

April, 2025

JIVAN

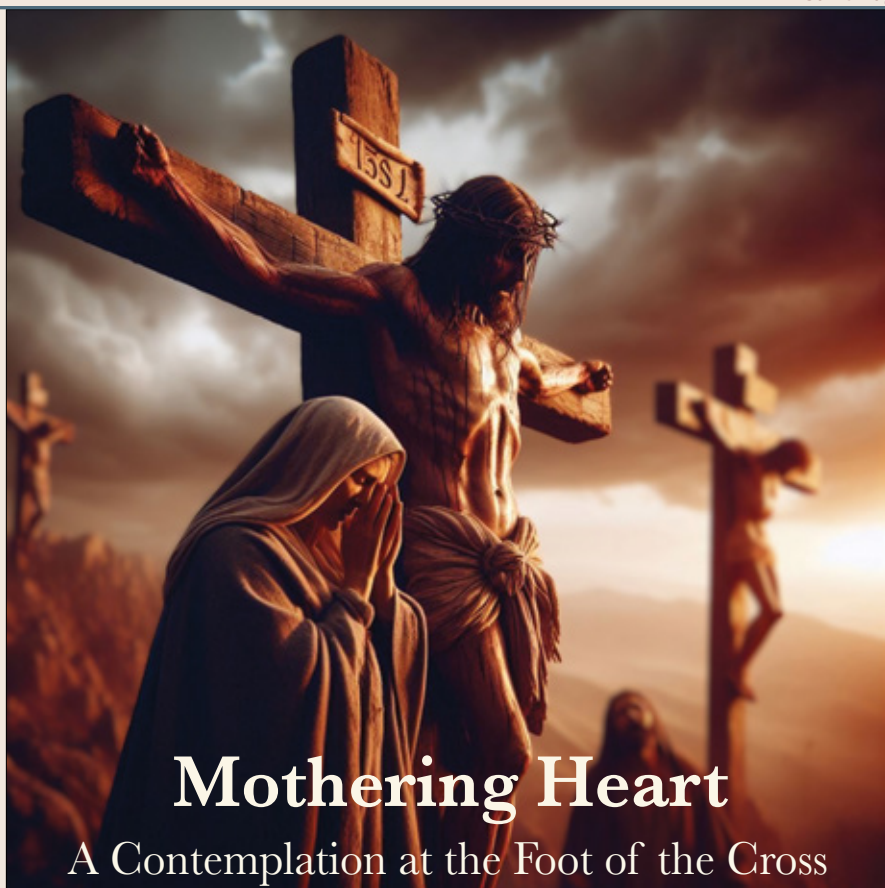
NEWS AND VIEWS OF JESUITS IN INDIA



**Do you belong to this
sad group of Jesuits?**

| World Earth Day Special

| Short Story: II prize winner



Mothering Heart

A Contemplation at the Foot of the Cross

My heart is pierced with a sword of sorrow, just as Simeon foretold.
 I watch my beloved Yeshua, the bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh
 His body, once so strong and full of life, is now broken and bloodied.
 He cries out, "Eli, Eli, lama Sabathani" the words from Psalm 22.
 My soul splinters at the sound, but I cannot let him be alone in this.
 My lips begin to tremble, but I force them to move aloud,
 "Yet you are holy enthroned on the praises of Israel,
 In you our ancestors trusted, and you delivered them..."
 As I recite the psalm, I feel a connection beyond time.
 I see my Yeshua as a child, learning the scriptures at my knee.
 I see the miracles, the healings, the teachings - his life's work; And now,
 I see the future, the salvation that his sacrifice will bring to the world.
 The pain is unbearable, but I know it has a purpose.
 I realize that what is happening is not just a death; it is a symbolic birthing.
 My Yeshua is giving birth to something new: the fullness of God's love for us.
 My Son, you may be in your final moments, but you are not alone.
 I am here, and so is the Father, and together, through this sacred pain,
 God is being born anew into the world.
 Because, Yeshua... you make everything new.
 And... Yes Adonai....here is my fiat, yet again...
 Abba... Thy will be done!

*Fr. Sanil Mayilkunnel, SJ, (KER) , is a trained clinical psychologist
 and is currently serving at Loyola College of Social Sciences (Autonomous),
 Thiruvananthapuram.*

*** Kindly confer Psalm 22 for the full context*

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

Hindus serve the iftar meals

Let me share with the readers of *Jivan* what we at Arul Kadal, Chennai, gained during a two-week course focused on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations conducted by Joseph Victor Edwin SJ. This program included visits to two historic mosques in the city: the Walajah Mosque in Triplicane and the Thousand Lights Mosque in Royapettah.

At the Walajah Mosque, a Sunni mosque, we participated in iftar, the evening meal that breaks the fast during Ramadan. The spiritual ambience during iftar, coupled with the communitarian prayers that followed, fostered a sense of religiosity and a shared humanity within me. This sentiment was further enriched by the knowledge that a group of Hindus from the Sufidar Trust has been serving iftar meals to approximately 2,500 attendees for the past 40 years. I found great solace in the wisdom of those who strive to cultivate fraternal relationships in the face of narratives filled with hatred, intolerance, and division.

At the Thousand Lights Mosque, a Shia mosque, we had the opportunity to meet Agha Shabir, a Shia Imam, who shared insights into the beliefs and practices of Shia Muslims, who constitute about 15% of the global Muslim population.

We had the opportunity to view Kombai S. Anwar's insightful documentary, 'Yadhumi,' which explores the culture of Tamil Muslims. The film shows that Islam can coexist harmoniously with various religions and cultures without compromising its core tenets. We had discussions with Janab Asar and his

colleagues from the Centre for Peace and Spirituality (CPS), founded by Maulana Waheeduddin Khan. CPS diligently strives to present Islam in a peaceful light.

This course has led me to a clear conclusion: in our contemporary post-truth context, intensified by populism and societal polarization, there is a pressing need for a theological framework to guide our mission today. This mission must be firmly anchored in the belief in one Triune God and it should encompass the wisdom to acknowledge the divine presence within the sacred traditions of Islam, Hinduism, and other belief systems.

Sch. Jenith Xavier, SJ | Chennai

Sacred space

I was deeply moved by Meath Conlan's article, 'Letting Silence Heal and Renew Us.' In a world constantly filled with noise and distractions, we often forget the profound wisdom hidden in silence. In my own journey, I have found that silence is a sacred space where the soul listens to God. It is in the quiet moments of prayer and reflection that we come to understand ourselves, our purpose, and our deep connection with others. As the article beautifully illustrates, silence teaches us to feel the greater reality beyond our mental barriers. I hope more people embrace silence as a source of renewal. Thank you, Dr Meath Conlan, for sharing such a transformative perception

Denzil Pinto, NSJ | Bengaluru

Prayer
Intention for
April' 25



Pope's Worldwide
Prayer Network



For the use of the new technologies.

Let us pray that the use of the new technologies will not replace human relationships, will respect the dignity of the person, and will help us face the crises of our times.

Pic courtesy: datacenter-insider.de



WHAT DO YOU SAY?

STANY D'SOUZA, SJ
President, JCSA

Are you a giver or a taker?

What a scintillating experience that was! About four hundred priests, six Jesuit Major Superiors, seventeen bishops, twenty-five thousand people and the Apostolic Nuncio were under one roof and with one feeling - gratitude.

It was the centenary celebration of the Dumka-Raiganj province, the erstwhile Santal Mission. The story of the present Dumka-Raiganj is quite impressive. A few small steps taken by the early Maltese missionaries, led by the legendary Fr Anthony De Bono have become highways today. A small group of people they evangelized has grown into three dioceses today. A small little Santal Mission they established has grown into a full-fledged province today.

The story of Dumka Raiganj province reminds me of a write up that I read recently. It speaks of two types of people: givers and takers. The 'takers' see how much they can get from others. Their goal is personal gain and hence, they focus on exploiting and hoarding. Of course, they have immediate gain. They become popular, but they lose in the long run. History does not remember them.

The 'givers' on the other hand, see how much they can give. Hence, they develop a collective vision and mission, employ collaboration and networking, nurture trust and talents, and thus, build persons and communities. There is no much immediate gain for the givers but in the long run they are remembered for their glorious legacies.

The pioneers and those who succeeded them have left a splendid legacy in Dumka-Raiganj province. It is because most of them gave till they had nothing left to give. Hence, the names like Majlispur, Torai, Guhijori, Tinpahar, Mariampahar and Cilimpur are not mere geographical dots on the map of Dumka-Raiganj province. They are veritable milestones in the long journey and a testimony of the selfless service of the Jesuits and their partners in mission.

The beauty of Dumka Raiganj province is that even after a century it lives and thrives in the rural areas, with and for the poor. It is the poor who teach us the lessons of true giving, don't they? Often giving is explained in terms of sacrifice. Hence, naturally, some hesitate to give their time, energy and resources to others. However, giving is a contribution and the paradox is that the more you give, the more you receive. It is the story of Dumka-Raiganj province.

So, the message is clear. Invest on giving. It lasts because it is not centred on power, position, privilege and possessions but on love, compassion, generosity, trust and fulfilment. It is the story of the Easter as well. So, let us replace fear with faith and be the 'givers', the architects of a new way of being and living. What do you say? Happy Easter to you!



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

M.A. JOE ANTONY, SJ
Editor

Justice or reconciliation?

It is always a proud moment for a magazine when thinkers and scholars use its pages to discuss and debate, articulate and clarify their ideas.

Remember the cover story titled, 'Where has justice gone?' in the September '25 issue of *Jivan*? It was the perceptive Joseph Lobo, SJ (KAR) who first sounded the alarm, noticing that the term 'justice' has gone missing in the Jesuit vocabulary for some time. He thought that in the recent times our favourite term is 'peace and reconciliation.' He felt that this shift raises a nagging question: 'Have we, over the decades, softened our commitment to the cause of justice?' In our Christmas issue, dated November-December '25, we published a letter from a veteran social worker, Anthony Dias, SJ (BOM), who wholeheartedly endorsed Joseph Lobo's observation.

