

October 2020

JIVAN

NEWS AND VIEWS OF JESUITS IN INDIA



Moves and Halts in South Asia: 2014-2020

FOOTPRINTS

In Commemoration of the Feast
of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, 31st October

Thrills and Trials in Being Utterly Brotherly

Vatican II unfolded a big and bright new vision
Of the Church, in her search for a new zeal for Mission.

"The human race" it said, "has passed from a static concept of reality,
To a dynamic, more evolutionary concept" of humanity.

Sadly, many such brand new lights
Have far from given us any sleepless nights.

Following the euphoria, several Synods and countless courses of renewal,
To most, its been "back to business as usual".

That Council's beneficiaries may not rank among its luminaries;
But the way the Spirit has long worked in and through them all,
Shows what it takes today to heed God's Call.

Having freely chosen "the road less travelled"
Has made all the difference" on which they've revelled.

Brothers contain "others", so like 'mothers', display their qualities
In being dear care-givers to their fraternities.

Unfortunately, only "a few good men" have widely enjoyed that "freest of all Callings"-
Impacting the poor multitudes, despite their own fallings.

This needn't have been so, had more of them worked for "the Common Good"
Like Jesus, co-creating many a model neighbourhood!

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

Christ Today: On the Altar or on the Streets?

Thanks for one more enlightening, challenging issue of Jivan (August 2020) that addresses the ongoing post Covid -19 crisis, head on. From the profound and provocative reflections of George Pattery (POSA) and Vinayak Jadav (Editor) at the start, to the frank, transparent and sincere sharing by Arun de Souza towards the end, the whole issue makes for very stimulating spiritual reading.

The amazing article by Astrid Lobo Gajiwala on "Baptism by Covid - 19" was the most nourishing and delicious of the sumptuous holistic fare offered. Her unique integration of feminine, interfaith, and eco-justice insights offers a creative reinterpretation of the Sacraments and the whole concept of "sacred", so that we can truly discover God in all things. We selected the topic of 'Reinventing the Liturgy' for our community prayer, as well as for Mass at the neighboring convent, as her novel perspective of liturgical practices struck

a deep chord in our hearts. The evocative image of Sikhs on the streets binding the blistered feet of the migrants raised a question: Would Christ today prefer to be celebrant on the altar at a livestreamed Mass on Holy Thursday, or with the Sikhs on the streets?

The thought-provoking poems of Pravin Jose, Godfrey D'Lima and Anthony Dias add a unique touch of prophetic flavour to this outstanding issue.

Do continue to offer readers regular doses of the vaccine of hope to combat the viruses of hate and despair in these apparently hopeless times.

Prashant Olalekar, SJ | Mumbai

'Good Samaritan' Jesuits

Thank you for featuring the CORONA VIRUS SLAYER - the health minister from Kerala, for her timely action in the JIVAN. Long before Modi put things in place she had gone from house to house with her

team and enabled Kerala with 32 million, to escape the onslaught of the virus.

This type of timely action is what I would have expected from Jesuit Governance when they saw the Jesuits moving away from the mission envisaged in the Formula of the Institute of Julius III & Paul III. The Jesuits emerged with a recommendation of the Universal Apostolic Preferences for 10 years - many years after discovering that we were going off track and that too, after such a long discernment. What comes to my mind is the story of the man who was beaten up and lying on the road to Jericho. A priest and a Levite passed by, discerning of course, ... while the Samaritan's response was immediate. If the priest was a Jesuit he would have made a long discernment prior to responding, and when the Jesuit arrived on site, the man would have been dead! Some Jesuits responded to the Corona virus with an on-line retreat, while many others followed the way of the Samaritan. (Tongue in cheek response okay!)

God bless you Fr. Editor, for the wonderful work you are doing for JIVAN.

Ranjit Yawu, SJ | Sri Lanka

JESWITS

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"What do you ask of the Church for your new-born child?"
"Oh, Father, please - admission to the parish school after four years!"



"Of course, Father! The NEP is just a smoother way to teach Hindutva to the young."



"So what's next, Father ex-POSA?"
"Tell me -- becoming a bishop?"



"Exactly, father. Ultimately religious life is only a more perfect way of observing canon law."



POSA Speaks

GEORGE PATTERY, SJ

Thank you ... Keep moving ...

Thank you Vinayak and Jivan, for the colourful, stimulating and attractive volumes that nourish us every month;

Thank you, JCSA companions, for the times that we unburdened on each other, and enlivened one another;

Thank you, the Jesuit fraternity of the Common Houses, for your 'generous and patient service' at the common space that is nobody's and every body's;

Thank you, Secretaries of the Commissions (past and present) for animating our apostolates, beyond Province/Region boundaries;

Thank you, our good neighbours – ISI Delhi community – for your constant support, and for parking CDO, JRS and JESA-SJES in ISI, as partners in collaboration;

Thank you, Vidyajyoti community, Delhi Jesuits of Sahyog-Xavier's communities and Delhi Provincial, for your support to us, as and when required;

Thank you, my Socius – Keith William Abranches – for the perfect book-keeping, and holding the fort of JCSA in season and out of season, and now moving on to guard the fort of Gesu in Rome;

Thank you, Stan D'Souza for assuming the POSA mantle with your youthful dynamism and undying enthusiasm! Welcome to the heat and cold of Delhi weather and politics!

Thank you, Jor Bagh Community for enduring me and my unending goings and comings, until I was grounded by the lockdown, facilitating my longest stay in the Community and enabling me to relish your TLC all the more;

Thank you, South Asian Jesuits and Friends, for journeying together, in conversation with one another, listening to the whispers of the Spirit!

Thank you, dear Companions of this 'least Society' for your 'holiness, wisdom and weaknesses' - who can't but fall in love with you?

Thank you, Lord, for labouring with us, in our weaknesses and frailties, and 'chasing' us with your dreams for us, and for our Common Home – the Earth.



Editor's Desk

VINAYAK JADAV, SJ

The Echo of Eden: Where art thou?

Since past nearly a month, the country's ears are 24X7 drilled with a single monotonous news item about Rhea Chakraborty and Sushant Singh Rajput. Kangana Ranaut added spice to the story of one big circus. It's a circus full of gimmicks like TRP for the sold-out Media channels, distraction for the Government, attention for the actresses and upcoming election of a state. Masses of the democracy were held hostage, paying a tagless price of oblivion to actual concerns like poor economy, Covid mess and endangered democracy.

In the Garden of Eden, when Yahweh sensed some tampering with the human soul, he cried out: Where art thou? Every Adam and Eve has been engineered to listen to the echo of this cry which we commonly know as Conscience. Every contempt of it ruffles the peace of the garden, exposing human nakedness called "shame". Prashant Bhushan recently played an Adam who heard the echo in the garden of Democracy when he refused to be cowed down by the Hon. Supreme Court's order of apology against his so called "Contempt of Court". A citizen boldly stood to his own democratic DNA! The words of Bhushan then were no less evangelical: "If I retract a statement before this court that I otherwise believe to be true or offer an insincere apology, that in my eyes would amount to the contempt of my conscience and of an institution that I hold in highest esteem."

After a thumping majority in the Lok Sabha elections in 2004, Sonia Gandhi refused the "Platter of Prime Ministership" with these historical words: "The post of Prime Minister has not been my aim. I was always certain that, if ever I found myself in the position I am in today, I would follow my inner voice." To the demands to reconsider the decline of the post, she unequivocally replied "It is my inner voice, my conscience".

Leadership and Conscience are synonymous. Whether Prime-minister, Chief-minister, Bishop, Principal or Superior; it is always a matter of dealing with one's Conscience. Human life itself is called to be in constant touch with the ever-resounding echo of the Garden of Eden. On the Richter scale of integrity, where would we rate ourselves, our leadership? Often the temptation of popularity produces average conscience-keepers. Fear of criticism generates headmasters who in Gujarati we say "neither punishes nor teaches"!

Assertive, firm, categorical and yet warm leadership, loves those to be led so dearly, that it does not allow the values and principles that protect them, to be sacrificed. Compromising "our way of proceeding" or fundamental principles, is nowadays becoming a norm instead of an exception. Rusting of conscience is degenerating the best of religious, social and political institutions. The responsibility of it goes first to the "fake shepherds" or "false prophets" who sold institutions to personal securities. Letting the wolves into the fold while being wide awake, is perhaps a disgrace to any shepherd.

Prophetic leadership runs the risk of shaking the establishment, at least momentarily. From fleeting anarchies grow mighty orders. The head of John the Baptist stained not just the platter but the conscience of one who asked for it. The prophet refused to let his conscience be slayed on a platter of popularity.

Conscientious leadership has the power of transformation. In fact, Conscience alone is the power of leadership. Old Testament prophets or New Testament apostles could not hold back from what they needed to proclaim. Gandhi knew no Britishers who could stop him voice his inner self. Leadership that swallows words, sentences and paragraphs of untruth dies an obscure death.

Our world suffers more from omissions than commissions, from the silence of those who ought to have spoken, than the words of those who ought to have shut up. Let the call in the Garden free our conscience from the fetters of intimidations. Let the winds of the spirit keep the echoes of Eden resounding. Let the flames of truth blow and burn what is of no relevance. Conscience knows the wheat and knows the chaff. It knows that what is life, lives, and what is death, dies!! Let there be no contempt of it ever, at least by any leader!!!



Moves and Halts in South Asia: 2014-2020

It is always a welcome Ignatian Exercise to review our life-mission as it unfolds before us. How did the last six years unfold before the Conference of South Asia? What are the 'moves and halts' as it were, that are obvious? Yet 'moves and halts' depend on who we are, and where we are moving to. Moves could be important if the end is already in the beginning; 'halts' matter to us when we begin to revisit our journey. Both are perspectival reading – "as I see it". Even in this pandemic time, perspectives do matter.

'Moves' as it were!

1. Restructuring: a process that could be a game-changer.

"Trusting the 'special grace' that they (we) received at JCSA-Phesama (October, 2014 JCSA) the Major Superiors of South Asia invited ... each and every member of the South Asian Assistancy to think as a corporate body and to join in the spiritual process of structural renewal at all levels". The process of re-structuring that was initiated at Phesama, turned out to be a protracted journey of five years, and was concluded at JCSA (Ranchi) in October 2019. The corporate journey of the spiritual animation programme engaged more than two thirds of our men. At the second phase this was re-christened as 'Re-orienting for Greater Apostolic Effectiveness' (REGAE). Through spiritual animation process, REGAE rediscovered the tool of 'spiritual conversation' – which was also significant for GC 36 (GC 36.1.12).

REGAE findings highlight among others, the following elements: a) The five Conference Apostolic Challenges; b) The Role and function of JCSA summarized as 'collective responsibility' especially for making men available for Common Works of the Society; c) Restructuring of Secretariats into four Apostolic Sectors/Secretariats and two Administrative Sectors/Secretariats and to integrate various commissions under them; d) Re-drawing of



Photo: Jovin & Communication Hub JCSA

Province boundaries is a task entrusted to the Zonal Chairs. By August 2020, all Provinces/Regions will have apostolic plans aligned to UAPs.

These REGAE conclusions broadly manifest a growing sense of the corporate body of the Conference, and greater readiness to act together. Above all, as many observed, the practice of spiritual conversation is beginning to be a game-changer among us. Our community meetings and apostolic board meetings are experiencing new energy and zeal, as and when this tool is employed. No doubt it is the best gift of REGAE for us in JCSA.

2. Lok Manch: An Extra-ordinary Jesuit Venture.

More than 95 NGOs, 16 Jesuit Provinces and many other religious groups joined hands to create a Peoples' Platform (Lok Manch) to capacitate peoples for their entitlements for food, education, water and shelter. The well-intentioned Govt schemes do not often reach the needy people; Lok Manch provides a forum where people get enlightened and energized to fight for their rights. A couple of years ago, at the National Review Session at ISI, Bangalore, one of the animators of Lok Manch from U.P. disclosed: "... by working in Lok Manch (LM) I derive atmasanthushti (inner joy)." This is a marvelous confession from a friend of a different religious tradition. LM is a common platform with genuine goals and plans. Given continued support, LM could remain a new narrative of collaboration and networking that GC 36.2. demands of us Jesuits. It gives JESA a new way that energizes.

