



GUJARAT JESUIT SAMACHAR

Premal Jyoti, PB 4002, Ahmedabad - 380 009



72/916 GJS MAY 2020

FROM THE PROVINCIAL'S DESK

Dear Brothers,
Peace of Christ!

The nationwide lockdown has now been extended upto 3rd May, due to the rapid spread of the dreaded Covid-19 pandemic. What will happen after that? At this juncture, none of us knows. The situation in Gujarat though, is indeed alarming: recently we had the highest death toll in a single day and over and above that, a large number of daily wage earners, migrants and poor tribals are faced with a world of deprivation and uncertainties; they have no earnings, many of them are far away from their homes; since their livelihood is affected there are related serious issues of food, hygiene and shelter.

This crisis has certainly brought us together and taught us to care for one another, in the true sense of the word; we live a life that is more simple, self-dependent and frugal. Bonded together in the common fight against the deadly pandemic, people of goodwill all over the world, are working tirelessly and sacrificing their own personal safety and family life. We need to salute all of them, particularly the health care professionals and the police force, for their exemplary and selfless service.

To help alleviate the suffering of the pandemic victims, the province began a 'Province 2020 Fund' and appealed to the entire Province, the corporate sector, our friends and benefactors to contribute towards this fund. The response received is simply overwhelming. Many of those who contributed did so joyfully and generously, unmindful of their own plight, struggle and hardships; their giving therefore, was all the more meaningful. I am deeply grateful to all the donors and also to **Frs. Franco Fernando, Ramesh Macwan and Hector Pinto** who render their services in managing the fund and coordinating



the province level relief work.

It is extremely heartening to see that all the communities, which are otherwise involved in different apostolates, are today engaged in one single mission; the mission of reaching out and responding to Covid-19 victims, with compassion and in solidarity. This pandemic has made us to focus on our universal mission. At this moment, we experience a tremendous union of hearts and minds, as all of us, think, speak, and act as one body. We are at the forefront in a variety of ways which include, collaborating with others, in mobilising resources, in giving spiritual support, in counselling those afflicted, helping people access the government relief programmes and reaching out to the unreached with relief materials.

Our Socius, **Fr Alpesh Macwan**, through regular updates on our collective response, not only provides us with significant information of our many interventions to this unprecedented crisis but on possibilities on reflecting on 'what more' we could and should be doing in the days ahead! What truly fascinates me, is the selfless service, team work, large heartedness, alacrity and the unfailing commitment by several in this crisis.

Quarantine is a moment of reflection, a call to introspection. Just as the eyes of the disciples, who were on their way to Emmaus, were prevented from recognising Jesus, in our journey of life, we too are often prevented from seeing the ultimate reality, the ultimate goal. We are so 'busy', that we often lose sight of our destination. It is important that we now busy ourselves doing a good deal of charitable work; it would be even better, that these works lead us to self-transformation and our own betterment.

Referring to this special situation in which we are currently placed, as a consequence of the Covid-19

pandemic, Fr. General would say that it is an opportunity which we cannot afford to miss. What is this opportune moment offering us that we should not miss? Are we prepared to open our hearts and minds to sincerely seek that which would have lasting value? Are we ready to make the onward journey more of an inward journey?

At the end of the journey while they were in lockdown, their eyes were opened and they recognised Him. They felt their hearts burning within as He talked to them on the way. May the Risen Lord accompany us during the lockdown and continue to enlighten us, so that we too can joyfully proclaim “We have seen the Lord!”

- Durai Fernand SJ

AMDG

PROVINCIAL'S PROGRAMME

28-29: Scholastics' Gathering

29-30: Consult, Sevasi

Note: If the lockdown is eased out and the atmosphere becomes conducive, Provincial may visit some of the houses in and around Ahmedabad.

APPOINTMENTS

► GENERAL has appointed

- Fr. Jerome Stanislaus D'Souza SJ, (KAR), President of South Asia.
- Fr. Ajitkumar Xess SJ, (RAN), Provincial of Ranchi.
- Fr. Sebastian Jeerakassery SJ, (DEL), Asst to the General Treasurer.

► PROVINCIAL has appointed

- **Fr. Nagin Macwan**, Province Coordinator of PWPN/EYM.
- **Fr. Alex Thannipara**, Loyola Technical Institute, Nadiad.



PROVINCE HIGHLIGHTS

►► Satya Nilayam amidst lockdown

The pandemic Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown has brought all activity in Satya Nilayam to a standstill. This opportunity was used for our annual retreat. Fr. Michael Alosanai (MDU), our retreat preacher guided us in this spiritual journey.

