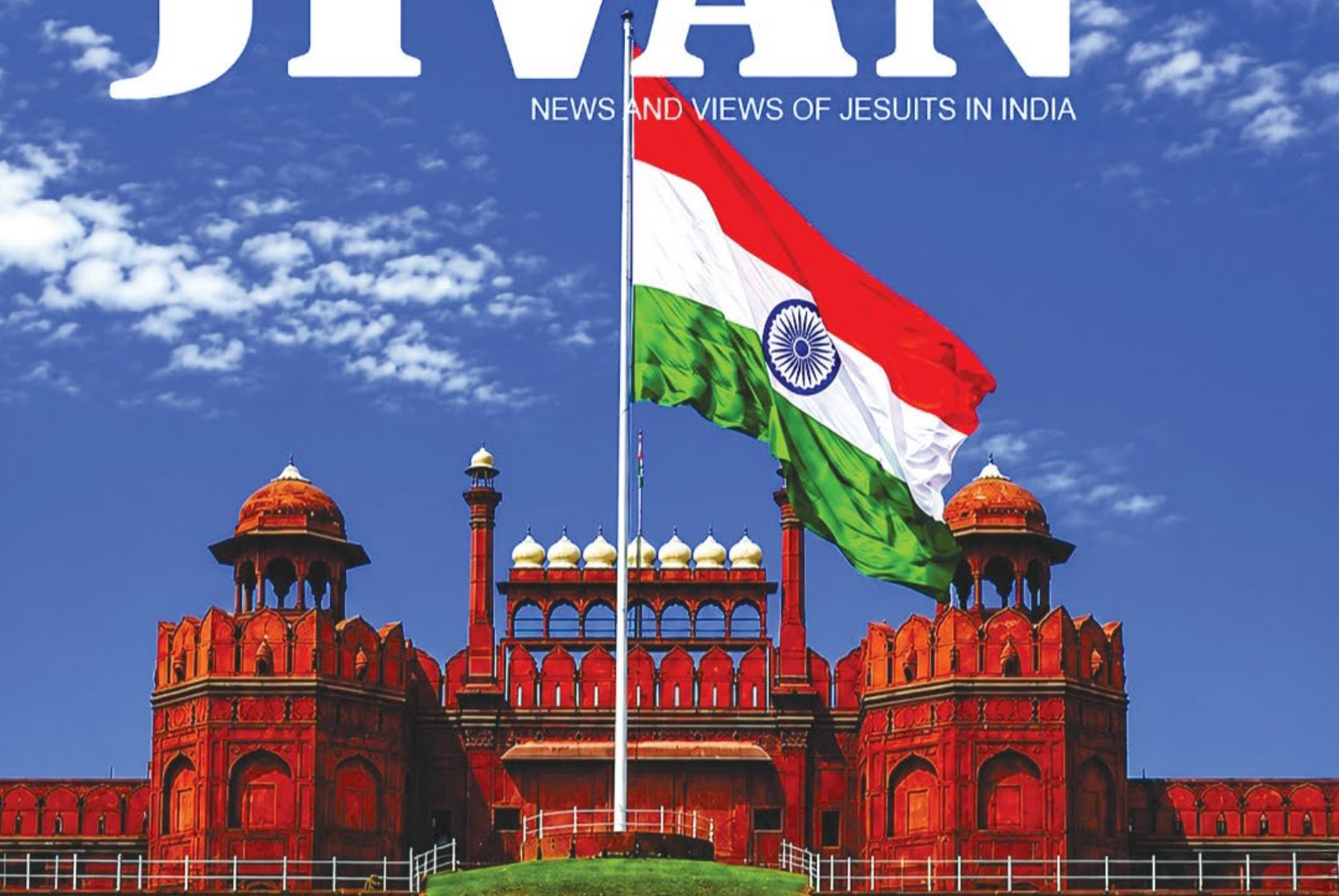


August, 2026

JIVAN

NEWS AND VIEWS OF JESUITS IN INDIA



Independent India @ 79

| A Portrait of the Ideal Jesuit

| Manjummel Novices

| The Question We All Carry

| Breaking the Loop



Free India

India is running ahead of me
(or is it running away from me?)
changing in ways I cannot control
or condone.

Truth has changed its pitch, tone and volume
remixed and whispered
afraid of being caught
between prison walls and court rooms.

The poor remain invisible
in manipulated data,
behind temporary screens
under flyovers
simply erased.

The powers-that-be sell their souls
to amass power
turning the machinery of the state
into an engine for their own perpetuity.

Politicised religious identities
trigger violence and suspicion
shaping laws
seeking to replace the unity of *the Tiranga*
with the uniformity of a single colour.

Independent India,
a democracy that is truly free?

Only time will tell
and the power of the people.

Dr. Astrid Lobo Gajiwala is a scientist, writer, activist, and a feminist theologian.

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Pic courtesy: in.pinterest.com

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Wounds can become sources of strength

I was deeply moved by Dr. Meath Conlan's article, 'Turning Suffering into a Gift' (*Jivan*, May-June 2026). The story of Harry and the insight that suffering becomes bearable when willingly embraced as an act of love resonated with me profoundly - both as a priest and as someone who has had to wrestle personally with physical pain. Human beings can endure extraordinary hardships when they discover a purpose beyond themselves. Harry's decision to offer his months of forced stillness for the sake of his parents is a striking example of this paradox.

Yet, there is an additional dimension: suffering as a path of personal transformation. At times, our wounds gradually become sources of strength and ministry. A few years ago, a life-altering accident left my right hand permanently disabled. The journey through physical limitation and emotional adaptation eventually inspired me to write 'Divine Trails', a book exploring how God accompanies us through life's unexpected turns. Our journeys meet at a common point: the conviction that suffering need not have the last word. Whether through sacrifice, transformation, or service, it can ultimately become a profound source of grace.

| Amaldass, SJ | Jaipur, Rajasthan

Not just places

The article, 'Five Lessons in One Year at Jnana Deepa' reminded me of a similar experience during my time in Philosophy. JD and DNC are not just places to study philosophy by reading books and attending classes; they are much more than we can imagine. When I read this article, I was transported back to my life at JD and DNC. It raised a recurring question I had

during my two years there: 'What more can I do for Christ?' In Jesuit terms, this relates to 'Magis', which emphasizes more and more – a hallmark of the Jesuit tradition and one of the identities as a Jesuit. Learning begins when we are not satisfied with what we know or do. It's all about discovering what new insights we can gain each day and every moment. Personally, I believe that places like JD and DNC are the best environments for challenging ourselves to avoid stagnation and to remain fluid.

| Nibin Daniel, SJ | Barasat

When power wears a halo

I would like to thank you for publishing the article "When Power Wears a Halo," written by Sch. Rezin Romero SJ (DEL) in the July '26 issue of *Jivan*. I found it to be a deeply moving and courageous reflection on the issue that is often left unspoken among the religious. This article gives voice to the silent struggles of many priests, seminarians, and women religious who carry emotional pain while continuing to serve faithfully.

Rezin's survey talks about the silence born out of fear. Obedience is one of the core values of religious life, but this article strongly reminds us that obedience should never mean suppressing one's conscience or remaining silent in the face of injustice. When people are afraid to speak up, because they fear punishment, rejection, or losing opportunities, obedience becomes a burden rather than a path to spiritual growth.

The survey findings invite us to reflect seriously on how authority is exercised and how communities can become places where every member feels respected, valued, and free to express themselves without fear. It challenges us to examine whether our religious lives truly reflect the values of Christ.

| Sch. Sagar Barwa, SJ | DNC, Pune

Prayer
Intention for
August '26

For evangelization in the city.

Let us pray that in large cities often marked by anonymity and loneliness we find new ways to proclaim the Gospel, discovering creative paths to build community.



Pic courtesy: thefordcatholic.org



WHAT DO YOU SAY?

STANY D'SOUZA, SJ
President, JCSA

How do we know we have grown?