3. The Conference Development Office: Initiating Apostolic Processes.

Four years ago, with great desire (not without some hesitation) JCSA initiated Conference Development Office, in view of coordinating and capacitating PDDs, of giving support to marginal ministries and of branding them for a corporate identity etc. The active support of ISI (Delhi) contributed much to the growth of CDO. Today it is becoming an effective hub to initiate apostolic processes and to effectively communicate them to the Conference and to the Universal Society. The six pillars of SANKALP (Informal education), JESUITEC (Technical education), Ecology, Migration, Peace and Reconciliation, Disaster Relief and Response, provide us a picture of the various kinds of ministries that we are engaged in, but are often not sufficiently made visible. CDO could coordinate the Secretariats and the six pillars to synergize each other; it could function as resource hub for the pillars; it could effectively network with other Conferences and the universal body of the Society and situate itself as JCSA Communication Hub. The online Lifeline Retreat, the #V4MIGRANTS campaign and the Ignatian Pentecost Vigil etc., give us an idea how much CDO could contribute to energize our life-mission.

4. Jesuit Faculty Forum of South Asia (JFFSA): Journey in Collaboration.

The Conference of South Asia is known for its three faculties of Vidyajyoti College of Theology, Delhi, Jnanadeepa Vidyapeeth, Pune and Satyanilayam, Chennai. In view of enhancing greater collaboration among them, JFFSA is created, with the Principals, Rectors, Deans, external experts including women

as members. Staff recruitment, development, appraisal, syllabus review, Faculty enhancement etc., come under its purview. If animated well, JFFSA could provide a collaborative spirit, renewed vision and dynamics of networking for these faculties.

In the same spirit, JDV Campus Jesuit Admn Forum brings the three Jesuit run institutions together to enhance greater coordination, support and fellowships among them. One campus, one mission, one Society!

5. Women Hostels & Study Centre: Solidarity with Women.

VJ-Niwas (Womens' Hostel) in Model Town, Delhi (initiated early), and JDV Women's Study Centre, Pune are two significant ventures. GC 34. "Decree.14.13 invites all Jesuits, as individuals and through their institutions, to align themselves in solidarity with women; ... to cooperate with them in shared projects; No.16. This solidarity is integral to our mission." The women staff in these faculties witness to the long-standing collaboration in the spirit of the Decree. JDV Women's Study Centre, Pune envisages, besides hostel facility, promotion of women's studies by creating a Forum for Women to articulate their views and advance their role in the life-mission of the church and the country.

6. 'ThinkTank' for South Asian Jesuits.

Based in ISI Delhi, a group of Jesuit social scientists, thinkers and activists come together periodically to reflect on the emerging socio-political and cultural issues of South Asia; they put out 'reflections' that are then discussed in the provinces and zones. The one on 'Religious Fundamentalism' eventually developed into JCSA Statement on the same topic. The relevance of such a 'thinktank' needs no justification in the prevailing toxic atmosphere in India, and in some other South Asian countries.

7. Eventful Journeys: 'Becoming' the Conference of South Asia.

My journeys to Afghanistan, Pakistan and Guyana, at different periods, were not only eventful and even risky, but were openings to grow truly into the Conference of South Asia. The vibrant Dialogue Centre in Lahore, the three mixed high schools in the lower middle-class Muslim locations in the suburbs of Lahore and a lively international Jesuit community – with one full-fledged Pakistani Jesuit, Imran – makes Pakistan the near-by yet far-way Companion for JCSA.

Our engagements in Afghanistan present us as typical Jesuits: in love with this 'civilizational land' of heroes and adventurers; in solidarity with Hazaras in Bamiyan, in support of the educational projects of the Govt in Kabul. The frontiers, where others don't, are ventured into.

Guyana (English speaking) is far and away! That makes it the favorite universal outreach of South Asia, with more than twelve Jesuits from South Asia working there, some of them permanently opting to belong to that Region. JCSA is stretched to the far south because we are part of a universal body.

- We dream that one day South Asia will retrace its

geographical unity into a vibrant socio-economic entity, banishing 'hate and poverty' from its midst, and celebrating its unique cultural variety and richness.

JCSA gatherings have been occasions to unburden, chances to encounter, spaces to discern, times to celebrate and moments to whisper – not necessarily in that sequence!

8. Beyond South Asian Conference.

The Conference of South Asia was particularly blessed by Fr. General, Arturo Sossa, SJ, as he chose to visit South Asia continuously for the last four years. We are immensely indebted to him for his hilarious presence with and definitive directions to JCSA. One of the most formative and fulfilling experience has been for me the participation in the Enlarged Council meetings of Fr. General, convened thrice a year in Rome. Since GC 36, Fr. Arturo made it a point that the six Conference Presidents become part of the Enlarged Council. On the one hand such meetings assisted us to be acquainted with the concerns of the Society and to contribute to the ongoing discernment; on the other hand, they enabled us to relate those themes and the spirit of the discernment to the Conference Meetings. It brings the Society to the Conferences, and vice versa. I recall vividly the dynamic process of discernment with active spiritual conversation that led us to deliberate on the UAPs. The Enlarged Council Meetings bring a new dynamic to the role of the Presidents.

Related to these meetings is also the consultations that follow on in the Roman Houses. Once again, the major concerns of these Institutions become part of our 'co-responsibility'. This facilitates active communication and generous collaboration from the Conferences to the Common Houses. Through these international consultations, the function of the Presidents of the Conferences is getting redefined.

The real 'icing' of all these international meetings is the gathering of the Presidents among themselves. A sort of 'among-us-feeling' mark these gatherings that often end up with a delicious dinner, occasionally graced by the joyous presence of Fr. General, at a well-chosen restaurant. Luckily, the 'lockdowns' arrived late!

'Halts as Pointers'.

1. Lost Opportunity: Statutes Revision.

While REGAE process was on, JCSA undertook the revision of the Conference Statutes. This was an exercise in itself required. However, the process of REGAE was putting forth a few aspirational themes like greater corporate sense of the Conference as a body, more readiness for restructuring, and openness for spiritual conversation as a tool for governance. Rather than integrating these dimensions and shaping an aspirational 'Statutes', JCSA was in a hurry to pass the Statutes

as a routine task, even though 1/3 of the Major Superiors were new and probably unaware of the import of the 'Statutes'. Even more, a narrowly construed understanding of 'parity with other Statutes' led to the unfortunate decision not to include ADF (CDF) as a regular invitee of the Conference meetings - a practice that has been so healthy and goes back to the very origins of the Conference, and when other Conferences have lay collaborators as regular members of the Conference.

2. Neglected Viruses and Ignored Interculturality.

In its workshop on 'Jesuit Leadership' at one of the Conference meetings, JCSA introspected to discover its 'strengths and viruses' in the Conference: the former consisted of multiculturalism, rich human resources and collaborative mission. We also acknowledged three viruses that debilitate our life-mission: ethnic divisiveness, financial misbehaviour and sexual misconduct. I am afraid, rather than facing the issues, we entered upon a denial mode, and allowed the viruses to fester.

We held a well-organized and much appreciated Jesuit conclave on inter-culturality, about 200 Jesuits in attendance in Pune. Its many recommendations were either gloriously ignored or they died the death of a thousand qualifications!



Members of the Jesuit Conference of South Asia with Fr. General at the Kathmandu Meeting

Image Source: Society of Jesus

3. RTCs: Orphaned to fend for themselves.

With enormous enthusiasm and sound theological justifications, RTCs were initiated with 'official' approval. Over the years, most of them died a natural death; some others bravely survived; others lingered on. The Major Superior decides

the fate of 'RTCs' with the approval of the concerned faculty. However the role of the faculty and its statutory bodies seem to be negligible. The new Veritatis Gaudium apparently does not recognize the RTCs as Extension Centres of faculties, although VG, to my mind, is open to ongoing theological reflections based on the regional cultures and traditions. Is the pandemic new-normal of the online studies from one's own locations, an additional justification for RTC model? All these need to be developed in a concerted effort. Who will tie the bell?

To conclude:

It's marvelous to be at the service of the Society at this level;

It's a humbling experience to be taught by the 'holiness, wisdom and weaknesses of this Least Society!'

It's wonderful to see the Conference grow, responding to the challenges inside, and that of the larger Society - 'the whole world is our home!'

The author is the outgoing President of Jesuit Conference of South Asia.

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Gandhian and Christian Martyrs

In the year 1965, war was going on between India and Pakistan. India was dropping bombs on various targets. We were about sixty five seminarians doing theology in Kurseong on the Himalayan hills. With the help of a large map, hung near the radio, we were following the progress of the war.

Meanwhile, in our Scripture class, we were studying in detail the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus clearly taught us to love our enemy. So I opposed the war saying that we would not drop bombs on people whom we loved. It was the time when I became aware, that none of the Churches in the Christian world was teaching the full doctrine of Jesus Christ. Jesus has taught us absolute non-violence. Gandhiji has been my model in this. Since those days, I do not consider any country in the world Christian. I was sad that the Church does not condemn war, weapons and military.

To my great consolation, recently I came across the life of a Catholic martyr of non-violence. Blessed Franz Jagerstatter was martyred in Austria by the Nazis. By beatifying Franz, the Catholic Church has publicly declared that non-violence, as taught by Gandhiji, is the genuine teaching of Jesus Christ. All the Churches are caught up by the sinful human tradition of patriotism. Every sovereign country is a sinful organization of selfish man delaying the coming of the Kingdom of God. The Jewish patriots crucified Jesus. The Kingdom of God is simply the kingdom of love. The final step of love is, loving our enemies.

Franz Jagerstatter was beatified in his own native place, Linz, on October 26, 2007. His wife Franziska and three daughters were present at the solemn ceremony. The great crowd of devotees was deeply moved, when Franziska kissed the relics and presented them to the presiding Cardinal and wept. This beatification of Franz in the small town of Linz should open the eyes of all Church leaders to take a daring stand against any war. For Christians, there is no just war. All the armed conflicts are against the teaching of Jesus Christ.

Franz was born on May 20, 1907. He grew up as an educated and progressive farmer. In his village he was the first one to buy a motorcycle. With Franziska and three daughters, he had a very happy family life. Then the Second World War broke out. All happiness was lost. Military service was compulsory. In February 1943 Franz was called up to join the army. Insisting that Jesus has taught us absolute non violence, Franz refused

to join the army. The Nazis arrested him charging that he was breaking the morale of the military. Church authorities advised him to think of his wife and the children and submit to the demands of the Nazis. But Franz held his ground insisting that following Jesus fully meant that one could never kill, or, support any war. He was sad to listen to the priests and prayed for them. The Nazis executed him on August 9.



Image Source : Euronews



Blessed Franz Jagerstatter

Image Source : The Catholic Weekly

During the imprisonment he wrote: "We must convince ourselves that the struggle is for the Eternal Kingdom; we need no rifles or pistols for our battle, but, instead, spiritual weapons. Let us love our enemies, bless those who curse us, pray for those who persecute us. Love will conquer and endure, for all eternity. Happy are they who live and die in God's love".

By this beatification of Blessed Franz Jagerstatter, the Catholic Church, knowingly or unknowingly, has taken a public stand against all theories that support any war. The Bishops and priests of the Church should be able to preach consistently the teaching of Jesus about non-violence. There is only one motherland for man - the whole earth. There is only one nation - humanity. All these sovereign countries, that make man to go to war, are the product of the universal selfishness in man. Selfishness is evil, and so all sovereign countries, including the Vatican, are evil structures. These promote patriotism against the advent of the Kingdom of God. If all the Churches in the Christian world could unite, and use the pulpits to promote non-violence faithfully as Jesus taught us, it will facilitate the advent of the Kingdom of God.

I am 86 years old. In 1939 at the age of five I was a freedom fighter, attending meetings against the British. I had my own white Gandhi cap. During the Gandhi centenary, Kurseong town had a public meeting. The organizers approached the staff for a speaker. They recommended my name and I was the main speaker. The All India Radio officers later requested me to broadcast a fifteen minute speech on Non-Violence of Gandhiji. I was very happy to do it. It was in 1968 before the advent of television.

