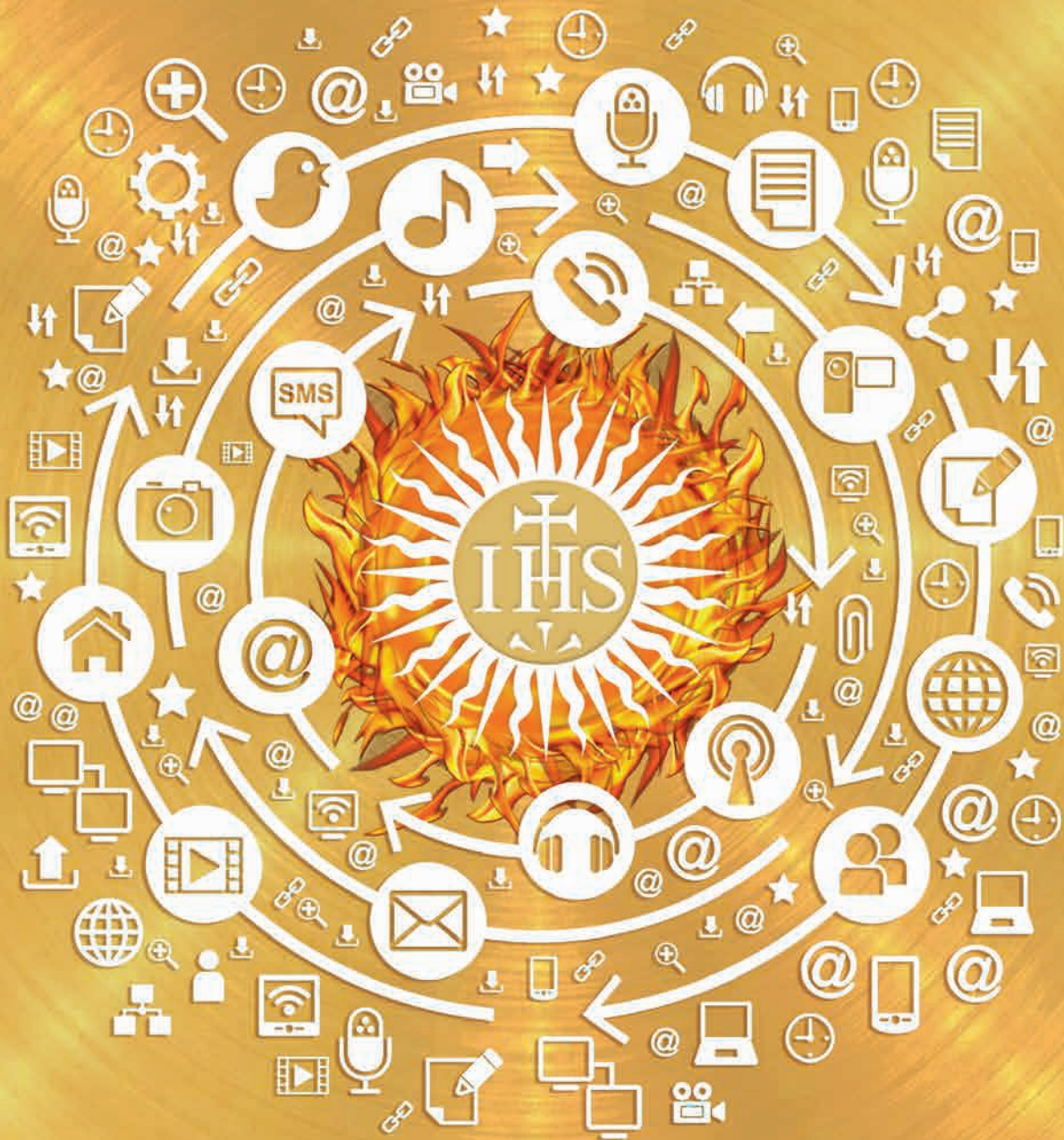


February 2021

JIVAN

NEWS AND VIEWS OF JESUITS IN INDIA



Go! Set the Web on Fire!

Prison life, a great leveller

Inside the daunting prison gates,
All belongings taken away,
But for the bare essentials.

'You' comes first,
'I' comes after,
'We' is the air one breathes.

Nothing is mine,
Nothing is yours,
Everything is ours.

No leftover food thrown away,
All shared with the birds of the air;
They fly in, have their fill and happily fly out.

Sorry to see so many young faces.
I asked them: "Why are you here?"
They told it all, not mincing words.

From each, as per capacity,
To each, as per need,
Is what socialism is all about.

Lo, this commonality is wrought by compulsion.
If only all humans would embrace it freely and willingly,
All would truly become children of Mother Earth.

Stan Swamy, SJ

(Fr. Stan Swamy, SJ from Taloja prison, to his Jesuit companions and friends through Fr. Joseph Xavier, SJ)



JIVAN

NEWS AND VIEWS OF JESUITS IN INDIA

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PUBLISHED AT
Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, P.B. No. 70,
St. Xavier's Road, Anand-388001,
Gujarat.

PRINTED AT
Anand Press, Gamdi, Anand-388001,
Gujarat.

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CIRCULATION
The Publisher, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash,
P.B. No. 70, Anand-388001, Gujarat.
Cell : +91 94084 20847,
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SUBSCRIPTION RATES OF JIVAN

(Visit jivanmagazine.com for online subscription)



Jesuits:
₹1000 / yearly

Non-Jesuits:
₹750 / yearly

Foreign:
US \$25 (or ₹1500)
/ yearly

Online Edition:
₹700 / yearly

GSP AC details
A/C Name: GUJARAT SAHITYA
PRAKASH SOCIETY
Bank Name: ICICI Bank
Address: Flavours, Nr Bhaikaka
Statue, Vallabh Vidyanagar,
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A/C No. : 008501008925
RTGS / IFS CODE: ICIC0000085

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JIVAN thanks **Fr. Siji Chacko, SJ** and **Fr. NiMo, SJ** for planning and procuring the articles for this special issue on Jesuit Communications.

As a service of information for the South Asian Jesuit Assistency, 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.

A caged bird can still sing

First of all, I deeply appreciate the overwhelming solidarity expressed by many during these past 100 days behind the bars. At times, news of such solidarity has given me immense strength and courage especially when the only thing certain in prison is uncertainty. Life here is on a day-to-day basis. Another strength during these past hundred days, has been in observing the plight of the undertrials. A majority of them come from economically & socially weaker communities. Many of such poor undertrials don't know what charges have been put on them, have not seen their charge sheet and just remain in prison for years without any legal or other assistance. Overall, almost all undertrials are compelled to live to a bare minimum, whether rich or poor. This brings in a sense of brotherhood and communitarianism where reaching out to each other is possible even in this adversity. On the other hand, we sixteen co-accused have not been able to meet each other, as we are lodged in different jails or different 'circles' within the same jail. But we will still sing in chorus. A caged bird can still sing.

| Fr. Stan Swamy, SJ

Corrections in Jivan, December 2020 - January 2021 issue

- We regret the misconstrued alphabetical order in the paragraph "The die-hard" on page 7. Instead, please consider the A, B, C... as examples of persons.
- We also acknowledge the misinformed addition of 'SJ' after Joe Palathunkal (a former Jesuit) on page 19.
- We sincerely apologise for the change in the title of the article on Page 20. Instead, please read the title as 'Challenges Raised by the Jail Custody of Fr. Stan Lourduswamy'.

JESWITS

| Myron Pereira, SJ | pereira.myron@yahoo.in



"Brother, your eyes are in bad shape indeed. How's it you've strained them so much?"
 "What to say, doctor! I've always tried to see God in my superiors!"



"That's your new Jesuit - God's in his heart, and the world's in his fist, duniya muthi mein!"



"Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Zoom, oh yes - but has he ever opened a book?"



"I tell you, Artie, the future of the Society lies in recruiting computers. They don't smoke or drink. They always do as they're told. And most of all, they're very very smart."



POSA Speaks

STANY D' SOUZA, SJ

Change the Attitude and Cultivate Gratitude

Recently I had an unexpected call from one of my friends, who is an oncologist in the USA. She spoke at length on her life, profession, children, marriage etc., and finally ended the conversation with a statement: it has been a great experience to learn that we are not in control of life.

The girl had difficulties all through. She lost her father early in life and hence, had to struggle hard in life. Since she was good at studies, of course, through the generosity of many, she finished her medical studies and then went to the US. Everything went on well for her in the beginning. She did her further studies and got a job. She met a black boy, married him and raised a family of three girl children. And then there was a shocker. She realized that the boy whom she met through the internet, loved and married, was a fraud. He bluffed her all along. He had neither adequate qualifications nor a job. All that he gave her were three children and after divorce, a commitment to pay for her subsistence.

Although, her life-story is filled with struggles, never once in our conversation, did she express her anger or bitterness against anything or anyone. What makes someone so reconciled with life, forgive people and move on?

Along with the pandemic, there have been a series of issues lashing the world in 2020. We too had our share. We saw with our own eyes the plight of the migrants and protesting farmers. We had to bear the loss of many of our men to the ravaging Covid-19 and the unkindest cut was the arrest of Fr. Stan Swamy. These and many other events of 2020 were a challenge to our faith and hope. There was anger, disappointment and despair and in frustration many asked the question, 'why?'

When a person was overwhelmed with difficulties and could not explain the vicissitudes of life, 'What must we do in the face of struggles of life?' he asked the master. The master's answer was simply mystifying. He said: change the attitude and cultivate gratitude. A grateful person pays attention to the small things of life and cares. It is the secret of life. It does make a difference within and around.

During the Catholic Church's World Day of Peace, Pope Francis gave a similar message. He appealed to all to foster a "culture of care". He said that the events of 2020, underscored the importance of caring for one another and for creation, and that is the only way for peace. We need to build a more fraternal society to be healthy and happy. The New Year 2021 has already rolled in. Let us usher in a culture of care in our life and mission.



Editor's Desk

VINAYAK JADAV, SJ

The Sound of the Silenced

Among the many issues that have surfaced during the Farmers' agitation, the role of the Indian Media has been both shameful and tragic. The protests were both undercovered and partisan. The media even went to the extent of calling the Sikh farmers Khalistanis. One of the placards at the agitation site read: "Don't cover us, you are the fake media, # Godimedia." What unfolded over the days hit the last nail on the coffin of a trustworthy Indian media. It clearly exposed how a democracy like India, which in the past cherished the right of freedom of speech and expression through a free press, has today a pliant media that is sold-out, and now the voice of the powers that be control the reins of the country. Today they are not playing the role of a watchdog or a gatekeeper of democracy but perhaps are like a lapdog that listens only to 'His Master's Voice'.



Since media will not investigate or introspect itself, leave alone self-critique themselves, it is 'We, the people' who will have to find out now who locked these watchdogs in! In the circumstances of diminishing trust in the legislature, judiciary, executive -- and now even the media, the dauntless farmers have laid the foundation of a fifth pillar of democracy: "People's Own Voice." The new media, indeed!

Recently a renowned news anchor shared on twitter an image of himself holding a black T-shirt with the caption: "This T-shirt is White: Indian Media!" TRT World also stated: "The Indian Media are facing a serious crisis of credibility." What makes these petted media wag their tails in appeasement, or hide it between their hind-legs in fear? The freezing of state advertisements in retaliation for any critical reports? A sting operation or investigating agencies in connivance with the judiciary let loose upon them, maybe? Or salivation for the post of the 'media advisor', or a Parliament seat?

Threats and violence against media in the form of undeclared censorship, clandestine coercions or pecuniary pressures is the new normal. A series of high-profile resignations at a news agency was just an exposé of the worrisome condition of the Indian Media. One of the resigning media persons commented: "The message sharp and clear to every news channel was: go against us and your business will suffer."

The blind race for TRP crosses every limit of media ethics. The recent leaking of the WhatsApp data reveals the blind craze of this rat race! The under-reporting of this media scam within the media sector itself is an indicator that the rot goes deep.

The media mesmerizes the masses with pseudo-issues while the real ones are swept under the carpet. The media has assumed the role of a bagpiper playing only the master's melodies! Both the master and the player are enjoying a congenial bonhomie!

As a result, India now occupies the 142nd place (out of 180) on the Press Freedom Index, ranking well below Nepal, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and even South Sudan. Referring to this change in the media climate, someone quipped, one rule had vision, the other has television!!

Despite the Indian media being in a state of castration, there are solitary voices undeterred by any arm-twisting, battling for a virile journalism of courage and conscience. Instead of brooding in requiem prayers over the death of a truth-telling journalism, they chant heroic songs of a triumphant future. They choose not to remain silent for the sake of justice and human rights. They choose to follow their inner voice and advocate on behalf of the weak and the voiceless even at the cost of being taken off-air or pay docking. There aren't numerous strings in such lutes, still let us add our own among them!