A teacher and his student were senior citizens. Both eminent scholars and writers, they often went for walks and bumped into each other. One evening, the senior teacher saw his student sitting alone, seemingly melancholic and depressed. Pausing awhile, the teacher walked and sat beside him. "Son," whispered the teacher gently, "You seem overwhelmed with sorrow. I have no solutions to ease your pain. But, I have a shoulder. If you want to weep, you can lean on me."

The student gratefully narrated this experience in his memoirs. He wrote: "At that moment, all I needed was a shoulder to lean on and weep. My teacher offered me just that."

How do we know that we have grown? Age and grey hair may make one look older, and achievements popular; but age and achievements are not the criteria to assess one's growth and maturity. One truly becomes mature when one develops one's sensibilities.

"We are human beings and humaneness is natural to us," one may argue. However, humaneness is a latent potential within us, which we need to cultivate and make our constant characteristic.

Even if we have two eyes, we need to develop a right way of seeing. Even if we have two ears, we need to cultivate a proper way of hearing. Even if we have a tongue, we must train it to speak effectively. Even if we have two hands, we need to develop a soothing touch.

Incidentally, we are in August - a month which brings happy remembrances of our Indian Independence. On and around Independence Day, the national TV and newspapers trumpet scores of success stories. It is true that we are politically independent. We have achieved much since 1947. We have made mindboggling progress in science and technology. We have built impressive buildings and bridges. However, science and technology offer us only one perspective, one perception. Are we emotionally, spiritually, socially free?

The poignant protests of our Indian youth powerfully proclaim that we have miles to go. The Independence Day of our country is a unique moment to pause and ponder. Let's sharpen our sensibilities and grow. Let's offer our shoulders and support those most in need. Will you? What do you say?



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

M.A. JOE ANTONY, SJ
Editor

Is it because....?

"The adjective 'virgin' is used in connection with olive oil, forests, and territories, which bring to mind ideas of nobility and purity, as well as being kept in its original state...We need to move from the dead-end obsession with Mary's reproductive capabilities and return to the inspirational vision of a woman whose only guiding light was love," writes Maidi Brown.

Responding to this, J.E. Howard writes, "Is it not also time that the Church moved on from its obsession with virginity and the notion that a virgin is a special (and superior) kind of woman, rather than merely a person without a certain life experience?"

Now, Maidi Brown and J.E. Howard are not learned scholars writing for specialized journals. They are both readers and they say these things in letters to the Editor of *the Tablet*, a Catholic magazine, published from London. This is why the pages this magazine assigns to letters are an important and much-appreciated part of the magazine.

Jesuits are supposed to be highly educated thinkers who often are pioneers, who show the way to others. Why then aren't the letters page(s) in *Jivan* as absorbing as those of *the Tablet*? Is it because many of them today don't bother, don't read, don't think, don't take the trouble to write? You tell me.

If you are a regular and careful reader of *Jivan*, you'd have noticed that after a series of 'Roman Encounters', we have begun from April '26 'Australian Encounters' that present to the readers energizing and inspiring experiences of some wonderful Australian Jesuits. In this issue, Stephen Sinn, SJ says, "The friendships I have with street people give me heart. They disarm me, disturb me, welcome me, and love me. They disarm my defences: my prejudices, my fears of rejection, of not being good enough. The depth of their suffering disturbs me." (See p. 21,22)

This issue carries special articles in view of the Independence Day (See p. 7-9), Raksha Bhandan (See p. 13,14) and Onam (See p. 15,16). For a reader with a good appetite it's a feast, don't you think?

Jesuit scholar earns ten million!

In the early 1980s, suited and booted in an executive office in Bahrain, Errol Fernandes managed the complex financial accounts of a prominent computer firm. He was on a clear trajectory to head the company as its Chief Executive Officer. Yet, the balance sheets of corporate success could not quieten a deep, persistent interior pull. Responding to God's call, he chose to completely rewrite his life's narrative. He walked away from commercial success to plunge into the rigorous, transformative life of a Jesuit novice in Nashik, Maharashtra, India.

As a novice, he embraced the traditional Jesuit 'begging pilgrimage' - a gruelling month-long journey from Nashik to Goa. With no money or material safety nets, he relied entirely on God's providence and the kindness of strangers. This foundational experience of radical reliance set the tone for his future ministry.

After the novitiate, Errol immersed himself in Philosophy and Theology at the serene Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth (JDV) campus in Pune, excelling with academic aplomb. His legendary energy and time management were already on full display; he routinely cycled from Ramwadi to Pune Camp every single day to teach postgraduate students at St. Vincent's College. While he proved to be an accomplished, deeply popular professor, his primal love was Sacred Scripture. Therefore he mastered Greek and Hebrew.

Following his ordination, Fr. Errol brought his unique blend of financial acumen and spiritual depth back to Mumbai. At St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, he successfully established the evening Commerce section and turned an academic department into an instrument of social justice. He sought out those on the fringes - financially vulnerable youths who worked exhausting day jobs but were ready to study at night.

Simultaneously, Fr. Errol balanced his demanding college duties with active parish ministry. His deep scriptural insights translated into profoundly meaningful Sunday sermons that resonated widely with the faithful. This wealthy reservoir of homiletic material culminated in his first major publication, 'Recycling the Word: Daily Reflections.' The book became a bestseller.

Fr. Errol recognized the digital landscape as the next great frontier for the Church. He had already pioneered early digital evangelisation by launching his first 'Net Retreat' and structured it more formally by 2004. Then, in 2009, he officially launched 'A Jesuit's



Blog.' Managing the entire platform single-handedly, he began uploading daily and Sunday scriptural reflections. For years, this digital parish quietly grew, serving as an invaluable lifeline for isolated laypeople and busy priests seeking solid material to prepare for the Mass. Through steady grass-roots traction, the blog achieved its first major milestone of 100,000 views. He cracked half a million (500,000) on 4 March 2017 and almost a year later (19 March 2018) cracked another 500,000 to get to a total of 10, 00, 000 - one million.

He began crisscrossing the globe to conduct scripture courses and preach up to seven intensive annual retreats. This global ministry created a powerful feedback loop, driving a massive wave of international readers back to his digital spaces. Today, that humble blog has blossomed into a multi-channel digital powerhouse encompassing YouTube and Instagram. He now has officially crossed an extraordinary milestone: over 1 crore (10 million) views on his 'Jesuit's Blog' in late June 2026.

The journey of Fr Errol Fernandes, SJ, from the quiet church of Nashik to a global congregation of millions, beautifully echoes the eternal gospel truth: With God, all things are possible. ❖

| Conrad Pessa, SJ (BOM)



Independent India @ 79

As India marks its 79th year of independence, I find within myself a mix of pride and unease - hope and concern. Two recent instances illustrate this contrast.

A moment of pride and hope: Venezuela recently suffered a severe earthquake that killed more than 3,800 people and injured 16,700. Tens of thousands are still missing. The Indian government responded with what it called 'Operation Amistad', a humanitarian relief mission. Two Indian Air Force C-17 aircraft delivered over 35 tonnes of

A moment of concern: At the same time, hundreds of young people gathered at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi, from 20 June 2026, to protest alleged irregularities in competitive examinations and concerns regarding the functioning of the Education Ministry. They expressed solidarity with 12 students who committed suicide because of the setbacks caused by the NEET exam. As of 1 July 2026, the sit-in—organised under the banner of the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP)—has not elicited an official response.



Pic courtesy: thesun.my

relief material, including medicines and medical equipment. A 41-member Indian Army medical team, along with a field hospital unit, was deployed for emergency care. Indian medical teams have been assisting local hospitals and treating survivors, reflecting India's growing role in international humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Such missions underline India's capacity to respond quickly to crises beyond its borders. There is a sense of reassurance in seeing India act as a first responder in moments of global distress.

The protest has received only limited coverage in the mainstream media. On 28 June 2026, activist Sonam Wangchuk joined the movement and began an indefinite hunger strike, drawing increased public attention and encouraging greater participation. Reports have also emerged of administrative restrictions imposed at the protest site. Yet, as of the time of writing, there has been no meaningful or proactive response from the government.