The author was a freedom fighter with Gandhiji. He is a former Novice Master and currently a Missionary in Gujarat.

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The Ignatian Year 2021-2022

Celebrating the Conversion of St. Ignatius



20 May 1521, Ignatius of Loyola is wounded during the Battle of Pamplona.

Comments heard at the end of a Mass in a Jesuit parish somewhere in the world...

Did you hear what the priest said during the announcements at the end of the Mass? The Jesuits are proposing to celebrate an “Ignatian Year” in 2021-2022. So far, so good! But it’s very strange what they choose to celebrate: for more than a year they will be marking the anniversary of a lost battle, of a wound their founder suffered in the war between the Spanish and the French! They will celebrate a failure!

Why a failure?

Because, until that terrible battle in Pamplona, everything was going well for Ignatius of Loyola, a knight of nobility in the Basque Country, at the service of the Kingdom of Castile. He was making a name for himself, rising through the ranks and seeing himself becoming an influential man at the court and among the princes. The battle was lost in advance. The French soldiers were more in number and well equipped. But Inigo - that was his Basque name - harangued his troops and incited them to fight to the end.

And then, the French won?

A cannonball went through the town walls and broke Ignatius’ leg. That was the end: his enemies had prevailed and he, the famous knight, would lose his reputation as a “winner”. And so, 500 years later, the Jesuits want us to celebrate this lost battle as if it were a moment of glory!

This is not the first time the Jesuits have had ideas that are unusual! You’ve already realised that. In their sermons, they go off the beaten track to provoke reflection, to make us see things from another angle, from a different point of view from whatever we think of first. And then, if you listened carefully to what the parish priest said, I think that what the Ignatian Year will celebrate, is above all what happened after that battle of 1521, when Ignatius was compelled to a long period of rehabilitation.

Perhaps indeed... judging too quickly is contrary to discernment which, according to the principles of Jesuit education that I received, is essential to see clearly. I should rather dig into the case to

find out more. How can failure be a source of inspiration and impetus for Jesuits and their partners in mission?

Good idea: that gives you a more serious subject for research on the internet than cricket or the turpitudes of Bollywood stars!

In the message he addressed to the whole “Ignatian family” on 31st July 2020, the feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola, Fr. Arturo Sosa, Superior General, presented the meaning of the coming Ignatian Year (May 2021 to July 2022). He began by stating the theme: To see all things new in Christ. How, he wondered, to reach this objective, how to be able to really see things in a new way, in Christ’s way? For Father Sosa, the only way to achieve this, is through conversion. Conversion, the interior journey that the founder of the Society of Jesus, 500 years ago, undertook in the months following the battle of Pamplona, the apparent failure of his young career.

The Superior General, in his message for the feast of St. Ignatius, invited all those involved in the works or mission of the Society of Jesus to enter into this spirit of renewal that allowed Ignatius to see more clearly. The feats of arms, the honours, the efforts to shine in the eyes of high-ranking ladies, all this was nothing compared to what he could do with his life by placing himself at the service of another lord, at the service of Christ and of those to whom Christ would lead him.

St. Ignatius experienced a tremendous interior conversion. The Ignatian Year is an opportunity to follow him on the path of inner change. First of all, it is an invitation to the Jesuits who, according to Father General, must enter into the spirit of Ignatius the pilgrim. To become needy pilgrims who have to rely on God, to discover the friendship that the Lord Jesus offers them, to perceive the calls of today’s world - those of the poor and marginalized who find it so difficult to make themselves heard. But the Ignatian Year is not only for Jesuits. It is an opportunity for people - young people in particular maybe - who, in connection with the Society of Jesus, are eager to see all things new in a world characterized by unjust structures that have been brought to light by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In order to see all things new, one must be converted. But, we have to admit, conversion is never easy. Yet it bears much fruit. This was the case for St. Ignatius himself. Without the journey of conversion undertaken in 1521, he would never have gathered a group of friends to create with them the Society of Jesus. He would not have opened the heart of Francis Xavier, and the latter - who was also called to see his life in a new way - would never

have been the great missionary of Asia that he became. Ignatius would not have had the insights that enabled the Jesuits and their partners to become involved in “changing the world” by promoting justice and faith with the same impetus.

One of the major tools that can help to enter into the spirit of the Ignatian Year will be the annual publication of the General Curia entitled: Jesuits - The Society of Jesus in the World - 2021. Prepared by the Curia’s communications team in Rome, this annual portrait reveals the Society in action. When Father General asked the Editorial Committee to lay the groundwork for the 2021 edition in preparation for the Ignatian Year and to focus on the theme of conversion, some doubts were raised. Conversion is not a theme that is very “marketable”! And will there be enough articles illustrating experiences of conversion in the history and present life of the Ignatian world?

Our fears were unfounded. The series of very well illustrated articles that we have gathered are eloquent, rooted in life, energizing. They speak of conversion as a path of freedom, as a tool towards availability and acceptance of the new, as a call to be aware of one’s weaknesses and faults in order to serve better. Articles written by lay people point Jesuits in the direction of conversion! More personal or community based testimonies of conversion after a motorcycle accident, in the context of relationships with indigenous people, or for prisoners who see their future opening up! And that is without mentioning the true story of what Fr. Pedro Arrupe, former Superior General of the Jesuits, experienced in the hell of Hiroshima in 1945.

Jesuits 2021 will be published in December this year. Reserve your copy through a Jesuit work you may be familiar with or at the Provincial offices in your area. It will be a good way to apprehend the Ignatian Year. It will help you to see all things new

in Christ. You will better understand how, once again, Jesuits have unconventional ideas such as celebrating an apparent failure, the wound of Ignatius of Loyola in Pamplona!



The Ignatian Year is an opportunity to follow him on the path of inner change. First of all, it is an invitation to the Jesuits who, according to Father General, must enter into the spirit of Ignatius the pilgrim. To become needy pilgrims who have to rely on God, to discover the friendship that the Lord Jesus offers them, to perceive the calls of today’s world - those of the poor and marginalized who find it so difficult to make themselves heard.”

Courtesy: Pierre Bélanger, SJ

The author is a French-Canadian journalist in the Communication team of the General Curia in Rome. He is a member of the International Commission for the Ignatian Year.

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Image Source: ScooNews

The NEP 2020:

Reforms tilted towards the Rich and the Powerful

“Education is a dynamic reality; it is a movement that brings people to light.”
- Pope Francis

The vision of the new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions “creating the education system holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, and aligned to the needs of the 21st century and 2030 Sustainable Development Goals”. This policy is all set to pave the way for a new education system in the country. The government claims that the NEP-2020 is a paradigm shift in India’s education.

In order to understand the Policy one must place this policy in the larger context of the Modi Government’s overall policy frame work. Policies such as Foreign, Economic, Labour, Tribal, Industrial, Agricultural, Land, Environmental, Farmers, NE, Disinvestment, J&K, Defense, CAA, NRC, are some of them. Education policy cannot be a separate entity. NEP 2020 is actually a shift from the two previous Education policies.

The Education Commission (1964-66), also known as the ‘Kothari Commission’, called for equal educational opportunities in order to achieve national integration and greater cultural and economic development. A few suggestions from the commission have found place in the NEP 2020 as well, but two important recommendations have been left out: Firstly, it is an educational approach that is based on universal human values. Not only this is omitted, it is replaced by “Indian values” in the NEP 2020, along with Constitutional values (Stress on FD and not FR). Secondly, the Common School System was extensively emphasized in the commission’s report in 1968. However the NEP 2020 does not make any mention of the same.

The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986, kept its objective as “special emphasis on the removal of disparities



and to equalize educational opportunity,” especially for women, Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Scheduled Caste (SC) communities. The NPE of 1986 was modified in 1992. - The ‘Common Minimum Programme’ adopted by the UPA1 government in 2004 went more or less along the same lines as before. In 2009, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act was passed, which made elementary education a fundamental right for every child.

With the arrival of NDA 1 at the center, the T.S.R. Subramanian commission was formed and it submitted its Report in 2016, which claimed to improve the quality and credibility of education by addressing the implementation gaps. However, the relevant criticism against the TSR Commission report was that it was centered on Commercialization, Communalization, and Centralization. Due to opposition from all quarters, the government was forced to shelve it and constituted a new commission.

The Dr. K. Kasturirangan Committee, submitted its report on May 31, 2019. It sought

to address the challenges of: (i) access, (ii) equity, (iii) quality, (iv) affordability, and (v) accountability faced by the current education system. This was modified after suggestions received from people and groups. The Cabinet approved the revised Draft and declared the NEP 2020 on 29th July 2020. NEP 2020 is divided into 4 parts. I. School Education, II. Higher Education, III. Other Key Areas of Focus, IV. Making it Happen.

School Education (Part I Ch. 1-8)

Universal Access: The NEP 2020 has provisions to ensure universal access to school education at all levels – pre-school to secondary. Major areas of reform proposed in the NEP 2020 for school education are: Early Childhood Care & Education, Attaining Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, Reforms in School Curricula and Pedagogy, Multilingualism and the Power of Language, Assessment Reforms, Teacher Recruitment and Deployment, School Complexes, Equitable and Inclusive Education, and Standard-setting and Accreditation for school education.

Higher Education of India is going to have a series of reforms. Some of them are: Increase Education Budget to 6% GDP,

aiming to increase GER to 50% in the next 15 years, amalgamation of Regulatory Bodies, and creation of New Regulatory Structures with well-defined roles, are all proposed by the Policy. Treating both Private and Public institutions on par, augmenting the Accreditation systems, promotion of Online and Virtual education, use of Internet, DTH, Mobile and other electronic gadgets and means, emergence and acceptance of Virtual Labs, Technology based learning, in the form of MOOCs courses, use of technology for Examinations, use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data etc., for enhancing learning and counselling etc., are very innovative ideas in Indian education.

Student-centered education rather than that of Institution and Teacher-Centered education, is a major thrust of the policy. Multiple-entry and exit is introduced in colleges along with multidisciplinary programmes and studies and active promotion of the Mother Tongue and other languages. The NEP 2020 gives adequate importance of Arts and Humanities. All these reform proposals will be implemented from now on, in a time-phased manner. The ultimate aim - as the document says - “aims at producing engaged, productive, and contributing citizens for building an equitable, inclusive, and plural society”. It is also aimed at “ending the psychological slavery imposed on us with British education!”

Issues of Concern

India’s first visionary PM, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and our first Education Minister, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, pioneered the concepts of ‘education for all’ and ‘education for social change’. Minorities are a social reality that has been recognized by our Constitution. The Muslim community makes for a major chunk of that minority-pie with 14%, and Christians contributed largely to the education sector in India. Christians are only 2.4% of India’s total population.

One of the concerns regarding NEP 2020 is its non-inclusive approach. It confines itself for seeking inspiration through the institutions of higher learning only from Ancient India. Educational institutions that flourished in Medieval and Modern India seem to have been skipped altogether. It is intriguing to see the contribution of Aligarh Muslim University, Jamia Millia Islamia, Banaras Hindu University, Jawaharlal Nehru University and several top ranking Christian institutions in the country, missing in the policy document.

The second concern is the near absence of the word ‘minorities’ in the entire document. To be specific, it has been mentioned only once in the NEP 2020 (Section 6.2.4). Twice, it uses the word minorities along with SC/ST. Minorities are also worried about the policy’s silence on the Rights of Minority educational institutions enshrined in Article 30 of the Constitution. Ensuring the Right to Equitable Access to Education for all citizens is the mandate given by the Constitution of India to the Government. The NEP talks of adopting creativity, rational thinking, and a holistic approach. It appears paradoxical in a political climate that crushes dissent, hates probing questions, and promotes majoritarianism.

The third concern is regarding the overarching tilt of the NEP towards centralization of the education system that will



methods, attitudes and institutions with a view to adapting them to the needs of the times, to a world in process of rapid change. In response to this commitment, the purpose and possibilities of education are being examined, with renewed concern for the poor and disadvantaged. The goal of Jesuit education today is described in terms of the formation of multiplying agents, as men and women for others". For Jesuits NEP 2020 is a call for self-introspection and setting priorities.