Then two Jesuits, one of whom was Secretary to Fr. General for Justice and Ecology for eight years, came up with an article, published in the February '25 issue. It was written by Fernando Franco, SJ (GUJ) and James C. Dabhi, SJ (GUJ). They suggested that the relationship between faith and justice in Jesuit practice is marked by certain tensions that tend to distance one from the other. Their conclusion was: "Now is the time to give, in all ministries, more weight to justice, so that the balance is maintained."

An interview and an article in this issue assure us that this anxiety over the disappearance of the term 'justice' is unwarranted. Roberto Jaramillo Bernal, SJ, the present Secretary to Fr General for Social Justice and Ecology, affirms, "True reconciliation is the supreme and radical act of justice; it goes far beyond the various forms of justice that we can think of - distributive, retributive, commutative or any other. What justice does not achieve is achieved by true reconciliation." (See p. 11,12)

In the Forum article on p.6 Brendan Byrne, SJ (ASL), professor emeritus of New Testament at the University of Divinity in Melbourne, Australia and a former member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, says, "When GC 35, followed by GC 36, stressed the notion of reconciliation, it introduced, to my mind, a significant and necessary dimension. Reconciliation that we help to bring about - in any area - is always an expression of God's grace. Work for justice is a necessary expression of faith - to my mind, a better formulation of the Society's mission."

So, friends, the discussion can, of course, continue, but there is really nothing to worry about, is there? What do you think?



The Justice Dimension of Faith

Like Frs Fernando Franco and James Dahbi (“Time to re-emphasize justice,” *Jivan*, February 2025, 17–19) I deplore the rise of the political right across the world and, notably in the United States, the rise of the Christian right in tandem with it. I am not so sure, however, that this shift is influencing the separation of faith from justice in the Society. The nuancing of the strong statement of GC 32 (1973–74) that the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement of the service of faith had begun before GC 33 (1983).

It began in fact in writings of Fr Arrupe, one of which (Rooted and Grounded in Love) GC33, Decree 1, §32, cites in a footnote (n. 41). The sentence in that Decree following the one quoted by Frs Franco and Dahbi reads, “We have not always recognized that the social justice we are called to is part of that justice of the Gospel which is the embodiment of God’s love and saving mercy”. GC 33, which I attended, recognized that several Jesuits had given their lives in the service of faith and the promotion of justice (Decree 1, §31); it also confirmed Decrees 2 and 4 of GC 32 (§38).

But, recognizing that Decree 4 had been controversial in the Society and the wider Church, it did try to bring faith and justice more intimately together by introducing a biblical dimension that the earlier formulation lacked.

The development in subsequent General Congregations that Frs Franco and Dahbi trace carried on that process. When GC 35, followed

by GC 36, stressed the notion of reconciliation, it introduced, to my mind, a significant and necessary dimension. The primary reconciliation in which we are caught up begins with God. Our reconciliation with God is God’s work: “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself ... and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:19).

Reconciliation that we help to bring about - in any area - is always an expression of God’s grace. Work for justice is a necessary expression of faith - to my mind, a better formulation of the Society’s mission, one also that might preserve us from the Pelagian tendencies to which we are sometimes prone.

I cannot of course speak for India but in the Australian society in which I live - and I think this would be true of Europe also - while work for justice is ever more necessary, the increasing secularity of society and practical atheism render equally pressing the struggle for faith. The drastically declining number and ageing of Jesuits mean that our social apostolates - which are many and in their various spheres effective - are staffed and led by lay companions with minimal Jesuit involvement on the ground. How Jesuits relate to them and what role we might play in them are key questions confronting us at the present time. ❖

Brendan Byrne, SJ (ASL) is professor emeritus of New Testament at the University of Divinity, Melbourne, Australia. He was a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission and rector of the Australian theologate, Jesuit Theological College, Parkville.



PLEASE NOTE:

The next issue of *Jivan* will be the combined holiday issue, dated May-June 2025. It will be posted in the month of June 2025.

- Editor



Do you belong to this sad group of Jesuits?



Do you know Fr Cyndas? He is a Jesuit – a smart, talented Jesuit. But he is critical and pessimistic. He is quick to dismiss new ideas as meaningless or unworthy of effort. He is judgmental, and tends to judge his fellow Jesuits harshly. Sadly, he is not aware that he is driven by insecurity and jealousy. He questions the success of his fellow Jesuits, and tends to attribute it to favoritism or undeserved privilege.

In his interactions with superiors, he often displays distrust, doubting their leadership and viewing their decisions through a lens of skepticism and criticism. Rather than engaging in constructive dialogue, he often retreats into negativity, and so further isolates himself from the community.

He doesn't trust others and so is not open to them. He struggles to build genuine relationships. He views others with suspicion and fails to recognize and acknowledge the strengths of others and so does not easily collaborate with others.

His prayer life reflects his inner rigidity, becoming transactional rather than transformative. It is shaped by a legalistic understanding of God, leaving little space for grace, gratitude, or growth. He has a rigid view of God, seeing him as rule-oriented and punitive. Therefore, he is incapable of forgiveness, compassion, or a graceful acknowledgement of human limitations. This cycle of critical detachment and spiritual stagnation deepens his sense of bitterness and isolation, moving him further away



“ Jesuit structures are uniquely equipped to counter cynicism by fostering environments rooted in empathy, cordiality, sense of humour, reflection, and shared mission. ”

Pic courtesy: confirmado.com.ve

from the compassionate and relational mission he is called to live.

Are there other Jesuits who are like him? Yes, quite a few. They are called ‘cynical Jesuits’. What make some Jesuits cynical are often their experiences, which they view as injustice done to them. Their personality and attitude too may contribute to making these smart, talented Jesuits cynical Jesuits. Of course, not every Jesuit succumbs to cynicism, when faced with disappointments and challenges.

In our Jesuit mission to labor for the greater glory of God, we are called to serve with zeal, hope, and profound trust in divine providence. However, every now and then we may encounter a subtle yet pervasive challenge: cynicism. Cynicism is characterized by a persistently negative outlook, detachment from meaningful apostolates, and a loss of trust in both authority and community. At its core, cynicism is a defensive response to prolonged stress, disappointment, or disillusionment, manifesting itself as skepticism about the intentions of others, withdrawal from community life, or a sense of hopelessness regarding the possibility of achieving meaningful change.

If left unchecked, cynicism saps our energy, damages relationships, and obscures our vision of hope, threatening both personal well-being and the

vitality of our shared mission. In India, Jesuits face unique challenges that can foster cynicism. Whether engaged in social work, education, pastoral care, or formation, the demanding nature of our ministries exposes us to systemic limitations, bureaucratic hurdles, and leadership challenges. These are capable of testing even the most dedicated among us.

Cynicism in the Indian Jesuit Context:

Questioning Mission Statements: Jesuits may doubt whether their ministries genuinely prioritize the ideals of education, social justice, and pastoral care. This skepticism is often fueled by limited resources or operational hurdles. For example, a Jesuit engaged in a rural education project might feel disheartened when the vision of empowering marginalized communities is undermined by inadequate funding and staffing.

Distrust of Leadership: Perceptions of superiors as disconnected or unresponsive to ground realities can breed skepticism and resentment. In hierarchical structures, top-down decision-making, when perceived as unilateral, can erode trust and hinder collaboration.

Emotional Detachment: The slow pace of systemic change and the enormity of challenges can lead to disengagement. A Jesuit working tirelessly in a remote tribal area, for instance, may withdraw

emotionally if his efforts seem to yield little tangible impact, leading to a sense of futility.

Disillusionment with Structures: Operating within flawed systems often exacerbates a feeling of frustration. Jesuits working on tribal land rights, for example, may face inefficiency, corruption, or political apathy, creating a sense of alienation from the larger mission.



Impact of Cynicism on Jesuit Life and Mission

Cynicism is not merely an individual struggle; its consequences ripple through Jesuit communities and apostolates, diminishing our collective effectiveness and mission.

Reduced Commitment: Cynicism undermines a Jesuit's sense of purpose, weakening their ability to inspire and lead. For instance, a disengaged educator may struggle to motivate students or effectively impart Jesuit values.

Erosion of Trust: The cynic's habitual distrust of motives of fellow Jesuits or collaborators hampers relationships, stifling teamwork and jeopardizing ministries.

Health Consequences: The emotional toll of cynicism can lead to burnout, depression, and physical health issues, further diminishing one's capacity to serve.

Declining Effectiveness: Cynicism stifles creativity and adaptability, vital for addressing the complex challenges of Jesuit ministries, leading to stagnation and reduced impact.

Countering Cynicism with Ignatian Wisdom

Though pervasive, cynicism is not inevitable. The Jesuit tradition offers a rich repository of resources

to address and mitigate its effects, enabling us to renew hope and purpose in our mission.

Reconnecting with the Ignatian Vision: Regular engagement with the Spiritual Exercises provides clarity and a renewal of purpose. Revisiting 'the Principle and Foundation' reminds us to seek God's greater glory in our work, countering feelings of futility.

Fostering Honest Dialogue: Creating safe spaces for open, empathetic conversations within Jesuit communities fosters understanding and solidarity. Practices like manifestation of conscience allow members to share their struggles with superiors or spiritual guides, breaking the isolation that cynicism thrives on.

Strengthening Bonds in the Community: Isolation is a breeding ground for cynicism. Jesuit community life, centred on shared prayer, meals, and apostolic reflection, nurtures resilience. For example, a Jesuit disillusioned by systemic challenges might find renewed strength in the support and encouragement of his community.