Image Source: amdgchinese.org

Go! Set the Web on Fire!

Historians of science regard the 15th and 16th centuries as an Age of reason that steered science and art to great heights. It was driven by a vision to create a new world! Moreover, it was marked with a distinct quest for newness. The Renaissance and the promise of a modern world, beckoned human species to rebel against anything which was static and established! This led to political, cultural, religious and economic unrest around the world. The crown of creation surpassed its own imagination in reaching new heights and depths answering the haunting questions of life. The printing press revolutionized the way people communicated. The age of reason gave rise to a series of far-reaching reforms. The scintillating personalities of the Renaissance advocated “newness, science, adventure and an irresistible thirst for knowledge.” The world was churned up by the heavy winds of reason! And reason turned out to be a winning tool in the hands of a wild harum-scarum elite!

Amidst the major upheavals in the Renaissance world, it was the Reformation that hit the Church hard. The reformists were ready for a war to bring down the mighty, corrupt, and scandalous Church. The coruscating attack on the Church shook its firm foundations! The church was in a frightful mess. It was in such a fog of war, that God chose Ignatius and his companions to communicate His dream to the Church, and through it, to the world. The First Companions embraced a new pedagogy unknown to their times, creatively utilized art, writing, science, technology, and education to communicate God’s dream. The Spiritual Exercises became one of the effective means to know God’s dream which materialized in Jesuit apostolates which communicated this dream to the world. In short, the first companions set the world on “fire!” The world of the first companions was divided, disconnected, unreachable, oppressive, violent and broken. The “fire” they set, purified,



Technologies (ICTs) have become ubiquitous and our communication has gone digital. The time is ripe for Jesuits and their collaborators to “Set the Web on Fire.” It essentially means to purify the digital platforms of their hateful content, to create digital assets that heal the brokenness of the present world, to reach the digital initiatives of the Governments to the poor, and to develop models to discern the algorithmic spirits that influence our daily clicks, scrolls, swipes and other haptics.

The onset of the pandemic has aided our species to mass migrate from analog cities to network-rich digital cities. Education has become online and virtual, making it indispensable for people to own a smartphone and have access to internet. Religious institutions have migrated to the virtual space to cater to the religious needs of their followers. Social Distancing and lockdowns have helped digital migrants to embrace technology-enabled devices to communicate and lead their lives efficiently. People, irrespective of caste, class, creed and profession are reaping the benefits of technology and digital communication. Our Conference has also transitioned from analog communications to digital communications quite efficiently. The digital communication initiatives such as the Lifeline Retreat, #V4Migrants, MUSE, #IgnatianPentecost, Inter-religious Prayer Services, AMDG-Conversations of the Heart, Webinars, Virtual Recreations, Digital Jesuits Platform, #StandWithStan and other campaigns have helped us register our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and the threats in digital communication.

The many campaigns and initiatives run by different Provinces are also noteworthy. While sending emails and messages and being active on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, running social media campaigns are essentially part of digital communication, Jesuits need to gradually shift focus on deciphering the pernicious effects of internet, social media platforms and the algorithms that offer power to such platforms. A large chunk of Jesuits uses technological artefacts and social media platforms for leisure. On the one hand many senior Jesuits and those holding important offices lack the acumen to use digital communication effectively in their mission. And on the other, the young ones though digitally resourceful lack the vision and the necessary skills to communicate effectively through digital artefacts not limited to audios, videos, pictures, podcasts, blogs, texts, and memes. Hence for the Jesuits of this age to “set the web on fire,” we need a package of digital acumen, resources and skills! Therefore, to communicate God’s Dream effectively I would suggest directing our intellectual energy in Mindful Digital Upgradation, Discernment of the Algorithmic Spirits, Digital Dialogue, Promotion of Cloud and Network Culture, and Creation of Digital artefacts.

Mindful Digital Upgradation:

Many of us limit technological upgradation to our personal lives. We personally own some of the best gadgets, tools and resources but fail to upgrade the technological artefacts at the institutional level. Computers, Internet, Laptops, Tablets and other ICTs are no more a comfort. They are essential needs in our ministries. We need to invest both in upskilling ourselves as well as upgrading our technological set ups in our Conference and Provinces. Our educational Institutions, Province Headquarters, Research Institutes, Retreat Houses, Social

united, healed and connected the Church and the world. Their education enlightened many, their spiritual assistance restored faith in God and the Church, their apostolic adventures liberated peoples, their intellectual produce became inspiration to an infinite number of young minds. Yes, they set the world on “fire!”

While our world is much sophisticated and technologically accelerated, the situation is quite similar to the world of Ignatius and his Companions. Though digitally connected, it is still divided and broken. In our times, God has chosen us to communicate His dream. How are we to serve God if we lack the tools and skills to communicate God’s dream for a peaceful, just and loving world? With all the advances in science and technology, the world still seems hurt and diseased. Has God’s dream become anachronistic? Or, have the communicators of this dream failed in adapting to a new world order of Information Revolution or Communications Revolution? Possibly, the problem lies in the way we live and communicate this dream to the world today! May be, the very voice of the voiceless has become feeble amidst the cacophony of those preaching a grandiose nightmare! The world today is virtual and online, Internet and Communication

Work Centers and Formation houses need to mindfully invest in futuristic technologies especially in ICTs. It is vital to integrate technological and digital artefacts in our education, formation and accompaniment pedagogies.

Discernment of the Algorithmic Spirits:

The opaque and impersonal algorithms that run silently, enabling the myriads of online nodes to help us communicate digitally, are not insulated from cultural, religious, political, gender and racial biases! They play a very important role in maximizing our online engagement and also in altering what we think about. The polypotency of technological artefacts give rise to many unintended baleful effects. These are the very algorithms that influence our digital choices such as the clicks, scrolls, swipes, and other haptics. In turn these digital choices have a butterfly effect on our real-life choices. Social media platforms celebrate, reward, routinize and normalize the immediate gratification of human life while anesthetizing the participants.

The obsession of our generation to keep clicking, scrolling, swiping, and wall-hopping on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp, is an issue that we as Jesuits need to address. Nobody can deny the tremendous influence of digital technology on human beings. Sadly, they have impaired our percipience. We are intoxicated by “Media Pollution.” Many of our wise elders have abandoned reason for madness and the young have handed over their intellectual capital to Google, believing in the promise of “instant moksha.” Therefore, it is quintessential to develop models of Discernment of Algorithmic Spirits for the netizens of the day!

Digital Dialogue:

Our self emerges in relation to others. In Jesuit formation too, we believe that the self emerges under the gaze of ‘others’ (parents/siblings/formators/teachers/companions/collaborators/option groups), the ‘other’ (Cosmos/Context) and the ‘Other’ (God/Powerful Spirit/Power). The role of the formation and accompaniment is basically to help a person blossom in a conducive environment. Unfortunately, this is altered with the invention of internet and other technologically enabled devices and platforms. LM Sacasas, a philosopher of technology, opines that we are constantly under the gaze of an algorithmically constituted collective ‘Other.’ It constitutes friends, foes, strangers, non-human actors, algorithms, hypertexts, and digital artefacts. The important dimension of this hybrid, cyborg audience is the power to influence and shape us! Our option groups where our UAPs need to materialize, belong to a technologically altered community. We no longer live in the enchanted world of the spirits alone, but also in the world of algorithms that wield their force over our lives! In order to



The time is ripe for Jesuits and their collaborators to “Set the Web on Fire.” It essentially means to purify the digital platforms of their hateful content, to create digital assets that heal the brokenness of the present world, to reach the digital initiatives of the Governments to the poor, and to develop models to discern the algorithmic spirits that influence our daily clicks, scrolls, swipes and other haptics. “

spiritually accompany such an altered community, it is essential that we need to initiate a digital dialogue that promotes not only digital mindfulness but also exploits the resources of this algorithmically constituted collective ‘Other.’

Promotion of Cloud and Network Culture:

Most of our institutions and ministries have gone digital since the pandemic. It is of paramount importance that we now move towards initiating a cloud-based work culture while taking care of the necessary security concerns and app integration. We need to move towards global digital collaboration on important educational, formational, cultural, pastoral and social projects. Digital World is network rich. We need to transpose such network richness in real world situations to make our ministries more effective!

Creation of Digital Artefacts:

This is a prerequisite to set the web on fire. It is important that we learn to produce visually appealing and soulfully soothing digital artefacts not limited to audios, videos, podcasts, memes, pictures, to creatively communicate God’s Dream! It is also beneficial to source Ignatian and spiritual content and metadata from online repositories for our children, youth, formees, collaborators, partners and other option groups. Content, design, timely updates and upgrades are the non-negotiables of our online presence!

At this juncture of human history, we are invited to take a gentle pause, may be even a screeching halt to critically study, analyze and evaluate the dynamics of “technological change and digital communication.” We need to learn to use the existing technologies and invest in futuristic technologies to purify the digital platforms of its hate content, to create digital assets that heal our brokenness, to reach the poor, and to discern the algorithmic spirits that influence our haptics. Given our pioneering interventions throughout history, it is inevitable that we reflect on the new technologies, their responsible incorporation, usage and disposal in our communities and ministries! Maybe it is time for a system reboot, which would initiate the dumping of irrelevant perspectives and help us embrace technologies that would assist us in our mission of ‘the service of faith and the promotion of justice!’ As we prepare ourselves to celebrate the Ignatian Year, I wish and pray that we hear the gentle whisper of Ignatius saying, “Go! Set the Web on Fire!”

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Digital Jesuits: The #Hashtag Ministry

Fr. Stan Swamy, an octogenarian Jesuit priest, hailing from Jamshedpur Province, was arrested by the National Investigating Agency (NIA) on 8 October 2020. 15 January 2021 marks 100 days since his illegal arrest.

The arrest of Fr. Stan Swamy has stirred a bout of empathy and solidarity among the Jesuits, collaborators, friends and people all over the world in general. National Solidarity Day was observed on 12 October 2020 in different parts the country. The expression of this disappointment and dissatisfaction has been expressed by Jesuits known for their expression through writings, taking to the streets to protest, and are advocates of truth and justice, by way of traditional means to express dissatisfaction. In addition to the Jesuit resource alone, there has been an alliance between various CSOs, NGOs, Human rights groups and several Jesuit institutions across the country, who have lent unconditional support and conducted many programmes, webinars, protests, public processions and display, in solidarity with Fr. Stan. Every event also made a strong and unanimous point to stand by all the other Human Rights Defenders, among whom Fr. Stan was one.

Redefining protests - posts

In times of this pandemic, where it had been typically impossible to gather traditionally in large groups, owing to lockdowns and curfews imposed in different parts of the country and to take to the streets to give way to rallies and processions, it was a time of reflection as to how one could be part of the modern communication systems. The undoubted route was the medium of Internet or the Online platform, which has been a great exploration, to continue to express displeasure over wrongs in the society.

The #Hashtag Ministry

In this background, the Hashtag Ministry was started by the Communications team of a few young Jesuits, making their presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, among the social media platforms. The Social Media platforms that were ventured into were labelled as Online Ministry in Jesuit terminology or the Usage of Online Social Media Platforms. The presence over the digital platforms served two objectives: (i) to raise up to the occasion and share one's views and (ii) to disseminate the right information, to and among Jesuits and common people on these platforms.

But the occasion was taken by the Communications team as a challenge as many of the Jesuits weren't aware of the usage of the online platforms. After the initial phase of inhibition and apprehension, younger Jesuits were motivated and educated to come together as Digital Jesuits. They signed up on social media platforms and responsibly took to sharing the information and online posters.

The coming together of Jesuits as Digital Jesuits

The beauty and aptness of the usage and presence over Social Media Platforms has been the coming together of all Jesuits, in unison. From Jesuits in Provinces at regional levels in different countries, to Jesuits of different nations internationally, it had

been very motivating to see them all coming together on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, as a group with solidarity for all the human rights defenders we know of.

Even as these online platforms were new to the Jesuits in India, it was especially motivating to see senior Jesuits taking to the social media platforms, tweeting and re-tweeting posters and information about the rampant violation of human rights of Fr. Stan and others. This process was even motivating for people unaware about the intensity of the whole issue. The usage of hashtags has been of special use to assemble all the associated information about Fr. Stan and issues concerning him and his illegal arrest, including articles and reactions from known and unknown people.

Some of the hashtags that have been widely prominent in the whole scenario are: #StandWithStan, #SipperForStan, #FreeStan and #FreeStanSwamy.

These hashtags have also been used and shared by various media influencers, who have been able to create ground for the right information about the issue and is constantly trending. Of them, #StandWithStan has been the point of culmination widely used, and is associated with every possible relevant information about the arrest and of human rights defenders.