In my view, this contrast is symptomatic rather than exceptional. It points to a larger pattern in

independent India, where impressive economic progress coexists with the marginalization of millions.

India @ 79: Proud facts: India remains officially a developing country, but is also widely described as a major economy in transition. It is now the fifth largest economy in the world by nominal GDP, according to international estimates.

The country's democratic framework remains one of the largest in the world, with regular elections and peaceful transfers of power. Economically, India has emerged as a significant global player, particularly in information technology, digital services, and innovation.

Institutions such as the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) have earned global recognition through cost-effective space missions, including lunar and Martian exploration. India has also made notable progress in financial inclusion and digital public infrastructure through platforms such as Aadhaar and the Unified Payments Interface (UPI).

In global health and pharmaceuticals, India plays a major role as a supplier of affordable generic medicines and vaccines. Its cultural influence - through cinema, music, yoga, and cuisine - remains substantial. India also contributes significantly to the United Nations Peacekeeping operations.

Worrisome trends: Despite strong economic growth, poverty and inequality remain significant. A large number of citizens continue to face insecurity in employment, nutrition, and housing. Youth unemployment and underemployment remain areas of concern.

Educational disparities between urban and rural regions continue to persist, alongside concerns regarding quality and competitive pressures. The public healthcare system, while expanding, still faces issues of accessibility and overcrowding.

Social inequalities, including gender disparities, caste-based discrimination, and violence against women, remain areas of serious concern despite legal safeguards. Environmental pressures - air pollution, water stress, and waste management - are increasingly visible in urban centres.

Governance challenges, including bureaucratic delays and uneven implementation of policy, continue to affect public trust in institutions. Even blatant cases of corruption go unpunished.



Recent controversies surrounding the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, along with statements regarding what is and what is not proof of citizenship, have led to widespread confusion and anxiety among citizens across the country.

The treatment of minorities - Muslims, Christians, and tribal communities - remains increasingly worrisome. According to the APCR-Quill Foundation report, in 2024-2025 there were 947 hate-related incidents, including hate speech, physical violence, and intimidation. A majority of these were reportedly targeted against Muslims, Christians, and tribal communities.

The Adivasi/Tribal population appears to be among the most affected. In the name of development, and often without adequate compensation or rehabilitation, many are displaced and left vulnerable - becoming migrants in their own land.

Numbers speak: Data on India reflect the contradictions:

- The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy



Pic courtesy: news.abplive.com

Index (2024) classifies India as a “flawed democracy”, ranking it 41st globally.

- Reporters Without Borders (2025) ranks India 159 out of 180 countries in press freedom. The Free Speech Collective documented multiple arrests, criminal cases, and harassment involving journalists in 2025, including at least six journalist arrests in the first four months of 2025 and several new criminal cases.
- The World Happiness Report (2024) places India at 126 out of 143 countries.
- Economic inequality: India has approximately 160–170 billionaires (Forbes 2025–26 estimates). The top 10 percent of the population get about 57 percent of national income, while the bottom 50 percent accounts for only around 15–16 percent. An estimated 20–25 percent of the population continues to live in poverty.
- Unemployment: the most recent official figure is 5.2% (April 2026), published by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

(MoSPI). India is often cited as a case of “jobless growth.” While the economy expands, adequate employment opportunities for youth do not appear to be emerging at a corresponding pace. Rapid advances in artificial intelligence further intensify concerns about the future of youth employment.

These selected indicators suggest a sharp divergence between economic expansion and social outcomes. Former RBI Governor D. Subbarao has noted, “Widening inequality is not only a social concern but may also have long-term economic consequences.”

Civil society and institutional balance:

A democratic society depends on a balance between the state, the market, and civil society. Concerns have been raised in recent years about the shrinking space for civil society organizations and increasing regulatory pressures on non-governmental actors. It has become common in India to dub activist organisations “urban Naxals”, “anti-national”, etc. The proposed FCRA amendment could be a death knell for a lot of charitable and social justice work.

Such trends, critics argue, may weaken independent scrutiny and reduce the vibrancy of public debate. Prashant Bhushan, the well-known advocate, has observed, “We have something to be terribly worried about: the very foundation of constitutional democracy is under threat, as the judiciary, especially at the higher levels, is being systematically compromised by the executive.”

Conclusion: India today presents a complex picture. It is a country of significant achievements and equally persistent challenges. Economic growth and global influence coexist with deep social inequalities and concerns about institutional responsiveness. I am concerned about the direction the nation is heading in; it feels like a downward spiral driven by spectacle, half-truths, and division.

The task ahead is to ensure that growth is accompanied by stronger institutions, greater equality, and a more responsive democracy.

If only our “flawed democracy” could become a truly “constitutional democracy”! ❖

George Mutholil, SJ (KER) is General Counsellor and Regional Assistant for South Asia. A former Provincial of Kerala, he is a member of the Jivan Editorial Board.

An Eight-Day Ignatian Film Retreat

An eight-day Ignatian retreat titled, “Praying with Films: Seeing God through Film” was held in early June 2026 at Dhyanashrama, Mount St Joseph, Bengaluru. It was directed by Fr. Richard Rego SJ, Professor at the School of Mass Communication and Journalism, St Joseph’s University, Bengaluru.

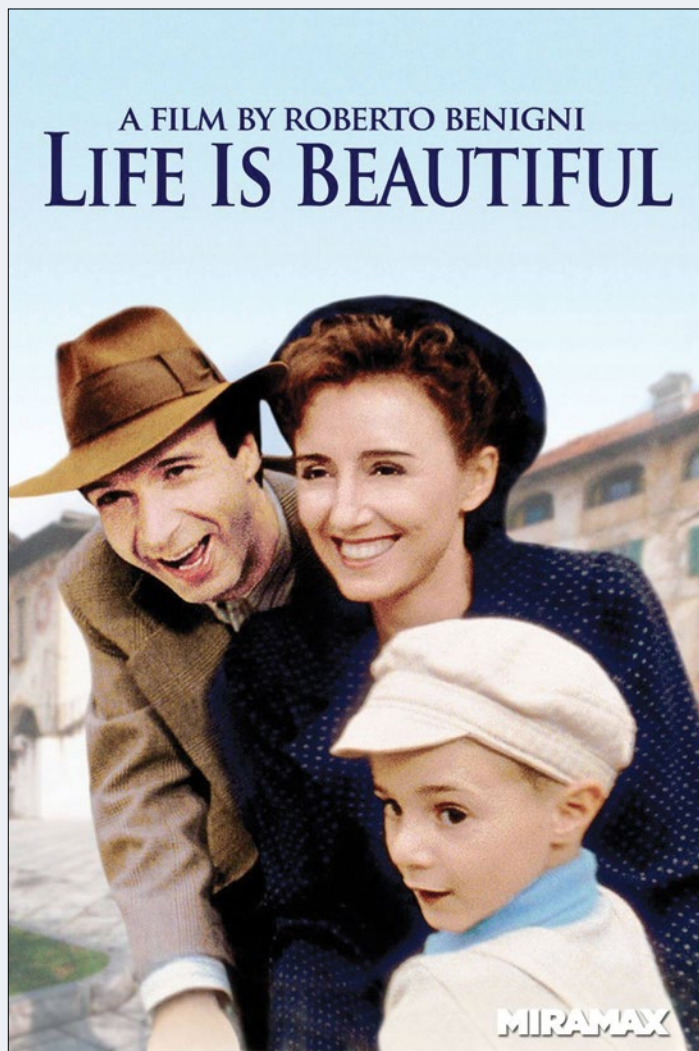
Eight Jesuits and two religious Sisters participated in this unique and rare spiritual experience, which was carefully crafted within the eight-day Ignatian retreat framework, using films. The retreat drew from St Ignatius of Loyola’s method of the composition of place, inviting us to imaginatively enter into Gospel scenes through their senses. This retreat illustrated how modern-day visual storytelling can become a powerful aid to prayer and spiritual reflection.