Twenty scholastics helped out during the online retreat conducted by JCSA. Currently, many of us are helping out in supporting Covid-19 relief works and the online campaign for migrant workers, initiated by JCSA. **Sch. Aric Makwana** is part of media team.

The lockdown is also an opportunity for the first year philosophy students to write integration paper and the second year philosophy students to do some useful online courses. We also provide our culinary 'expertise' in the kitchen. To maintain physical distance, we have the Eucharist and our meals in living groups. (Sch. Aric Makwana)

►► Journey to inner self

In the midst of the lockdown, forty college going scholastics residing in Premal Jyoti had an inner journey with their Annual Retreat from 18th to 26th April. There were two batches directed by **Frs Johnson Mundupuzhakal** and **Suresh Antony** respectively. The rest of the community accompanied the retreatants with prayer and in silence. (Fr. James Savarimuthu)

►► Deepening our Jesuit Roots

After the Annual Retreat, we are busy with the Graded Syllabus: the Autobiography of St. Ignatius of Loyola for the first years, History of the Society from the death of St. Ignatius till the Suppression of the Society for the second years and History of the Restored Society for the third years. Fr. Superior introduced the topics for our studies on 28th April. We are guided by **Frs. Peter, Hector Pinto** and **James Savarimuthu**. It is an opportunity for us to come closer to the person of St. Ignatius of Loyola, to learn more about the charism of the Society, the important events in the history of the Society and the lives of Saints as given in four volumes of 'Passion and Glory' written by Fr. Echaniz. We are having personal reading of the material, personal reflection, group sharing and group presentation through skits, PPT and video clippings for four days. (Sch. Raman Dalvi)

►► Our Response: with Compassion and in Solidarity

The pandemic COVID-19 has gripped the world as never before! Gujarat has not been spared. Reports in the media continue to come in of an increase in positive cases and even deaths; the poor and the marginalised are the most affected; among these, the migrant workers and daily wage earners are the worst sufferers.

In the wake of the pandemic, Fr Provincial wrote a letter to the province, urging all to respond in as effective a way possible. Our response to this pandemic needs to be seen as another step in our continuous effort to discern how the Lord is asking us to implement the four Universal Apostolic Preferences in the context of today's grim reality. The Commission Coordinators were contacted to gather information of various initiatives/actions and also of the challenges faced. Action plans for an immediate and meaningful response for the most affected people were formulated by several of our institutions, parishes and organisations. Many were done in collaboration with other religious congregations and organisations. Regular updates were sent out to keep the entire province abreast of our various responses.

We share here below thumbnails of some of the responses of our Province:

◀ Sabarkantha

Modasa, Bhiloda and Vijaynagar: We formed the parish committees consisting of lay collaborators and religious sisters who identified more than 100 families and widows who were in dire need of food and other necessary material help; food grains, oil, tea powder, sugar and soaps were distributed to them. St. Mary's School, Saroli Vijaynagar offered three big halls of the boarding, office and staff rooms to the government as a quarantine facility. The kitchen, toilet, water, bathing facilities and electric



supply were also provided. Four hostel staff members also render their services. The whole premise was sanitized by the government. There are about twenty people under observation right now. Programmes were conducted to make the local people aware of the serious nature of the pandemic and masks were distributed to them.

◀ North Gujarat

Catholic Ashram, Radhanpur: We identified 473 needy families, mainly migrants in eighteen villages. A package of rice, dal, poha, chilli powder, sugar, oil, and tea powder was supplied to each of these families. Lay collaborators under the guidance of the Fathers carried out the distribution of kits to the most deserving people, which included families of widows, orphans, elders and differently-abled.



Dhandhuka, Untesweri and Mandali Parishes with their lay collaborators helped one hundred and fifty poor families. A package of one litre of oil, 5kgs of wheat flour, 2 kgs of potatoes, one kg of rice, one kg of chana, and half kg of mung dal was given to each family.

◀ Ahmedabad District

Loyola Hall & SXSSS, Ahmedabad: Forty staff members together with the Principal of the High School



and Higher Secondary sections visited a slum for survey to assess the situation and identify the most deserving families in need of help. They identified 669 persons and the kits were provided to them.

Ghodasar, Ahmedabad: **Fr. Charles Kispotta** identified 63 families (263 people) of daily wage labourers who are tribals from Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Orissa. They are stranded in Punitnagar, Jashodanagar, Navi Vasahat in Ghodasar area, Ahmedabad. Through the help of lay collaborators from Ahmedabad, they are provided with rice, dal, atta, oil, salt and spices. Lay collaborators collected Rs. 27000/- to help them.