Encouraging Rest and Renewal: St. Ignatius emphasized balance as vital to effective ministry. Holidays, regular retreats, sabbaticals, and moments of personal renewal are essential to sustaining hope and energy. A Jesuit struggling with pastoral burnout might find new vigour after a retreat at a spirituality centre, reconnecting with his vocation.

Spreading Hope and Resilience

Cynicism, while a significant challenge, is not insurmountable. Jesuit structures are uniquely equipped to counter cynicism by fostering environments rooted in empathy, cordiality, sense of humour, reflection, and shared mission. By addressing cynicism head-on, we not only restore individual well-being but also reaffirm our collective commitment to faith, justice, and service. As Jesuits, we are called to embody hope and resilience, becoming witnesses to the transformative power of God's love even in the face of life's complexities. Together, we need to recommit ourselves to being agents of collaboration, creativity, and renewal, ensuring that cynicism becomes a fleeting shadow rather than a defining feature of our mission. ❖

Fr. Mukti Clarence, SJ (JAM), who has a Ph.D. in Psychology, is currently the Vice Principal at XTE College, Gamharia.

Fr General attends the JCSA Meeting in Chennai

All roads led to Loyola College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu as the Jesuit Major Superiors, along with the two Regional Assistants, Frs. Vernon D'Cunha and M K George, gathered there for the meeting of the Jesuit Conference of South Asia (JCSA) from 16 to 22 February 2025, to deliberate on several issues. The meeting was fruitful as the participants took many decisions to enhance the life-mission of the Society of Jesus in South Asia.

Continuing with the last JCSA meeting in Delhi, the Major Superiors focused primarily on the process of the Re-imagining and Re-structuring (RR) of the Society of Jesus in South Asia and they shared their personal journey of RR in smaller groups and Zonal Chairs, their perception of the process in their zones in the larger aula.

During the first two days, the Secretaries presented their annual reports in and through the lens of the RR process, dwelling on the activities conducted, successes experienced, challenges faced, and alternatives explored while implementing the RR process in their six Secretariats. The Major Superiors acknowledged and appreciated the good work of the Secretaries, and assured them of their support. The Secretaries were grateful for the presence and observations made by the International Secretaries for Social Justice and Ecology and School Education, Fr. Roberto Jaramillo and Fr Alberto Mesa.

The other highlights of the meeting were the presentations on the Eco-policy and on the De-addiction and Renewal programme by Fr John Kennedy and Fr Francis Jayapathy respectively. They enlightened the participants on the crisis in homes and in our common home, the planet Earth and ways to address them. We had a series of sharings on Nepal region, Bangladesh mission and Sri Lanka province by the respective Major Superiors. The President of the Jesuit Conference of the European Provinces, Fr Renic Dalibor, shared about their Conference, Fr John Dardis talked about Discernment in Common and the Magis Digital Home and Fr Chuks Afiawari, Director of



Communications, on the Apostolic Plan of the Curia Communication Department.

The privileged moment of the Chennai JCSA meeting was the presence of Fr General, who, during two sessions, interacted with the Major Superiors on various issues. He began with the general issues like the health of Pope Francis and the sense ethnicity that is all pervasive in the Society and need to combat it, and then proceeded to reflect on the governance in the Society from the perspective of reimagining. He observed that our life and activities are defined and directed by the mission and hence, there is bound to be tension. He invited the Major Superiors to focus on the mission and explore various ways to serve our mission more effectively.

The session with the Regional Assistants, as usual, was informative and enlightening. Fr MK George made a few general remarks on our way of proceeding and Fr Vernon D' Cunha clarified some issues related to finances and property in the Society of Jesus, and gave a historical perspective on the upcoming October 2025 meeting of the Major Superiors in Rome. He also spoke on the spiritual governance in the Society of Jesus as a way of being, doing and witnessing.

We bade goodbye to three of our outgoing Major Superiors, Fr EP Mathew, the provincial of Kerala, Fr Jebamalai Raja, the provincial of Chennai and Fr Ranjit Tigga, the provincial of Madhya Pradesh, who, thanks to their experience and expertise, always made a difference in the JCSA meetings. The visit to Satya Nilayam, an outing to a resort, and the generous hospitality with a personal touch of the Chennai province and Loyola Community made the Major Superiors happy and the JCSA meeting memorable. ❖

| Thomas Perumalil, SJ (PAT)

“The friendship of the poor has been my source of salvation”

Roberto Jaramillo Bernal, SJ, is the Secretary for Social Justice and Ecology at the General Curia, Rome. During his recent visit to India, he addressed the students and staff of Vidyajyoti, Delhi. For this interview to Jivan, he spoke to **Victor Edwin, SJ**, professor at Vidyajyoti and a Jivan Correspondent.

After your ordination, you dedicated 18 years to serving in the Amazon region. Will you describe your experiences working there?

One of my apostolic dreams had always been to go to mission lands. But in the province where I did my formation, I saw that ideal as distant, and my performance as a student in philosophy and theology and in other apostolic services made me foresee a life dedicated to the formation, education and research in more institutional services.

After my studies in theology, I began to study history and anthropology, and at that time, the apostolic field of the Brazilian Amazon was opening, for which the then provincial of the province of Salvador-Bahia (Brazil) was asking for reinforcements. I offered myself and won the lottery. In a divine outpouring of generosity, the Colombian province agreed to send me temporarily to reinforce the newly re-created - because there were already Jesuits in the Amazon since the beginning of the 20th century - apostolic district of the Amazon, which later became the Brazil Amazon Region. That turned out to be my place of apostolic work for 18 years of my priestly life. And I hope that one day it will again be my work and mission destination.

While working in Amazon, I learned that being a priest is neither primarily nor fundamentally to serve an institution and perform sacred rites - however fundamental and important or transcendental they may be - but to accompany the people of God in their journey, starting from their concrete needs and

trying to forge together with them a better future for all. Being a priest is not a function but a way of being with others: that of Jesus who went about rescuing the lost, vindicating the excluded, raising up the fallen, and restoring to us all the joy of being above all brothers and sisters in the same Father without distinction of religion, race, nationality, gender, etc. Trying to live my priesthood in this way is what I received from contact with the poor.



In your speech at Vidyajyoti, you highlighted how your bond with the poor has

shaped your Jesuit calling. Could you elaborate on this for the readers of Jivan?

“Friendship with the poor makes us friends of the Eternal King,” said St. Ignatius, and GC 34 tells us that proximity - not only cordial but real - with the poor makes our witness credible. When Fr. General promulgated the UAP, he insisted that “walking with the poor, the excluded and the vulnerable” (2nd UAP) is not a figure of speech, but a real presence in their struggles, in their daily lives, in their organizations, in their world, in their expectations, in their frustrations, in their hopes. It is not possible to walk with a person on two different paths: we in first class and they in second class; some on the deck of the ship and others in the galleys. You walk side by side, on the same level, eating the same, treading the same, enjoying the same, suffering the same. We are mistaken if we think that we can love God without loving our neighbors, if we think we can live religious life without being friends of and close to the poor.

The gratuitous friendship of the poor has been, for me, a source of salvation: freedom, clarity, and passion. I think that if the Society of Jesus does not make a radical option to form its new members in this experience, then we are losing the essence of the mystery of the incarnation, which is the foundation of the mystery of salvation: to assume what is most radically human in order to rescue and resurrect it definitively - even if that implies the cross. The heart of a religious person cannot be formed without daily and demanding contact with the poor. I do not want in any way to extol or deify the life of the poor - nor to denigrate or disparage the life of the more affluent and richer people - what I affirm is that I have had the grace of finding God more easily and certainly in the life of the poor.

Some Jesuits express concern that the focus on reconciliation may detract from the emphasis on justice. How would you address this concern?

Initially, when GC 36 redefined our mission in today's world as a mission of reconciliation and justice, I myself was a little disappointed. I felt so because the challenge of the struggle for justice seemed to be obscured or diminished by the emphasis on reconciliation. This word "reconciliation", is an elusive word; it is not univocal. It lends itself to nuances and misunderstandings that can make it lose its true meaning. True reconciliation is that which passes through radical forgiveness such as that offered to us by God himself in Jesus, who, in order to reconcile humanity to himself, gave himself up to death, "even death on a cross."

In this way true reconciliation is the supreme and radical act of justice; it goes far beyond the various forms of justice that we can think of - distributive, retributive, commutative or any other. What justice does not achieve is achieved by true reconciliation, by self-giving love, by the definitive recovery of the lost, the fallen,



and the misguided through love as radical as the love of Jesus on the Cross. That is why the definition of GC 36 regarding our mission as one of Reconciliation and Justice is not a step backwards, but quite the contrary, a Christian radicalisation of the message of justice that we must continue to proclaim and defend, even to the point

of death if necessary.

You are the Secretary for Jesuit ministries related to social justice and ecology. How will this secretariat influence Jesuit ministries globally in the coming years?

The mission of the Secretary for Social Justice and Ecology is primarily to assist Fr. General in all that relates to the challenge of social justice and ecology.

He must help Fr General to make sure of our apostolic commitment to reconciliation with ourselves, with each other, with creation and with God himself.

Therefore, the secretary must be able to inform Fr. General of the situation, needs and challenges of this mission in our various ministries. The secretary should also be able to accompany the apostolic works around four global challenges that we work on in supra-provincial and transcontinental networks: the right to education, justice in mining,

forced migration and integral ecology. The Global Ignatian Advocacy Network (GIAN) was created for this. But this is an effort that will require several more years consolidating the collaboration of many works of the universal Society in advocacy tasks at different levels.

The other special responsibility is to assist in the formation and information of Jesuits around issues of social justice and ecology, which we do especially through the publication, known for many years, called *Promotio Justitiae*, now published every week on the SJES website (www.sjesjesuits.global) and also on different social networks. ❖

“ True reconciliation is the supreme and radical act of justice. It goes far beyond the various forms of justice that we can think of. What justice does not achieve is achieved by true reconciliation. ”



What can we do to make our students peacemakers?

