minister. He was a good and friendly and courageous pastor. When he was the pastor of Kanchan Nagar, Naxalites came several times to attack him, but gradually he befriended them.

He was well known for administering herbal medicine. He was so compassionate to the sick that even from his sick bed he used to go in search of medicinal herbs for them. Patients from all over came to him for treatment. Fr. Tej Kumar will be remembered for his service to the sick, his friendliness towards his parishioners, sympathy for the poor, and his display of courage. May he rest in eternal peace!

|| OSCAR S. TIRKEY, SJ



1956–2018

## Fr. Manuel Alphonse, SJ (MDU)

Manu, as he was popularly known, was always very studious, intelligent, analytical and critical. Almost immediately after he was ordained a priest in 1979, he was assigned to AICUF where he served for 17 years in various capacities. All along, he kept the social justice thrust as the core and impressed everyone with his secular-social spirituality.

In 1995, he and a group of his young, socially committed friends started the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) that continues to be the premier civil society think-tank in the country. At the State level, too, he became one of the co-founders and co-conveners of the Tamil Nadu Peoples' Forum for Social Development that initiated and linked budget critiques and budget advocacy to safeguard the economic, social and cultural rights of the marginalized. He was also the Founder-Director of Social Watch-Tamil Nadu and, later, its mentor and guide. From 2007 onwards he served as founder-core group member of the National Equity Watch, New Delhi. He had a stint as Asia-Pacific

Advisor to the International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS - Hong Kong) and Asia-Pacific Advisor-cum-Chaplain of Catholic professionals belonging to the International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs (ICMICA - Geneva). From 1990 to 2010, he was visiting professor, Post Graduate Programme on Inter-Cultural Management, (CIMIC - a unit of Leuven University, Mechelen, Belgium). His latest initiatives were Loyola Institute of Social Research (LISoR) and Tech Loyola - an Organic Bio-farm at Loyola, Vettavalam.

Manu's heart problems began way back in 2007 and eventually led to his death on 17th November, 2018. Fr. Danis Ponniah, Provincial, was the main celebrant at the final Eucharist at Loyola College Church. Those who spoke had high praises for Manu - for living and struggling for justice and equality, and upholding the Gospel values against all odds.

|| JOHN IRUDAYA KUMAR, SJ



1942–2019

## Fr. Philemon Lakra, SJ (MAP)

Philemon Lakra joined the Society of Jesus on 20th June, 1965 at St. Stanislaus College Sitagarh. He made his first vows on 21st June, 1967. After his Juniorate at Mount St. Joseph Bangalore, he did his college studies at St. Xavier's College, Ranchi. He went for his philosophy studies to Sacred Heart College, Shembaganur (1970-1973). After his theology at Vidyajyoti from 1974 to 1976 Philemon was ordained on 1st May, 1976. Fr. Philemon did his tertianship at St Stanislaus College, Sitagarh and made his final vows on 8th December, 1983. Philemon was always joyful and faithful, in words and deeds. He enjoyed the company of his friends and companions.

Philemon was in pastoral ministry all his priestly life. He worked in relatively easy places as well as challenging ones. Sometimes he worked alone, at other times with companions. He always loved his work and the people. He remained cheerful and enthusiastic at all times - calm and joyous.

During his ministry he met with many minor and major motorcycle accidents fracturing his hands several times. But he lived happily even with his handicapped hands. It did not stop his missionary zeal. While still active, he suffered a stroke in 2014 resulting in partial paralysis. He learnt to accept it as coming from God and submitted himself to His will.

Philemon's entire life in the Society was marked with energy and missionary zeal. He never complained about anything - what he had or what he did not have. His physical condition, due to accidents, never dampened his missionary spirit and activity. Thus, he lived his life to the full in the service of God and His people. May he rest in peace in the heavenly kingdom.

|| AGAPIT TIRKEY, SJ

To read more, visit [www.jivanmagazine.com](http://www.jivanmagazine.com)

# Barren Acre transformed into Thriving Forest in 3 years



Pompayya Malemath

Image Source: Google

A wild life enthusiast, photographer and tour operator by profession, Pompayya Malemath's (Karnataka) fascination with wildlife and plants began at an early age. He saw the scrubby patch of land bordering his property turning into a dumping ground. He wanted to rejuvenate the area by planting trees. With permission from the authorities he planted 50 saplings, hoping at least two would survive. In three years over 800 trees stand tall in his forest! "I just wanted to give back to nature that gives us everything. Planting trees seemed the best way to do so," he says.

He began by planting native species like coconut, neem and papaya trees. He cleared the debris of the arid land, dug two-foot trenches and filled them with good soil before planting. Moved by his dedication, the forest department supplied him free saplings. Besides teak, silver oak and melia dubia (Malabar neem), he planted fruit trees like mango and guava, shady trees like Singapore cherry and native plants like wild jasmine,

jamun and amla.

The 800 trees recharged the ground-water table. The water holes he made do not dry up even in summers. About 70 species of birds, and animals like sloth bear, leopard, civet cat and the black-naped hare have been sighted.

Interestingly, Pompayya spent only a little over three lakh rupees from his own pocket in three years. He says that planting lakhs of trees and leaving them to fend for themselves does not work. One needs to invest time and effort to nurture the saplings until they mature. Selecting native saplings or ones attuned to similar climatic conditions is the best.

Jesuit institutions across our country could very well venture into such forestation of nearby public places.

[Adapted from TBI]

## THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

C Joe Arun, SJ  
cjarun@gmail.com

# Jyoti of the Musahar Community



Jyoti is a first-time MLA in the Bihar state assembly. She belongs to the severely marginalised Musahar community - better known as the community that feeds on rodents for want of proper food.



Jyoti has worked for nearly three decades with the women and children of her community, first as an aaganwadi worker then an educationist and even as an agricultural consultant, in order to better their lives and teach them to fight for their rights.

Courtesy: thebetterindia.com

When her parents left her in a residential school for poor children, she was just five. But Jyoti, one of seven siblings, didn't cry over being 'abandoned'. Even when many other girls her age ran away from this 'home' unable to adjust to the rigours of a spartan life there, Jyoti hung on. She had realised that this school was her only chance to get an education that would lead her to a better future.

Today, her resilience and wisdom – traits she developed early in life – have opened doors to immense opportunities and catapulted her on to the political centrestage. In Bapu Gram, a remote village

in Gaya district, members of the Musahar community, to which Jyoti and her husband Baleshwar Bhuyan belong, were not surprised when the 45-year-old mother of five received a call from the Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's office to set up a meeting with him. She was made the Janata Dal (U) candidate from Barachatti for the Assembly polls. Watching her from close quarters since 1981, when she and her husband began working in Bapu Gram, the villagers had witnessed the change she had brought in their lives by fighting for their rights. In the 2010 Bihar elections Jyoti was elected as a member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from Barachatti.