Each morning, the retreatants watched a carefully-selected mainstream film connected to the theme of the day. The films included ‘Into Great Silence’ a French Documentary on the life of the Trappist Monks of Chartreuse, ‘Amazing Grace’ a film showing the life of William Wilberforce and his unceasing effort to abolish slavery in British empire, ‘The Voice of Hind Rajab’ an Arabic/English docudrama based on real events about the last moments of a five year old child stuck in Gaza war, and Academy Award winning ‘Life Is Beautiful’ and ‘An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge’ based on the American civil war.

The screening was followed by personal sharing and reflection, which enriched our individual prayer and discernment. The retreat talks in the evening included short animated films. These helped us deepen our engagement with the theme of the retreat and our own interior movements.

The specialty of ‘the Praying with Films retreat’ lay in the ways films were curated, what participants described as a “spiritual film festival.” What stood out was the skillfully integrated cinematic narratives with



the dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises. Through his insightful reflections, Fr Richard guided the retreatants in discerning the deeper meanings of the films. He accompanied us in recognizing how stories of struggle, conversion, redemption, and hope resonate with the journey of faith.

As the first group at Dhyanashrama that experienced an Ignatian retreat through the medium of film, we discovered that cinema can be much more than a simple entertainment. When we approach films prayerfully, they become a meaningful lens for us to contemplate God’s presence in His own creation, and discern the movements of our hearts. All of us genuinely appreciated the retreat for its creative approach to prayer. What more can I do for Christ? ❖

Vishal Melroy Pinto, SJ (KAR) & Richard Rego, SJ (KAR)



Breaking the Loop

Joys and challenges of Youth Ministry

I have learned to *distrust* the word 'lazy'. For many years, working among the young, I have heard it pronounced like a verdict over the poor. The young, it is said, lack ambition. I have come to believe almost the opposite. The young men and women I meet are not short of desire. They are caught in a loop.

Let me give the loop a face. I will call him Ravi. He is nineteen, quick with his hands, and he longs to train as a welder. Yet his family eats each night from what

Ravi carries home as a daily wage labourer, loading sand, pulling a cart. To sit in a classroom for three months is to let his family go hungry. So, he cannot afford the training that would lift him out of the work that keeps him poor. The course that promises freedom asks of him a freedom he does not yet possess. And so

the loop turns: menial work today to survive, no skill tomorrow with which to escape, menial work again the day after.

Hannah Arendt drew a distinction that has stayed with me. There is labour, the toil that meets the body's needs and leaves nothing behind. And there is work, which builds what endures, and action, by which a person is seen in the common world. Ravi's tragedy is not that he toils, but that he is sentenced to labour alone, to the wheel of necessity, denied the deed by which a person makes a mark. The poor are not allowed to be more than their hunger.

Amartya Sen gave me the language for what I kept watching. Poverty, he insists, is not finally a shortage of rupees but a deprivation of freedom, of the

capabilities a person needs to choose a life he values. By that measure Ravi is not unmotivated. He is unfree. His ambition is intact; it has nowhere to stand. To call such a young man lazy is to mistake a locked door for a sleeping man behind it.

Simone Weil saw deeper still. She distinguished ordinary suffering from affliction, the misfortune that seizes the whole of a life and grinds it down. Affliction, she said, can root out from the soul its very capacity

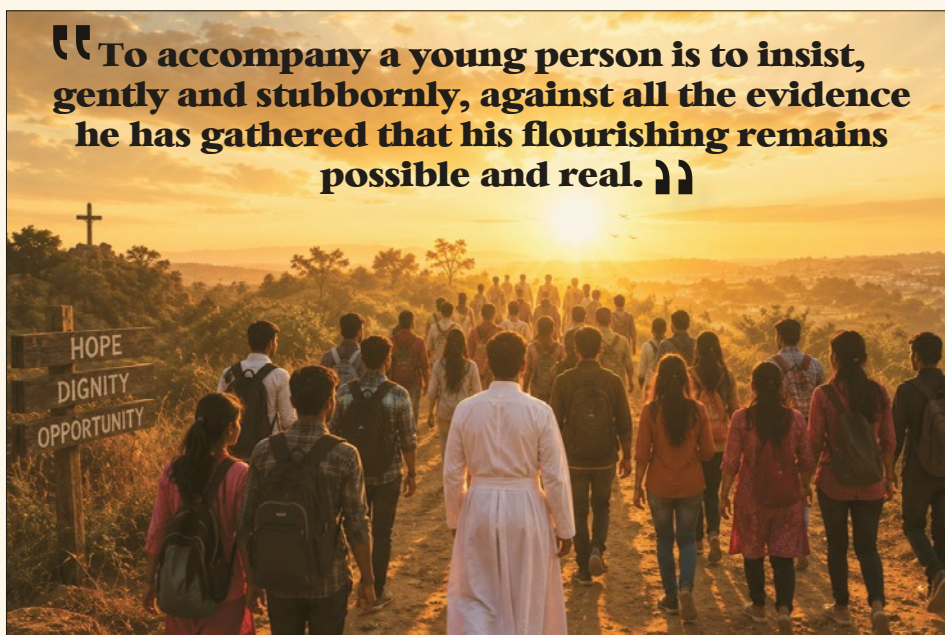
to desire the good, even to hope. This is the cruelty hidden in the loop. Prolonged far enough, it teaches the young to stop aspiring, that they might be spared the pain of wanting what they can never reach.

Scripture named all this long before the philosophers. In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus reads that

the Spirit has anointed him to bring good news to the poor and to set the oppressed free (Luke 4.18). I once heard charity in those words; I now hear economics with a soul, that the loosing of chains is the shape of the Gospel. And the Lord's own words, that he came so that they may have life and have it in abundance (John 10:10), indicts every arrangement that asks the young to settle for bare survival.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola bids us find God in all things, and does not exempt the welding shed. Labour is holy ground, which is why it must never harden into a prison.

Yet the challenge of the young is not material alone. Even where bread is found, a deeper hunger



Pic courtesy: AI-generated using ChatGPT



Pic courtesy: scroll.in

remains. The young are told from every screen that they are above all consumers, and a culture that treats persons as things will leave them restless in spirit. Pope Francis has warned of a throwaway culture that discards whatever it cannot use, and many youth sense that they may be among the discarded. From this grows what the desert monks called *acedia*, the noonday demon, a listlessness that is not idleness but despair wearing the mask of indifference. Much of what the comfortable call the sloth of the young is in truth the exhaustion of those who have hoped and met only frustration.

The Gospel offers a startling image for this fear. In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25), one servant takes the gift entrusted to him and buries it, and when asked why, answers that he was afraid. He is condemned not for greed but for fear. So it is with many of the young. They bury their gifts, not because they are lazy, but because circumstance has taught them to fear losing even the little they have.

Our task, therefore, is not to scold those who choose to bury, but to make the soil safe enough that the talent can be unearthed again without shame.

What the young need is not optimism, which is only a cheerful forecast, but hope, which is a virtue and therefore a discipline. The Prophet Jeremiah, writing to a people in exile, dares to speak in God's name of plans to give them a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29.11).

The future is named as gift, the hope as task. Aristotle taught that every living thing has its flourishing, the good toward which it strains; a society that withholds the conditions of that flourishing from the young is unjust at the root. To accompany a young person is to insist, gently and stubbornly, against all the evidence he has gathered, that his flourishing remains possible and real.

This is why some of us have given our lives to walking with the young. This is why the Society of Jesus, in naming its preferences for this decade, resolved to accompany young people in the creation of a hope filled future. The verb is everything. To accompany is not to instruct from above, nor to rescue from outside, but to walk beside. It was in this spirit that a few of us began a small work we call YES-J (Youth Empowering Service-Jesuits), less a programme than a way of being present, feeding while we form, at times holding a family steady long enough for one of its children to learn a trade and loosen the loop. It is one small example of a love-labour to which the whole Church is called.