We live in a divided, violent world that desperately needs peacemakers. Can we Jesuits, with nearly 3,500 schools and colleges in the world, make our students the future peacemakers?

Education plays an important role in socializing a child. It moulds the child to play a specific role in a society, often taking on the values and prejudices of the dominant group. Besides handing on the culture of a group, education must prepare the child to think critically and creatively to face new challenges. Hence, the kind of education we impart will determine the society we have. Therefore we need to tweak our education to create the society we dream of.

human beings are all the same and that our differences are due to the different cultures we are born into. Cultures are manmade as these are our response to the different challenges we faced as a people over time. They reflect a certain wisdom that should be appreciated. As situations change, new solutions have to be found, and so we can all learn from each other. The different cultures we encounter today should be seen as the common patrimony of mankind and we should be proud of and learn from it.

Religion is an intrinsic part of one's culture. Hence we need to foster inter-faith and inter-cultural exposures for our students so that they

“Everyone talks about peace but no one educates for peace. In this world, they educate for competition - and competition is the beginning of any war! ”

- Maria Montessori



Pic courtesy: suprajmontessori.org

Maria Montessori, the founder of the Montessori method of teaching that attempts to help children learn naturally, says in her book, *Peaceful Children, Peaceful World*: “Everyone talks about peace but no one educates for peace. In this world, they educate for competition - and competition is the beginning of any war! Only when we educate to cooperate and owe each other solidarity, will we be educating for peace that day.”

Let me suggest a few ways to educate our children for peace.

Understanding and appreciating our culture and that of others: Our students must realize that at birth we

come to know and understand each other. Human Fraternity or Constitution groups can be formed to foster this dialogue. Fr Arturo affirms that “we need to practice interculturality. We need to develop a critical awareness of our own culture recognizing its gifts and limitations, and go out to meet other cultures, contributing what one is and being enriched by exchange with the other.” (Fr. Arturo’s address to IAJU, Boston, 4,08,2022).

Fostering open and honest communication: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., affirms, “People fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don’t know each other;

they don't know each other because they have not communicated with each other." We keep seeing what lack of communication within a family does. A failure to communicate makes life partners strangers to each other. A healthy two-way communication allows us to express our needs and yet be sensitive to the needs of others, teaching us that life involves a 'give-and-take' relationship.

Therefore by teaching our students to mix and communicate with each other, especially those who do not belong to 'our group', we can help them get rid of prejudices and fears they have of each other and form genuine friendships with all. Hence, we need to admit students to our school from across the socio-cultural spectrum.

Nurturing a critical understanding of the media and history: Because vested interests manipulate

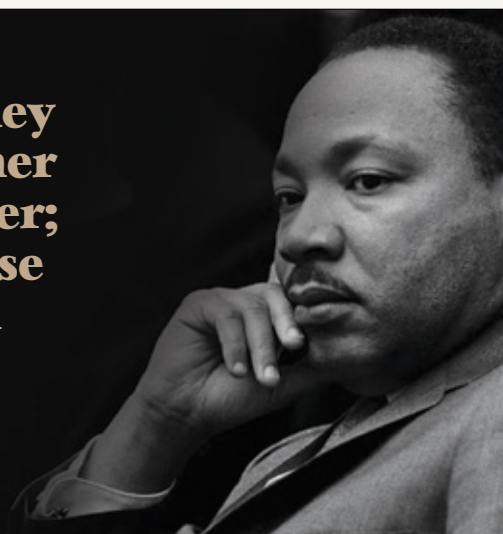
to ask where these are coming from and research the sources of such deliberate misinformation.

Helping them see that violence is not the answer: Our students need to appreciate and practice the wisdom of ahimsa. Some maintain that 'if you want peace, prepare for war!' But can war or violence lead to the establishment of true peace? Martin Luther King Jr, a disciple of Gandhiji's philosophy of non-violence, affirms, "Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Educating to cooperate, not to compete: The way we educate our children determines how they look at those around them. We usually foster competition rather than cooperation in our children. So our

"People fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don't know each other; they don't know each other because they have not communicated with each other."

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr



Pic courtesy: wikipedia.org

our differences to their own advantage, we should help our students learn to question everything. They should understand today's realities like 'disinformation, partisan journalism, and fake news' – even 'government-sponsored' fake news! – and the many techniques used by media to manipulate the truth. There is a constant need to question our sources of information, and get information from many sources, to get a better idea of what truth may be. Nothing in life is black/white, evil/good. Everything is mixed! So we must encourage them to do fact-checking.

Our students should learn to situate an event in its historical context. When repeated attempts are made to rewrite history, our students should learn

children grow up looking at each other as opponents fighting for the same resources rather than as partners working together to attain the resources we need and can share so that all prosper.

Conclusion: Having so many schools and colleges, with thousands of students in our care at an impressionable age, is a rare privilege. But this comes with responsibilities. One of them is to mould them into peacemakers, who will be messengers of peace wherever they go to live and work. Are we Jesuits ready to do all we can to build a society where peace, harmony and unity are assured? ❖

Fr Peter D'Cruz, SJ (PUN) is the Director of Snehasadan Institute for the Study of Religion, Pune, and involved in interfaith dialogue.

The holy man who asked us to fall in love and stay in love



(Fratern Masawe, SJ, a General Counsellor and Regional Assistant for Africa, residing in the General Curia, talks to our Roman Correspondent)

Where in Africa are you from?

I am a Tanzanian and a Jesuit since 1978. My dad was called Michael Kiwese Masawe and my mum was Yustina Mtemberi Kavishe. I was born on 1 August 1956, on the slopes of the Kilimanjaro. I joined the then English speaking Jesuit Novitiate for Africa in Lusaka, Zambia, on 4 July 1978.

We have heard that Father Pedro Arrupe had a great impact on you. Tell us about your experience of Fr Arrupe.

The first time I met Pedro Arrupe face to face was in Africa. I was a mere novice then. Not knowing much about who the General of the Society was, I joined the more experienced Jesuit companions in welcoming him as instructed by the Superior. I remember the atmosphere was electric, not to mention that it was a feast of reading the signs of the time, a celebration of its own kind on africanization.

Personally, I was filled with emotions of all sorts. I was curious to encounter a well-known global figure, and a man of authority with as many as 27, 639 companions under his spiritual leadership. No wonder, the phrase that I kept hearing from our elderly Jesuits was he was the “Black Pope”, which increased my curiosity.

Pedro Arrupe, SJ, the Spanish Basque Jesuit priest, was the then the 28th Superior General of the Society of Jesus in his 13th year. It was rare in those days to see the Superior General. On the other hand, I felt like Peter (Lk 5:8); I have been close to a holy man. What would happen to me if I touch the hand of a holy man, I wondered! After all this man has seen the effects of the atomic bomb – pain, suffering, death in Hiroshima - and survived.

With what we were hearing of him in our years of our initial formation and reading his writings, I



could not think of anything else apart from the cardinal virtues – prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. Pedro Arrupe was a man of practical wisdom who had the ability to judge the right course of action at the appointed moment. I

cannot help but remember his statement: Today our prime educational objective must be to form men-and-women-for-others; men and women who will live not for themselves

but for God and his Christ — for the God-human who lived and died for all the people of the world. Arrupe affirmed that we cannot even conceive of love of God which does not include love for the least of our neighbors. If love of God does not lead to justice for all humans it is a farce.

When you think of Arrupe, what encourages you the most?

Often I am encouraged by his simple and yet deep understanding of what love is – who God is. And I hear men and women praising him for this powerful statement: “Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you will do with your evenings, how you will spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love and it will decide everything.”



What do you admire the most in Arrupe?

Pedro Arrupe, was graced in an extraordinary way with the gift of fortitude. He was able to face difficulties and endure suffering with inner strength. This perseverance is manifest meaningfully and humbly in what he said: “More than ever, I now find myself in the hands of God. This is what I have wanted all my life, from my youth. And this is still the one thing I want. But now there is a difference: the initiative is entirely with God. It is indeed a profound spiritual experience to know and feel myself so totally in his hands.”

Are you praying for his beatification?

His eventual beatification and canonization are entirely in God’s hands and it would be just a confirmation of a holy life well lived. He lived a life of holiness and he remained faithful to the very end. His perseverance in his last ten years of infirmity is extraordinary. He is a model worth imitating. Many Jesuits in Africa feel empowered, supported and inspired by Pedro Arrupe’s life. He is a re-founding father of the Society of Jesus in Africa. ❖



The new dangers to our planet earth

As we step into celebrating International Earth Day on 22 April 2025, in the Jubilee Year of Hope, the Earth -our shared sanctuary- is under siege. Our planet faces an unprecedented array of environmental and socio-political challenges. While past generations grappled with pollution and deforestation, today's ecological threats are more complex, interconnected, and severe. These emerging dangers not only threaten ecosystems and biodiversity, but also humanity's very survival. Let us examine the current and future threats to Earth and their implications for global sustainability.

The Crisis of All Time—A Path Through the Inferno: Climate change remains the single most existential crisis facing our planet. The Paris Agreement's 1.5°C target is now a distant memory. In 2025, with global temperatures at a 1.68°C tipping point, the Arctic permafrost is melting, and the Amazon is suffering from dieback due to microbial attacks on trees and shrubs. These changes are accelerating.