As pointed out earlier, in the 100 days of Fr. Stan's arrest, the whole process of bringing newer people into the online medium of expression of displeasure over the situation has been meaningful, as the sole objective of the digital ground was the idea of solidarity, and educating the world with positive information.

With the advent of the Social Media platforms, it has opened up a safe haven for its users to broaden their horizon of freedom of expression, and thus with a click of a small post, if not a write-up or article, responsible users can exercise their freedom of expression.

Also, introducing the digital platform was yet another chance for Jesuits as well, to express the best in them, their creativity, and thus reach the people in their minds and hearts.

The road ahead

Despite the discussion, the online presence on social media platforms are still likely to fizzle out, if and when Fr. Stan is released. The sole purpose of giving momentum to the Hashtag Ministry is to take up real issues of the country, like Farmers' Bills and Anti-Conversion laws among others, and to generate solidarity as responsible Jesuits. The success was indeed the Jesuits signing up on Social Media platforms and reflecting their presence online, but achievement in a true sense, would be the continuation of Online Ministry and educating people as responsible Jesuits.

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Wiring the Universal Apostolic Body

Jesuit Strategic communications and networking in the COVID era

We may be experiencing one of the key global turning points of our time. This juncture, despite the serious impact it has on so many levels, has given rise to another way of relating, of understanding ourselves in the world context, of seeking new ways of living and, as Jesuits, new ways of living the mission. The COVID has meant a health crisis of planetary dimensions, the socio-economic consequences of which have yet to be seen, but it has also meant a boost to what was already in the making for years: an explosion of apostolic connectivity. We are not (only) talking about the digitalization of communication: it is about the enormous possibilities of networking for the mission of the Society of Jesus.

Although this is a process that began in the 1970s, it has been in the last 12 years that supra-provincial collaboration in the Society of Jesus has exploded. Collaboration and networking have been promoted in GC35 as a key element behind the universality of mission, and in GC36 they have been upgraded as two axes of our new way of proceeding: “Discernment, collaboration and networking offer three important perspectives on our contemporary way of proceeding” (GC36 D2, n3). This progressive evolution created the conditions of possibility for the networks that, during this time of pandemic, have proven to be key to the promotion of collaboration and cohesion of the apostolic body in the Society of Jesus.

There are several key variables in this process that allow us to establish the framework in which we found ourselves by March 2020, when the COVID was recognized as a global pandemic:

The development of communication technologies at the international level in the Society has advanced significantly, especially after the last General Congregation and the strengthening of the Rome Communication Team, which -since then- has been efficiently and constantly coordinating the communication counterparts of the conferences and major

international apostolic works. One of the best examples is the evolution of jesuits.global.

Since 2008, secretariats in Rome have been exploring different

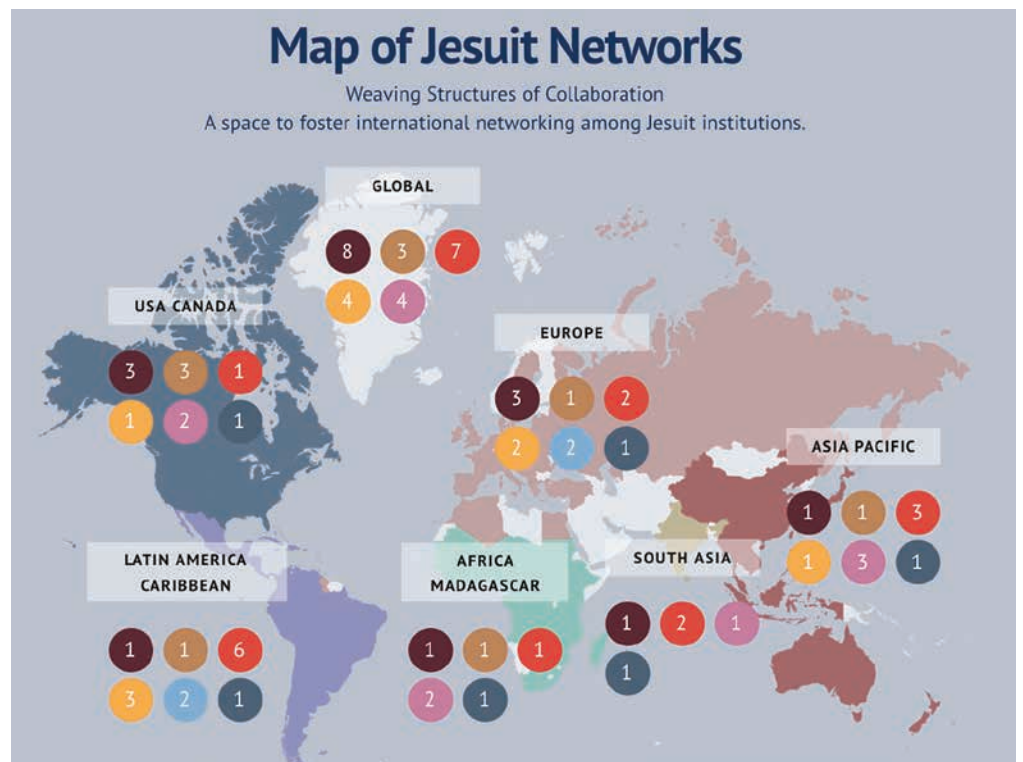


Photo Courtesy: Dani Villanueva, SJ

models of international networking that work with a certain efficiency providing the possibility of global coordination and dynamization of the apostolic sectors together with the delegates of the conferences.

Since 2016, the Office for Apostolic Planning and Discernment allows for coordinated work between secretariats, their networks and communication teams, and incorporates two key elements in this culture of collaboration according to the GC36 triad: discernment and networking, personalized in two of its transversal projects: discerningleadership.org and jesuit.network.

Finally, and as part of all the above, the process of elaboration and proposal of the Universal Apostolic Preferences, culminated

in 2019, establishes a unique conceptual framework around the universal mission that from now on favors coordination, apostolic alignment and collaboration at the international level in a way unthinkable in previous times.

Thus, accompanying the culture of international Jesuit collaboration with our principle of the Ignatian MAGIS and with a mission that is increasingly being formulated universally, we have learned that there are missionary challenges to which we cannot respond individually, that the Society needs its entire apostolic body for the complex response to some of the dynamics that are impossible to address at the province or conference level.

It is important to acknowledge that the Jesuit response to the challenge of the COVID was predominantly local, prioritizing the accompaniment of populations, dynamics and contexts from our apostolic works and provinces. However, from the very beginning of this crisis, we were able to observe several international collaborative dynamics favoured by the above-mentioned conditions of possibility. Here are a few that are worth mentioning:

updated their global maps, in the same direction of fostering -more and more- a sense of belonging to an international body with a shared mission.

In the last stage of this complex time, we have been able to observe the emergence of workshops, talks and seminars of all kinds, with proposals for action or reflection at different levels of collaboration. The main ones have been collected at jesuit.network/proposal/

These are just some of the emphases that we could make of what has been happening in the international Jesuit scene in recent months, as a wiring of the apostolic body, which is increasingly cohesive and linked, susceptible to dynamics and processes of ever wider agency. Since 2012 the project jesuit.network is systematizing information and following the reflection on all supra-provincial Jesuit networks and trying to be a place of connection and visibility for those networks, initiatives or institutions that want to carry out international collaborative projects in the framework of the mission of the Society.



Photo Courtesy: Dan Villanueva, SJ

One of the first initiatives proposed to add the available information on the impact of the COVID on all the works of the social sector at the global level. Accessible at covid.xavier.network and updated for the fourth time in December 2020, it is a mapping of an unprecedented scale drawn up by the Xavier Network in collaboration with the Secretariat for Social Justice and Ecology in Rome.

In view of the proliferation of digital initiatives in the Provinces, at the beginning of April, the Curia of Rome launched the initiative jesuits.online as a platform to make visible and accessible all the proposals for accompaniment that were being created in the first weeks of the pandemic.

In an attempt to promote unity of mind in the midst of the pandemic, the secretariat of the Faith in collaboration with jesuit.network launched on May 30th the first global vigil of Pentecost, bringing into play all the Ignatian networks. This model of joint energizing of the international body was again activated in September for the 'Breathing Together' vigil with the Secretariat for Social Justice and Ecology.

The networks of the secretariats of higher education (iaju.org) and secondary and pre-secondary education (educatemagis.org) have also been promoting the aggregation of good practices and in-depth reflections on the crisis through international repositories and webinars. Both networks have recently

The case of South Asia deserves special attention since the creation of the Jesuit Resource and Response Hub (JRH) at the conference level has been an extraordinary incentive both for the creation of collaborative proposals in JCSA and for linking and bridging with international proposals and dynamics. The coordinated response of JRH to the COVID, the online campaign #V4Migrants or the dynamic of mobilization and denunciation around the arrest of Fr. Stan Swamy are some examples of Jesuit supra-provincial network coordination that have achieved visibility and global collaboration thanks to the networks.

Let me finish with a quote by Pope Francis that reminds us: "We don't come out of the crisis as the same ones, we can become better or worse, but never the same." Every change is an opportunity for improvement, and, in the case of the Jesuit network, we have seen how the new urgent needs uncovered by the pandemic bring out the interconnections between us all. At the end, the key to networking is whether we are ready to be part of something bigger than ourselves. We believe that the Jesuit network is now prepared for such proposals, and that this crisis is making this even clearer.

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Image Source: Tallahassee Democrat

Jesuit communications during Covid-19

An overnight nationwide lockdown announced on the 24th day of March, 2020 set off a series of events that confused, confounded, and challenged each one of us. That night, a maverick virus that flew into the country with the jet-set, was installed as the Bogey-man that would instil fear, doubt and desperation throughout the land. That overnight lockdown soon dislodged over ten million migrant labourers from their livelihoods, and forced them out of the very cities they helped build and thrive, in an exodus that put the great Partition of India in the pale.

Of these workers, mostly from rural areas, some 1,500,612 trudged back to their homes in Bihar state in Eastern India. It was through communication technology, the social media and our cell phones that we came to know about them, and we were moved by that. Jesuits in different Provinces began to respond to this crisis through various communication means, such as call centres, mobile apps, radio programmes and others.

ISI Bengaluru partnering with IGSS and Caritas India used social media and mobile phone technology to conduct a study

on distressed migrants, entitled, 'Walking With the Migrants, Beyond Covid-19 Pandemic' released on 30th July 2020 through a virtual event.

As the months dragged on and finances dwindled, the added insecurity about the future brought on desperation and depression. Social action centres and formal educational institutions started counselling services for their beneficiaries using mobile phones.

Crisis unites people and networks. As Jesuits and collaborators, we are united by this crisis in the way we have been responding to the vulnerable and most affected, the migrants and the poor. The Provinces and Regions in the Jesuit Conference of South Asia [JCSA] in tandem with collaborators, served the hungry and foot-wear through camp kitchens and food dispensing stalls along the highways. Volunteer groups and collaborators from Jesuit educational institutions, coordinated relief work and carried relief packets to stranded families in the most neglected habitations and slums. Using digital payment platforms and social media, appeals went out for donations.

The Development Office of the Conference through an initiative called Jesuit Resource and Response Hub (JRH) consolidated efforts across the Conference. It is heartening to see how Jesuits and collaborators, came together and responded to the needs of the 'unreached', to cover some 3.5 lakh direct beneficiaries.

The JCSA website featured regular online news updates called 'Corona Diaries'. 'The Muse', featuring a series of articles was started. Several webinars were organised on the issues of migrants through #V4Migrants, an online campaign, actively promoted through Social Media networks. Over time, short videos and theme songs to galvanise support for the Migrants went viral on several platforms.

A viewer commented on the JCSA Facebook page, "Together we stand to fight Covid 19 ... much more the issues related with migrants".

Reports from the Provinces, Regions, Common Houses, JAAI, etc., reveal how Jesuits united and synergized efforts towards reaching out to the most disadvantaged and distressed. The flow of data from the Provinces has brought to the forefront the importance of developing an efficient system of pooling media and communication materials at the Province level, says Siji Chacko SJ, the JCSA Director of Communication Development.

From these efforts, sprung the Migrant Facilitation Net (MFN) which was a product of many online consultations finally approved by the JCSA.

The Jesuit Migrant Facilitation Net expressed the desire to serve distressed migrant labourers across ten plus states in India as a collaborative effort. If it were not for the social media networks, this vast phenomenon may have gone ignored', says Martin Poras SJ, the Bihar coordinator of Jesuit Migration Net.

Many Secretariats and commissions, especially the JEA and JHEASA conducted various on-line programmes to address problems and concerns brought on by the pandemic.