At this juncture, Jesuit Educationists are called to show the way. Our institutions must be beacons of innovations and creativity, modernism based on our living tradition in the 21 Century. As the NEP 2020 talks about 8 Key principles, we Jesuits must work on actualizing them.

weaken our federal polity as a natural consequence. With the 'light but tight' policy, the control mechanisms are going to be more bureaucratic in nature (CABE, PARAKH, RSA, SSSA, SCERT, HECI, HEGC, and a host of other standard-setting and Accreditation set ups) will be in place.

The Fourth Concern is of the School Complex. The policy is not specific about whether the Minority institutions come under the School Complex. There is anxiety over the allocation of funds, maintenance of educational standards, the amalgamation of weaker institutions into some other entity, sharing of resources (both infrastructure and expertise), the location and accessibility of the proposed new education complexes.

The Fifth Concern is of reservations or affirmative action(s). The NEP fails to recognize the social and educational backwardness. Historically, in India, educational backwardness of a particular community is not because of economic incapacity, but due to social oppression and denial of opportunity. Different communities suffer different levels of oppression and based on the level of oppression and backwardness, reservation and scholarships are provided. NEP 2020 fails to recognize this social reality, but talks only on the Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs). Concern for education is a concern for future generations and for the future of humanity.

Our IPP method insists that "Jesuit schools should be places where people are believed in, honored and cared for; where natural talents and creative abilities are recognized and celebrated; where individual contributions and accomplishments are appreciated; where everyone is treated fairly and justly; where sacrifices on behalf of the economically disadvantaged is commonplace; where each of us finds the challenge, encouragement and support we need to reach our fullest individual potential for excellence; where we help one another and work together with enthusiasm and generosity; attempting to model concretely in word and action, the ideals we uphold". (IPP no.37). Pedro Arrupe, SJ, exhorted us; "The Society of Jesus is committed to "the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. It has called for a reassessment of our traditional apostolic

1. Respect for Diversity & Local Context
2. Equity & Inclusion
3. Community Participation
4. Use of Technology
5. Emphasize Conceptual Understanding
6. Accepting the Unique Capabilities of students
7. Critical thinking and Creativity
8. Continuous Review.

They are excellent principles, in tune with the Jesuit Education. For the government, they may remain only in the document and they will try to by-pass these. We must take the lead to actualize these. We must collaborate and network with all progressive educators and organizations to check the excessive push for corporatization at the cost of the poor, expose the ideological undercurrents in the policy, and place alternate, progressive, inclusive and a forward- looking education pedagogy for all. Pope Francis urged us to "unite efforts in a broad educational alliance to form mature people, capable of overcoming fragmentation and opposition, and rebuild the fabric of relationships for a more fraternal humanity".

We can plan out how we are going to empower our stakeholders, to keep up the diversity and unity as given in the Constitutions, to reach out to the marginalized, to train our teachers, to make education more relevant and in tune with the 4 Universal Apostolic Priorities (UAPs). As Jesuit educators, our task is to refresh and deepen our spirituality, so that we are able to face the challenges ahead with proper discernment, resilience and grit.

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Facing Corona with Meditation

It is already eight months! Corona is still ruling the nations! So much suffering, death, and uncertainty. Many scientists, doctors, social workers, government and private agencies and individuals are trying their best to cope up with the situation. Still no solution is found to destroy the Corona-virus. Individually and collectively, people have started thinking where they have gone wrong, what needs to be corrected, and how to create a new society.

Thanks to Corona, individuals are getting a lot of time to be with themselves. Ultimate questions can rise in them about their very existence. They wonder where God is, why He is not responding to their prayers, and if their prayers and religious celebrations are serving their purpose. Corona is challenging us, and asking us to find other ways of approaching God. In situations like this, certain clarity on the goal of our life and the pathways to reach it, can be very helpful. This small article makes a humble attempt to present briefly the goal of life and the various stages to reach it and how ashrams can be of help in this process.

In the long history of ashrams in India, Christian Ashrams find a place from 1921 onwards. By now we have about 50 Christian ashrams spread all over India. The official Church in India welcomed the idea of Christian ashrams to promote the much needed contemplation, inculturation, and inter-faith dialogue in the Church. Every year a good number of religious and seminarians in formation, are sent to these ashrams to learn yoga, meditation, mindfulness, mantra-japa, karma-yoga and other practices. Many senior religious and priests also make their individual or group retreats in these ashrams.

Yet, most of the religious, priests, and Christians in general keep themselves away from the ashrams. They have a genuine difficulty: they are not able to see how Christian spirituality centred on redemption with its rituals and services tally with the ashram spirituality of going deeper into silence, for an experience of oneness with God. This could be resolved once we clarify the goal of Christian life and its various stages of development.

The goal of Christian life is to realize our oneness with Christ, that is, to realize ourselves in Christ, as divine. The Christian mystics speak of it as becoming Christ, or divinization of humans or theosis. To reach this goal of Christ Consciousness, we need to pass through different stages of spiritual evolution.

The Indian spiritual tradition starts with bhakti marga or the way of devotions, then karma marga or the way of selfless action; then jnana marga or the way of knowledge, and finally the dhyana marga or the way of meditation. Something similar we can see in Christian tradition: we start our spiritual journey by religion-based practices that involve bhakti and karma. Then jnana: a situation like the present pandemic, sufferings of innocent people, disappointments, war and violence, can raise many questions in our minds: Who am I? Why do these things happen to me or to others?

Where do I come from, and where am I going? Is there really a God as I am told or as I think? What is the Ultimate Reality? It makes one think, read reflect, and consult. This long search ultimately leads one to realize that the mind has no capacity to answer these questions; one has to go to the heart by silencing the mind. This leads one to the dhyana marga, to start personal meditations with the guidance of spiritually advanced masters.

Going to a secluded place - what we call 'ashram' in India - to do serious meditation, is very much part of the Christian tradition. Jesus himself was habituated to meditate; He meditated for forty days in the desert, and often spent the whole night in the hills, meditating. Following His example throughout the centuries, there were Christians who went to the deserts, caves, hill-tops, and meditated, all by themselves. It is in the stillness of meditation that they realized their oneness with God, the divinity in oneself and their oneness with all.

For us in India, in order to practice the 3rd and 4th stages of reflection and meditation, Ashrams can be of great help. By creating a suitable environment in the ashram, the guru of the ashram guides the seeker through various stages to the core of oneself, to experience the divine as one's very self, beyond the duality of the I-Thou structure of the human mind. The ashram experience can offer one a valid Hindu-Buddhist-Christian vision and way of non-duality. It is in and through the non-dual vision and realization that we can live and work to bring peace and harmony in this turbulent world. We will also find

peace and compassion with all, whether hostile or friendly. Thus Ashrams with enlightened teachers will be the treasure houses for the Church and the country.

Conclusion

People all over the world are losing faith in the self-centred traditional religions and looking for inner peace through yoga, meditation and Eastern spiritual practices. The Church also is more open to receive and practice the good things from other spiritual traditions. This is an ideal situation to lead people in the path of realizing Christ consciousness. A strong wind of mysticism is blowing across the globe today, urging us to enter into mysticism. Hopefully it would draw many Religious, Priests and the Christians at large, to make use of the ashrams for growth in their own spiritual life and to lead people in the path of meditation.

May all beings be happy;

May all people live in peace and in harmony.

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Photo: Yoganga Healing

THOUSAND WORDS

DALIT LIVE

**In Commemoration of National
Solidarity Day, 20th October**

JIVAN condemns the brutal rape, murder and midnight cremation of the young victim girl of Hathras (U.P.) and the discrimination meted out to the Dalit family.

Image Source: The Print

ES MATTER



Image Source: Google

The day a woman
can walk freely
on the roads at
night, that day we
can say that India
has achieved
independence.

■ Mahatma Gandhi



A group of 70 Rohingya refugees being rescued from a traffickers trawler on 15 April 2020.

Rohingya: fast becoming a lost tribe?

Unlike the 2019 peace rally at Kutupalong Mega camp, when over 200,000 Rohingya refugees converged together to mark the second anniversary of their exodus from Rakhine state, the third anniversary on 25th August 2020 was commemorated by 900,000 Rohingya refugees living in the 34 camps at Cox's Bazar, in a rather quiet and prayerful manner. The 25th August has been commemorated as 'Rohingya Genocide Remembrance Day' by the Rohingya communities all over the world, ever since the August 2017 brutal military crackdown on Rohingya civilians. The fleeing survivors and the eye witnesses narrated scores of stories of untold atrocities such as infants being snatched and tossed into burning flames, hundreds of girls and women sexually brutalized and done to death often in the presence of their loved ones, countless Rohingya boys and men hunted down and shot dead by the Myanmar military and Rakhine ethnic mobs. The Rohingya rightly remember them all as their martyrs.

Third General Election in Myanmar: 8 November 2020

On the other side of the Naf river in Myanmar, this third anniversary passed off almost as a non-event as people of Myanmar are currently in intense preparation for their third general election scheduled for 8th November 2020. All politicians and political parties, including the Myanmar State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, are all solely focused on their meticulous home-works, just two months ahead of the election. The biggest question at the moment is however whether Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's ruling party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), will repeat its 2015 landslide victory this time as well. With several Rohingya candidates being barred from contesting in the election

and most Rohingyas being left out of the voters list, the Rohingya community in Rakhine sees little or no hope of ever being able to achieve any of their basic rights, including citizenship in Myanmar.

Covid-19: Added scourge in Rohingya camps

For the 1.2 million Rohingya refugees living in the 34 camps as well as among host communities in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, the reigning fear now is how to keep themselves and their many children safe from this coronavirus. According to the UNHCR August 7th-13th weekly report on Rohingya camps, 79 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 6 fatalities are recorded. For the Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, the Covid-19 pandemic could not have come at a worse time than now when their living conditions in these squalid camps are becoming more distressing, unsafe and often nightmarish. Nothing could more poignantly reveal the grim situation they are in than the desperateness which drives countless Rohingya youth, both men and women, to seek the 'help' of human traffickers to take them out of the camp to Malaysia or Indonesia or wherever they can get to. How else can one explain the booming business of human trafficking being carried out clandestinely across the camps!

Rohingya camps serve as fertile fields for Human Traffickers

A total of 382 'starving' Rohingya men and women with their little children were rescued from an abandoned fishing trawler at mid sea by the Bangladesh's Coastguards on 15th April 2020. A band of 7 traffickers was trying to ferry 500 Rohingya people to

the Malaysian shores but the stricter surveillance by Malaysian coastguards made the traffickers finally retreat to Bangladesh waters. The gang was eventually overpowered by 17 Rohingya youth on board, who carried out a well-chalked out mutiny to save themselves and their fellow Rohingyas from the clutches of their traffickers. As many as 58 Rohingyas aboard this trawler reportedly died of starvation and torture. Their bodies were thrown into the sea in the course of 60 days, while the trawler was left adrift.

According to the IOM figures, about 1400 Rohingya have been stranded at sea and at least 130 of them have died till June, in 2020 alone. The human traffickers charge \$ 2300 per head from Rohingya willing to be ferried to the shores of Malaysia or Indonesia, the two favoured destinations in South East Asia. If anything, the 2017 Rohingya massive influx has only given the traffickers a long rope to carry out their clandestine criminal operations in the camps.

Two Indo-Aryan Groups: Kaman Vs Rohingya

Rohingya Muslims and Kaman Muslims are the only two ethnic groups that trace their roots to the Indo-Aryan racial background. Unlike the other 133 mongoloid racial groups in Myanmar, Rohingya and Kaman are of dark and brown complexion and hence they naturally look different from the majority Myanmarese in appearance and in other physical features. And yet the Kaman Muslims have been recognized by the Myanmar Constitution as one of 135 indigenous national ethnicities. Kaman Muslims numbering about 60,000 live mainly in Ramree Island in the southern part of the same Rakhine state. With their 400 year old history of residency first in the Arakan kingdom and now in Rakhine state, the Kaman Muslims have been able to intermarry with other Rakhine ethnic groups and forge an integration and cohesion with the Myanmar language and culture, in contrast to the Rohingya Muslims who are seen as alien to the Myanmar language and culture.