Extreme weather events—wildfires in Los Angeles (USA), Australia, the Amazon (Brazil), Maui (Hawaii), and Sariska (India); hurricanes and floods in Valencia (Spain), Kedarnath, and Badrinath (India); and droughts in Vidarbha, Warangal, and Kalahandi (India)—are growing more frequent and intense, devastating ecosystems and human settlements. Rising sea levels, increasing at 3.99 mm per year, have submerged 30% of the Sundarbans delta since 2020, displacing 1.5 million people and destroying

rice paddies and freshwater sources through saltwater intrusion. Cape Town's "Day Zero" water crisis has led to rationing and riots, resulting in loss of life. Melting glaciers are contributing to coastal flooding, threatening low-lying regions like the Panama Canal and Pacific islands such as Kiribati, which are becoming uninhabitable.

By 2050, climate change could create 143 million environmental refugees as people flee regions rendered uninhabitable. Warmer climates are also expanding the range of disease-carrying insects like mosquitoes, increasing the prevalence of malaria, dengue, and Zika fever. Future generations may face pandemics born of a fevered planet.

Thawing Permafrost and Methane Release: In Siberia and the Arctic permafrost is thawing at an unprecedented rate, releasing methane—a greenhouse gas with over 25 times the heat-trapping potential of CO₂. According to NASA, permafrost holds 1,700 billion tons of carbon, twice the amount currently in Earth's atmosphere. This feedback loop exacerbates global warming, altering weather patterns and raising sea levels. Ancient pathogens trapped in ice pose a growing threat (Anthrax Outbreak in Siberia). Future generations may face diseases we are unprepared to cure, unleashed by a warming Earth.

'Urban Heat Islands' and Unplanned Urbanization: With a global population of 8.2 billion, the proliferation of concrete jungles without green spaces has intensified urban heat island effects,

making cities hotter and less habitable. The lack of vegetation exacerbates air pollution and increases energy consumption for cooling, further straining the environment.

Monoculture, Biodiversity Loss: A Silent Catastrophe:

Climate shifts, habitat destruction, and invasive species introduced through global trade have accelerated biodiversity loss. Modern agriculture's reliance on monoculture has increased vulnerability to pest outbreaks, reduced soil fertility, and weakened resilience against climate variations. This loss disrupts ecosystems, undermines food security, and diminishes nature's ability to regulate climate and disease.

Antibiotic Resistance and Microplastics: 'These are called 'the Silent Killers'. The overuse of antibiotics in human medicine and livestock has fuelled rising antibiotic resistance, potentially rendering common infections untreatable. Concurrently, microplastic pollution in food and water sources raises concerns about long-term health impacts, with links to 20% of cancers, infertility, and immune disorders.

Climate Denial and Abandoning Climate Treaties: Prioritizing personal interests over the common good, some world leaders have adopted an "I, Me, and Myself" mentality, exiting critical agreements like the Paris Climate Accord. Their attitude undermines collective action against climate change and weakens global resolve to combat environmental degradation. Geoff Dembicki's book, *The Petroleum Papers: Inside the Far-Right Conspiracy to Cover Up Climate Change*, reveals how certain oil companies, aware of the link between fossil fuels and climate change, actively discredited climate science to protect profits. When leaders dismiss evidence for short-term gain, the consequences are dire. Future generations inherit a globe fractured by ego, not united for survival.

Resource Wars Over Rare Earth Materials: The demand for lithium, graphite, and platinum - essential for batteries, renewable energy, and technology - has sparked geopolitical conflicts and resource wars. The new President of the USA has demanded that Ukraine should share its rare minerals



Picture courtesy: i0.wp.com

if it wants American support in the ongoing war with Russia. Pursuing infinite growth on a finite planet comes at a steep environmental cost.

Space Debris Threatening Satellite Activities: Human activities have extended beyond Earth's surface, with figures like Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk pushing space exploration. However, the escalating problem of space junk - defunct satellites and debris - threatens operational satellites critical for weather forecasting, communications, and navigation.

Digitalized Lifestyles and Social Disconnection: Increased reliance on digitized, fast-paced lifestyles is unravelling social bonds. Teens, glued to screens, report isolation. The pressures of an online-driven world have contributed to rising mental health issues, with 'Generation Z' feeling "doomed" amid "digital arrests," leading to higher suicide rates.

The Urgency for Collective Action: A Faustian pact is an agreement that sacrifices something of great moral or spiritual value for material gain. That is precisely what we have done, trading Mother Earth as part of the bargain. Addressing these emerging threats demands an unprecedented level of global cooperation to establish climate justice, ecological restoration, and global solidarity. The choices we make today will determine the fate of future generations. We can choose collapse or courage. Imagine a world where coral blooms, permafrost remains locked, and youth thrive in harmony with nature. That's the vision worth fighting for. The clock is ticking. Let's make it count. ❖

Fr. Xavier Savarimuthu, SJ, (DEL) an environmental scientist, is currently the Principal of St. Xavier's College, Jaipur, Rajasthan.

A large background image showing a man in a dark suit and glasses, identified as Dr. Xavier, speaking to a group of students in school uniforms. He is gesturing with his hands as he speaks.

“If you want to become a hero...”

St Joseph's Higher Secondary School was celebrating the demisemiseptcentennial anniversary with pomp and zest. The grand celebration began with a prayer song and welcome address. The principal welcomed the gathering. Then the M.C. briefly introduced the chief guest, Dr. Xavier, the Founder of Francis Higher Secondary Schools and Colleges. Listing his positive traits, the M.C. said, “He is a symbol of hard work and a source of inspiration. We are fortunate to have him here among us today. He loves our school, therefore even though he's busy, he accepted our invitation right away. Above all, we are pleased to recall that he graduated from our institution.”

The principal presented the chief guest with a memento and a shawl as a sign of respect. Then addressing the school, Dr. Xavier said, “Listen carefully. This is a real-life incident. Shyam was a smart young boy with great ambitions studying in a semi-urban school. He fared well in studies and was quite liked by his teachers and classmates. Stepping into school finals, his one consuming desire was to make his last year in school eventful. He wanted to be acclaimed and remembered as a hero. Eager to draw attention to himself, he began sporting a punky hairstyle, get dressed in gaudy colours, and was seen hanging out with the town's riffraff. Boisterous and defiant, he soon acquired notoriety.

“Shyam started skipping classes, attracting attention to himself for all the wrong reasons. Those who knew him thought that an intelligent, affable student was slowly but surely heading to perdition.

“As the year was coming to a close, his class teacher, when preparing his character certificate, left a blank against the column: character. He told Shyam, “I know you have performed consistently well in your studies in the past. Twice you were elected class captain and had led many group activities. You were a diligent sportsman winning medals, at least till the last year. My concern is about what you have turned out to be this last quarter. There have been many and frequent complaints about you. Some negative remarks mentioned include defiance, absenteeism, aggression, challenging teachers, and disturbing class. Shyam, I don’t really know how to grade your character. Last year I would have readily awarded ‘Excellent’ for your character. But your recent conduct has been diametrically opposed to what you have been all these years. I don’t know what to do. Therefore, I am leaving this column blank. I shudder to think of the consequences of the label ‘Poor’ against your character. It’s a stigma you’ll carry all your life. Opportunities would be denied, all doors would be closed. I don’t want your future ruined. Yet, in conscience, I can’t help you. So, I’m forwarding all our records of your years in this school to the principal. Let the principal take the call.”

“Shyam took some time to process what his teacher had said. With tears flowing down his cheeks and shaking all over, he stormed into the principal’s room. Fraught with fear and anxiety, Shyam stood with his hands clasped and felt his heartbeat quicken. While the principal was reviewing the report with a fine tooth comb, all of Shyam’s malicious actions flashed across his mind.

“The principal looked at him with disdain. “Shyam,” he called him in a tone that startled Shyam. “You were such a sincere and diligent boy, somehow and somewhere you missed the track and went astray. You were carried away by worldly affairs, craving for fame and vainglory. As far as I understand, you were misled by the deceitful words of those in your gang. You were swept away by their false projections of yourself. You have fallen prey to the trigger of hero worship.” He continued, raising his voice, “And the disruption

you have caused to the campus is worse. Oh God! Shame on you!”

The principal paused for a while as if he gave Shyam time to ponder his words. Shyam quickly recalled how he lost the way and headed in the wrong direction. It pricked his conscience. Realizing his blunders and feeling guilty, Shyam wept.

The principal said loudly, “Mind you, a single label is enough to ruin your future.”

His words frightened Shyam. He wished to plead with him to for one final chance. But he was speechless.

The principal said, “However, I care for you and I’m concerned about you.” A glimmer of hope dawned on him. “What are you going to gain with cheap popularity?” Shyam understood it was a rhetorical question. He did not respond.

The principal said, “Life is a gift of God to you, and what you become will be your gift to God.” Shyam realized how true it was. He nodded his head. The principal continued, “If you want to become a hero, do something good to those in need and you will live in their hearts forever. I do hope that you would come up with flying colours. Prove to the world you are a Jesuit product.”

Seeing the effect his words had on Shyam, the principal wrote against the column ‘character’: Good’ and let him go.

There was total stillness in the auditorium as Dr. Xavier finished narrating what he called a real life story. He asked, “Do you know who Shyam is?” The audience waited breathlessly for his response. The principal said, “The person who is talking to you right now was Shyam once.” The audience responded with a loud applause that lasted for a few minutes.

“Who was the principal that gave me a new life? It was Fr. Francis, SJ. That is why I have named all my institutions after him. He instilled in me the spirit of discernment and inspired me to become a man of Magis. I have not forgotten what Fr. Francis used to say: ‘If you want to become a hero, do something good to those in need, and you will live in their hearts forever.’ ❖

Fr. Arul Gnanapragasam, SJ, (MDU), is currently a teaching faculty at Vidyaniketan, the South Indian Common Juniorate, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala



In a synodal Church everyone will have something to give

Synodal conversion: The recent Synod on Synodality presents a vision of the Church defined by mutual listening, dialogue and discernment that could open new pathways for more inclusive ministry and outreach. The goal of synodal conversion is a spiritual and ecclesial renewal to bear more fruit in the mission and, in turn, to better love and serve the men and women of our time. That is to say, all of them. “Tutti, tutti, tutti”, “no one is excluded,” as Pope Francis tells us so often.