The joys of this work are many. To watch a girl, who once trembled to speak, now rise and teach, or a young man carry home a wage that is at last his own, is to watch the loop break in a single life; in that breaking, *cura personalis*, care for the whole person, stops being a slogan and becomes the texture of an ordinary day. The challenges are quieter, and they do not leave. The need is vast and the means are small. There is the temptation to count heads rather than accompany hearts. And always the loop returns in the next street and the next village..

Ignatius is remembered for sending his first companions out to set the world on fire. I have stopped asking the young to be ambitious. I ask only that they come to believe that the fire already smouldering in them is not a fault to apologise for but a gift to be freed. The welder's torch, the first true wage, the trembling recovery of the courage to desire, these are what happen when grace and a few faithful companions help one young person break the loop. ❖

Sources and allusions: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (1958); Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (1999); Simone Weil on affliction; Pedro Arrupe, *Men for Others* (1973); Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit* (2019).

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A silken bond becomes...
a bright token of joy and security

My own brother died many years ago, but the rakhi-brothers on whose wrists I still tie rakhis every year are just as dear to me. I do it every year on the festival of Raksha Bandhan, which, this year, falls on 28 August.

For Indians the world over, the festival of Raksha Bandhan speaks of love, of solidarity, of support and protection, of relationship. The simple ritual – a woman tying a silken thread around the wrist of her brother – is a symbol of the tenderness of

Pic courtesy: in.pinterest.com

fraternal affection and care. It celebrates the silent message of loyalty, of friendship and protection, of lifelong connectedness.

Traditionally, the *rakhi* is tied on the wrist of one's own brother, but given our Indian propensity for extending the boundaries of the family (witness the way we address acquaintances and even strangers as 'didi' or 'bhaiyya'), cousins and even friends are often included.

Mythological and historical legends around the festival highlight different elements of the significance of the gesture. Three of them are worth revisiting to explore the meaning they bring to the ritual.

The first is the one with which the ritual is said to have originated. When Draupadi saw Lord Krishna's hand bleeding from some injury, her instinctive response was to tear off the end of her sari and bind the wound. Krishna was so moved by her spontaneous act of tender care that he declared her his sister and vowed to protect her always – a promise he redeemed most notably in the famous story of the *vastraharan* in which he saved her from the disgrace of being stripped in the Kaurava court by making her sari unending.

What I find particularly satisfying is that the starting point of the dynamic relationship between them is Draupadi's spontaneous gesture. This mutuality can sometimes be lost when the emphasis is only on the protection offered by the brother. In our heavily patriarchal world, and the way in which this shapes our interpretation of events and meaning, we need to remember that sisters and brothers within the family offer each other care and protection in reciprocal measure. And that same reciprocity – not a one-sided dependency – adds value and sweetness to other relationships as well, making the silken bond a bright token of joy and security.

Another legend, this one more traditional in its implications, is the one in which the 16th century Rani Karnavati of Mewar, faced with certain defeat when her kingdom is attacked by the Sultan of Gujarat, Bahadur Shah, sends a rakhi and an appeal for help to the Emperor Humayun. Touched by the gesture and the deep symbolism it invoked, Humayun responds by sending an army to her aid.

What does this symbolism invoke in our hearts today? Surely, there is a call to return to the simple

loyalty of childhood, where we can turn to those who are 'our own' – our brothers, our sisters, our friends – sure of support and of help when needed. Sure of acceptance and love and welcome, this fraternal relationship is untainted by judgementalism and censoriousness.

The third story dates back to the British Partition of Bengal in 1905. As a public protest against this partition on grounds of religion, Rabindranath Tagore organized a mass rally in which Hindu and Muslim men and women were urged to tie rakhis on one another as a symbol of their unity and solidarity. The symbol of fraternal love and mutual protection was being extended to a far wider circle of relatedness. Again, in the divisive, fractured environment we inhabit today, the message is a radical one: calling us to step beyond the 'narrow domestic walls' to embrace even the Other.

So, this year, as we prepare our hearts to renew these ties of affection and loyalty, what do we hope for, what do we seek to commemorate, what do we pledge once again to each other? What is it we look for in our brothers and our sisters? Is it the conventional hierarchies and dependencies that have all too often dominated our patterns of thought and behaviour? Or can we, as brothers and sisters, recognize and value our mutual interdependence? Can we, as persons, recognize and value the contribution that each one brings to our life and our world? Can we celebrate both affection and respect between siblings, between friends?

This celebration is an invitation - an invitation to let ourselves return to the simplicity of our childhood relationships and to keep alive the strength of the bonds we forged unthinkingly through the ordinary joys and sorrows of daily interactions - an invitation to renew our commitment to each other, to choose solidarity in a world fraught with hatred and violence - an invitation to bring that fraternal loyalty and love, that profound respect and tender care, to every relationship and every encounter of our lives.

Happy Raksha Bandhan, everyone! ❖

Sr Ananda Amritmahal, RSCJ, was formerly principal of Sophia College for Women, Mumbai. She is currently in Rome, serving as a member of the General Council of her congregation, the Society of the Sacred Heart.



Onam: The eternal yearning for harmony and prosperity

The famous Malayalam Poet, Vailoppilli Sreedhara Menon, wrote a celebrated poem in 1952 titled 'Onapaattukaar' (The Onam Singers). It says: "The flower-soft feet of that sacred Thiruonam/ Grace our courtyards for these ten days." For him Thiruonam stood for "Whatever the ultimate human imagination would dream about/ Even in the deepest abyss of cruel grief."

The words of the poet, Vailoppilli, capture the truth that even as times change, what humanity always yearns for is goodness and happiness. Onam is the symbol of that yearning. No matter how immense the hardships may be, no matter how poor one may be, when Onam arrives, people forget it all. Like a smile arriving from afar onto a darkened face, Onam infuses hope and joy. The footprints of this most sacred Thiruonam imprint themselves upon our courtyards and our minds for ten days, from Atham to Thiruonam.

When Nature and Hearts Bloom Together: As the golden blossoms of Thumba and Mukkutti flowers brighten Kerala's countryside and the relentless rains give way to radiance, a unique spirit awakens across the land. Homes are cleaned and adorned, markets bustle with cheer, and vibrant floral carpets begin to bloom in courtyards and, more profoundly, within the hearts of the people.

Kerala prepares to celebrate Onam, its most cherished festival: a grand commemoration of

abundance, golden memories of the good, old days, gratitude, and togetherness. In this sacred season, peace and joy that come from prosperity, justice and equality blossom in the hearts and minds of all.

Onam is far more than a harvest festival. It is a cultural expression of the Malayali identity and a living remembrance of an ideal society founded on justice, equality, and harmony. While many civilisations cherish legends of a lost golden age, for Keralites that dream continues to live through

Onam. The festival commemorates the legendary reign of Mahabali, the benevolent Asura king whose kingdom was renowned for prosperity and fairness. Tradition tells us that during his rule there was neither poverty nor injustice, neither falsehood nor discrimination.

A much-loved verse in Malayalam captures this vision beautifully: "Maveli Nadu Vaneedum

Kalam, Manusharellarum Onnu Pole." (When Mahabali ruled the land, all people lived as equals.)

The Legend of a Golden Reign: According to mythology, when the generous and just Mahabali was the king, there was prosperity all over the land and people loved him. But his growing popularity alarmed the gods, who sought the help of Lord Vishnu. Vishnu appeared to Mahabali in the guise of Vamana, a humble Brahmin dwarf, and asked the generous king for just three paces of land. When Mahabali agreed, Vamana revealed his true



Pic courtesy: travel4kerala.in

cosmic form, Trivikrama, covering the earth and the heavens in two strides. Since there was no place for Trivikrama for his third step, Mahabali offered his own head and chose to die. Moved by his humility and honesty, Vishnu granted him a blessing – the privilege of returning once every year to his land to visit his beloved people. Onam commemorates this annual homecoming and celebrates the values of justice, generosity, and equality that Mahabali represents.