They are Myanmar Residents But Not Citizens

As for the 1.6 million Rohingya people mainly living in the three northern townships of Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung in western Rakhine state, the majority of whom are currently sheltering in 34 refugee camps in Cox's Bazar Bangladesh, the 1982 Citizenship Act has effectively rendered them stateless, even though they enjoyed the right to citizenship in the years following the country's independence in 1948.

Even though the Myanmar government does not want to grant them full citizenship, it has provisions to grant them partial or limited citizenship, which are called either the Associate-citizenship, or the Naturalized Citizenship. The descendants of migrants living in Myanmar for several generations can apply to obtain either of these two citizenships, which offers only a limited number of rights and privileges. The full citizenship on the other hand is treated as the sole prerogative of members belonging to any one of the 135 national ethnicities.

JRS is committed to accompanying Rohingya Refugee Children

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) South Asia has reached out to these most persecuted people in the world today, almost within weeks of the start of this crisis. And three years on, JRS is committed to accompany the 2592 Rohingya children in Kutupalong Mega camp with an upgraded program for this year 2020-2021. What used to be called Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) in the last two years, has now been upgraded as Multipurpose Child and Adolescent Centre (MCAC). The new dimension of MCAS is that the 1200 adolescent boys and girls would be provided some life-skill trainings such as mobile servicing, vermiculture, sewing and embroidery.

JRS in partnership with Caritas Bangladesh is at the moment doing COVID-19 awareness-raising & preventive activities in the Rohingya camps and host communities in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

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We too are God's Children, Aren't we?

We are citizens of 'No man's land'
We belong neither here nor there
But to the 'No Man's Land'
Squeezed between Myanmar and
Bangladesh!
So true of us Rohingyas literally and
metaphorically!
We too are God's children, aren't we?

We are citizens of 'No man's land'
Entitled to neither an identity nor a name
But hurled with labels and names: 'kalars'
'illegal Bengali migrants'
'interlopers' 'land grabbers' 'born
terrorists'
So described in all dailies and reports,
locally and globally
We too are God's children, aren't we?

We are citizens of 'No man's land'
Now stripped of all our roots and our roofs,
our story and our history
Our lives hang on the risky perilous
mountain slopes in Cox's bazar
Not knowing where lie our destination and
destiny!
So we live in constant fear of being lured
into the traffickers' net
We too are God's children, aren't we?

We are citizens of 'No man's land'
Condemned to never settle down on any
land
Driven back and forth between Rakhine
and Cox's Bazar
We lead a life as nomadic as that of our
forefathers
We too dream of a promised land,
shouldn't we!
We too are God's children, aren't we?

|| Jeyaraj Veluswamy, SJ

('Kalars' means dark-skinned people. Myanmar people use this derogatory term to refer to Rohingyas.

Rakhine is a State in west Myanmar from where Rohingyas are driven out and Cox's Bazar is the southern most district in Bangladesh where the Rohingya camps are set up)



Can our forerunners inspire us?



Photo Courtesy: S. Ignacimuthu, SJ

Front view of St. Xavier's College, Palayamkottai, Tamil Nadu

Education has been an important tool in the hands of Jesuits almost from its very inception in 1542. Within a few years of the founding of the Society of Jesus, it became clear that one of the best ways to help others was to provide them with good education. With this in mind, the first Jesuit school was opened in Messina, Sicily, in 1548. By the time Ignatius died in 1556, thirty five schools had been started. At the time of the suppression of the Society in 1733, the Jesuits had established more than 800 schools around the world. In 1986, when Characteristics of the Jesuit education document was released, they had more than 2000 educational institutions in the world. Today there are about 1020 educational institutions run by Jesuits all over the world.

Through these institutions, Jesuits commit themselves to accompany students in their different contexts. They help

young people think critically and deal with contemporary situations effectively. The end result is that through their students, they are able to influence, to a large extent, society itself. During the time of St Ignatius there was a widespread challenge to the Catholic faith in the form of Reformation. During the Reformation most of the universities in Europe were seedbeds of heresy. The Jesuits decided to get themselves involved in the defence and eventual restoration of the Catholic faith. And to do this, the best way they found was to get people educated. And so they set up their own institutions as well as worked in tandem with like-minded Catholic institutions.

For instance, St Francis Xavier in Goa, India (1545) and St Francis Borgia in Spain (1546) got into the already established Catholic institutions and trained young men to be teachers to promote Catholic faith. In 1551 St Ignatius decided to found

the Roman College with the intention of instilling in them the correct Catholic faith to fight against heresies. The Roman College soon became the greatest university of his day, a dream that St Ignatius had long cherished. In course of time many more schools and colleges were established first to counter Reformation and second to prove that the Jesuits would be ready to do everything possible in order to show their loyalty to the Church and to the Holy Father.

In doing all this, the aim of the Jesuits was to mould young minds in right principles of faith and morality. Besides this, Jesuit educational institutions were concerned about teaching their wards to grow up in critical thinking and in personal decision-making. This, in turn, would help the youth to be prepared to stand on their own against persecutions coming from the Reformation or from other forms of heresy. The result has become history in the sense that so many young people got themselves involved in Counter Reformation and solidly stood by their Catholic faith.

Down the centuries many Jesuit alumni/ae have been torch bearers of universal values and vocal defenders of equality, justice, peace and harmony all over the world. Jesuits can legitimately be proud of the many illustrious alumni/ae who shine in different walks of life and who command considerable level of respect and attention in their own spheres of activity. Some of them have their own fans and followers. Quite a few of them have been staunch activists to defend the rights of the poor and the democratic values of their countries.

Unfortunately, today, in some parts of the world and more specifically in India, people, especially the youth, are being led astray by tall claims and evaporating promises made by selfish politicians and self-made religious leaders. They are being bombarded with many values which are counter to the universal values of love, brotherhood, tolerance, peace and harmony. Many of them are falling a prey to the aggressive growth of fundamentalism and the systematic implementation of hate agenda. Some of them even have become instruments (a few wilfully and some gullibly join these forces) in the hands of such people to spread these messages through media. In some sense, fundamentalists who copied the method of Jesuits to establish schools in different parts of India have successfully produced a cadre of people who wield great influence in judiciary, administration and politics. Some of them have the capacity to sway the masses through their oratory.

As against the backdrop of Jesuit education of past centuries and the present day trends, a question naturally arises: "What is the role played by our alumni/ae in different parts of the world, and more particularly in India?" It appears that millions of students who have passed through the portals of Jesuit institutions are also getting the messages just mentioned above but are in a dilemma as to how to cope with them or how to respond. Strange but true, many of them who might have been touched by our ideals and values are either silent or remain

neutral to the present day developments related to universal values, constitutional principles and democratic rights. Why is this so? Days were there when many of the Jesuit students rose up to defend the values they believed in. But today? Why are the present day alumni/ae hesitant or indifferent or silent to rise up and defend universal values, constitutional principles and democratic rights? Have we fallen short in our efforts to imprint in their hearts these noble ideals during the years they spent under our care and mentoring? Have we failed to mentally prepare them, empower them and equip them with sufficient pedagogical tools to counter these heinous and chauvinistic trends? Are we providing our students the necessary skills to withstand such onslaughts?

These questions are thrown back to us, Jesuits, to examine several relevant areas: Are we imparting the right type of education that was envisaged by St Ignatius and his followers of earlier times? Have we tried to help our students to analyze

critically issues of universal concern that affect humanity and the universe as a whole? Have we really made and are still making them to become agents of social change as we vouch for in our Characteristics of Jesuit education? It may not be too much to add that the work we do in our educational institutions is mostly routine, structured and limited. More than that, there seems to be a competition among various institutions as to who can hog the limelight and who can score better in assessments! May be sometimes the essentials get a step-motherly treatment while the peripherals take centre stage.

On the contrary, are we not expected to be engaged in moulding our students into right thinking citizens and socially involved persons so that when they leave us, they have degrees in their hands which are worth more than the paper on which they are printed? Should we not take steps to drill into the hearts and minds of our students the imperishable and eternal values which are the corner stones of an enlightened society? Better late than never. Let us spend some time thoughtfully and decide how best we could make our students real critical thinkers which, in turn, will help them become men and women of moral calibre and so stand up to the assaults of fundamental despots and religious fanatics of the day.

Honestly, I do not have answers for the questions I myself have raised here. It is, however, my earnest wish that we Jesuits enter upon a soul-searching programme so that ways and means could be found to make our educational service become a more effective instrument as St Ignatius, his companions and our forerunners had envisaged!



Remnants of St. Paul's College Gate, Goa

Image Source: goa.india - blogger

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Humour as a Way to Face the Vicissitudes of Life

Three aspects of humour are highlighted here: 1. Humour softens the existential suffering and also acts as protest against injustice and discrimination; 2. It's an antidote to what cannot be changed in life; 3. Humour is also a constitutive component of any spiritual formation.

Peter L. Berger in his book *Redeeming Laughter* (1997) raises the question why there are so many Jewish wits. First of all, wits must be skillfully narrated and the Jewish culture is perhaps the most verbalized among mankind. Psychologically: wits soften or ease the suffering. Which folk has in course of the centuries suffered more than the Jews? Sociologically: for a long period of their history, Jews have existed in the periphery of different societies. This border position gives rise always to a comic perspective.

If this is true that the marginalized people joke about their situation with a sense of humour, then the wits of the Dalit community in India need to be analyzed to discover the hidden protest dimension therein. A modern articulate Dalit writer explores the internal spheres of the world of Dalit humour. "These spaces are as much a revolt against as a relief for suppressed thoughts. They also carry a powerful counterculture of art that remains unknown to the rest of Indian society." (Suraj Yengde, *Caste Matters*, 2019)

This is important in the Indian cultural context where the hierarchical caste system demeans and discriminates human beings denying equality and human dignity. The greatest challenge to Christian mission is work towards changing the structural change of this unjust system. Humour is one way of facing this existential situation. It is also one of the means of the weak against their oppressive masters. (James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 1985). There are a quite a few poems in Tamil folk tradition which ridicule their rich masters – their bodily size, their sexual dealings etc. Faced with the destructive forces around, one can either become bitter and cynical, thus destroy oneself or face it with a sense of humour to laugh away the inevitable. That requires tremendous courage born out of one's inner stamina.

The humour of the oppressed people has to be empathetically understood. Even though Abraham also laughs at the promise in Genesis 17:17, centuries of biblical criticism have condemned Sarah's laughter as unfaithful disbelief in God's promise. But today women theologians redeemed Sara by interpreting it differently. Her laughter was not of disbelief, but of protest with belief. "She laughs out of both: the paradoxical experience of shame and grace, barrenness and hope, pleasure and grief, doubt and faith." Sarah's laughter is a form of chutzpah which means – "our human capacity to affect God and change his decrees and



Image Source: Interton

consequently man's future by his action and justified complaints towards God." (Jacqueline A. Bussie)

This interpretation is pertinent in understanding humour as protest with faith to change the situation. Obviously it goes against several western theories of humour. Nobody has ever felt his soul purged after watching the performance of Greek tragedy, as 'cathartic' theory claims. Based on the hydraulic metaphor of the pressure cooker for the mind, several theories came up: (Freud – "release of repressed urges", Spencer - humour provides an outlet for "surplus energy", Bergson - theory of mechanical repetition -, Hobbes - superiority theory -, Nietzsche - "Only man suffers so excruciatingly that he has been compelled to invent laughter") with social and psychological functions of humour. They do not help our goal here and hence humour needs to be seen differently in an Asian context.

Aesthetic factors in shaping one's spirituality

Traditionally spirituality is associated with asceticism and detachment which denies even the due place to the bodily needs. Religious people who seek perfection take three vows. But on serious reflection of humanist tradition, one discovers the immanent force which recreates our spirit within us. The three elements are: an intense search for beauty, frequent explosions of humour and an insatiable thirst for intimacy, without which there can be no authentic spirituality.

A sense of beauty means our ability to see the invisible wholeness beneath our fragmented existence. Genuine aesthetic delight actually does not intoxicate our inner senses but sharpens them to perceive the ugly that lurks in beautiful things. Only when we are capable of tasting the exquisite beauty, could we be sensitive to the reality of sin, oppression and injustice.