The synodal emphasis on conversion - relational, structural and ecclesial - points toward needed transformation in how the Church approaches ministry and outreach. This includes examining where current practices may create barriers or cause harm. As the document states, “Listening to those who suffer exclusion and marginalization strengthens the Church’s awareness that taking on the burden of wounded relationships is part of its mission” (no. 56). Synodality “requires repentance and conversion” (no. 6); it is a path of reconciliation.

Baptismal dignity: Several key elements of synodality highlighted in the final document are particularly relevant for fostering a more welcoming church for everyone, especially the marginalized. At the heart of the synodal dynamic is the centrality of baptism, which binds us together as members of Christ’s body: “There is nothing higher than this baptismal dignity” (no. 22). So, in a synodal church—that is, a relational church—“nobody should be excluded.” The synodal path also emphasizes the importance of recognizing and receiving the gifts of all baptized persons.

Authentic relationships: This understanding of dignity leads to a vision of the Church as fundamentally relational. As the final document states, “What emerged throughout the entire synodal journey...was the call for a Church with a greater capacity to nurture relationships: with the Lord, between men and women, in the family, in the local community, among social groups and religions, with all of creation” (no. 50). The synod’s focus on authentic relationships and human dignity provides a foundation for genuine encounter and dialogue in a spirit of reciprocity.

Everyone has something to give: In a synodal Church, everyone has something to give and something to receive. As the document states, “In the Christian community, all the baptized are enriched with gifts to share, each according to his or her vocation and way or condition of life” (no. 57).

LGBTQ ministry: While the synodal documents do not specifically address LGBTQ ministry, their vision of a listening, dialoguing, discerning church provides principles for developing more inclusive pastoral approaches. Significantly, the Synod recognized the need to listen to those who have felt the pain of feeling “excluded or judged because of their marital status, identity or sexuality” (no. 50). The document’s emphasis on human dignity, authentic relationships, communal discernment and ongoing conversion also offers a framework for ministry that genuinely welcomes and accompanies LGBTQ persons, while remaining rooted in Catholic faith and tradition.



Pic courtesy: osvnews.com

Listening & respecting: The document also stresses that synodality requires “listening attentively and respectfully to each person’s voice” (no. 84) and emphasizes the Church’s call to “rebuild community life, to put a face to faceless entities and to strengthen relationships” (no. 111). This commitment to listening and relationship-building is essential for understanding the lived experiences, needs, and gifts of all.

Unity, not uniformity: A key synodal principle is recognizing that unity does not require uniformity. The document notes, “The unity of the Church is not uniformity, but an organic blending of legitimate diversities” (no. 39). This understanding creates space for cultural and pastoral approaches that respond to different contexts while maintaining communion. The synodal path calls for “missionary creativity” in developing “new forms of pastoral action and concrete processes of care” (no. 111).

Listening & Learning: A synodal understanding of lived ministry is one in which we walk alongside those to whom we minister, remaining open to listening and learning from them, and fostering closeness, mutuality and friendship. The minister is not above or separated from the people, but a companion on the journey, like Jesus on the road of Emmaus.

Need for formation: Formation is highlighted as crucial for developing the capacity for dialogue, discernment and inclusive ministry that such a lived ministry demands. The synod calls for formation that is “integral, ongoing and shared” and engages “all dimensions of the human person (intellectual, affective, relational and spiritual)” (no. 143).

Transparency & Accountability: The document’s call for transparency, accountability and regular evaluation of pastoral practices (nos. 99–100) provides a framework for assessing whether ministry efforts truly serve their intended purpose of sharing God’s love and building up the community. This includes remaining accountable to those being ministered to

and learning from their experiences, grounded in the dialogical vision the final document articulates. We experience that our diversity is a richness enlarging our perspectives. Significantly, synodality calls for processes of communal discernment that involve “the widest possible participation” (no. 82).

Welcome & belonging to counter isolation and marginalization: The document’s emphasis on the “prophetic voice” of synodality challenging “cultural individualism” and promoting “mutual care, interdependence and co-responsibility for the common good” (no. 48) points toward building genuinely inclusive communities. This includes addressing isolation and marginalization through concrete practices of welcome and belonging. The synodal method of ‘Conversation in the Spirit’ has been experimented as a fruitful tool to include all voices and foster communion.

The future of a synodal Church: Moving forward on this path will require patience, humility and trust in the Holy Spirit’s guidance. As the synod reminds us, authentic practices of synodality enable Christians to offer “a distinctive contribution to the search for answers to many challenges faced by our contemporary societies in building the common good” (no. 47). More inclusive ministry shaped by synodal principles could be one such contribution.

Implementing these synodal principles in Catholic ministry will demand sustained commitment, formation and willingness to engage in sometimes difficult conversations. However, the synodal path offers hope for developing ministry approaches that more fully embody the Church’s mission to be “the sacrament of the union of the human race with God” (no. 56)—a union that excludes no one from God’s love and the community’s care. ❖

Source: <https://outreach.faith/2025/02>

Sr Nathalie Becquart, XMCJ is an undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops. Appointed to this position by Pope Francis in 2021, she is the first woman to hold this post and the first ever to vote in a synod.

“The synodal path emphasizes the importance of recognizing and receiving the gifts of all baptized persons.”



100 years of the Catholic Church in Bihar

Name: *Church at the Service of Bihar: A Centenary History of Patna Archdiocese, 1919-2019*

Author: Jose Kalapura, SJ

Publisher: Archbishop's House, Patna, 2023

Pages: 547+xx

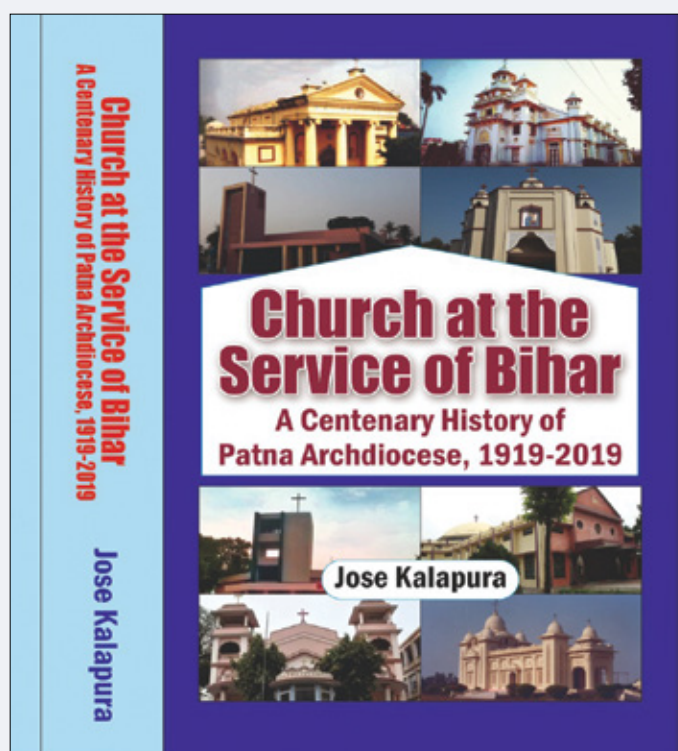
Price: not stated.

When you look at 100 years of the Catholic Church in Bihar, what strikes you the most? What do you think is remarkable?

The most striking aspect of the Church in Bihar, which completed one hundred years in 2019, is the transformation of a mission into a self-sufficient, mature Church. When the American Jesuits inherited the newly created Patna Diocese in 1919, there were 19 mission stations with only about 5000 Catholics. Under the management of Patna Jesuit Mission, the diocese witnessed substantial growth in terms of establishment of parishes (60) by 1980s, numerical expansion of clergy, religious and laity (nearly two lakhs in 2020). This growth is visible in the creation of four more dioceses in Bihar. The most remarkable achievement is not ecclesiastical expansion of the Church, but mediating much change in the Catholic community - comprised of mainly three ethnic groups such as the Bettiah Christians, Dalit Christians and Tribal Christians - which is visible in their upward mobility in educational, occupational, literary, and socio-economic spheres.

Has the Church grown in any way?

I have partially answered this question. Church growth can also be gauged in terms of its institutional presence in all the 38 districts of Bihar. Catholic institutions of service like schools, colleges, hospitals, dispensaries, old age homes, hostels or study homes, institutions for specially-abled persons, social work centres, etc. are well sought after by the public and are appreciated. Besides, the numerical strength of the Christian community in Bihar is slowly growing, thanks to the intervention of many evangelical and Pentecostal missions in the recent decades.



What, in your opinion, is the future of the Church in Bihar?

Though numerically a miniscule community, the future of the Church in Bihar is hope-filled. Unlike in a few north Indian States, the Christian community in Bihar has enjoyed acceptance, maintained good communal amity with other religious communities and has been generally appreciated by the civil administration and the public, thanks to its institutions of service. ❖

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

Integrating Spirituality into Business



The 'Integrating Spirituality into Business: Drawing Wisdom from India's Diverse Traditions' conclave, hosted by XLRI's Centre for Spirituality on 10 February 2025, highlighted the increasing recognition of spiritual values in fostering ethical decision-making, meaningful leadership, and sustainable business models.

Its central theme revolved around harnessing insights from India's rich spiritual traditions - Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Atheism and indigenous wisdom - to inform and guide contemporary business practices. Scholars, industry leaders, and practitioners convened to explore how these spiritual values can be woven into business strategies and operations, promoting integrity, empathy, and sustainability.