The Ten-Day Countdown to Splendour:

The festival begins with Atham, the first day of the ten-day celebration. It is believed that Mahabali commences his journey to Kerala on this day. Each morning thereafter, families make Pookolams in front of their houses - beautiful floral carpets made from fresh flowers. Beginning with simple designs, these floral arrangements grow larger and more intricate each day, until Thiruvonam, the most important day of the festival. The proverb 'Atham Pathinu Ponnonam' reminds us that ten days after Atham comes the golden day of Onam.

Preparations intensify as the festival approaches. Families purchase Onakkodi, new clothes specially bought for Onam and wear them during the celebrations, while homes undergo thorough cleaning and decoration. The day before Thiruvonam, known as Uthradom, witnesses a surge of activity as people make their final preparations and purchases.

Thiruvonam: A Symphony of Gratitude and Feasting: Thiruvonam itself is a day of joy, gratitude, and reunion. Family members gather together, dressed in traditional attire. Women adorn themselves in elegant Kasavu sarees, while men wear the classic Kasavu mundu. Prayers are offered, elders are honoured, and the atmosphere is filled with warmth and affection. At the heart of the celebration lies the magnificent Onam Sadya. Served on fresh banana leaves, this grand feast showcases the richness of Kerala's culinary heritage. With its harmonious blend of sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and spicy flavours, the Sadya symbolizes the varied experiences of life itself. More than a meal, it is an occasion that brings families and communities together in a spirit of sharing and fellowship.

A Global Celebration with an Enduring Soul: The joy of Onam extends beyond homes.



Across Kerala, colourful cultural events enliven the festive season. Snake boat races, tiger dances, Thiruvathira performances, traditional games, folk songs, and community gatherings transform villages and cities into vibrant centres of celebration. People of all ages participate enthusiastically, making Onam a truly inclusive festival. In today's rapidly changing world, some customs have evolved. Fresh flowers may be purchased rather than gathered, and ready-made Sadyas have become common. Yet the essence of Onam remains unchanged. It continues to inspire feelings of belonging, gratitude, and cultural pride among Malayalis across the globe.

Ultimately, Onam is not merely a remembrance of a legendary king and a golden era. It is a celebration of humanity's enduring dream of a just, compassionate, and prosperous society. It reminds us that true prosperity lies not in wealth alone but in equality, generosity, and mutual respect. As we welcome Mahabali into our homes and hearts each year, we renew our commitment to these timeless ideals. May the spirit of Onam fill every home with happiness, every heart with gratitude, and every community with peace, harmony, and hope! ❖

Raju Augustine, SJ (KER) holds a Master's in Applied Psychology and now serves as the Manager of St. Michael's Anglo-Indian Higher Secondary School, Kannur, while also engaging in the retreat ministry.

A large silhouette of a man's head and shoulders is the central element, filled with various scenes of religious life. The top section shows a person kneeling in prayer at an altar with a glowing monstrance. The middle-left section depicts a teacher in a classroom. The middle-right section shows a person reading books labeled 'Holy Bible', 'CONSTITUTIONS', and 'SPIRITUAL EXERCISES'. The bottom-left section shows a person sitting and talking to an elderly man. The bottom-right section shows four people walking away on a path towards a large cross on a hill. The background is a warm, golden sunset over a landscape with a distant city skyline.

The first and most vital quality is that a leader “be closely united with God our Lord and intimate with him in prayer and all his actions.” Ignatius places this first because authentic leadership begins in the interior life. A leader rooted in prayer does not act from ambition or impulse, but learns to listen, discern, and respond to God’s guidance. This is the essence of being a ‘contemplative in action’ for whom prayer becomes the source from which all labour flows. In a world that measures leadership by visibility, Ignatius reminds us that the hidden life of prayer remains the true foundation of fruitful leadership and a defining mark of Jesuit identity.

Second, the leader must “be a person whose example in the practice of all virtues will help the other members.” Leadership, for Ignatius, is moral and exemplary. Leaders must embody the values they wish others to practice, such as magnanimity, courage, patience, humility, freedom from disordered attachments. People are influenced more by character than by command. A Jesuit who lives virtuously creates an atmosphere in which others are encouraged to grow in goodness. Leadership thus becomes less about control and more about inspiration, less about enforcing rules and more about modelling a way of life that others can trust and emulate.

The third quality is “great understanding and judgment.” Good intentions alone are insufficient for leadership. Leaders must possess wisdom, discernment, and prudence or practical intelligence. Ignatian leadership values discernment: the ability to recognize what truly serves God’s mission and the common good rather than what merely appears attractive or expedient. Wise leaders neither react hastily nor remain trapped in indecision. Instead, they seek clarity amid complexity. Ignatius envisioned leaders who combine spiritual sensitivity with intellectual depth.

The fourth quality is energy and effectiveness in action. The leader must “have a care and concern for the Society and for undertaking and carrying through its affairs successfully.” Ignatius wanted perseverance in completing tasks undertaken and practical effectiveness. This reflects a broader Jesuit ethos that values initiative, ‘apostolic availability’, and reliability. Jesuits have traditionally served in demanding ministries requiring adaptability and endurance. Effectiveness is measured not merely by visible success but by fidelity to mission: whether the work is aligned with God’s greater glory and the service of others.

Fifth, Ignatius addresses “health, strength, and age suitable for bearing the burdens of the office.” He was realistic regarding human limits. Instruments of mission require care, and Jesuit spirituality does not glorify exhaustion. Physical and psychological stability are strategic necessities; leaders who neglect their own well-being eventually diminish their capacity to lead with compassion. In this framework, disciplined self-care is viewed as a responsibility to the mission rather than a luxury.

Finally, Ignatius speaks of external qualities that support mission, such as credibility, authority, and reputation. The sixth quality concerns “esteem, a good reputation, and whatever else contributes toward authority among those within and without.” Ignatius was aware that leadership functions within a social context. A leader must command a good reputation. This is not about

Inspiration

The power of the Ignatian blueprint lies in its radical integration. It demands a leader who is simultaneously a mystic and a pragmatist, a visionary thinker and a disciplined executive, an emotionally resilient anchor and a physically energetic operator. By demanding excellence across every dimension of human faculty, Ignatius ensures that authority is never merely structural, but deeply authentic, commanding respect through the sheer alignment of personal integrity and professional excellence.

vanity or image management but about the trust required to foster collaboration. A leader must live in a way that naturally inspires confidence, both within their community and in the wider world. When a leader is respected, that builds a ‘bridge of confidence’ that allows the mission to flow unhindered.

Taken together, these six qualities form a profound portrait of a leader who is prayerful yet practical, virtuous yet decisive, and humble yet respected. Ignatius’s vision avoids the extremes of authoritarianism and weakness. It reminds us that the best leaders are not just efficient managers, but integrated persons whose character and wisdom draw others toward a greater good. This blueprint continues to challenge modern assumptions about power, offering a timeless model for leading with depth and generosity.

Early Jesuits quickly recognized these qualities as a portrait of the ideal Jesuit. Pedro de Ribadeneira, Ignatius’s first official biographer and a close associate who had known him personally, remarked, “Our blessed Father, without realizing, described himself as he was and left us a perfect likeness.” Later Jesuits often read these qualities not merely as requirements for office but as an ideal of Jesuit character. ❖

Hedwig Lewis, SJ (G.U.J.) is an educationist and writer and has served as a lecturer and principal. He can be contacted at hedwiglewis@jesuits.net.



The hidden burdens that many carry

As part of my recently completed Philosophy studies at Jnana Deepa Institute of Philosophy and Theology (JD), Pune, I had conducted a survey to better understand the hidden burdens many carry in religious life today. I gathered responses from 122 current seminarians, religious, ordained and professed members, as well as a few who had left.

The respondents reflect the diversity and face of contemporary religious life in India. Nearly 48% were young adults between the age of 25 to 34. This is a critical stage when formation is most intense and personal ideals are still being shaped. Those aged 35–54 made up 23%, seniors accounted for 19%, and the youngest cohort comprised 11%. The findings present a serious picture that calls for immediate attention and discussion.