A sense of humour is also needed to temper our sense of beauty. Every dictator silences the court-jester or cartoonist who exposes the nudity of the hominized beast robed in beauty. True humour is a celebration of beauty. It does not go against the search for inner harmony.

The Sanskrit poet Syamalaka remarks, correcting the view that what is sacred cannot be laughed at. Thus:

“Ascetics do not attain salvation by weeping,
humorous stories do not obstruct a future heaven;
therefore a wise person should laugh with an appreciative mind,
after abandoning the mean modes of life.”

If ‘our sense of beauty is an act of faith in our glorious future, then our sense of humor is an act of hope which makes us celebrate our certitude of victory in the midst of setbacks and failures. But love is the greatest of the three, St. Paul insists (1 Cor. 13.13), without which there is no music, but only noise (1 Cor. 13.1).’ (Aloysius Pieris, 1992)

Laughter is a small form of ‘theodicy’.

The concept of theodicy comes from Leibnitz which juxtaposes the presence of evil against the justice and perfection of God. Several thinkers have struggled with this question of reconciling the apparent contradictions. Joachim Ritter says that laughter succeeds to re-establish the identity of the marginalized with the marginalizing factors. In laughter, one opens himself to the otherwise tabooed state of affairs. According to Helmut Plessner (1892-1985), we laugh because we could not cope with something. Laughter is a possibility of the distance to situations in which the human being does not find any answer at all. And then the body takes over partly, to search for an answer to some extent, namely, through laughter, first of all, a physiological affair, a tickling. Basically laughter means a recognition that one does not and cannot cope with the situation.

Rabindranath Tagore is probably the most universal and comprehensive figure of modern India. He was a poet, but also wrote novels, dramas and philosophical essays. He experienced great suffering from deaths of family members and friends; also he experienced two world wars as unbearable evils. His understanding of evil is recorded in his book of essays (Sadhana). According to him the problem of evil reveals the limited, incomplete and imperfect nature of creation itself. The human life is to seek greater completeness, greater fullness. Existence is not inherently evil. Imperfection as found in limited will and intellect, has perfection as its ideal which must go through stages of realization.

The universe is a marvelous piece of art produced by the ‘Eternal Master Artist’. In its center there is a living idea which

reveals itself in an eternal symphony, played on innumerable instruments, all keeping perfect time.

“What music is that in whose measure the world is rocked?
We laugh when it beats upon the crest of life,
We shrink in terror when it returns into the dark.
But the play is the same that comes and goes
With the rhythm of the endless music.” (Fruit Gathering no. 52.)

There is no negation of the world in Tagore’s thinking. Evil exists to measure the good; pain is to measure the value of joy; suffering is to draw attention to one’s destiny. His originality lies in his discovery of interrelatedness of everything. So evil means alienation, isolation and unrelatedness. He seeks the infinite and universal in the finite and the particular. His response to evil is not to transcend the finite, but to respond to evil in greater relatedness to the finite and the particular.

So evil is the ‘material obstacle’ to the infinite ideal of perfection working out itself through the process of a continual creation. It is vain to complain over evil. This thought is expressed in a poem in Gitanjali (78):

“When the creation was new
And all the stars shone in their first splendor,
the gods held their assembly in the sky and sang
‘Oh, the picture of perfection! The joy unalloyed!’

But one cried of a sudden --- ‘It seems that somewhere
there is a break in the chain of light
and one of the stars has been lost.’

The golden string of their harp snapped,
Their songs stopped, and they cried in dismay –
‘Yes, that lost star was the best,
she was the glory of all heavens!’

From that day the search is unceasing for her,
And the cry goes on from one to the other,
That in her, the world has lost its one joy!

Only in the deepest silence of night
The stars smile and whisper among themselves –
‘Vain is this seeking! Unbroken perfection is over all.

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Intention For
October 2020

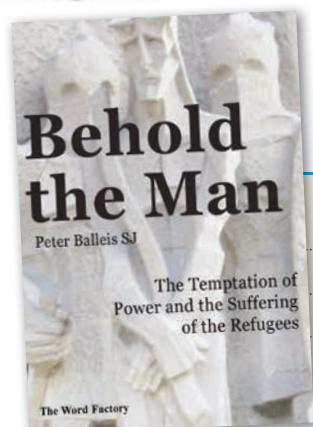
The Laity’s Mission in the Church

We pray that by the virtue of baptism, the laity, especially women, may participate more in areas of responsibility in the Church.



Pope's Worldwide
Prayer Network





Acquiring Refugee Spirituality

TITLE: Behold the Man: The Temptation of Power and the Suffering of Refugees
AUTHOR: Peter Balleis, SJ
PUBLISHER: The Word Factory
PAGES: 203 | **PRICE:** ₹400

Given his vast experience of work with refugees in many parts of the world, Peter has come out with a book - first written in German and then translated into English, and available on Kindle.

First, Peter takes us to the hot spots of conflicts and refugees in the world.....The conflicts in eastern Congo, South Sudan and in Central African Republic have a certain ethnic or religious colouring. But on a basic level they are wars about resources with local, regional and international actors. North Africa is shattered by poverty, failing states and religious fundamentalism. The elites of few Arab states have squandered their oil revenue and invested abroad but they have not invested in the development of their own societies. There is war in Syria, in Yemen in Iraq, and in Afghanistan. Another conflict zone on the border with Europe is Ukraine.

Then Peter talks of the causes of war. The first is economic interests that are the central motive for many wars. "A few earn large sums from war, especially arms dealers and countries that produce arms, mining companies, and oil and gas producers" (p.47). Secondly, national or ethnic, as well as religious interests, lead to acts of war. One ethnic identity is threatened by another ethnic or religious group. Thirdly, acquisition of power is the purpose of realpolitik and the exercise of power by military force if necessary, is a means of ensuring that national and economic interests are enforced. However, all these above causes of war are only pretexts, used to disguise the personal pursuit of power, wealth and honour – decisive driving forces in politics!

Taking up the Lazarus and rich man parable, Peter compares Europe to a rich man at whose doorstep sits Africa with its conflict potential in the Sahel Zone, the Middle East, and Central Asia. "Refugees are the victims of an abuse of power; they are helpless, without power. They

don't want violence, but to live in peace and security. In regarding them we see the face of God and recognize the suffering servant of God" (90). Our challenge is how to resist all the temptations of avarice, ambition for glory and power and how to integrate so many refugees.

Peter compares the Jesus model on ruling and serving. With love and mercy there may be a chance to end the vicious circle of anger and violence. He uses the parable of the multiplication of loaves, with Jesus saying "give them something to eat". He also refers to the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Peter also highlights the plight of victims of oppression, captivity, exclusion, and atrocities. The role of prayer on one's knees with uplifted open palms is the most primal way. Dialoguing with the oppressors alongside prayer, is another way of overcoming the evil. Our own Fr. Prem Kumar S.J who was under the captivity of Taliban and his prayer of thanksgiving takes a prominent place in this volume. Peter shares his experience of working at the Jesuit Refugee Service. He says: First, one should be available to all people in need. Second, JRS teams should be made up of both conflicting religionists. "There is no alternative to friendly dialogue and engagement, and no substitute for reconciliation and living together peacefully". People without inner peace cannot promote peace outside!

St. Ignatius and his spiritual exercise especially the Principle and Foundation has been given a pride of place in this volume as to how to see reality. "Man is created to praise reverence and serve God our Lord; the other things are created to help him to achieve this goal. Peter contrasts two characters in Africa, Mandela and Mugabe - both Christians, who were imprisoned for some time. The former took the road to reconciliation, peace and justice on leaving the prison, while the latter took to oppression, chased primal temptations of power, wealth and glory and managed to keep power until his death.

Very few Jesuits have written stories of their lives based on their work, problems encountered in multi-cultural, conflicting arenas and the strength they derived from Jesus, Mary, Scriptures, Spiritual Exercises, and the examples of heroic women and men of Christian faith. This book is a statement which shows how one can live alongside evil that manifests in our times, especially with the refugees, and how it can be countered. Refugee Spirituality indeed!

■ Lancy Lobo, SJ

Community Prayer book on Ecology

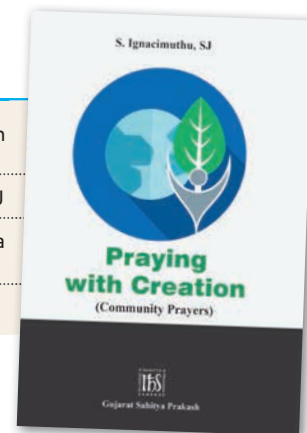
The Encyclical Laudato Si by Pope Francis has rejuvenated our love and care for environment and all of creation. Environment acts as a medium to elevate our spirits with ecstatic reverence and helps us raise our minds and hearts to God. The Society of Jesus has also chosen this topic as one of its universal apostolic preferences motivating its members to get actively involved for the next ten years.

This book highlights the wonders of creation and assists us to be united with God through our community prayers. Forty important topics of creation are taken as themes. Each component has some facts on the theme in the opening prayers, then there are relevant readings for reflection, followed by pertinent petitions, concluding with elevating prayers. Praying with creation motivates us to be involved in protecting and conserving creation as stewards.

Fr Ignacimuthu, SJ deserves our appreciation for bringing out this inspiring book at this particular time when we realize how important environment is for our very survival. The publishers also have done an excellent job. This book will be a blessing for religious communities, parishes, families and institutions.

■ John Rose, SJ

TITLE: Praying with Creation (Community Prayers)
AUTHOR: S. Ignacimuthu, SJ
PUBLISHER: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, Anand
PAGES: 202 | **PRICE:** ₹ 175



Jesuit Bishop Linus Gomes celebrates 100th Birthday

The nonagenarian Bishop Most Rev. Linus Nirmal Gomes, SJ has, with ease and grace entered his 100th year of existence on 7th September 2020. To celebrate this unique occasion, Jesuits of St Xavier's College and St. Xavier's university Kolkata, came together for a special Eucharist presided over by the Jesuit Provincial, Fr Raphael Joseph Hyde, SJ, in the college chapel. Bishop Linus Gomes SJ is the seniormost bishop in India and Asia.



Born on 7th September in 1921 in the small village of Balidior in Dacca district, Bishop Gomes had his schooling at Holy Cross School Bandura. Later he came over to St Xavier's College, Calcutta. During his college studies, he came under the influence of renowned Jesuits like Fr Paulus Turmes, SJ, Fr G. Dandoy SJ and Fr Peter Gomes, SJ. Thus his attraction and vocation to the Jesuit way of life, began way back in the 1940's.

After his ordination on 21st November 1954, he was made first assistant and then parish priest at St Teresa Parish, Kolkata. Pope

Paul VI then made Fr Linus Gomes SJ the first Bishop of the diocese of Baruipur. Consecrated as Bishop by late Archbishop Cardinal L.T. Picachy, SJ, on 19th November 1977, Bishop Gomes SJ served the nascent diocese of Baruipur for 18 long years, literally nurturing and building it up.

Indeed the best moment came when Bishop Linus wanted to say something. The Centenarian bishop surprised everyone with this inspiring message. He blessed and greeted everyone saying aloud, 'Dear Brothers, at my age I have many things to share. But I have

little energy for that. Yet I have something to tell you all, dear Fathers and Brothers. I bless each one of you and pray for all of you. Please carry on the works. For the works are given by Christ Our Lord. They are not ours. They are Christ's works. We must fulfil His mission.' All gathered around the Bishop, took this message to heart, as a beautiful personal message and blessing from Bishop Linus N Gomes, SJ.

I Jeyaraj Veluswamy, SJ | Kolkata

Celebrating the Person and Mission of Swami Agniveshji



peace and democratic values in India and the world.

My first contact with Swami Agnivesh was on the eve of New Year 1990 when, along with labourers of Bandhua Mukti Morcha and civil society members, we protested against the extravaganza at La Meridien in New Delhi. One of the memorable ventures was he, along with twenty social activists visiting Kandhamal, to understand the violence against the Dalit Christians in Odisha. After a visit to the camps in Phulbani, in the press conference when Swami Agnivesh spoke about the violence committed against the Dalit Christians by the Hindutva forces and the state machinery, the press took note of that and began to report the atrocities.