In his message Fr. Arturo Sosa, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, emphasized the imperative of integrating spirituality into the business realm, not as an abstract concept but as a practical framework for ethical leadership. He affirmed that grounding business practices in spiritual wisdom ensures decisions that honour human dignity and environmental stewardship. He highlighted that true

leadership transcends profit margins, and considers the well-being of all stakeholders. By drawing from spiritual traditions, leaders can cultivate virtues such as compassion, humility, and resilience, which are essential in navigating the complexities of the modern business landscape.

The conclave was inaugurated by Ms Aarti Sharma, Senior Director, Coca Cola. Topics ranged from integrating spiritual values into leadership and management to exploring ethical decision-making rooted in spirituality. Participants delved into how mindfulness and compassion can be incorporated into business practices. One notable session examined the concept of 'Corporate Dharma' from Hindu philosophy, discussing how principles like Dharma (duty) and Karma (action) can guide corporate ethics and responsibility. Another session explored Buddhist mindfulness techniques as tools for enhancing managerial focus and empathy.



The conclave also served as a platform for presenting research papers and case studies that showcased successful integrations of spirituality into business. These contributions provided empirical evidence and real-world examples of how spiritual values can drive organizational success and societal well-being.

Frs Donald D'Silva SJ, Dean (Admin & Finance), XLRI and Somy Mathew, SJ, CISF, JCSA and Marianus Kujur, Director, XISS, contributed much to the success of the conclave. The conclave showed yet again that XLRI, Jamshedpur has consistently championed the integration of ethical and spiritual dimensions into management education. ❖

| Kuruvilla J. Pandikattu, SJ (DUM)



You will not find truth, but Truth will find you

Film: *Restless Heart* (2012)

Director: Christian Duguay

Run time: 180 minutes

The movie depicts the life of the intellectual giant, apologist, saint and philosopher St Augustine (354-430) whose *Confessions* is the first autobiography in history. The title recalls the famous lines from *Confessions*: “Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee.” The movie covers his entire life, presenting key aspects of his life and message.

The time of action is the 5th century, a time when the Roman Empire was declining and the Church was struggling with schisms and persecution. The opening sequence set in 430 A.D when Hippo, in North Africa ruled by Augustine’s friend and Governor Valerius, is besieged by the barbarian Vandals. When the Pope sends ships to rescue Augustine along with his books, Augustine prefers to stay with his people. While he packs his books, his conversation with his scribe takes us back in time.

The story flashbacks to the mid 3rd century Thagaste, East Africa where Augustine is born to a devout Christian mother Monica and a pagan father Patricius, a drunkard, unfaithful husband, disliked by the son. While Monica prays for the conversion of both, Augustine disdains the faith as weakness and takes after his father. The brilliant teenager Augustine, with the support of a friend, reaches Carthage to study law and rhetoric under the famous Macrobius, and gains a reputation. He successfully defends guilty clients too, uncaring of truth and justice. He pursues fame and fortune, has a child by his mistress. His mentor Valerius sends Augustine to Milan, Italy to fight brilliant orator Bishop Ambrose, who opposed the young Roman Emperor Valentinian’s persecution.

Augustine leaves for Italy secretly abandoning his mother, mistress and son. But they follow after. In Milan Monica helps him procure access to Bishop Ambrose. Augustine uses his oratorical skills against Ambrose at the Emperor’s court. By now Augustine has embraced Manichaeism that shunned the notions of right and wrong holding that all human behaviour is inherently natural. Defeated by Ambrose in court, Augustine prompts the Army to attack unarmed Christians protecting Ambrose’s cathedral. His mother nurses the wounded Augustine and his troubled conscience and this leads to a period of soul-searching. Ambrose tells him that he will not find truth; and Truth is the person of Jesus Christ who finds him. Monica’s prayers are answered; Ambrose baptizes him.



Enraged, the Emperor’s mother banishes Valerius and Augustine. Returning to Africa, Augustine champions the true faith against heresies such as the Manichaeism Donatism and Arianism. Vandals invade Hippo. Governor Valerius prepares to fight. Wishing to make peace, Augustine dispatches his friends in the Pope’s ships and makes a diplomatic journey to meet the Vandals’ chief, but fails. In the closing sequences the devastated city reminds of Augustine’s reflections on the transmutation of the world into a new heaven and a new earth. ❖

Prof. Gigy Joseph Koottummel, former Head of the Department of English, SB College, Changanacherry is a sought-after writer, translator, columnist and actor-director of Shakespeare productions.

Three Years of War: Jesuits Accompany over 127,000 Refugees

Europe's largest humanitarian crisis since World War II continues, with over 8.8 million people - or nearly one in three Ukrainians - fleeing their homes, leaving behind memories and hopes for the future.

As Ukraine marks three years of conflict, Jesuit Mission Australia alongside the Xavier Network, have been supporting project partner Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Europe to help provide life-saving support to over 127,000 refugees.

Since the war began, Jesuit organisations have delivered over 612,000 essential services -ranging from emergency aid and shelter to education and psychosocial support. "As another grim milestone passes and some decision-makers waver in their support, our commitment to accompanying those forcibly displaced remains as steady as the first day," said Fr Alberto Ares SJ, Regional Director of JRS Europe and project partner of Jesuit Mission Australia. "Even in a context marked by pain and uncertainty, we see daily examples of solidarity and integration - people extending a helping hand and walking together."

JRS Europe has expanded their response to adapt to the evolving needs of displaced people. Initially focused on emergency aid, the coordinated programmatic response now primarily supports

long-term integration - providing education, psychological support, legal assistance, and employment opportunities.

Thanks to JRS, just a few kilometres from their home in Ukraine, 10-year-old Nadja and her grandmother Natalia (62) have found refuge in a shelter on the outskirts of a small village in eastern Moldova. "Nadja and I were shopping when we heard the first explosions. The child was so frightened

that all she wanted was to leave," said Natalia. In a moment of urgency, Nadja's parents made the painful decision to send their daughter and Natalia to safety. "My daughter told me: 'Go to Moldova; you'll be safe there. We'll stay here to defend our home, and you'll come back when it's all over.'"

The Jesuit network's support extends across Ukraine, neighbouring countries, and further afield - reaching as far as Portugal and Spain.

"Even in the darkest times, hope persists. We see it in every refugee who finds a new home, a new job, a new future - made possible by the generosity of those Australian supporters who have stood alongside the Ukrainians during this time," said Helen Forde, CEO of Jesuit Mission Australia. ❖



Pic courtesy: theivifoundation.org

Source: JCAP



Look at the birds of the air!

Name: *Nature's Canvas*

Author: Xavier Savarimuthu, SJ

Publisher: St. Xavier's College, Jaipur

Pages: 160

Price: 1500.00

This is basically a book on birds. What inspired you to write this book?

The inspiration behind “Nature’s Canvas” stems from a deep reverence for nature as a divine creation and a personal fascination with birds. Birds are the epitome of freedom, grace and resilience. Documenting their presence within the campus felt like both a privilege and a responsibility to practice sustainable development goals (SDG-15, Life on Land). This work is also a tribute to the late Dr. Salim Ali, whose pioneering studies kindled in me a lifelong love for ornithology. Fr. Abraham Amal Raj SJ’s talent in photography brought an artistic dimension to the book. His lens captured intimate moments of these birds in their natural habitat. I aimed to present birds not only as subjects of scientific curiosity, but also as symbols of interconnectedness in creation.

How do you transform bird watching into a mission for environmental protection and cultivating a love for nature in young people?

Bird watching is much more than a pastime—it is a gateway to understanding the interconnected ecosystem in the natural world. Transforming bird watching into a mission starts with education. I organize nature walks, workshops, and talks for students, where they engage actively with the environment and learn to identify species and their roles in the ecosystem. Experiencing the richness of birdlife first-hand sparks curiosity and fosters respect for nature.

To cultivate a sense of responsibility, I encourage students to take small, but meaningful steps, such as planting trees that attract birds, avoiding plastic waste, and advocating for habitat protection. I emphasize stewardship of the environment as a spiritual and moral duty - one that aligns with the ethos of caring for creation, ‘our common home’. The goal is to instil a love and responsibility for nurturing the environment,



so that the next generation becomes vigilant guardians of our planet’s biodiversity.

What insights have you gained from our avian companions for your spiritual journey?

Matthew 6:26 Says, “Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” Birds have taught me profound truths about life, faith, and Divine creation. One of the most striking lessons I’ve learned is the virtue of trusting in God. Birds, especially migratory ones, traverse vast distances with remarkable precision, often without familiar landmarks. This incredible feat echoes the spiritual act of surrender- trusting in the unseen Force guiding their journey. It has deepened my understanding of faith and reliance on God’s providence in the face of uncertainty.

Birds also embody resilience and adaptability. The way they build nests, find food, or recover from storms serves as a metaphor for finding strength amid life’s challenges. Their songs inspire me to sing my own ‘Magnificat’. Be it the sunrise melody of a robin or the chirping of sparrows during the day, their sounds often draw me into mindfulness and gratitude for the present moment. They constantly inspire me to live a life of purpose, harmony, and reverence for all forms of life.



(as told to Victor Edwin, SJ)

‘The Jesuit Pilgrimage’ app now available in Tamil

The app called ‘The Jesuit Pilgrimage’ is now available also in Hindi and Tamil and is freely downloadable on Google Play for Android and the App Store for Apple Mac. This update adds to the existing 8 languages, making the spiritual heritage of the Jesuits more accessible to all those who use online media. Whether you are planning a physical or virtual pilgrimage, the app offers text, photographs, audio meditations, interactive maps and stunning visuals.

The app takes the viewers to key historical sites related to the life of St. Ignatius of Loyola and important to Jesuits - like Arévala, Pamplona, Loyola, Aránzazu, Montserrat, Manresa, Barcelona, Alcalá y Salamanca, Azpeitia in Spain and in Italy places like Rome, La Storta, Venice, Flanders, and in France like Rúan and Paris. Every site in this online Ignatian pilgrimage provides: composition of place, preamble, prayer text and points for prayer.