The educational environment was in for an upheaval and most teachers were forced to adopt and adapt to computers and online technologies. Teachers in the more backward 'low tech' states of Bihar and UP were utterly dismayed. They had to let go of chalk and blackboards and learn how to conduct classes via video conferencing and other techniques.

In Jesuit institutions, teaching and learning went online. In the rural parishes of Barbigha and Sheikhpura in Bihar, teachers recorded lessons on their mobile phones and uploaded them on YouTube. Those who once shunned the 'new media' now worked hard at upgrading their technological skills. In Jesuit colleges across the land, media pedagogy took on a new meaning as professors and principals alike, grappled with the nuances of 'Zoom meetings' and 'Microsoft Teams'. At times, when stumped during an online session, teachers gratefully followed the instructions of their more tech-savvy students!

'We have an important role to play in the education of the poor,' says Martin Poras SJ. 'We have moved away from a cash based economy to a digital economy. The government sends subsidies and pensions to the bank. The elderly and often illiterate people face numerous problems when they go to the bank. They fall prey to middlemen who charge as much as a hundred rupees to help

them make a withdrawal. We need to educate the people to use the apps, and negotiate in this new digital ecosystem'.

In 'low tech' Bihar, Covid-19 environment overturned the local churches' cautious and lukewarm engagement with social media and communication. The strict curfew, blackout on news, and the obstacles to pastoral work and community devotional practices tossed the unwilling and bewildered 'old school' into the deep end of the New Media pool. The options were clear: sink or swim! Religious congregations and diocesan clergy rose to the occasion.

South Asians are a gregarious, noisy, community minded lot, and the forced isolation was stressful to many.

The government's Covid -19 'emergency' response suppressed basic rights and freedoms. In fact, in the weeks before the lockdown, as protests against Citizenship Amendment Act and National register of Citizens gained momentum, state governments used the Covid-19 crutch to ban public gatherings, effectively putting a lid on protests. In the weeks after 24th March, with most of the nation effectively under house arrest, social activists and enlightened citizens had to develop credible on-line networks to share information and help communities cope with unemployment, frustration, hopelessness, and stress on the one hand, and the escalating systemic attacks on human dignity and freedom on the other.

Liberal India stood as one in protest against the politically motivated arrest and framing of sedition charges against the 84 year-old Fr Stan Swamy SJ. Citizen groups, and institutions using Twitter, Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram and Zoom, Blog and webpage, churned up a storm.

As this is being written, Stan Swamy is still in jail, his incarceration a warning for those who stand up against powerful vested interests in the fight for the rights of the poor. Describing the past nine months as 'the darkest period for social action', an observer said that, in this new normal, continued engagement with the poor and marginalized workers is taking place. Through the social action centres, the poorest of the Dalit families are helped with income generation training and seed capital.

'St. Ignatius tells us to read the signs of the times,' says A. Sebastian SJ, the regional coordinator of the All India Catholic University federation [AICUF] in Bihar. The new media gives all an opportunity to become producers of news and content. Catholics should be encouraged and trained to use low cost media, their own mobile phones and apps to communicate effectively, thus building up a strong faith-filled online community.

A new year dawns, with a glimmer of hope that a vaccine might bring relief. The socio-economic and political environment has changed considerably in the nine months following the lockdown. The path is laden with challenges and opportunities for learning. In the face of the upheaval caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, Jesuits and their collaborators soldier on, inspired by the words of St Ignatius of Loyola 'Find God In All Things'.

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The 'Byte'ification: Our story of going online!



Image Source: Twitter

met on zoom, discussed at length, and designed an online retreat with the support of many, to accompany people all around the world! With fingers crossed, the registration link was activated. The response was overwhelming. The word spread like a wild fire. Within three days, we had 7543 registrations. Though there was a great demand, we closed the registrations with 10,000 retreatants from 32 countries. The retreat assets were digital. They were written in various places, edited in Delhi, finalized in Bangalore, designed in Delhi, recorded, animated in Chennai, and shared by scholastics who helped as digital resource managers between the virtual directors and the retreatant! We reached approximately 18000-20000 people. This was the beginning of our 'byte'ification." The success gave us the much-needed confidence and energy to spread our wings! Many other digital campaigns followed suit! The conference's story of 'byte'ification looks really good with numbers! Here are a few details.

The ongoing pandemic is but a corroboration to Human species' ability to adapt, adopt and evolve to any given situation. The forced incarceration of the human species due to COVID 19 has accelerated the digital migration exponentially!

In the case of the Jesuit Conference of South Asia (JCSA), the pandemic acted as a catalyst to bolster and enhance our online presence. We shifted gears to fasten our mindful migration into the grandiloquent digital city! Various online campaigns both at the conference and the province levels, helped improve our visibility in the virtual space. The Communications Team of the Conference utilized various services not limited to the streaming services, chat applications, social media platforms and Webinar platforms. The collective effort of Jesuits in the Conference has produced numerous digital assets such as videos, audios, banners, wallpapers, animations and memes.

Some would say it all began with a dream! No! Not at all! It all began with the pandemic and the unplanned lockdown in the country! Four Jesuits from different corners of the Conference, (Nithin, Jossie, George Pattery and Siji), talked over the phone,

The official 'YouTube' Channel of JCSA gained 6,381 subscribers between 25 March 2020 and 11 January 2021 as against 18 subscribers, between 2 May, 2019 and 24 March 2020. We have published 136 videos. We have a watch time of 16,126 hours and 1,91,276 views. Our channel has been shared 4065 times till date. We have a total of 11,02,729 impressions! We have 218 followers on Twitter and 281 followers on Instagram. The official Facebook page of JCSA has 568 followers. The official campaign page of #StandWithStan has 1428 followers. Our Conference websites have seen an upward surge ever since the Online retreat. The number of visitors to the official website of the Conference (www.jcsaweb.org) has jumped from 88,000 visitors to 2,06,850 within a span of eight months. The official website of the Jesuit Conference of India (Non-Profit Organization), www.jesuitconferenceofindia.org has garnered 1,45,166 visitors till date! Yes, this is great. But it is surely not enough. We do have a long way to go. But for now, the numbers speak for themselves. YouTube has been our greatest strength. Facebook too is not that bad. However, it would make a day-night difference to become more active on Twitter and Instagram.

A few of the online characters that have strengthened the plot of our story of 'byte'ification deserve a mention:

#IgnatianPentecost: JCSA collaborated with an international group of Jesuits and collaborators in organizing a virtual Pentecost Vigil prayer service where approximately 7,200 people from all over the world participated.

AMDG: Conversations of the Heart – An inter-religious prayer in preparation for the feast of St Ignatius was organized on the 27th of July 2020. Around 1200 participated in the live prayer and the video has garnered 3171 views since it was published on YouTube.

OMG! It's Our Feast: The conference organized an Online Recreation for all the Jesuits in honour of the feast of St Ignatius on the 1st of August, 2020. As many as 200 Jesuits and 40-50 communities from the Conference participated in this event.

PAX LUMINA & JIVAN: Peace and Reconciliation Network of JCSA, with its Nodal Agency - Loyola Institute of Peace and International Relations (LIPI), Kochi, has launched an online Magazine: PAX LUMINA: A Quest for Peace and Reconciliation from May 2020. The e-copy of the magazine is circulated to over 15000 people. During the pandemic JIVAN had a similar online reach.

#V4MIGRANTS: Jesuit Resource and Response Hub (JRH) initiated as a response to the migrant crisis during the ill-timed and unplanned lockdown started a social media campaign with the hashtag #V4MIGRANTS. It not only garnered enough support on social media platforms but also raised funds to help the migrants. The campaign concluded with a virtual run/walkathon named, "Fun Run 2020: One Step for Migrants."

#V4MIGRANTS WEBINARS: JRH initiated conversations and deliberations on issues pertaining to migrants in a webinar series called "#V4MIGRANTS WEBINAR SERIES." Every episode that was aired had a minimum of 1000 participants. The webinars were much appreciated by many across the globe.

Muse: JRH initiated a series of scholarly posts on issues related to the Migrants and the Pandemic. It was shared among Jesuits and collaborators.

Digital Assets: JCSA produced three original compositions, two in English and one in Hindi as part of its various online campaigns. Adding to this, a number of videos and banners were also edited and produced by the Conference Communications Team.

Digital Jesuits: JCSA supported and promoted the idea of



#V4MIGRANTS



Our Conference websites have seen an upward surge ever since the Online retreat. The number of the visitors to the official website of the Conference (www.jcsaweb.org) has jumped from 88,000 visitors to 2,06,850 within a span of eight months. ”

setting up a platform for scholastics, known as “Digital Jesuits” which aimed at promotion of faith and justice through online engagement. There are around 100-200 active Jesuit scholastics belonging to various Provinces as part of this network. Digital Jesuits, organized a series of online talks on the Gospels, arranged competitions as part of Christmas celebrations, and hosted online recreations to better their companionship. They also contributed generously to #StandWithStan campaign through their posters and videos.

#StandWithStan: Protesting the inhumane arrest of Fr Stan, the Conference started an online campaign named #StandWithStan. The campaign has garnered support not only nationally but also globally. A microsite, <https://standwithstan.jcsaweb.org> has been dedicated to disseminate relevant information to public. A whopping 59773+ people signed the online petition for the release of Fr Stan, as part of the Online Signature Campaign. The microsite has garnered around 2,96,683 views till date. A theme song for the campaign named “Hum Honge Kaamyab” (We shall overcome), was composed and produced by the conference. Many webinars, zoom discussions, online brainstorming sessions, virtual prayers were organized to aid the campaign.

Initiatives by the Provinces: Many provinces took the plunge into the digital platforms. Provinces contributed a potpourri of digital assets in support of the campaigns run during the pandemic, the migrants’ crisis, and Stan’s incarceration. Most of the Provinces utilized the social media platforms to network efficiently during the pandemic, the migrant crisis and in the #StandWithStan campaign.

Our story of 'byte'ification has just begun. It has a long way to go to achieve its climax. But the story until now has been very interesting and surely has been an eye-opener for the Conference. If the story needs to be captivating, it needs strong twists in the plot. It needs interesting characters and mediums to narrate. The plot is set, the characters need to constantly build, and the medium needs to be used effectively. We believe we are on the right track!

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Photo-WebinarJam

THOUSAND WORDS

In Commemoration of World Day of
Social Justice - 20th February

On the Long Road to the Capital

In Covid times and in the shivering cold,
Farmers in their thousands have set out
On the long road to reach the Capital City,
Looking for Justice, Dignity and Peace.

But the State and its police swing into action,
Firing water cannons and putting up iron barricades;
'No Room for them in the City' where the powerful dwell;
The farmers resist the hostility of the Government.

Forced to spend nights on end on the long roads,
They brave the cold winter night and the icy wind
That lacerate their skin, scarred anyway, by many a battle
In the fields of recurring debt, sweat and frequent death.

■ Anthony Dias, SJ

With every passing anxious day, and uneasy night,
They witness the deceit, and the wily sleight of hand
Of those impervious to the earnest plea of the farmer,
But heed even a whisper of a wish of the mighty.

As those in power harden their hearts -
Using every trick to break the farmers' backs,
They are faced with an inexplicable steely resolve
Of those determined to save their future and way of life.

"We shall not go back", declare the farmers
"Until we have won this war for Justice, Peace and Dignity";
Those who dare try to tear the farmers' Resolve Asunder,
Misread the situation and commit the Capital Blunder.







Farmers on the Roads: An Opportunity for the Jesuits



Image Source: Google

As the world's attention is riveted on the 'largest protest in history' that is being played out on the streets leading to the political Capital of India, there is a churning happening. Indian democracy is being severely tested. Political parties are forced to take a clear stand. The 'sentinel on the qui vive' and protector of the Indian Constitution - the Supreme Court of India - is on trial. And it is as if all of us, the so-called civil society members, religious and the Church are being interrogated and challenged. This is clearly a moment of reckoning, a conscience call for each of us.

Millions of farmers all over India are asking for the repeal of the 3 farm laws, rammed through Parliament without due process and with scant respect for democratic principles and norms. They know that the laws are detrimental to their interests and to their existence not only of the present generation but also of

the future ones. At the time of writing this piece, the farmers are out there on the roads braving the icy winds, the shenanigans of the government and the greed of the corporate world; more than 70 persons have died; and there have also been instances of suicide. A suicide note left by a priest, who could no longer see the suffering of his people, said "injustice is indeed a sin; and to suffer injustice passively is also a sin".