Xavier's Parish, Navrangpura: The basic activity has been to reach out to the poor within the jurisdiction of the parish. Along with help of Parish Pastoral Council members and Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the poor and hungry (irrespective of their religious background) families were identified and provided with food grains and groceries. Some families were also given some money through online transfer. Some women of the parish are involved in making face masks and also in counseling. They are collaborating with MACAF (a lay organization). The members are making masks. They also work closely with the government authorities.

HDRC: In first 4 to 5 days in Ahmedabad city, HDRC in partnership with UCD provided cooked food packets to 4450 families in 20 slum areas. These families had lost their job in the factories due to the lockdown. Information was passed on to the migrant workers in Ahmedabad city about Rein Basera (night shelters), community kitchens and other services being provided by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation. HDRC team guided the migrant workers to access some of the bus services that was started by the government to go back to their native villages.

A rapid assessment of the families that required immediate support was made. The kit would enable a family of five members to help meet their needs for about fifteen days, till they can access the government relief package and schemes. We reached out to 6743 families with kits in ten districts. In addition to this, in Vatva area, families from the housing societies were motivated by HDRC team members to provide 3330 families with kits.

As part of Citizens for Shelter and Housing Alliance Ahmedabad (CISHAA) submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister of Gujarat regarding adequate and urgent response to the conditions of the migrant labour community and other vulnerable groups in urban and industrial areas of Gujarat

◀ Kheda District

St. Francis Xavier Parish Gamdi-Anand and Khambhat: Under the guidance of Parish Priest, the volunteers of Xavier's Parish Anand, made the list of the beneficiaries and prepared 223 kits of essential food items. The parish volunteers went around fifteen villages with a tempo and personally distributed these kits. Youth, leaders and teachers guided by Jesuits of Khambhat, distributed kits to deserving families who are affected during this lockdown. An awareness programme was launched among the people about COVID- 19 and hygiene.



◀ Vadodara District

St. Joseph's Parish, Vadodara: The Parish council members identified about 285 needy families. The Jesuit Community and Parish Council contributed towards the aid given to the poor and daily-wage earners. Families have been helped with essential food commodities. XTI, Sevasi distributed grocery items to needy families through St. Joseph's parish and Rosary parish.

Sneh Jyoti, Sevasi: We identified seventy-five families from the neighbouring village Ashapuri. Most of them are dependent on daily wages. Because of the lockdown they have lost their jobs. We provided them with food kits (consisting of rice, dal, and sugar and cooking oil). **Schs. Melwin D'sa, Jayanti Bhadagi and Br. Patrick Fernandes** coordinated and distributed the ration.

◀ North South Gujarat

Catholic Church, Bharuch and Ankleshwar: We reached out to the families of poor, daily labourers who are struggling to survive the lockdown in our villages and in the town. In collaboration with the Sisters, youth and lay leaders, we distributed altogether 620 kits to the needy families, most of them are migrant labourers.



Catholic Church, Nanisingloti, Katkuva, Dadhwada and Zankhvav: In collaboration with the village leaders and health workers, we identified the most vulnerable people in more than 40 villages in our parishes. A ration kit for about a week for each family (consisting of rice/wheat flour, pulses, cooking oil, sugar, salt, beaten rice, soaps, coconut oil, biscuits) has so far been distributed to 457 families in the villages. Meal is provided for almost 500 migrant workers and home guards every day at Dediapada town. Our center is providing provisions and distributing fresh vegetables periodically from our farm.



Fathers and sisters reached out to 70 deserving families in Dadhwada and Katkuva. Help was also provided to 31 migrant labourers from Rajasthan who were kept in the Vadi Primary school.

RSSS, Rajpipla: RSSS is providing meals to 170 migrant labourers from UP, MP and Rajasthan sheltered in Adarsh Nivasi Shala, Rajpipla. These migrants have walked all the way from Telangana and Surat to reach their native place. Food is being provided to them till the administration



makes arrangements for their travel. Besides this outreach programme, we are creating awareness about Govt. welfare schemes, sanitation, hygiene, physical distancing, isolation etc.

◀ South South Gujarat

Navsarjan and St. Xavier's Surat: Navsarjan distributed grocery kits to daily wage earners and seasonal migrants in Surat. St. Xavier's high school along with the Jesuit community, Vedruna Sisters, lay collaborators with the





cooperation of Navsarjan staff have helped 1000 families with ration kits containing 5-kg rice, 1 kg dal and oil, and a packet of salt in the different slums of Surat.