Vocational Doubts: 38% reported that online relationships had triggered serious questions about continuing in religious life. This is a disturbing reality in our digitally connected age.

Suicidal Thoughts: Nearly 20% shared experiences of suicidal ideation, whether their own or among companions in formation, often linked to isolation, vocational uncertainty, or Church scandals.

Reasons for Leaving: Internal conflicts within religious communities emerged as the dominant factor, cited by 61% far ahead of lack of prayer life at 25%.

Daily Difficulties: Almost half (48%) described a complex mix of problems, while 36% highlighted personal struggles, 11% pointed to peer conflicts, and only 6% mentioned family pressures.

Caste, Ethnic Discrimination and Groupism: A striking 64% experienced feelings of exclusion and conflict due to caste dynamics, ethnic tensions, or cliques. This is a painful truth



Pic courtesy: trinitariansindia.org

too often left unaddressed. Interestingly 39% said that external societal hostility actually strengthened their resolve to stay and face the problem.

Church Scandals: 51% said abuse cases and other scandals had eroded their trust and commitment.

Issues such as **addictions, including pornography**, and financial irregularities also surfaced.

What sustains many: Despite these challenges, the survey reveals powerful sources of light and strength that sustain many: *Prayer and Eucharist*: Remained central for 83% of respondents, even amid difficulties. *Spiritual Direction and Counselling*: Proved very helpful for 82%, highlighting the transformative power of competent accompaniment.

Growth through Struggle: Encouragingly, 65% felt they had successfully turned personal difficulties into genuine spiritual and human growth, largely through consistent guidance.

Reading the Signs Together: These numbers do not stand in isolation. The high percentage of people leaving religious life cite internal community conflicts as the primary reason for leaving (61%).

It connects directly to the 64% who have suffered from caste-based exclusion, groupism, and cliques.

Personal struggles, unshared doubts, addictions, emotional burdens, and financial strain often remain hidden in environments where emotions are frequently silenced or spiritualized away. Church scandals then strike at whatever trust remains. In such a climate, even an ordinary online conversation can cause a vocational crisis.

The picture that emerges from this survey does not show people with limited or little faith. It is the story of sincere, good people whose genuine vocations encounter a formation system that too often treats the human dimension as secondary, leaving emotional and relational wounds to fester. Unless the superior is highly perceptive, the very community meant to heal can become a source of deeper hurt. Yet the findings do not leave us in despair. The enduring centrality of prayer, the proven effectiveness of spiritual accompaniment, and the many who row through their struggles demonstrate that grace is powerfully at work when support is real and consistent.

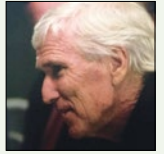
A Way Forward: Caring for the Whole Person:

Religious life in India will flourish only when we stop treating the problems of the human heart as secondary. In the spirit of true care for every person, we are invited to: *Create safe spaces* where emotions and struggles can be named honestly without fear of judgment. *Confront the caste dynamics, groupism, and exclusion* with courage and Gospel integrity. *Prioritize ongoing, integrated accompaniment* that combines spiritual direction with professional counseling and psychological support. *Integrate emotional literacy* into formation programmes as essential, not optional.



My own journey and the voices of these 122 brothers and sisters have convinced me that caring for the whole person is not a distraction from our vocation, it is the very foundation on which healthy, joyful, and credible religious life is built. Only when we listen deeply, heal readily, and walk together can we truly become the “bridges” of hope we are called to be for the Church and the world. ❖

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The depth of their suffering disturbs me, says Stephen Sinn, SJ

Stephen (Steve) Sinn, SJ has been a Jesuit for 60 years. After 18 years in the inner city Parish of St Canice's, Sydney, he established The Bridge Community in Bathurst, to provide accommodation and support for men and women coming out of prison. He presently lives with four of the men in one of the Community houses.

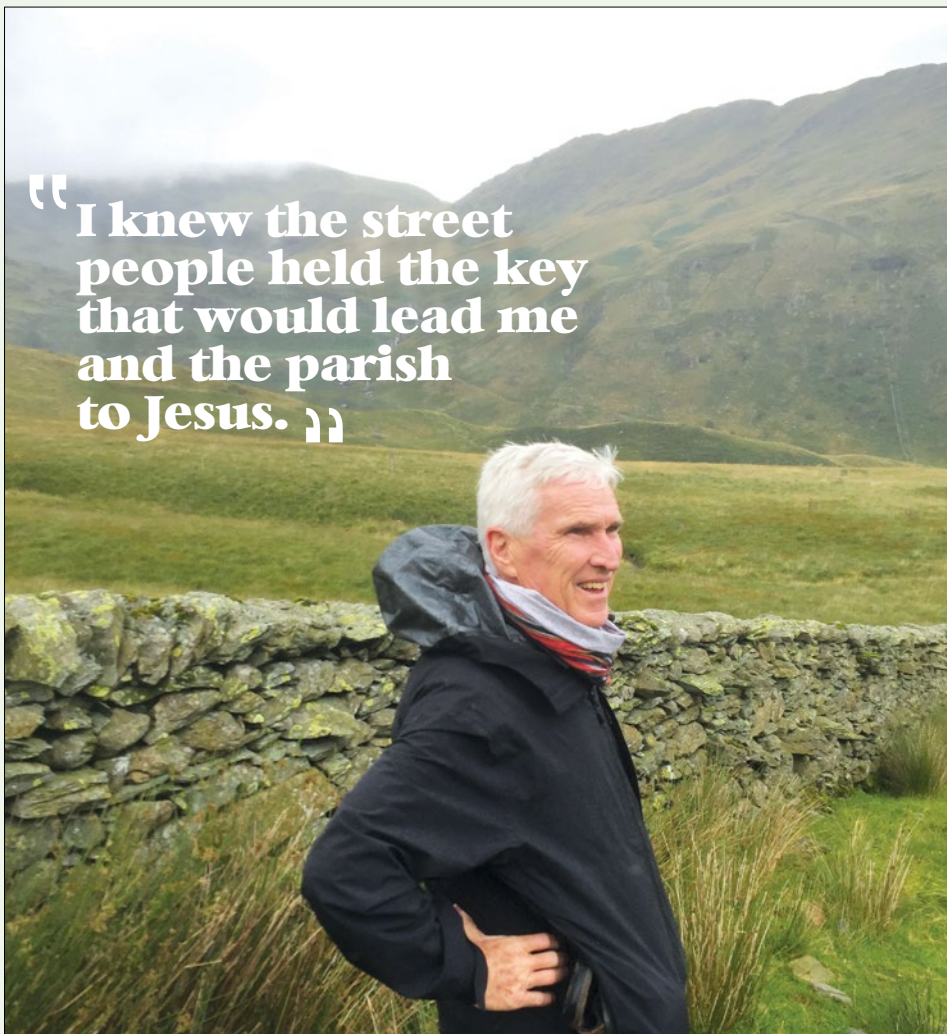
Tell us about your experience of serving lunch every day to street people in your parish that only had a weekend soup kitchen earlier.

I knew that the key to a healthy parish was to follow what Mother Teresa once said: "Put the poor at the centre of the parish and everything else will

look after itself." I do believe that and I tried to do that. I wanted to get to know the street people, to sit at table with them, as friends. I knew they held the key that would lead me and the parish to Jesus. Whenever I was with them I felt close to the gospel. They are the same people Jesus saw when he got out of the boat, "harassed and helpless." I wonder what Jesus taught them. Their distress would have opened him to his own deep truth, that he and the Father are one. He sat down with them to eat.