Jesuit Response: Hence the issues at stake are more than just MSP, or livelihood loss or diminishing return on investments. There are serious issues concerning Justice - the right to culture and ways of living, wellbeing and human dignity, democracy and rights under the Constitution. The response of the Jesuits and of the Church in general has been as of now guarded. Concerns have been privately expressed and some have ventured to provide relief material. Others have made solidarity visits to

indicate their support to the agitating farmers. Some others have participated or organized Webinars and meetings. A Farm Committee has been constituted by the President of the Jesuit South Asian Conference and it is doing its work.

At the recently organized meeting with some farmers in Delhi by the Committee, a nun made a telling observation: “It is okay to have webinars and to organize meetings like this, but much more needs to be done. Supplying relief material like blankets might make our own skin feel good but that is not enough. We have to take a stand and express openly our solidarity. It disturbs me to see that the city of Delhi has not responded to the crisis. The Church is also silent. It is as if we are living in different worlds; as if what the farmers are demanding and going through is none of our business. Where is insaniyat (humanism)? I am troubled that the people of Delhi are so unconcerned about this massive protest on its borders.”

We Jesuits have responded to various crises and challenges. Our efforts during severe droughts and famines, and in times of other natural and human made calamities have been lauded. We have been quick and effective in relief and rehabilitation work, and our capacities for sustained endeavor in this respect have been acknowledged. Currently, there have been several determined efforts to get Fr Stan Swamy released from Jail. The campaigns in the social media and in civil society have been remarkable, which have generated a lot of support from several other quarters.

As Jesuits, it is incumbent upon us to respond to this situation in many ways and be ‘visible and vocal’. The primary reason to get involved is simply insaniyat! We do not need any spirituality to do this but if we do need it, then we must remind ourselves of our unequivocal commitment to a ‘Faith that does Justice’ and our ‘preferential option for the poor’. This is perfectly in line with the prophetic tradition in the Church and her social teaching. Prophets in the past, and now in our generation, have denounced evil, even as they announced the Good News of God’s presence among us. Fr Stan Swamy is an exemplar of this commitment. In his own words, “I do not want to be a spectator...”

Speaking Truth to power, becomes an imperative and an integral part of our mission. This becomes all the more important as the government and its agencies engage in subterfuge, insinuations and innuendos; and when it spreads lies directly, by calling the genuine protesters Khalistanis, Naxals, Maoists and anti-

nationals. The propaganda machinery of those wielding political power is forbidding, and its intent to break the movement and discredit the leaders is obvious. Here is where we need to step in and counter blatant lies. There are also the Universal Apostolic Preferences, and those of the South Asian Conference that we need to keep in mind. These ask us to walk with the poor and those oppressed.

There are other reasons why we Jesuits and others, should be at the protest sites. As one of the nuns who visited the sites said, “It is not as if we are giving them something. No matter what little we give, we receive much more in return. We should go there to redeem ourselves.” Fr P.R. John, Principal of Vidyajyoti said: “There is something deeply spiritual about this movement.” You cannot return without being touched, or even transformed. As Ms Ravneet Kaur, a law student from the Jesuit-run St Joseph’s Law College in Bangalore told this writer with a glow on her face, “An atheist told me that there is something very spiritual happening here and I am beginning to believe that God exists.”

Observing and interacting with those fighting for their right to live a dignified life, we see genuine secularism, socialism, equality and fraternity – all Constitutional Values - being lived out and celebrated in the open streets. There is creativity, humor, tears and laughter, sharing from the heart and fellow-feeling. The gender discrimination is not seen. The women and children feel safe and cared for. The determination to agitate for their rights till the end peacefully, is solid and inspirational.

If we fail the farmers, we will fail not only them but also those who are vulnerable and oppressed. We will fail democracy, the Indian constitution, the rule of law, the philosophy of peaceful protest popularized by Gandhiji. At the end of the day, we will fail our own conscience. We cannot afford this to happen. We will have ourselves to blame and future generations will not forgive us our lapses, inertia and immobilizing fear, some of which are more imaginary than real. We need to bear prophetic witness by engaging not only in relief of various kinds but also by doing advocacy on behalf of the farmers and with the farming community in general as the agrarian distress continues to rage and take its toll. The longer term task is to focus on Democracy. We need to strengthen democracy in every area of human endeavor. Let us not miss this opportunity!

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JIVAN CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST (Essay) - 2020

 <p style="font-size: small; margin-top: 10px;">JIVAN thanks the Jury for their 'Labour of Love'.</p>	PRIZE	The first prize: ₹ 4,000	The second prize: ₹ 2,500	The third prize: ₹ 1,000
	CONTESTANT	Dr. P. Mary Vidya Porselvi	Samson Basumatary, SJ	Sch. Samborlang Nongkynrih, SJ
	ESSAY TITLE	Eco-Storytelling: Stories that Care for Our Planet	More Attention is required For "Women Empowerment" to create a Better Tomorrow	We need to Empower the Youth Today!



Assessing Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)



Image Source: The Leaflet

Articles 48A and 51A (g) in the Constitution of India spell out the imperatives for the state and its citizens, namely, protection and improvement of the environment. Article 48A states, “The State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wild life of the country”. Article 51A (g) places a duty on the citizens of India to protect and improve the natural environment and have compassion for all living creatures. The draft Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) notification issued by the Ministry of Environment Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in March 2020 dilutes the fundamental principles of the constitution. If implemented, the MoEFCC’s draft will replace the 2006 EIA notification for future projects, systematically and summarily stripping away or bypassing laws meant for the protection of the rights of communities, (specifically the indigenous) and the environment, creating violent ruptures in the local socio-economic fabric.

A. The Timing

With most people locked inside - schools, colleges, work places, everything off-limits, this is certainly not the right time to be pushing environmental legislations, especially of the kind that is expected to have far-reaching consequences on the economy, the environment and the people of the nation at large. To make things worse, this is a time when mainline media – newspapers in particular, are virtually off limits, television is facing severe credibility issues and fake news

peddled by vested interests in the social media – unchecked and unedited, is ruling the roost. Naturally, the haste with which the Government is trying to push and bulldoze through the proposed amendments, are forcing many environmentally conscious and right-thinking citizens to raise their eyebrows, questioning the very reasons underlying the frantic haste. Some are even going to the extent of seeing a sinister ploy, even an abject sell-out to vested interests, which they feel must be objected to, for the nation and our children.

B. The Genesis of EIA

Before we delve deeper into the matter, let us take a quick look at the past to understand how, at least legally, things had come to this pass. The genesis was the Bhopal Gas Tragedy in 1984, which had paved the way for the passing of the Environment Protection Act in 1986. It was in this Act that the concept of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was unveiled before us. Well, there were loopholes, and the objections from various stakeholders were strident, but we did have a written piece of enacted document. A document that sought to lay down the do’s and don’ts that needed to be adhered to, before setting up an industry or any other developmental project that would bring adverse effects on the environment. It also had talked of an Expert Appraisal Committee comprising of, among others, environmentalists, project management experts who were required to prepare a report that had to be placed before the local stakeholders who had the right to have their concerns

and objections noted, before the draft was to be sent to the concerned authorities, often specifying the various steps that needed to be taken.

C. Dilution of EIA 2006

Various aspects ranging from the ways and means of addressing the issues arising out of the negative impact of the project on the environment to the rehabilitation of the sons of the soil who were affected, were all supposed to be the gist of the exercise. There was some amount of tinkering with the provisions and the Act in 2006 – whether effective, good, bad or ugly is a separate debate – but the main drift of the provisions was not tampered with, nor did the amendments go against the very grain. But the far-reaching changes that are sought to be introduced now, even as the nation remains under lockdown, are not only scaring, but even borders on brinkmanship, according to many experts who are well versed with the working of the industry and the government, including its departments.

D. Restricted Language

The fact that is being underscored by those in the opposition (to the EIA) – that the devil-may-care manner in which the entire process is being conducted – draft notification, for example, has been issued only in English and Hindi, with total disregard to the fact that the actual sons of the soil may not know either language being selected for highlighting. “It has always been the practice to issue notifications even in the local language – a practise that has been done away with in the particular case, which is not only suspicious, but may be downright discriminatory”, say activists working on the ground.

E. The Lessons Learned

For a moment, let us go to Vishakhapatnam – the gas leak at AG Polymers that chalked up a toll of 17, or, to the Baghjan’s Oil India Limited in Tinsukia District of Assam, which has been throwing out jets of gas and fire for almost two months now, after a blow-out. Well, it is no coincidence that neither had the necessary environmental clearances. This brings us to another very important aspect of the whole tamasha that is being played out in the present. The onus of filing a “complaint” is now proposed to be shifted to Government Officers and the concerned companies, as opposed to giving the aggrieved party (or the world at large) the right to have their concerns notified. In other words, we are moving towards a situation where we will have to depend on the criminal having a change of heart to turn himself in, so that the law can take its due course. If that is not preposterous, what is it then? It is

akin to asking the killer to turn himself in and willingly wear the noose around his own neck, even while the actual sufferers are expected to wallow in self-pity or elation at having been wronged against, or both.

F. Ease of Doing Business

1. For some environmentally detrimental projects, it is proposed that they will no longer be required to seek environmental clearances before setting up the industry. One can start a project, wreck environmental havoc, and then, almost as an afterthought, can apply for the necessary documentation. The point is, once the crime against nature is already committed, what is the point in having a system where such crime can be legalised with retrospective effect? Isn’t the whole tenet bad so far as natural law is concerned?

2. There is more to it, a cruel joke in fact, for the proposal talks about a fine of a princely sum ranging between Rs 2000 to Rs 10000 per day, in case of non-compliance. That is, suppose you continue your plunder and pillage for one full year, you will be liable to pay a maximum penalty of Rs 36.50 lakhs – not even peanuts, considering the thousands of crores which project costs run into, and the fragile ecological balances that have evolved over millions of years, priceless in other words, that are destroyed forever.

3. There is more: earlier construction businesses required clearances for anything above 20,000 square meters. This has now been raised to 150,000 square meters. There are other such glaring efforts to throttle every concern with, as some experts are putting it, an “abject ulterior motive”, a sell out to large businesses to “crony capitalists” deliberately. The real whammy however is, if the Government in its wisdom thinks something is in the “National Interest”, then even this fig leaf can be removed. “Go forth and plunder” will be the standing order.

Before I bid adieu, let me point out two more instances of injustice – the time accorded for public hearings have been reduced from 30 days to 20 days, which will now be conducted online. Imagine a forest that is threatened where you live in a village. Now whip out your smartphones and register your protest. What is the percentage of 1.37 billion having internet facility or smartphones to register complaints? The Chipko Movement was born without smartphones and data plans. What God has created, let no one plunder!

The author is an Environmental Scientist and Professor at St. Xavier’s College, Kolkata.

Contact: sxavi2005@gmail.com

Intention For
February
2021

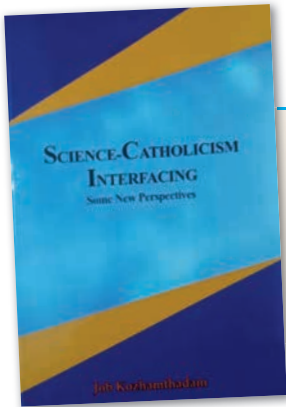
Violence against women

We pray for women who are victims of violence, that they may be protected by society and have their sufferings considered and heeded.



Pope's Worldwide
Prayer Network





Science and Religion: An Eastern Interface

TITLE: Science-Catholicism Interfacing: Some New Perspectives

AUTHOR: Job Kozhamthadam, SJ

PUBLISHER: Dharmaram Publications, Bengaluru

PAGES: 268 | PRICE: ₹ 400 | \$10

This book is an attempt at presenting some of the contemporary activities in the field of science-religion interfacing, particularly in the Eastern sector of the globe. Two points are emphasized here: Firstly, the old view - that modern science and contemporary religions particularly Catholicism, have been at war, with science in the winner's seat - is a popular myth created by certain historians of science with certain personal interests and ideologies. Recent research and study by reputed historians of science show that

this view has very little historical foundation, although there have been periods of tension and disagreements. Secondly, the Catholic Church has been a major player in the origin and development of modern science, particularly the Jesuit Order. In developing the first point, the book points out that the relationship between modern science and Catholicism went through 3 identifiable stages: Encouragement, Estrangement and Engagement. Today the relationship is mostly in the engagement phase. The chapter on "Vatican II on Science and Technology," is particularly important, since very little has been written about the highly positive and genuinely encouraging attitude of this Council towards science and technology. The chapter on the Galileo episode also has many new historical facts which have been sadly neglected in the past. The chapter on "Christian Contribution to Science in India," also presents many hitherto overlooked or ignored facts. On the whole, this book is expected to shed some fresh light on science-Catholicism relationship in the world-scenario in general and the Indian milieu in particular.

| Job Kozhamthadam, SJ

Hindu Rashtra is an Illusion, it is also a Lie!