Jivan Jyot, Unai and Bardipada: Food kits have been distributed to 28 families of labourers (130 people). Masks have been distributed and awareness is created among people about COVID19. Eleven migrant tribal workers from the Panchmahal District are provided shelter in Bardipada since more than a month and are provided with rations.

Catholic Church, Pimpri, Subir and Shamgahan: The neediest of the area were identified by village leaders. We provided (5 kg rice, 5 kg wheat flour, 1 kg daal, oil, bathing soap and washing soap) to 450 families. Apart from this help, we created awareness about important aspects like prevention, hygiene, physical distancing and isolation.

St. Joseph's Parish, APK Vyara: With the help of lay collaborators and the youth group we identified migrants, labourers and construction workers from Jharkhand who are stranded due to the lockdown. Food grain kits were



distributed to them. We provide rations to the daily wage labourers around our campus as they have no source of income.

St. Paul's Parish, Fulwadi and Paraspada: Ration Kits (consisting of 5 kg Rice, 5 kg wheat flour, 2 kg of dal & 1 ltr oil) were provided to 300 migrant families of Kaparada and Dharampur. The planning, survey work, preparing the kits and the distribution was done in collaboration with the Sisters, youth and the leaders of the villages.



The pandemic and fact of the lockdown, has also meant that several of our Province men have been reaching out to people in several different ways. Holy Week Services were livestreamed from some of our Parishes; Sunday Eucharistic Celebrations (and even daily Masses) both in Gujarati and English are online. Retreats, homilies and spiritual talks online and on YouTube have been providing the much needed spiritual solace to many. Articles and poems, participation in webinars on the current reality, are just some areas of involvement in this rather unique situation for all.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ◀ Kindly note that Glen View at Mt. Abu will be closed during Summer Holidays due to COVID 19.
- ◀ Gujarat Jesuit Youth Ministry announces that Magis Programme 7th to 11th May 2020 at Jivan Jyot Unai is cancelled.

IN MEMORIAM



FR. VALENTINE DE SOUZA SJ

(1927 – 2020)



A Visionary and Missionary

Fr Valentine de Souza was truly a visionary and a missionary who was totally people-oriented. In his death the tribals of Gujarat, the Church and the Society have lost a legend!

A fellow Jesuit, once in jest, inquired from Fr. Vally, “All your Karachiwala Jesuits of our Gujarat Province have gone to their eternal reward. Are you not going to keep them company?” Pat came Vally’s reply “I’m the last but not the least. I’m not in a hurry to join them”. Vally would often be asked about the secret of his good health; in his inimitable style he would reply, “It is sensible living that has made me what I am today”. Mamtaben, the tribal cook of the Mandal Parish, was taught a phrase in Latin by him: “Ne quid, nimis” meaning “nothing in excess”. An axiom he always applied to himself including his daily food. Despite the frailties of age (like forgetfulness and being repetitive), Vally grew old gracefully. He did not physically suffer much nor did he let anyone else suffer on his account.

Fr Vally lived and worked in the Vyara Mission from the sixties till he breathed his last (he always gave credit to the late Fr Zubeldia, of being the real pioneer of the mission and that he just assisted him). Apart from the long years there, he did have brief stints in St Xavier’s Surat, Jeevan Darshan Vadodara (where he cared for the old and sick) and for a sabbatical to the US. His heart was unquestionably planted among the Gamits of the Vyara Mission.

As a pioneer missionary, he would either go in a bullock cart or on a rented bicycle and visit different villages. He would stay there in the villages listening to people and learning from them. Being close to people made it

easy for him to know them and as a result, there grew a special bonding, a strong and lasting relationship with the people.

Vally realised, that the best and most effective way of communicating with the Gamits of the area was through their mother tongue. He did all he could to master the Gamit language which he spoke with great fluency. It was indeed a herculean task to learn a language which belonged to the ‘oral traditions’ of the tribals and has no written scripts.

For Fr. Vally, the 1967 famine was the turning point in the missionary work of South Gujarat. Food and other materials from the CRS were a great help to the affected tribals. The Church spared no efforts in bringing relief to them and thus enhanced its credibility among the tribals and in the area. The missionaries also worked for the total liberation of the tribals: for their felt need of dignity, respect and justice. The tribals were being exploited and treated unjustly by those from the higher castes and classes. Fr Vally had faith in the Gamits. Based on his intimate experience with them he knew that they were capable of carrying out their own responsibilities and standing on their own feet with dignity and respect. This was another hard but a fundamental lesson of believing in the capacities of the people. He always believed that our presence among the tribals should be that of an ‘animator’ who draws out the best from the people. This attitudinal difference worked miracles in the Vyara Mission and brought forth some genuine fruits.