Swami Agnivesh was the founder of many forums, collectives, movements, struggles, platforms, etc. Though a strong Arya Samaj follower, he was a person who celebrated humanity. He was also initiator and supporter of innumerable interfaith dialogues, forums and collectives. Swami Agnivesh was

criticized for standing for inter-religious dialogue and harmony, but he continued his mission for more than three decades.

The following civil, secular and religious organisations organized this webinar to celebrate the life and mission of Swami Agniveshji: All-India Christian Union, Alliance Defending Freedom, Badayal Alternatives, Bandhua Mukti Morcha, Central Board of the Dawoodi Bohra Community, Centre for the Study of Society and Secularism, Christian Students and Youth for Democracy, Council for Social Justice and the Peace Archdiocese of Goa, Delhi Forum, Eco-Frontiers Goa, Hali Panipati Trust, Indian Christians for Democracy, Indian Muslims for Democracy, Muslim Women's Forum, National Confederation of Human Rights Organisations, North East India Regional Bishops' Council Secretary for Ecumenism, Samanvaya, Student Christian Movement, United Christian Forum, Vishwa Arya Samaj, and YWCA India.

I Prakash Louis, SJ | Patna

Over 20 Civil, Secular and Minority Rights Organisations organized on 15th September, 2020, a commemorative on the Person and Mission of Swami Agnivesh. The objective of the webinar was to celebrate the Life and Mission of Swami Agniveshji, who lifelong stood for the marginalized from any community and for communal harmony. He symbolized the struggle for upholding justice,

A webinar on the role of media in environmental protection

Fr. A. Irudayaraj S.J. organised a webinar on media environmental protection on 24th August, 2020. Four panellists highlighted the constructive role of media in saving nature. It invited us to become instruments of change in possible ways.

Mr. Vertiselvan, a lawyer, spoke on various environmental issues. He said that there are many kinds of viruses and bacteria in the world, but we know only a few. The human body has got accustomed to live with some viruses and bacteria. The whole universe is an organism. All creatures are part of it. Deforestation is a cause of a pandemic outbreak. When there is no sufficient place for animals, they are pushed out of forests. Developmental projects such as Hydro Carbon and Sagar Mala Project, lead to destruction. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a real threat for the environment.

Dr. Jayaprakash spoke on the use of social media. Youth are concerned about the importance of the protection of the environment. They use social media as platforms for spreading their views and



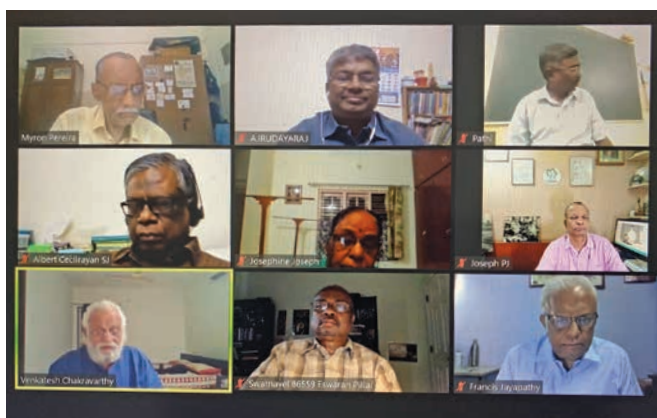
innovative ideas. As this generation is well-acquainted with social media, popularizing awareness programmes on environmental issues has become globally much easier for them.

Mrs. Radhika spoke on conservation photography. Timberlands are havens for animals, birds and various rare species. Pollution of air, contamination of water, depletion of land and erosion of soil affect wild life. Natural inhabitants of species are exterminated, owing to several activities that disturb their natural movements. Mr. Rogan Prem Kumar spoke on the tribal rights. Once, indigenous people were kings of jungles and they were protectors of forests.

Their life was around 'Jal-jami-jungle,' but they were merely accused of destroying forests by cutting wood. Hence, the displacement was imposed upon them in view of privatization of lands leading to violation of their rights. This webinar was really an eye-opener for many youngsters.

Arul Gnanaprasam, SJ | Chennai

A tribute through media to a media legend



An online tribute and memorial lecture were jointly organized by the communication commission of the new Chennai Province and the Department of Visual Communication Loyola College, Chennai in memory of Fr. Gaston Roberge s.j, the Jesuit who has left this earth with a legacy of contributing to communication and media for sixty years. Veteran Jesuit communicators from

Canadian joined the Calcutta province and became fully an Indian by his thought, life, work and mission. His presentation was followed by a screening of a documentary on Fr. Gaston.

As part of this meeting to pay tributes, a memorial lecture was organized.

Mumbai, Calcutta, Andhra, Madurai and Chennai provinces participated in this meeting.

After the prayer song and a formal welcome, Fr. A. Irudayaraj, head of the department of visual communication, Loyola College, briefed the context of organizing a virtual tribute to Fr. Gaston. In the beginning, Fr. P.J. Joseph, director of Chitrabani, gave a biographical sketch on Fr. Roberge. He recalled that Fr. Gaston who was a

Eminent media critique Prof. Venkatesh Chakravarthy, Hyderabad, highlighted various contributions that Fr. Gaston made in media and communication, particularly evolving an Indian film theory.

Fr. Francis Jayapathy s.j., remembered how his stay with Fr. Gaston helped him to initiate various new and innovative communication programmes in the then Madurai province. Fr. Myron Periera s.j., former editor of JIVAN shared his experiences with Gaston through three anecdotes. Through a video bite, Fr. George Ponnadath S.J, former director of EMRC shared how he learnt about perfection through Fr. Gaston. Academicians like Dr. Josephine Joseph, Fr. Vincent Britto s.j, Chennai Province, and Fr. Lourduraj s.j., Andhra Loyola College, were among those who fondly and thankfully remembered Fr. Gaston. Prof. Alex Parimalam, Loyola College, thanked both the organizations who hosted this meet. Let the legacy of Fr. Gaston live on.

Prof. Alex Parimalam | Chennai

A NOTE ON GASTON ROBERGE

The first time I met Fr. Gaston Roberge was either in 1966 or 1967 when he came to Mumbai as a young Jesuit Priest. He was assisting, as far as I recollect, a remarkable Jesuit, Fr. Francis who had started a number of children's homes for street children named **Sneh Sadan** in several slum pockets of Mumbai - an extremely successful rehabilitation programme.


I think Fr. Gaston Roberge at that time was a Brother and helped Fr. Francis in all his work. Later when Fr. Francis, who was of Spanish descent, returned to Europe, Fr. Gaston Roberge took over from him. It is around that time I made a small documentary called **A Child of the Streets** with one of the children from **Sneh Sadan**.

Extremely enthusiastic, Gaston Roberge used to drive me and my crew around different parts of Mumbai while we were shooting the film.

I lost contact with him when he went to Kolkata where he remained since. I did meet him occasionally but eventually lost touch.

His passion was Cinema and was very active in film society circles, apart from his numerous other activities which made him much admired and loved in that part of the world.

All in all, he was an extraordinary Jesuit Priest whose grand passion outside of his religiously ordained work was the **Cinema**.


Shyam Benegal
Sept.11, 2020

Gaston Roberge: an appreciation

Fr Gaston Roberge SJ, founder of Chitrabani Institute, Kolkata, and film and media scholar par excellence, passed away at St Xavier's College, Kolkata, on August 27, 2020. He was 85.

Both Chitrabani, started by Gaston Roberge, and the Xavier Institute of Communications, founded by Francis "Packy" MacFarland, SJ, were born within a year of each other, a little over 50 years ago in 1969-70, in two different parts of the country, Calcutta (now Kolkata) and Bombay (now Mumbai).

The Xavier Institute – or XIC, as it came to be known -- defined itself as a training institute for the professional media from the very first. Bombay was the media capital of the country, and it seemed the right place to start a college for professional media training. That's why XIC was located on the campus of St Xavier's College, Bombay. Though its courses varied in name, scope and duration over the years, it has always adhered to its academic blueprint: professional skills within the context of a humanist ethos – the universal Jesuit hallmark.

Chitrabani's design was different. Its emphasis was film (as its very name implied), and it soon established itself as a place for film lovers and serious students of cinema. Roberge encouraged many young talents to explore the visual media through photography, film and video. Among the many friendships which developed as a result, Roberge counted Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, Mani Kaul and Kobita Sarkar.

One of his protégés, George Ponodath, a Jesuit like himself, took charge of the Educational Media Research Centre at Kolkata's St Xavier's, and made it into arguably the best production unit of educational films in the country.

If XIC's contribution was linear, systematic and academic, Chitrabani was more intuitive, asymmetrical, and highly personalized in the genius of Father Roberge.

For several years, Roberge also headed an adult education program in Bengali, through radio. Called Chetana, it broadcast its messages of literacy, child-care and women's empowerment all over Bengal and Bangladesh.

Roberge's major contribution however, has been in film scholarship, and together with it, a critical understanding of the 'new media'.

His first book, titled Chitrabani (1975), (like the institution he started), is a basic handbook for film enthusiasts, helping one to understand the grammar and the idiom of film, with perceptive insights into the history of Indian cinema.

Another, Mediation (1978) is a collection of articles, anecdotes, photos, cartoons, questions and quotations on the action of the media in society. Roberge always believed – much like McLuhan before him -- that the technology of the electronic media were slowly but surely changing society, and with it, human nature

as we've known it. In the 1980s, when XIC started its program "Mediaworld", to inculcate critical reflection on the media in high schools, he warmly encouraged it. Mediaworld was a venture ahead of its time, and sadly, short-lived.

In essence, Roberge the film scholar, explored the various facets of today's media culture with imagination and variety. The books followed, one after the other. The Faithful Witness (2000) explored the nature of Christian communication; Cyberbani (2005), is "being human in the new media environment"; and Media Dancer (2008) took the analysis further with the internet and social media.

Roberge has written almost thirty books on topics related to cinema and the media.

One of his last books returns to his favourite topic, popular film: Indian Film Theory (2011). "I had been asking myself since the 1980s why we do not have a new theory of popular film," said Roberge. "It was only recently that I got an answer after studying a 2000-year old Indian treatise of drama and dance, Natya Sastra – The Science of Drama." The result is a new perspective on the theories underlying Indian commercial cinema. It is widely acknowledged that this Jesuit priest has made a "significant contribution" to film with his new book on Indian film theory.

All through that marvellous decade of the 80s and the early 90s, when we passed from Doordarshan/ Akashvani to colour TV, video, FM radio and cell phones, Roberge was a frequent visitor to XIC.

Those were still the early years of mass communication in India, and the

Jesuit fraternity through its umbrella group, JESCOM, would meet frequently to discuss and argue, to share project planning and squabble over funding, to build friendships, solidarity and encourage innovation. Gaston Roberge was always there at these meetings, looked up to with respect, admiration and certain affection.

It is a sign of how much the last decades have changed us, that no one speaks of the 'mass media', or 'mass communications' anymore. Today the buzz words are 'online', 'social media' -- facebook, twitter, instagram, the internet -- and the little gizmo you hold in your hand connecting you with everyone, everywhere, all at once: duniya mutthi mein.

Roberge was a Jesuit in Calcutta, one of a rare breed of scholars -- men like Lafont, Goethals, Johanns, Antoine, Beckers, Verstraeten and so very many others, who left their imprint not just on a city, but on a whole epoch.

To this distinguished group we may now add the name of Gaston Roberge. For wherever Indian cinema is studied, wherever the new media culture is analysed, we will never forget that it was his name and his writings which first opened the door.

Myron J. Pereira, SJ





Fr. Joseph L. Pragasam, SJ (MDU)

Fr. J. L. Pragasam who used to refer to himself, as “A Reed in God’s Hand” was born in Madurai on 21st April, 1937. He had his schooling at St. Mary’s, Madurai, and with his God-given gift of music, he was also a member of St. Mary’s Cathedral choir (“reed flute through which God has breathed eternally new melodies” Tagore in his Gitanjali). He joined the Society of Jesus in 1956 and was ordained as priest in 1971 at St. Mary’s Cathedral, Madurai. He was proud to assert that he was the first parishioner of the Cathedral Parish and the first day scholar of St. Mary’s to become a priest.