India has taken so sharp a turn in recent years that the very centre has shifted considerably. What led to this swing? Is it possible to trace the path to this point? Is there a way back to the just, secular, inclusive vision of our Constitution-makers? These are the questions that Aakar Patel wrestles with, in this book Our Hindu Rashtra: what it is, how we got there?*

Aakar Patel, columnist and former executive director of Amnesty International India, was arrested and then let out on bail earlier this week for allegedly posting "offensive" tweets against Modi.

This book is about how India became majoritarian, privileging one community over others. The Indian constitution did not officially privilege the rights of one community or privilege one religion over the others. Under the Modi regime, the constitutional goals and the lived reality have continued to lose resemblance to the values of the constitution. "Minorities are actively and regularly persecuted, dissent is punished, the judiciary is unable to balance executive overreach, freedoms are restricted often to the point of being absent, and the State is vicious" (p.2). Patel further states that India under Modi, "did not approach the brutalization of its minorities through constitutional change, but through existing law and policy and, above all through the issues that parties and governments picked and stayed focused on, till the majoritarian impact was achieved" (p. 2).

Hindu Rashtra is an illusion. It is also a lie. The name promises something which reality will never deliver. It has no ideology or theory but has an agenda. "It is purely about the exclusion and persecution of India's minorities, particularly Muslims. That is the only meaning of Hindu Rastra in India. It imagines India as a Hindu nation where the Muslim and Christian exist on sufferance" (p.14).

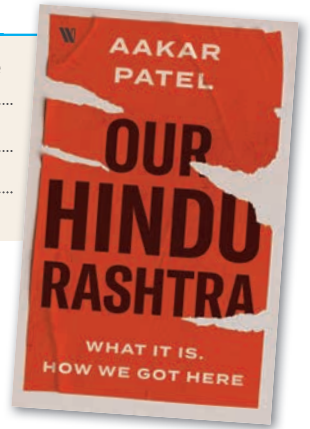
This book is structured in four parts. "The first looks at Pakistan and how it became the majoritarian State it is today. The second part is about the core individuals behind the Hindutva ideology and their intellectual output, which has been examined and connected to its politics. The third part, the longest, is the manner in which the democratic, secular republic of India has become majoritarian by law over time. India has done so in a more devious fashion than Pakistan, by privileging Hindutva and discriminating and restricting the rights

TITLE: Our Hindu Rashtra: What It Is. How We Got Here

AUTHOR: Aakar Patel

PUBLISHER: Westland Publications, Chennai

PAGES: 495 | PRICE: ₹650



of its minorities, while pretending to be secular and pluralist. The fourth part, is about more recent events. It looks at the way in which brute force of majoritarianism was successfully resisted in a democratic and peaceful way in our time" (p.16).

The last chapter suggests ways in which Indians can push back against Hindutva majoritarianism. "Reclaiming our fundamental rights is the answer to the problems of Indian majoritarianism. We have to peacefully reclaim our rights both at the level of individual and the level of civil society" (p 337). The peaceful Shaheenbagh protest against CAA, NPR and NRC has put the Modi-Shah regime on the back-foot. The peaceful farmers' protest in Delhi and other parts of India has sent the Modi-Shah regime into the silent zone.

"It is through mass individual participation in every day activism, through raising of voices, through funding just causes and funding organized civil society groups, through supporting progressive calls for engagement and supporting those who need that the Western democracies have become open societies (p. 340). India too has no other route.

This book is written in a language that is lucid, without jargon, highly reader-friendly, analytical, well argued, well supported with facts and insights, showing the trajectory of majoritarianism and how to counter it. It should appeal to minority communities, youth, students, activists and intellectuals.

| Lancy Lobo, SJ

The maiden Province Day of Chennai Province

The 28th of December 2020, would go down in the history of Jesuit Chennai Province as a memorable day. The new-born Province celebrated its first birthday with the theme: "With Gratitude and Hope." Fr. Jebamalai Irudayaraj, Provincial, officiated the concelebrated High Mass. The Madurai Province Assembly souvenir was released. Fr. A. Irudayaraj, convener, welcomed the gathering and spelt out the dynamics of the day.



reference to the UAP's. He urged the gathering to realise the call to look always for possibilities, hope and God. We shared our God experiences and the care of fellow-Jesuits in smaller groups.

We had a virtual cultural programme which was well received. Fr. Provincial spoke on developments and initiatives of the new Province of the past one year, and thanked all.

A beautiful video presentation 'Our Journey of Synodality' gave glimpses of the first year of our journey - thanks to Fr. Vasanth who toiled for this.

At the end, Fr. Ilanko Xavier thanked Fr. A. Irudayaraj and his team, who tirelessly worked for the success of this Province Day celebration.

Fr. John Dardis, General Assistant, addressed the gathering on the theme: Challenges and hopes for Jesuits in the Indian context, in

| A. Irudaya Raj, SJ | Sch. Zenith, SJ | Chennai

Diamond Jubilee of Berchmans Illam



Berchmans Illam, a formation house, was immensely happy to celebrate its Diamond Jubilee (1960-2020). When it was born in 1960 with 21 scholastics, it was named Berchmans Hall. After 38 years of journey, it was renamed Berchmans Illam (BI) in 1998. With expanded structure, it now accommodates Jesuits from across the globe for UG, PG and doctoral programmes in Loyola College.

The Diamond Jubilee celebration started in November, 2019. This year, it culminated on 26th of November, 2020 with a concelebrated High Mass officiated by Fr. Alangaram, the present superior. We also released a souvenir which brought out the long history of BI and memories of all those who stayed in this beautiful nest. We also organised a virtual cultural programme which attracted global participants.

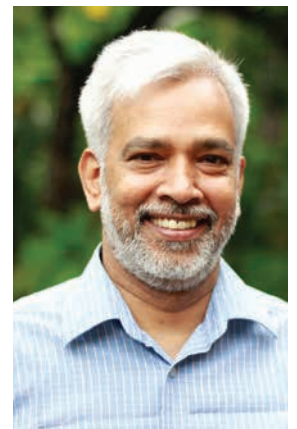
In keeping with the Jubilee theme - Loyalty and Legacy - former staff of BI, then scholastics of BI, now serving in various part of the world, have shared their fond memories of their life in BI. We gratefully remembered all the 23 superiors, 27 ministers, 23 sub-ministers and 15 Spiritual guides. We also prayed for all the scholastics, brothers and priests who are blissfully resting with the Lord.

| A. Irudaya Raj, SJ | Chennai

Indian Jesuit appointed to Pontifical Commission

Pope Francis has appointed Fr Henry Pattarumadathil, SJ, a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission. Fr Henry (57) belongs to the Kerala Province of the Society of Jesus, and is presently Dean of Studies of the Biblical Faculty and Professor of New Testament Exegesis at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome. Earlier, he had earned his Licentiate in Sacred Scripture from the same Institute and he obtained his Doctorate in Biblical Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome.

Before moving to Rome, Fr Henry was Director of Studies at the Jesuit Regional Theology Centre at Kalady, Kerala. He was also a member of the KCBC team for Malayalam New Testament revision. His publications include Sermon on the Mount: Analysis and Interpretation (in Malayalam, 2017) and Your Father in Heaven: Discipleship in Matthew as a Process of Becoming Children of God (2008).



| P.T.Mathew, SJ | Kozhikode

Saul Abril, Master Printer

A Personal Memory



I first met Bro. Saul Abril when I was a scholastic in DeNobili, where he spent two brief years, 1964-66. But our acquaintance matured into friendship much later, during the 1990s when I would travel to Anand every month to see to the formatting of JIVAN.

That was a unique time in our lives, and I'd like to recall it briefly in these pages.

In 1989, I took over the editorship of the Assistency periodical, JIVAN, and relocated the editor's office to Mumbai, where I resided at St Mary's, Mazagon. Anand Press would do the page layout, the printing and the distribution.

This meant that once every month, ten times a year, I'd take the night train to Anand and spend three or four days at the Press (or more accurately, as a guest at St Xavier's, Anand, the "mother house" of the Gujarat Province).

At Anand, there were three older Jesuits with whom I'd interact: Xavier Diaz de Rio, the ebullient manager of Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, publisher; Manuel Eneriz, production manager; and Saul Abril, the general manager of the Press. Close bonds of friendship quickly developed between the four of us.

Abril was a quiet, methodical and disciplined person. It was a critical time in the late 1980s, as printing was slowly shifting from "hot metal" to photo offset, where the composition and page-design was increasingly done on computer. Times of change mean jettisoning the old and purchasing new technology. They are usually times of tension. Abril went through it all.

It was clear that Abril had the affection and loyalty of all the workers at the press. They respected him for his expertise, as well as for his personal concern for their circumstances. [In fact not far from the press buildings, a Press Colony had been set up which provided affordable housing for its workers.] He was not one to talk much about himself, but I came to know that he was one of six siblings, that he had lost his mother in the Spanish Civil War, and that his father had brought them up single-handedly, with great generosity and self-sacrifice. Thus do parents mould character: in later years, Abril himself would show a similar solicitude towards an orphaned family from the locality.

JIVAN was by no means the biggest client of Anand Press. That place must go to Amul Dairy, whose director Dr Kurian, was a close friend of Abril, and entrusted him with the designs and printing of Amul's various products. Then Gujarat Sahitya Prakash expanded its operations to become a publishing house for all the Jesuits of South Asia, not just with documents and booklets from Rome, but also the English writings of several Jesuit writers. Its flagship author was Tony de Mello, but others like Luis Bermejo and Carlos Valles also claimed their place.

Still later, GSP began a relationship with Chicago's Institute of Jesuit Sources, to bring out special editions on Jesuit history and spirituality for India and South Asia. Anand Press was where they were printed, and under Abril's careful stewardship.

But even before this, Abril's proudest moment was Anand Press's printing of the first edition (1981) of the new Gujarati Bible -- Sampurna Bible, all 1593 pages of it - with illustrations from the Good News Bible, many specially done by Brother Rabella, for years resident artist at Anand Press. This translation from the Hebrew and Greek original was the joint collaboration of Isudas Cueli SJ, Scripture scholar, and Nagindas Parekh, the famous writer and translator. The first edition of Sampurna Bible also received a gold medal for fine printing.

Abril died a few months short of his 90th birthday. He had spent 67 years in India, most of them in Anand, Gujarat. As we honour Abril, we recall as well other Jesuit Brothers, gifted professionals so many of them. Others may lay claim to fame and popularity but these men laid the foundations for Jesuit ministry, and of Jesuit communities. For this they are appreciated, for this they will always be loved.

Brother Saul Abril, SJ died on December 13, 2020 and his ashes were laid to rest in Anand.

I Myron J. Pereira, SJ



Fr. Dionysius Rasquinha, SJ (PAT)

Fr. Dionysius Rasquinha, SJ, affectionately called Fr. Dion, was a scholar, teacher, guide and mentor, writer, musician, vibrant Jesuit, dedicated priest and above all, a lover of life. Love for the poor, especially Dalits, permeated his research, teaching and writing, along with a commitment to promote integral cosmic wellbeing. He was a perfectionist who wanted to excel in all that he did and in all that was entrusted to his care; for this he applied himself fully into all that he undertook, not counting the cost.

A major part of Fr. Dion's life as a Jesuit priest, was dedicated to theological research, teaching-guiding-mentoring theology students and writing. He was one of the stalwarts of the Regional Theology Centre (RTC) at Patna, and he promoted theological reflections on contemporary issues. He demanded the best from his students and closely accompanied them for achieving it. In as much as he was a 'hard task master' on the

intellectual front, he was an affectionate companion who accompanied them with immense love. The annual seminars of RTC in which Fr. Dion participated and/or guided the students, invariably had the stamp of academic rigor. In the last five years of his life, he served as Assistant Treasurer of Patna Province / Patna Jesuit Society.

Fr. Dion celebrated life in many ways: music, food, companionship, animated discussions and jokes; heartfelt outbursts of laughter with his whole body shaking, was his trademark. There were no half measures in his work or celebration of life, there was only fullness and abundance. Even serious health setbacks could not dampen his spirit because his source was Jesus, who came to give us life - life in abundance (Jn 10:10).

— Susai Raj, SJ

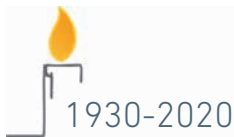


Fr. Joseph Thayil, SJ (KER)

Fr. Joseph Thayil left us on 30 September 2020, aged 90. But he leaves behind fond memories with people who associated with him. He was known for his skill in counselling and guidance, and so he spent his life mostly in the twin fields of religious formation and Psycho-spiritual counselling. He was Director of Juniors, Novice Master, Spiritual Guide to the philosophy students, and Tertian Instructor. He was a much-appreciated Retreat Director too. In between, he was Rector of Christ Hall Kozhikode, Superior of Sameeksha and RTC Kalady, and Socius to the Provincial. But all through these, he continued his passion for counselling and spiritual direction. He was sought after by many religious congregations as a reliable guru and amiable guide. He had an uncanny talent to untangle even the most twisted knots in human hearts. He has authored two Malayalam books on Ignatian spirituality, 'Adyatmika Sadhana' and 'Antharika Swathatryam'.