In order to deepen the faith and Jesus-experience of the Gamits, Vally and team initiated a new way of catechising called



‘bhajan harifai’ by inviting different villages to participate in the event. Based on the Bible, the bhajans were composed by the people themselves in their local language and cultural expression. Later on, the ‘bhajan harifai’ was turned into a ‘bhajan sammelan’. This way of catechising injected into the people, basic Christian values. Some key values such as unity, collaboration, respect for each other, which were already in the tribal culture, were reaffirmed by this approach.

Fr. Vally was a gifted musician. He played the accordion and guitar. He was also a good singer. He utilised his talent of music by composing hymns in Gamit and taught the people to sing. Fr. Vally was popularly known as ‘de Souza father’ among the Gamits and they knew which bhajans were composed by him and referred to these as ‘de Souza father’s’ bhajans. He encouraged what is known as ‘ubhu bhajan’ (singing and dancing) after the Eucharist and supper in the villages.

He was very sensitive to tribal rituals: be it marriage or funeral. He encouraged the locals to follow their cultural practices and adapted catechesis to their way of life. He also published a few books on catechism in Gamit. Above all, he stood as a symbol of dignity, respect and love for the tribals, as far as their language and culture are concerned. Vally wrote a well-researched book on ‘The history of the Church in South Gujarat’.

Vally was a soft-spoken person, a keen observer, a thinker. When he did speak, words of wisdom flew out of his mouth. His observations, opinions and stand mattered to all. He genuinely respected and accepted the contribution and differing opinions of others.

Fr Vally lived life to the fullest. He gave and did not count the cost! He loved the people and he did all he could to truly empower them: to bring dignity, respect and self-worth into their lives. On his death glowing tributes to this great soul have come in from all over! He will be greatly missed!

- Fr. Raymund A. Chauhan SJ

A Pioneer and Pastor

Fr. Valentine de Souza, (Vally, as he was fondly called) was one of the pioneers of the Vyara Mission and perhaps, the first Indian Jesuit to work among the adivasis of South Gujarat. Gujarat was privileged to have several Jesuits from Karachi in the undivided India (present-day Pakistan). Vally was the last of fourteen prominent Goan Jesuits who came from Karachi to work in Gujarat. All of them were ex-students of St Patrick’s High School, Karachi (which

was founded by the Jesuits in 1861; handed over to the Franciscans in 1935 and finally to the Diocesan clergy).

For almost twenty years, Vally and I, collaborated closely as members of DELTA training team and later, for four years as members of Mandal-Songadh Jesuit community. He substituted me at Rajpipla Social Service Society (RSSS), when I was asked to take over that place, (after the untimely death of Fr. Jose Idiakunnel) and since I had still six months more to complete my term as the South Asian Secretary of JYMSA. Though Vally was in the pastoral line he was acceptable to all at RSSS; he vibed with the vision and mission of that place. He always remained closely associated with RSSS and the social action ministry. We shared a lot of ideas and experiences when we met.

Vally attended the first DELTA training at Bharuch which was co-facilitated by John Khanna and myself, with Ms. Ann and Sally, the founders of DELTA, when they visited India in 1978. After a six months internship experience with Ms. Ann and Ms. Sally in Kenya, Vally joined us in the Indian DELTA training team in 1979. We had conducted DELTA programmes for several groups all over India, which included teams of bishops, religious sisters’ congregations, Jesuits of Gujarat, Bombay and Madurai provinces, NGO’s, village leaders, catechists, youth groups etc. The focus of these trainings was the rights-based approach to development.

Vally was the PRO person for all these trainings. He was an effective trainer and a very creative team person. He was an example and inspiration for us of how to prepare a session meticulously and conduct it effectively and he expected the same from us his team members too. He was very open to criticism and always listened to the suggestions and even negative remarks of the participants and others; there are instances of how he changed an entire training module going by the expectations of the participants. Vally was indeed admired by all.

Many who visit the Vyara-Mandal mission are impressed with and inspired by the faith dimension and people’s cooperation in the parish programmes. This is in no small measure due to Vally, who did all he could to help build a mature and self-reliant Church. Vally enjoyed being with people and they genuinely loved him.