In 1973, he began his teaching ministry in our schools. Students thronged to his classes attracted especially by his novel methods of teaching English. Of his students he would say: “Always I approached them as their father, mother, friend and guide. They crowded my working days as much as they crowded my praying heart.”

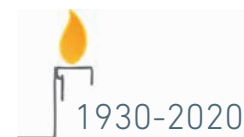
Retiring from school teaching after 21 years, he went as a missionary (1996 to 2006) and engaged himself in pastoral

ministry with much love and great generosity in Marabá, in the Jesuit Region of Amazonia, Brazil.

Back in the Province he worked in our institutions. While being on Oxygen support in the ICU of a Madurai Hospital, he was diagnosed as COVID-19 Positive. He passed away on 3rd July, 2020. He was laid to rest on the same day in the cemetery of St. Mary’s, Madurai.

People in Marabá, Brazil, used to fondly call Fr. J. L. Pragasam “Padre Jô”. As AMT is 9:30 hours behind IST, on July 3rd itself they organized a Eucharistic celebration in the parish church at 7.30 p.m. with the necessary social distancing measures. May God grant Padre Jô eternal rest!

■ Antony Inico and George Raja



Fr. George Gispert-Sauch, SJ (BOM)

Fr George Gispert-Sauch was a well acknowledged theologian, Sanskritist and Indologist, ever willing to mentor and to accompany young aspirants. He even stayed with a group of theologians living for a while in an Old Delhi slum.

Born in Spain, he joined the Society in Vuelva, and sailed for Bombay as a Junior, more than 70 years ago. He studied at St Xavier’s College, specialising in Sanskrit. After his theology in Kurseong, he was assigned there. An invaluable mentor, accompanying guide and inspiration, always supportive and encouraging, Gispert could vibe with most discourses, without compromising his intellectual integrity.

Most intellectuals generally understand you in their terms of reference, and respond to you from within their perspective. Gispert would try the opposite, namely, entering into your frame of reference and meeting you there for a dialogue. Most intellectuals have too much ego to be so open to the others’ ideas. Gispert had no such issues.

For him the Jesuit intellectual enterprise was committed to the Kingdom, not some petty gain for oneself.

With his guidance, the Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection saw a quantum leap in quality. As librarian, he knew every book in the library, and where it was placed and on which shelf. He worked all day in his room, cluttered with papers. But he could always find what he wanted, with ease. I’ll always remember something Gispert said to me when I was too critical of our colonial missionaries: Don’t rubbish these men; they gave their lives to the mission; though we may disagree with them, we must respect their heroic dedication.

His application for Indian citizenship was still in process when he passed away on the morning of 29th Jul 2020 at Vinayalaya. Jordi was a true Jesuit, after the heart of Ignatius, who wanted Jesuits to be men of solid virtue and solid learning.

■ Rudi Heredia, SJ



Fr. Isidore Alban Egil Pinto, SJ (PAT)

Fr. Isidore Pinto was born in 1942 at Maryneer House, Hosabettu, in Mangalore Diocese, as the youngest of nine children. He joined Gonzaga House, the apostolic school, while doing his high school and PUC from St. Aloysius, Mangalore. He joined the Patna Jesuits in 1963 and was ordained a priest in 1976. Fr. Pinto was a soft spoken, simple, sincere and dedicated person, who spent his entire apostolic life in the education ministry serving as the Head Master of the Middle Schools in Chuhari and Ara; Vice Principal of K.R., Bettiah and St. Xavier’s, Patna. He retired to XTTI in 2006.

Fr. Isidore Pinto was a person of committed, serious, and steady character. He was an eloquent witness of a person consecrated to God. He always carried out the responsibility entrusted to him to the best of his ability. Serving in different schools over a span of thirty years, in a quiet and unassuming way, he enriched the lives of the

students. Beyond his teaching in the class room, his life was a witness to order and discipline. His rhythm of life built on simplicity of life style, perseverance in monotony and service, with no expectation of anything in return, had taught the students more than his words. Despite his health problems throughout his life, Fr. Isidore exhibited endurance, contentment and interior peace.

On the 7th August, the day of his death, he joined the community for Mass and meals, though he was coughing and unwell. In the afternoon, one of our co-workers found that he had passed away in his sleep. As in life, so in death, he passed away quietly. May the Heavenly Father who sees what is done in secret, reward His silent servant with eternal life! (Mt 6:4-6) May his soul rest in peace!

■ Selvin Xavier, SJ



Amrit Rai, SJ

Though difficult, one of the roles of a leader is to know the needs, gifts and aspirations of each member, so that he could integrate them with the objectives and goals of the organization. To achieve the mission and apostolic plans of the province / region, the major superior should integrate cura personalis with cura

apostolica. To accomplish this, St. Ignatius of Loyola has given us a mantra: manifestation of conscience.

To me, receiving the manifestation of conscience was not only a humbling but a transforming experience. In the manifestation of conscience I really understood my brothers - their graced and un-graced elements, their aptitude and aspirations. I was touched by their openness to share their strength and vulnerability. It helped me to accept my own imperfection. Receiving the manifestation of conscience has helped me to love and accept my brothers with their light and shadows. Listening to some of their struggles made me more compassionate.

One of the portraits of the major superior is that he be intimately united with God. In my case I don't know if it were so. However, in the last two and a half years I have grown deeper in intimacy with God. There were times I was in a long dark tunnel.

The only option left was to pray and trust in His providence. In every such situation God intervened, and I was through. These experiences have left me with a profound trust that it is the Society of His Son, and He will take care of it.

Delegation of authority is the key in the governance of the Society of Jesus. In the context where the Director of Works is given maximum importance, the local superior could easily be side-lined and he himself could prefer to remain passive. Therefore, I emphasize on the empowerment of the local superior and make him accountable.

Participative leadership is one the most effective leadership styles. REGAE has been a game changer. It helped the Jesuits to imbibe the spirit of Spiritual Conversation and Discernment-in- Common. One of the most consoling experiences I cherish is the process we followed in making the Region Apostolic Preferences and Action Plan. Each Region's member was involved in the process, therefore he owns it.

Few are born leaders, rest are made. Therefore, training for leadership is a must. The world has become more complex. For the greater effectivity in our ministries, Jesuits need professional skills. It is not fair to have high expectations from a Jesuit, without equipping him. I prioritize different professional trainings and international experience for Jesuits with certain aptitude.

Of course, there are a few Jesuits who find it difficult to follow our way of proceeding. They have helped me to grow in the virtue of patience and be more creative.

One thing I have learned is transparency garners support. I am immensely grateful for the support I receive from my companions.

The author is the Regional Superior of Nepal Jesuit Region.

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Siji Chacko, SJ

I was a Community leader at the Indo-Nepal border in Bihar. We did not have a proper residence, or chapel, or cook, and had no electricity in the area (though solar power came later). We only had handpumps for water. In our community, we cared for each other and our focus was less on us, on formalities and rules. If someone had to visit us, the person did not have to inform the community leader essentially. Our life of faith, living together as companions, and the mission among the most deserving tribals and Dalits, kept us going.

Our faith and love were being translated into service, inviting us to be contemplatives in action with much focus on the justice dimension. Much of our happiness depended on the mission that became the nucleus.

Authority is more centralized around rituals, rules and superficialities in an affluent community. Often our leaders forget that governance in the Society is meant for a meaningful community life and apostolic effectiveness. St. Ignatius envisaged the leader to be a person of 'magnanimity' (CN [728]) with a big heart that opens up beyond the self, to others. Ignatius wanted the Jesuit leader to be 'free from inordinate affections', having them 'tamed' and mortified (CN [726]). But leadership today is in need of a deeper dimension of genuine sharing, active listening and intentional speaking, that are very much part of the Spiritual conversation.

Any team leader who is not willing to look at each Jesuit and his mission as unique, would be a failed leader. I recall a Superior of mine who used to say, 'If I give him permission, others also might ask.' And therefore, he would not give that permission, even if he thought it was important to be granted.

It is important for us to realize that when one is appointed a leader, he is one among 'equals' and probably everyone else in the same community has a possibility of assuming that role and responsibility. Perhaps it is exceedingly difficult to find capable leadership today. When St. Ignatius presented the portrait of a leader, he was also aware of certain limitations. Still, he aspired the Jesuit leader to be one who would look into a realistic integration of heart (affection), head (understanding) and hands (executive power). He had gone to the extent of projecting him as a 'mirror and model' (CN [726]).

Chris Lowney in his famous book 'Heroic Leadership', speaks of one of the strengths of the Society as each one is invited to be leader. It is high time for me and all of us to think of each of us as a leader. What is applicable to a leader or a Superior is applicable to me too, because I am a Jesuit and essentially a leader like you, in spite of limitations!

The author is the Director of Conference Development Office and Conference Communication Coordinator for South Asia.

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Unique Bamboo Houses Survive 7 Assam Floods in 3 Years



Image Source: TBI

Almost every monsoon, the Brahmaputra floods Assam, sweeping away everything they encounter — human settlements and paddy fields. In 2016, the soil erosion due to floods in Golaghat district wrecked more than 40 residential shelters and schools.

Inaccessibility of toilets in the flood, forced people to defecate in open flood waters which were also used for drinking, breeding water-borne diseases like malaria, dengue and cholera. Water-logged villages could not access educational, health and work facilities.

SEEDS (Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society), a non-profit organization, started disaster-management and rehabilitation using their expertise in architectural design. In 2017 they built 81 unique houses with high quality local bhaluka and jati bamboos. They were the traditional strong and elevated stilt houses that could withstand floods, with modern architectural innovations.

They were built through their local Harisya system — neighbours voluntarily build houses in exchange for meals. The building process was owner-driven, with their involvement from design to execution. Cutting and splitting bamboos, making the thatched walls, deciding the

customized facade with personal aesthetics ... the owners participated at every step of the process. Built on 23 sq. meters, the core of the house was supported by 5-ft bamboo stilts to cope with rising water-levels during floods.

The main house comes with a large hall that can be partitioned into rooms based on need, and a semi-open verandah for various activities like food preparation, socialization and basket-weaving. The elevation provided by the stilts in addition to protecting the house from over-flooding, also allows a space for other purposes like rearing livestock, weaving, recreation, storing boats, etc.

Technical improvements are incorporated, like waterproofing the stilt bamboo columns with rubberised coating to prevent them from rotting over time, due to extensive exposure to water, and construction strengthened with deeper bamboo footings encased with concrete. Roofing and walls use cross-bracing along with an indigenous tying technique using rattan and bamboo dowels, making the structure more resilient and resistant to lateral forces both during floods and earthquakes. Each house costs Rs.75,000 to build.

Adapted from TBI

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

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Of a different Kind-ness



Image Source: TBI

Do you want to know what it means to be kind to others? You should talk to Manisha (22), a lecturer at the Nandha College of Nursing in Erode District, Tamil Nadu. She has made kindness a way of life. She is determined to show kindness to the forgotten, the beggars on the streets. Not only that, she even helps them live a life of dignity. She has rescued and rehabilitated nearly 150 beggars, drug addicts, destitutes and those afflicted with incurable diseases from the streets and given them a new life.

She says, "Although the desire to serve has been within me since childhood, studying nursing and closely interacting with underprivileged patients is what finally inspired me to help those who couldn't afford three square meals and a roof over their head."

In fact, Manisha wanted to join the Indian Army. But her father was against it. She then wanted to pursue MBBS, but didn't secure the necessary marks. Unwilling to give up, she chose to become a registered nurse, and enrolled into the JKKN College of Nursing and Research.

It was during her first job at the Indira College of Nursing in Trichy, that she first rescued and rehabilitated a beggar.

Manisha registered an NGO, the Jeevitham Foundation in September 2019, prior to which it was called 'Volunteer to Needy People.' She collects the necessary data of the beggars and the abandoned - their current status and personal histories - and then sets up a plan to rehabilitate them as per their wishes. If they are old they are admitted to an old age home. If they are differently-abled, she helps them get admitted into a hospital for treatment. If they have a family and wish to rejoin them, she helps them there as well. She does the same if they want a job.

"My parents feel that instead of doing this work, I should concentrate more on my career. However, there is no stopping me, and I hope to convince them soon," She says resolutely.