The venture was initiated by the communications wing of the General Curia in Rome. LENS, the media unit of Jesuit Madurai Province, has added the Tamil section in this pilgrimage app. Fr Devadoss Mudippasamy SJ, former Socius to the Provincial of Madurai and Fr Vernard Antony SJ, JCSA Communications Coordinator were the advisers



and Fr Pavulraj Michael SJ, formerly Professor at the Gregorian University, Rome and now Rector, St. Joseph's College, Trichy supervised the text and Mr. Sibi and Mrs. Viji were the technicians. Fr. Xavier Antony, SJ, Director, LENS, translated the text from English to Tamil.

Xavier Antony, SJ (MDU) & Vernard Antony, SJ (DUM)

From Sitagarah to Kolkata

The Juniors at SSC, Sitagarah, (HAZ) went on an educational tour to Kolkata, the “city of joy” on 27-29 January '25, guided by Frs Vinod Soreng SJ (RAN), Ranjit Kumar Horo SJ (RAN), and Roshan Tirkey, SJ (CCU). On the first day we visited Dhyan Ashram to meet our fellow Juniors of Kolkata. The entire community welcomed us with a lunch, songs and bouquets. After the lunch we participated in a quiz programme, anchored by Fr. Thomas, SJ and had friendly volleyball matches.

On the second day we visited the Science city where we explored the latest scientific discoveries like the Time Machine. At St. Xavier's University, Kolkata, Fr Mourlin K, SJ gave us a brief history of the Jesuit University, and explained its growth and expansion.

Fr. Mourlin and Prof Sudipto Ghosh gave us a guided tour of the university, its facilities, different academic wings and the library. At the Zoo we saw roaring tigers, zebras and giraffes. It was the Vice Chancellor, Fr Felix Raj, SJ who facilitated this guided tour. The Eco Park looked like a paradise here on earth.

On the third day we visited the Generalate of the Sisters of Charity called Mother Teresa Sisters and prayed at the tomb of St Mother Teresa. We attended the Eucharistic celebration concelebrated by Frs Ranjit Kumar Horo and Vinod. We explored the Howrah Bridge on Hooghly River, the Victoria Memorial, and Birla Science Planetarium and returned highly satisfied and happy.

Sch. Ugin Martin, SJ (CEN)



Ignatian spirituality & Zen

A rich dialogue exists between Zen and Ignatian spirituality. Zen excels in transformative awakening experiences, but may face challenges with nuanced discernments in daily life and relationships. Ignatian spirituality, with its methodical approach to discernment through reflection and prayer, offers tools for uncovering the intricate undertones of moral decisions and ethical living, complementing Zen's experiential nature.

Central to this exploration is discernment - the practice of deep listening to the heart's wisdom - portrayed as a responsive dialogue with life's calls. For mutual enrichment, Zen practitioners can gain insights into compassionate action from structured Ignatian methods, while Ignatian spirituality can deepen awakening through Zen's emphasis on fully experiencing the present moment. When Zen encounters Christ's teachings through Ignatian thought, it may unearth deeper understandings of compassion and community, recognizing their inter-connectedness.

Similarly, when Ignatius and Spiritual Exercises absorb Zen insights, they elevate the experience of faith and encourage connection to both the Divine and our world. Deep listening, mutual comprehension, and courage to explore the unknown are required. Growth comes through respectful dialogue with diverse spiritual paths; our shared journey toward peace and discernment.

Spiritual insight often emerges through compassionate action, transcending dogmatic divisions. By "deep listening to the heart's wisdom," we learn discernment is an holistic process: empathetic worldly engagement, humble openness to learning from diverse experiences. I sometimes forget that moment when the heart knows before the mind speaks.

Key ways Zen brings clarity to the process of discernment:

1. *Presence and Immediate Awareness:* Zen's

core strength is its emphasis on being fully present. In discernment, this means: Letting go of future projections and past regrets. Experiencing the decision-making moment with complete attention. Observing thoughts and feelings without immediate judgment.

2. *Emptying the Mind:* The concept of "emptying the cup" is important to discernment. This involves: Suspending pre-conceived notions. Creating mental space for intuitive wisdom. Releasing attachment to 'expected' outcomes. Allowing insights to arise naturally, rather than forcing solutions.

3. *Compassionate Action as Insight:* Discernment is embodied. Wisdom reveals itself through: Responsive engagement with immediate circumstances. Seeing beyond conceptual boundaries. Recognizing inter-connectedness. Acting with spontaneous compassion.

4. *Non-Dualistic Thinking:* Zen challenges binary thinking. In discernment, this means: Moving beyond 'right' and 'wrong' dichotomies. Embracing complexity. Seeing decisions as part of a larger, flowing process. Recognizing that seemingly opposite paths

might contain shared wisdom.

5. *Mindful Reflection:* Zen meditation techniques can assist discernment by: Cultivating inner stillness. Developing capacity to observe thoughts without being controlled by them. Creating spaciousness around difficult decisions. Accessing deeper intuitive knowledge.

Practical Exercise for Discernment: 1. Sit in meditation. 2. Pose your decision as a gentle inquiry, not as a problem to solve. 3. Observe any arising thoughts, emotions without attachment. 4. Notice bodily sensations. 5. Listen for a response that feels spacious, compassionate, inter-connected. 6. Trust the intuitive insight that emerges. ❖

Rev. Dr. Meath Conlan is a Counsellor and Adult Educator. He travels frequently to India. He can be contacted at meathconlan@icloud.com



Pic courtesy: linkedin.com



"Look at this letter from Fr. General for my golden jubilee. I never knew that I was so holy and have these wonderful qualities. How does Fr. General know what I don't?"



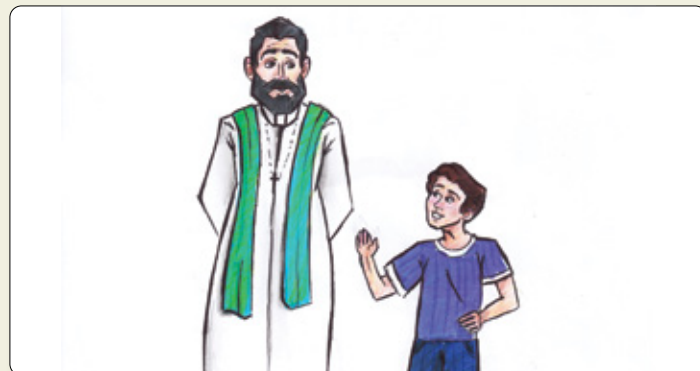
"I think I know why they don't respect me as their Superior. I am the only one in my community without a Ph.D. It is never too late to start, I thought."



"In all the community meetings, they all agree with me..."

"Really?"

"When I say I could be wrong as the Superior."



"How many years have you been a father?"

"Ten years now."

"My father is also ten years old."

"Ten years?! How can that be?"

"He became a father when I was born."

Melwyn Pinto, SJ

JESUIT HUMOUR

The Sick Call

On a Sunday morning, Fr. Nathaniel, a visiting priest, celebrated Mass at St. Michael's Church at the request of the parish priest. After Mass, a parishioner approached him with an urgent request to administer the last sacraments to an elderly woman who was critically ill.

"We don't want to disturb our parish priest, Father," the parishioner explained, "as he's busy meeting people to help them with their problems."

Fr. Nathaniel, who had often assisted the parish priest in his ministry, graciously agreed to attend to the sick call. After praying over the woman, he turned to his companion and said, "She has only a few hours to live. You really should have asked the parish priest to give her the last sacraments."

"No, Father" replied the companion, "We love our parish priest dearly. The sick woman is suffering from a highly contagious disease, and we didn't want to risk anything happening to our dear parish priest."





In the Joy of Easter

It is difficult to express in worn human words the mystery contained in the joy of Easter. If the mysteries of the gospel can enter the smallness of our human comprehension only with great difficulty, putting them into human words involves even greater difficulty. The Easter message is the most human message of Christianity.

Easter says: God has done something... God has raised his son from death. God has made what was dead alive. God has conquered death. God has done something and declared victory in a place ... where we experience what we are: children of the Earth who have to die. But what does that mean and why is this message a blessing to the children of the Earth?

He who is both the son of God and a human being has died. The one who has died is both the eternal fullness of divinity, which is sovereign, unlimited, and blessed as the word of the Father before all time and the child of the Earth as son of the blessed mother. The one who has died is, therefore, both the son of God's perfected nature and the child of Earth's poverty. But to have died does not mean that his spirit or his soul has escaped from this world and this Earth and has fled to the distant land of God's glory beyond. It cannot mean this simply because the body that is related to the Earth has demonstrated that a child of eternal light cannot be housed in Earth's darkness.

And he rose from this heart of all Earthly things where ultimate union and utter nothingness could no longer be distinguished and from which emanates the entire course of the world. He rose, not in order to go away in the end, not so that the pains of death could give birth to him anew, leaving the Earth's dark womb in hopelessness and void. No, he is risen in his body. That means: He has begun to transfigure this world into himself; he has accepted this world forever; he has been born anew as a child of the Earth, but of an Earth that is transfigured, freed, unlimited, an Earth that in him will last forever and is delivered from death and impermanence for good.

He is risen to show not that he is leaving the tomb of the Earth forever, but that this very tomb of the dead –



Pic courtesy: Freepik

which is the body and the Earth – has been completely transformed into the glorious, incomprehensible home of the living God and the divine soul of the son... He is risen in order to reveal that by his death there remains forever implanted into Earth's narrowness and pain, within her heart, the life of freedom and blessedness.

-from 'The Mystical Way in Everyday Life'

WELL SAID

**“Easter was when Hope in person surprised the whole world
by coming forward from the future into the present.”**

- N.T. Wright



Pic courtesy: pinterest.com