Vally was up-to-date with theological ideas and with the current socio political situation in the world. Many enjoyed his translation from Spanish of Jose Antonio Pagola’s commentary on the liturgical readings. For him, religion and religious observances and rituals were not a function to be fulfilled but it was an invitation to live life meaningfully. He was always questioning the mere cultic



approach to religious practices and particularly, when there was any inkling of the rightist approach to religion. He wanted religion to make a difference in one's life, to be a way for transformation. Vally was theologically progressive, culturally alert, intellectually sharp, and sociologically up-to-date and pastorally people oriented: having the smell of the sheep (as the Pope Francis would say). He was a pioneer in making the sacraments and the liturgy culturally relevant and in the local language. His Gamit was flawless.

Though nearing ninety-three, he had no serious problems with his physical and mental health. A few weeks ago, we had gone to Saputara for a community outing, Fr. Arana got annoyed about something. Vally, with his tongue in his cheek quipped, "This is a sign he is reaching 90!!" He was not only alert but witty too. Many were hoping that Vally would complete his century. I once asked him "Vally, what is the secret of your good health?" He said "sensible living". His life was indeed a sensible one and even his death showed that sensibility. In spite of the brain hemorrhage he had, he seemed to have guided himself to sit on the floor rather than allow himself to be dashed against the wall in the bathroom; without hurting himself, he slipped into a coma. Vally has written his reflections about the Vyara-Mandal mission about which no one knew more deeply and intimately than he.

Vally's death was like his life: he stayed close to people till the very end. Though it was he who built the Jeevan Darshan infirmary at Baroda, he remained in Mandal till the end. He did not like to have any show or celebration for himself. It so happened due to the lockdown situation

we could not have the burial as people would have liked for him. But I am sure left to himself Vally himself would have preferred what happened ultimately for his burial. We can say that he not only lived sensibly but he aged also sensibly and died graciously!

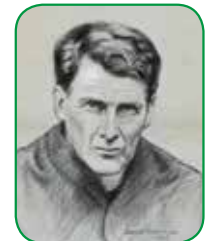
Bye dear Vally, I will miss you when I visit Mandal and also when I need to share some of our interesting experiences of DELTA. I am sure having lived a full life sensibly and completed your mission, you would continue praying for us, guiding us and even correcting us as you always did "to live sensibly".

- Fr. Xavier Manjooran, SJ

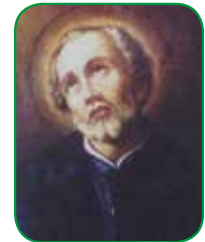
JESUIT SAINTS OF THE MONTH



◀ St. Joseph, the worker



▲ Bl. John Sullivan



▲ St. Andrew Bobola

Prayer for Vocations

LORD of the Harvest,
BLESS young people with the gift of courage
to respond to your call. Open their hearts
to great ideals, to great things.

INSPIRE all of your disciples to mutual love
and giving - for vocations blossom in the good
soil of faithful people.

INSTILL those in religious life, parish
ministries, and families with the confidence
and grace to invite others to embrace the bold
and noble path of a lifeconsecrated to you.

UNITE us to Jesus through prayer and
sacrament, so that we may cooperate
with you in building your reign of mercy
and truth, of justice and peace. Amen.

- Pope Francis



IN MEMORIAM



FR. JOSEPH JAVIER AIZPUN, SJ

(1930 – 2020)

Adios, Jose Aizpun! 'God will take care of you'

Fr. Joseph Javier Aizpun, SJ of the Gujarat Jesuit Province, transcribed to Argentina-Uruguay Province, passed away in Argentina on Good Friday (10 April 2020), at a ripe age of ninety years (born in 1930); he was hale and hearty, almost till the end. On 1 April, just about eight days before his demise, in reply to the greetings from one of his friends, for his birthday on 22 March when he completed 90 years, he wrote (unedited here):

“My dear Mario, the other day, in response to Your greetings, I wrote a short mails. I had many mails to respond to. Now all that is over, let me tell you about my life here. For a good many years I was living with the scholastics doing juniorate and Philosophy. But last year the Faculties of Philosophy and Theology were shifted to another city, as part of a Jesuit University there. I remained in San Miguel (San Miguel to Buenos Sires is like Andheri to Bombay). They gave me a room in the infirmary because in the community there was no free room. But I am not here as a patient. I can go out of the house whenever I like. But it has its advantages. The infirmarians are very fine ladies and do every thing for me: wash my clothes, clean my room, make my bed every morning.... Very little ministry. I go out for Sunday Mass, I give an occasional retreat,; a number of diocesan priests (very good fellows and very good priests) come for a bit of spiritual direction. And quite often I'm called for confessions of people I in the surrounding area. For the rest in my room, reading, seeing movies, writing and praying. And to tell you the truth I am not longing for more work. I have always had a certain inclination to laziness which I tried to overcome. Now I don't try I feel I have every right to be lazy. And because of my laziness I put an end to this mail. Warm greetings and prayers, Joe”