Fr. Joe served as Programme Director of SRC at Kozhikode for 15 years. Working with him in group therapy sessions, I used to marvel at his gentle but firm ways of challenging the participants to look at life differently. He was a real guru but with no external trappings of greatness. That is why people felt attracted to him. He was an amazing person to deal with, and more, to live with. In 2018, when he reached 88, he withdrew from active ministry and moved to Sangamam, the house for senior Jesuits in Kozhikode. When I met him there recently, I noticed that his very presence radiated joy and contentment. "It is time to move out and so here I am", he seemed to be saying. No regrets, no complaints. Thank you, Joe, for leaving many good memories behind for our nourishment.

— Ephrem Thomas, SJ



Fr. Paul Vadakel, SJ (KER)

Father Paul Vadakel passed away on 8 October, 2020 at Christ Hall, Kozhikode, after a few months of agonizing struggle with life, at the ripe old age of 91. He had spent 71 years in the Society of Jesus as a committed and dedicated son of St Ignatius. Fr Paul was born at Vadakara, a village near Koothattukulam. Fr. Mathew sdb, the only surviving member of the family of six siblings, had the unique privilege of officiating at his funeral Mass.

risky situations seemed to be in his blood. The Society can never forget the services rendered by him for the development of St Xavier's College, Thumba where he spent nearly 15 years, twice as Rector and Manager. He put heart and soul into developing this college into a centre of excellence. With proverbial courage and optimism and absolute trust in God, he was able to face problems that confronted him, whether at St Xavier's College or in the Chirakkal mission. Facing challenges with courage was his forte.

What he has been and what he did for Kerala Province will be marked in golden letters. He has left an indelible mark on all those who got a chance to work with him. The sweet memory of Fr Paul Vadakel will ever remain alive in our hearts and minds.

— Joseph Edassery, SJ



Fr Paul joined the Society in 1949 and was ordained in 1962. As a priest, he plunged deep into the pastoral and administrative services of the Society. All the posts he held in the Society, required real courage and determination. He was Provincial of Kerala Province for over six years. Whenever the Province was direly in need of combating any serious situation or facing a tricky problem, Fr Vadakel was there to shoulder the burden. This audacity to venture into challenging and



Fr. A. Wilson, SJ (MDU)

The untimely death of Fr. Wilson (56/36) came as a shock to all. He was born on 25 April 1964 at Sekkakudi; joined the Jesuits on 5 July 1984; did his regency in PALMERA, during which he committed himself to the poor and marginalized.

His involvement in academic ministry lasted about 22 years in various schools. As a teacher, he kept the students enthralled in the subject and as headmaster, he knew each and every student personally and deeply loved them.

On 2 October 2020, he tested positive for COVID-19 and was hospitalized in Nagercoil. He was discharged and was quarantined for two weeks. On the 14th morning, he suffered from shortness of breath and had a very low oxygen level. He was immediately rushed to the hospital for emergency care. His lungs were severely damaged. On October 16, he tested COVID negative but that very night, his pulse and blood pressure

had a steep fall. He was put on a ventilator. Sadly, he breathed his last at 5:15 am on 17 October 2020.

Rev. Nazarene, Bishop of Kottar, paid a visit and blessed the mortal remains at Carmel HSS. Around 2.30 pm, the body was taken to St. Xavier's, Palayamkottai, for burial. Rt. Rev. Antonysamy, Bishop of Palayamkottai, blessed the grave. The Funeral Mass was presided over by Rt. Rev. Jude Paulraj, Bishop Emeritus of Palayamkottai. Fr. Wilson was laid to rest in the garden behind the Jesuit residence.

Fr. Wilson was a good combination of cordiality and sternness. He was a joy to be with and had a tender heart that would easily cry with those who struggle and suffer. He was a man of audacity and kind heart and a man of determination and hard work.

Henry Jerome, SJ



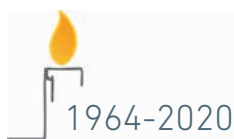
Fr. Gregory Stany D'Silva, SJ (JAM)

Gregory Stany D'Silva, fondly called Greg, could be described as what Pope Francis calls 'shepherd who smells of the sheep,' a man who touched the lives of people. Gregory D'Silva was indeed a pastor who knew his people, and touched their lives, with great cheerfulness, typical of him. Greg remained a pastor with a kind heart for the people even when he was not in parishes. This was his way of leading people to God.

Gregory Stany D'Silva SJ born on 12 June, 1964 in Karelara in Mangalore as the youngest of a large family. He joined the Jesuits on 7 July, 1983 as a member of Jamshedpur Province. After the years of formation at DNC, Pune and VJ Delhi, Greg was ordained on 6 May, 1999. The very first mission that was assigned to him remained the best for him – shepherding the flock at Bordor/Pandabir in the heart of the land of the Ho tribe.

The long years at the service of people of this region brought out the best of Greg, a time that he laid the foundation, in the company of Fr John Deeney, apostle of the Hos, of the future parish. Was it the fluency in the language that made him a most loved shepherd of the flock or was it his heart full of enthusiasm and zeal for the mission – of bringing people to God? Answer is not easy, but tears that flowed on the farewell for their beloved PP back in 2002, vouch that Greg had touched the hearts of people, in his inimitable style. Greg dedicated most of his time in this Kolhan region of Jharkhand. What brought great satisfaction is nurturing the faith of the people, leading people to God. God reward your toil Greg. Rest in Peace!

Somy Mannoor, SJ



Br. Jeyaraj Annaviar, SJ (MDU)

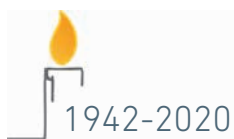
Br. Jeyaraj was from Michaelpattinam, a village rich in vocations. After completing his primary education there, he continued his studies in Madurai. Inspired by the Jesuit Brothers of Madurai he expressed his desire to join their ranks. His family expressed their reservation. Even after his high school at St. Mary's, Madurai, and training at Sattur Teacher Training School, the desire to become a Jesuit Brother did not fade away. Providentially, he met Fr. Ignatius Sama during a bus trip. Fr. Sama, who was then in charge of the Brothers, welcomed him with open arms.

After completing his novitiate at Beschi Illam, Dindigul, Br. Jeyaraj served successively in several Jesuit houses and institutions. He was a man who was always busy with his brisk steps, doing his work – taking care of those entrusted to his care, especially the sick. He was quite enthusiastic about conducting prayer services. He used to get the co-workers and

students once a week, for an hour of prayer after supper. He had a great love for poor students whom he helped in whatever way he could.

He was quite active and cheerful during his last days in Beschi Illam. Outgoing, warm and full of energy, he used to meet regularly, greet and spend time with community members and visitors to Beschi. On 23 October 2020, he tested COVID Positive and was hospitalized. He was responding well to the treatment but, unfortunately, had a massive heart attack and was declared dead in the wee hours of 3 November 2020. As his death was COVID-related, his mortal remains were laid to rest on the same day in the Beschi cemetery, after a short and strictly private burial service, in a grave prepared as per specifications given by government health officials.

A. Prasanth, SJ





Fr. Robert Wirth, SJ (DUM)

Robbie, as he was affectionately called, was born at Valletta, Malta, on 12 February 1934. He joined the noviciate at Loyola House, Naxxar, on 2 October 1951 and made his first vows on 3 October 1953.

In 1954, he came to India as a missionary and worked here till 1990. He was ordained at Guhijori on 24 March 1963 and made his Solemn Profession at Sahibganj on 15 August 1969. In 1965, he was sent to St Joseph's College, Bangalore, as Spiritual Father of the boys. The following year he was back in the Santal Mission and in the subsequent years, was appointed at various places in ministries such as Assistant Pastor, vice-Principal, in-charge of boarders, Minister and Treasurer. In 1972, he was appointed the National Promoter of the Leadership Training Service (LTS) and resided first at St Xavier's college, Calcutta, and then at Prabhu Jisu residence, Calcutta. During the 18 years that he held this office, he travelled to many parts of India to promote and

establish the Movement in many Christian Colleges and conducted training courses. He prepared and printed Manuals and other literature for the members. This was Robbie's great work for the holistic formation of youth.

In 1991, Robbie returned to Malta, and in the subsequent years took up different ministries like Pastoral Co-ordinator, Chaplain of the University of Malta, Co-ordinator of the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm, in-charge of the pastoral care of our benefactors, Administrator of the Province Infirmary and as Superior. On 1 November 2020 he was diagnosed with Covid-19 and was admitted at Mater Dei Hospital where he died on 4 November. Robbie had a warm personality and was particularly generous with youth in their formation, and with the disadvantaged in their needs.

—
| John Scicluna, SJ



Fr. A. Antony Pappuraj, SJ (MDU)

Fr. Antony Pappuraj was an excellent teacher, able administrator and friend of the poor. He joined the Society of Jesus on 10 June 1963 and was ordained on 16 April 1978. He pronounced his Final Vows on 15 August 1984. After Ordination, he was appointed the first Director of MAITRI - an organization of the CBCI to provide relief and rehabilitation to Sri Lankan repatriates who were bonded labourers in Kodaikanal. For two years he worked hard for the rights of the repatriates. Then, for four decades, since 1980 he rendered remarkable service in four colleges (St. Xavier's, Palayamkottai, Loyola, Chennai, St. Joseph's, Tiruchi and Arul Anandar, Karumathur) in various capacities. For more than 12 years he performed almost all key roles in St. Xavier's campus including Rector, Correspondent of the School and Teacher in Management Institute in the last few months of his life. He organised the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations of the college effectively, as Principal. He gave Joseph Institute of Management, Tiruchi, a facelift,

with professionalism, efficient financial management and green initiatives. He involved himself with AICUF and supported Rural Uplift Centre, a Non-Governmental Organization in Nanguneri as its founder member, in fighting for the rights of thousands of poor unorganized women, innocent victims of domestic violence, dowry victims and poor Dalits, with legal assistance. He always had a soft corner for the first generation learners and the poor people in the neighbourhood. In November he tested COVID Positive with an alarmingly high blood sugar level and kidney problems. Despite being treated with utmost care in Apollo Hospital, Madurai, from November 4 to 12, he breathed his last on November 13, and at 6.15 pm on the same day he was laid to rest in St. Mary's Cemetery, Madurai, surrounded by his Jesuit companions and a few relatives. May God grant him Eternal Rest.

—
| Britto Vincent, SJ



Fr. Susai Lourdu Irudayaraj, SJ (DUM)

Fr Lourdu Irudayaraj Susai was born in 1946 at Satharavanpathy in Tamil Nadu and joined the Society of Jesus for the Santal Region in 1967. He was ordained priest in 1980. Throughout his priestly life, pastoral work was his main assignment and his predilection. In later years, if engaged for a while in some other work, Fr Lourdu would say, 'I am a pastor'. In fact, he served zealously in various parishes of West Bengal and Bihar-Jharkhand both as Assistant Pastor and as Parish Priest. Since 2013 he pioneered Jirulia mission in Jharkhand and also saw through and won a number of cases related to the Jirulia property. In between the pastoral assignments to the various parishes, Fr Lourdu did one year of post-graduate studies at EAPI in the Philippines, in 1994, related to pastoral and catechetical work, became the Director of Catechists Training Centre (CTC) at Torai in 1996 and in 1999, he was mandated to pioneer the Paharia apostolate.

Fr Lourdu also served, for a number of years, as one of the consultors of the Provincial and also vocation promoter. Bp. Alphonse D'Souza SJ of Raiganj Diocese, Fr Lourdu's Ecclesiastical Superior for a number of years, on Fr Lourdu's transfer to Dumka Diocese, wrote to him: "I thank you wholeheartedly for your wonderful apostolate and dedicated hard work and commitment to the diocese. I appreciate your availability for any kind of ministry in the Church. You carry out your responsibility with zeal, dedication and commitment." Fr Lourdu had also his share of ailments which he bore with fortitude. He loved people specially the poor and he would share with them whatever he had. His was a happy personality. May the Lord grant him Eternal Happiness!

—
| Paul Aquilina, SJ





Br. Desmond Dias, SJ (BOM)

Desmond was born and grew up in Bandra, a place that he held close to his heart. He always cherished fond childhood memories of growing up with his family. His contact with the Jesuits in the parish and school inspired him to join the Society. Desmond felt God calling him to be a Jesuit Brother and he answered that call valiantly. Over the years he served as Brother Socius to the Provincial, and then as Minister and sub-Minister in several houses.