Joe, as he was fondly called by all those near to him (including his former novices), joined the Society on 18

September 1947. His younger brother Michael, joined him a year later. He arrived in India with seventeen others (2 priests, 5 Brothers and 11 Scholastics) on 26 November 1949. His younger brother joined him a little over a year later. Both the brothers, Joe and Michael were ordained together on 24 March 1961 in Ahmedabad in the presence of their parents. His first appointment as priest, was to Loyola Hall as Prefect of Studies before he went to Shembaganur for Tertianship and then to Rome, for studies in theology/spirituality. He made his final profession in Rome in 1965.

Joe was a man of vision. In 1966, at the young age of 36, just five years after his Ordination, he was entrusted the responsibility of Novice Director. Visitors to Mt. Abu in those days, were only during the vacation period; for the rest it was a lonely place. Joe made sure to invite special persons like Fr. Balaguer to give a talk to the Novices, on his experiences of the recently concluded GC 31. Joe loved music, sang well and at times joined the novices in a game of basketball. He received first-hand experience of how rough some of the novices could be on the games-field when one day, a novice lifted him up, instead of the basketball! He provided opportunities for the Novices to understand western classical music. For Joe, the Novitiate was not just for spiritual training but also for the all-round development of a novice.

Those were the heady days after Vatican II. There was a palpable change in the air. In keeping with the times, he was the first one to stop the studies of Latin in the Novitiate in 1968 and was criticized for it; however, later all other Provinces in India followed suit. He was one of those who strongly advocated moving the Novitiate from the seclusion of Mt. Abu to the hustle and bustle of a city like Ahmedabad. As Novice Master in Ahmedabad from 1968, he made sure that the Novices imbibed the spirit of the Society in the changed circumstances and in the spirit

of Vatican II. Here he also had an able helper to guide and train the Novices in music, Fr. Echaniz (of happy memory).

An inspiring spiritual director has to practice what he preaches. Joe was a man of prayer. The room above the present office of the Socius to the Provincial was converted into 'Holy Spirit Room' where he met with some of his fellow Jesuits to spend quality time in prayer.

He was a highly successful Novice Director. In later years, whenever he came to Ahmedabad, his first complete batch of novices (1967-69) made it a point to take him out for dinner. He was loved by his former novices.

In 1973, at the young age of 43, he exchanged places with Fr. Jose Luis Arana; he took over as the Provincial Superior of the Gujarat Jesuit Province and Fr. Arana became the Novice Master. As Provincial, he would make sure to return to Newman Hall (now Premal Jyoti), even if it was late at night, just to have the satisfaction of sleeping in the bed that he was used to! In those days, without internet and computers, to ensure that his office work would not suffer, he would take Bro. Malcolm (along with his typewriter) as his driver cum secretary. He was a man with a sensitive heart. He used money which was donated to him to help the families of Jesuits to have their own houses.

The responsibility of being the Provincial was not his cup of tea. He succeeded in being relieved in 1978. He was a man of spirituality and formation. As Provincial, he was part of the triumvirate, entrusted with the responsibility of evaluating 'Sadhana' begun by Fr. Anthony de Mello, (of happy memory), his companion in the Juniorate in Mumbai. Joe must have been impressed by the work of Sadhana and so he did the course himself in 1978-79 after his term as the Provincial Superior. Tony wanted him at Sadhana by all means; for three reasons, as Tony himself was wont to say: i) because Joe was a well-respected Jesuit and would lend respectability and acceptance to Sadhana, ii) because Joe took with a pinch of salt, whatever Tony said and iii) Joe would challenge Tony. This last trait was something that Tony admired in Joe.

Joe joined the Sadhana Team as its Superior and one of the directors in 1979 and stayed on till 1992 when he was called to Rome. In 1983, he was asked to team up with late Fr. Joseph Currie as Tertian Director in Shembaganur. Joe kept shuttling between Shembaganur and Lonavala, Tertianship and Sadhana, doing justice to both the responsibilities.

In those days, Tertian Directors were mainly missionaries from other countries. Joe was uncomfortable with that. According to one version, he kept asking for an Indian to replace him. When he was told that there was no

appropriate person available, his reply was, appoint one and he will get trained. His advice seems to have been followed.

In 1992, he was invited to join the team of General Councillors of Fr. General. It was a loss for our Assistancy but a gain for the Universal Society. His experience in formation and spirituality would now be available to the whole Society, through his role as General Councillor to Fr. General. He served in this capacity till 1995, but continued to be in Rome, serving as Spiritual Guide till 2002.

Joe felt that he would be able to do more (Magis) in a Spanish speaking country and went to Argentina in 2003 and stayed there till the end, serving mainly as spiritual guide to religious and clergy as well as directing Retreats.

Joe hated travelling. Once he left India, his visits became rarer until they stopped completely. In one of his visits in the first decade of this century, he accepted to direct the Province Annual Retreat in Mt. Abu. The place was overbooked and some had to stay elsewhere. The Retreat was highly appreciated by those who participated in it. Though he stopped coming to India, he did not sever all ties. He kept in touch with some right till the end, as can be seen from the letter quoted above.

Joe was a man for others who had fully imbibed the spirit of the Society and went out of his way to ensure that the basic charism of the Society, is applied according to the changing contexts and thus made relevant. He could make his own the words of St. Paul, "I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith" (II Tim. 4:7). All that has come to him now is the crown of uprightness which the Lord, the upright judge, has given him. (cfr. II Tim. 4:8). "Well done, good and trustworthy servant come and join in your master's happiness" (Mt. 25:21). Joe, don't forget to keep on interceding for us!

- Fr Francis Parmar SJ
(with inputs from Br. Mario Correa (BOM)
& Fr. Joseph Mangalam).



IN OUR FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19...

BE SAFE

BE SMART

BE KIND & SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER

R.I.P

- † Fr. Valentine de Souza (GUJ), 92/74, on 06 April in Vadodara
- † Fr. Jose Javeir Aizpun (ARU), 90/72, on 10 April in Buenos Aires, Argentina



POPE'S WORLDWIDE PRAYER NETWORK FOR DEACONS

We pray that deacons, faithful in their service to the Word and the poor, may be an invigorating symbol for the entire Church.

GREEN CORNER

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS!

COVID-19 has brought much of the world to a standstill. Is the tiny virus actually responsible? Or is it the consequence of what we have been doing to Mother Earth? That certainly needs exploration, analysis and reflection.

In the meantime, can we count our blessings: 'Is our tumbler half full or half empty'?

Families now spend more time together, at home. Consumption patterns in food, luxury items and one's whole lifestyle has changed. Pollution levels of the air, water, noise have come down dramatically, thanks to the stoppage of industries and transportation. The Himalayan peaks are now visible from Punjab, almost 200 kms away.

Earlier, Mother Earth was open to all creatures. Later, in several parts of the world, many non-human creatures were pushed into the shrinking forests and even made extinct. Today, birds and other animals are seen and heard much more. Some (elephants, deer, kangaroo) have actually come out to explore the cities in some parts of the world!!!

Technologies are put to greater and better use now. Education/training/formation is imparted through IT today and from homes. Important meetings and conferences are held through IT, cutting down travel and thus reducing costs and pollution.

Has COVID-19 come with a call to review, reform and renovate 'Our Common Home'?

- Fr Rappai Poothokaren SJ



BIRTHDAYS & DEATH DAYS 2020

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 02 Fr Luis Dastis – 2015+ | Thomas Chamakala | Fr Erviti Ramiro – 1986+ |
| 04 Joseph W. Parmar | Fr Vincent Gimenez – 1955+ | 22 Peter Kozhikkadan |
| Leslie D'Souza | 13 Fernando F. Franco | Br Martin Macwan – 2009+ |
| P. M. Gnanaraj | Fr Ramon Grau – 1978+ | 24 Arul Rayan |
| Fr Zavala Luis Maria – 2000+ | Fr More Joseph – 1992+ | Fr Osset Alfredo – 1986+ |
| 06 Coelho Paul | 14 John Rose | 25 Jerry Sequeira |
| Kamlesh K. Raval | Lawrence Dharmaraj | 26 Manuel Díaz Gárriz |
| Fr Raphael Chakkumpidy – 2018+ | 15 Jose Luis Arana | Br Jordana – 2004+ |
| 07 Snehal Parmar | 17 Thomas Thannipara | 30 Joyson Rayappan |
| Victor Davamani | 18 Fr Pedro Pou-Montfort – 1958+ | Sanjay Parmar |
| Vinayak Jadav | Br Benito Letosa – 1969+ | Stanny Jebamalai |
| Fr Carlos Bastons – 1984+ | Fr Narciso Mendiburu – 2012+ | 31 Varghese C. Paul |
| Fr Iype Palaparambil – 1989+ | 20 Ashvinkumar Pandav | |
| 08 Malcolm Rodrigues | Durai Fernand | |
| Patrick Arockiam | Ukken George | |

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