Vinayalaya and many more at St. Pius X Seminary. He would often ask about these trees and was delighted to receive fruits from them. He was extremely skilled at maintenance and was also a master of thrift - woe to any maintenance worker who tried to cheat him! Dezzi was a faithful Religious and was there punctually for the Community Mass. Every afternoon around 3:15 pm, he would withdraw to his room, light a candle and pray the rosary.



Dezzi, as we affectionately called him, was a man of few words who never attempted to be who he was not. He loved the Society deeply and wore his heart on his sleeve. The courses he had taken in photography and poultry farming were put to very good use. He was a top quality photographer and was the official photographer of the Province. As a genuine photographer he was always behind the camera and rarely in front of it. Wherever Dezzi was appointed, he planted trees – almost 400 at

Desmond strongly believed that he would fall sick if he were ever taken to a hospital! Unfortunately his last days on earth included 2 months in the ICU, battling Covid 19. He did battle through his illness, but he finally lay down his guard after two months in the Province infirmary. He now enjoys eternal bliss in the gardens of the Heavenly Vinedresser.

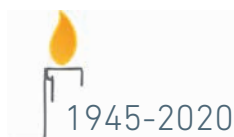
John Cyriac, SJ



Fr. Augustine Lopes, SJ (BOM)

I always found something unique in the company of Augustine and we became good friends in the Society. Augustine came across as a confident and fearless person. He had earlier worked in a government office. Was it this experience that gave him that fearlessness? Perhaps it could also be due to his firm unshakeable faith in Mother Mary. He enjoyed human company and would be the centre of any gathering. He would take me to visit his friends and I was struck by how he would be so comfortable there. Although we hardly agreed on any issue, we enjoyed each other's company. His assessment of people was perceptive and his intuition defied my logic and experience.

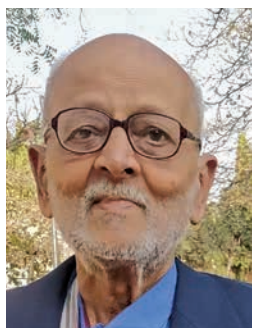
mannerisms. The best part of his ministry was when he was at Manor just after his ordination. It was there that he began conducting youth camps. He was at the peak of his personality, and had a great influence on many a young person, building up their faith and personality. He was also well known for retreat preaching in English and Marathi. His father was a creative story teller and evidently Augustine inherited something of his father's quality. Unfortunately, his accident at Talasari broke him and after that he was not his usual, bubbly self.



He was an excellent preacher who left a powerful impression on his congregation. The manner of delivery was so good that listeners would long after remember not just the content but also his actions and

He had repeatedly told me that he wanted to preach at my funeral. God did not give him that privilege. I will miss my friend for many years to come. It was a chemistry I cannot explain. He lived a happy life and made many people happy.

Joseph Pithekar, SJ



Fr. Rudolph Fernandez, SJ (BOM)

I hardly knew Fr. Rudy before June 2018. Just two and a half years later, I wish I had met him earlier in my life. I would have learned so much from his vast store of knowledge, his wisdom, his practical sense and example of simplicity and humility. If I were to write his biography, it would have been titled "The Saint of Small things".

- confessions, bible study groups and meeting people after Mass, right up to lockdown times. Really, a saint in small things.



He might have been small in stature or the way he considered himself in comparison with others, but he was really BIG in unassuming holiness, virtue and unstinted service to others. Most of us have to die to go to heaven. Not so Rudy. He quite lived it while he spent his life on earth, doing missionary and pastoral work in the districts ... with three stints as Socius to the Novice Master. And in all of these, concern, care, dedication and service to all those under his charge - novices, parishioners, pilgrims and the simple poor who came to him for help. He continued his ministries at the Shrine

He was an avid reader - books, newspapers, magazines and anything printed he could lay his hands on. He had a good memory for all he read, sharing from his store of information many items that we may not even have wanted to know! His last words were: "Give the community my best wishes". He said this thrice... He was a simple man and a wonderful Jesuit; had a great love for the Society and a burning desire to meet the early Fathers. His wish has now been granted. We will miss him and his always-there striped sling bag, and his walking stick that had the habit of regularly falling down with a bang in the middle of our evening prayer.

Terence Quadros, SJ



Michael T. Raj, SJ

During our New Provincials' Colloquium in Rome in 2009, while sharing on 'What kind of Provincial do you want to be', one of the participant Provincials said, "I want to be a good enough Provincial." If the same question is put to me today in a negative format - What kind of Superior would you NOT want to be? -

I wish to respond (borrowing four adjectives from a writer, Sheiresa Ngo) in enumerating four negative types of Superiors.

I wouldn't like to be a Micro-Manager Superior. I do not want the community members to get an uneasy feeling of being watched by the Superior, or of being under his scanner constantly, so that he may be able to control every aspect of their lives. This type of Superior is not uncommon in our religious communities. When being governed by such a Superior, the members will be hesitant to make any creative move without his approval.

I wouldn't like to be a Ghost-Superior who is rarely seen around. He works in closed doors and appears at times when no one is expecting him. His appearance is often at the time of some crisis

or when someone makes a mistake. He is a Superior in absentia. His silence may make people think everything is fine, but he will surface from nowhere, when something goes wrong.

I wouldn't like to be a Clueless Superior who may be too young or inexperienced and who often does not know what is going on around him. You may have to guide a clueless Superior, more than he guides you. All members may wonder how this person managed to get into this leadership position.

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I would rather be a Superior, who moves between 'the dance-floor and the balcony', who would climb up the 'balcony' time to time, to distance oneself from the centre of action to perceive things objectively.”

I wouldn't like to be a Know-it-All Superior who is the exact opposite of the clueless Superior. The Know-it-all Superior will swear that he knows what's best for others. He will insist that all around him do things in his way, even if they have better plans and strategies, but he will blame others, when something goes wrong.

I would rather be a Superior, who moves between 'the dance-floor and the balcony', who would climb up the 'balcony' time to time, to distance oneself from the centre of action to perceive things objectively. I would encourage self-discipline rather than imposed control, enabling the members to experience more freedom and less fear. I would rather be a Superior, who cares for the sick and protects the weak in the community, who is around and available when needed most. I would rather be a Superior willing to learn new skills, welcome suggestions and keep updating my knowledge and expertise. I would rather be a Superior who will believe in 'reverse-mentoring', i.e., being ready and willing to be 'mentored' by others in the community on strategic issues, leadership skills, and appropriate mindset.

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Rashmi M. Fernando, SJ

Freedom with responsibility is what makes sense to me in my vow of obedience as a Jesuit with 16 years in the Formation and 3 years in the Priesthood. No matter what the responsibility rested on me thus far, while the aspect of inner freedom of the obedience I seek and enjoy the most, the responsibility part of it makes me accountable to my Superiors and, through them, to the universal Church at large, in all I say and do in my life-mission as a Jesuit priest. It is nevertheless this freedom with responsibility which for me makes the vow of obedience either our way or a limit of exercising my fullest self in freedom. Let me explain.

The Ignatian spirituality and formation right from my Novitiate have disciplined me to look to the Person of my superior not as a human being, subject to errors and miseries, but as the Christ who is supremely good, all-knowing and faultless. Moreover, I should always be prepared and quick to do so when it is needed to seek out reasons to defend what the superior commands or is inclined towards, rather than reasoning out against, to disapprove of it. This points towards the common Ignatian understanding that whatever the superior enjoins, is the command of God and His holy will which should be executed blindly and without any inquiry, but with the force and promptitude of the will, eager to obey.

When trying to see that invisible God of my faith and His holy will in my Superior whom I see fully flesh and fully alive daily (or do not do so that often) in corridors

and common places in my community; when the Superior has little or absolutely no time to listen to his subject; or even at the tiniest of the time found, the apprehension of the gravity, the depth, and the importance of the issue shared, the understanding of the emotions and the affects that the subject undergoes, the active listening and the personal empathy, etc., do not seem to evoke from the part of the superior; when the confidentiality is ruptured and/or related comments are passed at common forums in the community; when the workaholicism of the Superior esteems little or no freedom of the subject whatsoever, rather it curtails the latter's time for self, socialization, etc.; it is often in such instances that the crucial conversation has meaning, and is felt very much a necessity in my vocation as a Jesuit. To see God and His holy will at such instances becomes not only an internal struggle against the image of God of my faith, but also the obedience in executing the entrusted mission under such circumstances often makes it more functional, limited and heady rather than charitable, bountiful and hearty.

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While the aspect of inner freedom of the obedience I seek and enjoy the most, the responsibility part of it makes me accountable to my Superiors and, through them, to the universal Church at large, in all I say and do in my life-mission as a Jesuit priest.”

The author is the PAP/IY/Media/Prison Ministry Coordinator for the Sri Lanka Province.

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Farmers Turn Organic with Bumper Crops and Profits



Image Source: TBI

In late 2016, farmers of Khaparkheda village in MP were surprised (or perhaps shocked) to see the farm of Laxmi Parate produce a high-quality surplus harvest of tomatoes, earning her a bumper profit. A few months ago they had mocked Laxmi for her new farming techniques – **Zero chemical fertilisers and pesticides**. Today, Laxmi's success converted 125 acres into pure organic farming.

Asharam says, "We were always scared to implement organic methods of crop cultivation. But now I see the difference: The chemically grown tomatoes had a shorter shelf life. Laxmi's tomatoes had far fewer infections by common fruit-penetrating insects, and attracted more customers."

Her tomatoes outshone the others in the market. "No one trusted my sudden change in farming methods, and it was an experiment for me also," says Laxmi, who owns a three-acre plot in the village.

Earlier she used chemical fertilisers like Urea, DAP and pesticides. The toxins affect the fertility of the soil and harden its texture.

A workshop from the BAIF Development Research Foundation convinced her to switch towards organic farming. "I learned to make organic compost from farm waste; I decided to try it out in one acre with tomato plants" she said. She was the only woman from her block to attend the workshop.

"The results were astounding! I produced a harvest of 2.5 quintals, 30 per cent more than the normal outcome," she added.

Looking at the quality and size of her tomatoes, Laxmi decided to sell them at Rs. 15 per kg instead of Rs. 10, the prevalent price. Customers bought them in droves. She saved Rs. 20,000 on chemical fertilisers and pesticides.

Looking at her success, over a dozen women farmers approached her to learn about compost and organic mixes for pesticides. Laxmi taught them to make organic compost and manure.

She decided to teach them collectively and formed a group. Today over 125 acres, with farmers from six neighbouring villages, have switched to organic farming.

Traditional prejudices often act as a hurdle, and slow positive change. Women are major contributors to farming activities in the area. Hence, BAIF decided to convince and train one farmer woman; Laxmi was trained, and she got over a hundred farmers to switch to organic farming. Recognising her efforts, Laxmi was awarded the 'Krishi Vigyan Kendra' Award in September 2020, for using progressive farming techniques.

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

C. Joe Arun, SJ
cjarun@gmail.com

In a Different *Farm*



Image Source: TBI

What comes to your mind when you think of a government official? Bribes for a sign on your certificate? Delay in registering your sale deed? Meet Taslima Mohammed, 34, a sub-registrar working in Mulugu and Jayashankar Bhupalpally, two districts in Telangana. You will be surprised to know a different kind of an official. As a sub-registrar, she maintains property records, and collects any taxes applicable to the government. For many it is a lucrative job. But she takes a road not taken by any official in her status.

She works during the day in the sub-registrar office and in the evenings and in the week ends she devotes her time in uplifting members of the underprivileged Gutti Koya tribe, who are mostly farm labourers, spread across Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

For the past six years she has been working for the causes of farm labourers. Not by sitting in her arm chair to preach liberation but by soiling her hands in the farm lands along with farm labourers. She also uses the time

with her farm mates to explain government schemes and create awareness about making use of them. She joins the farmers in their struggle to get their due in subsidies from the government due to which she is often questioned by her higher officials. That has never deterred her to fight for the rights of farm labourers. Taslima says she spends over half of her salary in helping the labourers as much as she can.

Where did she get motivation for this? She says "my father was killed by Naxalites. My mother toiled in our five-acre land but eventually lost it for monetary reasons. Farming helped my mother survive and take care of me."

During the COVID-19, the youngsters studying in major cities and professionals returned to their hometown, but felt uncomfortable working in the fields. She persuaded them to join the farmers and even managed to convince 50 teachers from private institutes to do the same. Her work has earned her the title of 'Gutti Koyala Peddakka' that translates to 'Sister of the Gutti Koya tribes'.