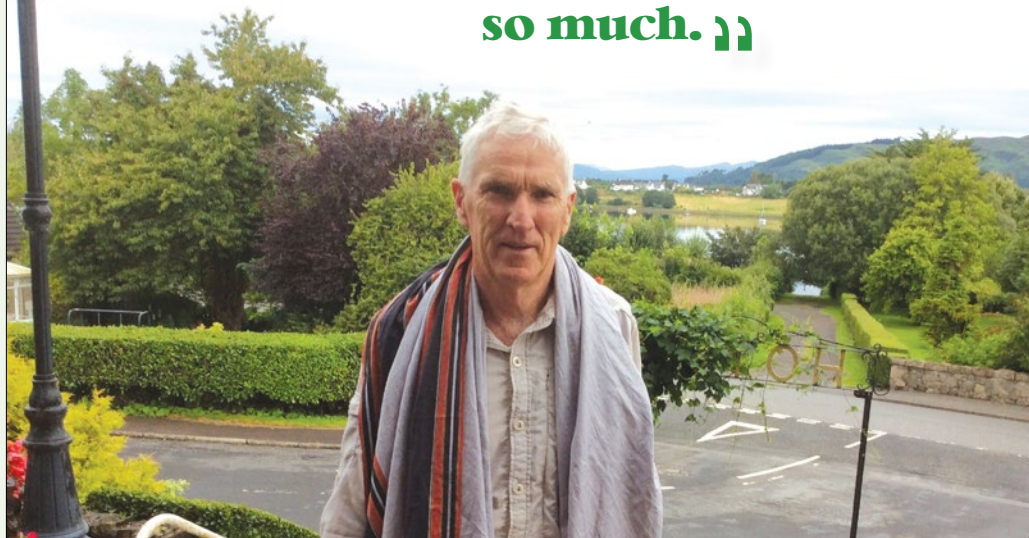
Will you share with us about your friendship with Celeste, the woman whom you found sitting on the steps of the church?

When I came to the parish as the assistant priest I was lonely. The Jesuit community was established and I was the newcomer. I didn't know anyone in the parish. One day I saw Celeste sitting on the steps of the church. I sat down next to her, both of us facing the street. She was swarthy, a week's growth on her heavily powdered face. She was wearing a schoolgirl's skirt and had hairy legs. Around her neck was a whistle, the kind umpires blow. It was to keep others away. I sensed an empathy that I had not experienced prior to this. I told her I was lonely and she heard me, she didn't comment, just heard me. She was the first person I met and we have been friends ever since.



"I knew the street people held the key that would lead me and the parish to Jesus."

“My deepest joy as a Jesuit priest is to recall many a time during the day that Jesus has saved me, that all will be well, that he loves me so much.”



How do friendships offered by street people help you as a Jesuit priest?

The friendships I have with street people give me heart. They disarm me, disturb me, welcome me, love me. They are my tribe. I come from a different tribe but they have welcomed me as one of them, different but one of them. They disarm my defences: my prejudices, my fears of rejection, of not being good enough. The depth of their suffering disturbs me. I see their ravaged faces, the mental illness, the sores on their feet, their decaying teeth and I feel powerless. I am grateful they open their door and welcome me into their lives and love me.

Tell us about your experience as a part time Scripture teacher in state schools

I've been teaching scripture to children for over 25 years, one weekly class. Many times I've felt like resigning, because I've felt so inadequate but somehow I hear God calling in the children. It's a unique privilege to be given time to talk with the children about God. I've never met a child - or a street person for that matter - who is not open to God. Their spontaneous faith is inspiring. I ask them to read a gospel story from a bible picture book and to write down a sentence that moved them. It is a beautiful thing to see the eye and the hand of a child

working together to form a sentence from the gospel and for them to read it back to the class.

What made you think of the Bridge Community - houses for men and women coming out of prison?

I had this vision of living with homeless people, especially those coming out of prison, as nobody is willing to welcome them. I used to see them asleep on the porch of the church and I wanted to sit at the same table with them. I have always felt this to be a calling from God. The Bridge Community is three houses and two units

with 12 men and 1 woman at the moment and I live in one of the houses with 4 men. I believe it is God's work and that God sends the people who need the place. At the moment it's not an organisation, we rely totally on donations and no one is employed. I'm presently working on how to make The Bridge Community sustainable. The men here are often too much for me and I have to throw myself into the arms of the Lord or light a candle before a battered statue of Mary I have in my room.

What are your joys and challenges in being a Jesuit priest in Australia today?

My deepest joy as a Jesuit priest is to recall many a time during the day that Jesus has saved me, that all will be well, that he loves me so much and that he has won victory over evil and death. In the midst of my trials I have this knowledge that gives me deep joy. The challenges are endless: how can I cope with seeing a child I have grown to love caught between parents who don't know how to love one another let alone the child? How can I be kind and tough at the same time? How can I live with the anguish of other's suffering and not be manipulated? Why did I take on so much? I've said 'yes' to the one who calls me and that means I have to carry my cross with him.





Six crucial months when your four wheels are aligned

In the 1970's when I was a student of Loyola Technical Institute in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, doing a diploma course in Automobile Mechanism, I used to have practical classes in the institute workshop. There were trained mechanics who trained us students to repair vehicles.

One of the most important aspects of the automobile maintenance was 'wheel- alignment' which in those days was done manually and only by expert mechanics, who meticulously aligned the four wheels of a vehicle. Nowadays wheel alignment is done on a computerized platform in a few minutes.

Well, what exactly is Wheel Alignment? It refers to adjusting the angles of the four wheels of a vehicle. It helps the wheels to stay parallel to each other and perpendicular to the ground. This adjustment is done to the parts of the suspension system of your vehicle. The suspension system keeps all four wheels working in unison at the same speed and direction. It offers better contact with the road. The primary purpose of getting the wheels aligned is to optimize the lifespan of the tyres with better and firmer contact with the road, and to ensure that the car moves straight without pulling to one side.

What I have perceived recently is that young Jesuit priests too are in need of alignment. Our lives as Jesuits run on four wheels – the four aspects of our life - Spiritual, Intellectual, Communitarian and Apostolic. After the ordination – within three to four years of a busy life, doing various works, these 'four wheels' may lose their alignment and experience 'wear and tear' and fatigue. This is the time the young priest is sent for tertianship to align his life and to rejuvenate his religious life before he is finally incorporated into the Society of Jesus. Doing tertianship is like doing wheel alignment of a vehicle. The Tertian Instructors are like 'expert mechanics', who, with their experience and expertise, help the young Jesuits to align their lives to the present context of our mission.

Importance of Wheel Alignment & Tertianship:

1. Comfortable and Smooth Driving Experience: By aligning the wheels, you achieve a smoother, more comfortable ride. It also reduces driver fatigue and enhances the driving experience. Tertianship helps our young men live their religious life in a smoother and more energetic manner. Balance brings ease to their life mission and to their routine apostolic life.



Pic courtesy: erautocare.com



Pic courtesy: AI-generated using ChatGPT

2. Better Tyre Lifespan and Performance: By aligning your wheels, you can ensure uniform contact and grip of tyres with the road, optimized tread performance and enhanced tyre lifespan. It can reduce the frequency of tire replacement, leading to long-term cost reduction. Similarly, tertianship can help a young Jesuit gain stronger contact with the reality, firmer grip on the current socio-political-cultural context and better and longer resilience in apostolic endeavors.

3. Optimal Fuel Efficiency: Proper wheel alignment contributes to optimal fuel efficiency. When the wheels are aligned, it reduces the rolling resistance, allowing the car to run more efficiently and reducing semi-burned carbon emissions. Tertianship too helps a young Jesuit have optimum perseverance and better efficiency in performing one's duties. It reduces the daily fatigue and increase the resilience and energy to do more for God's glory.

4. Road Safety: Proper wheel alignment ensures stable vehicle control, reducing the chances of vehicle wobbling and enhancing road safety. After Tertianship a person will be better equipped to have full control of a situation, and to protect himself and others from unnecessary tensions. Working with him becomes safer and tension free.

5. Preventative Maintenance: Regular wheel alignment is a type of preventative maintenance. It identifies and corrects the alignment before any extensive damage happens. Tertianship could help correct any potential future deficiency in the life style of a young Jesuit. A Jesuit who has completed his tertianship is better equipped to face challenges in his long-term mission.

The After-effects of Tertianship: After the tertianship, having well aligned his 'wheels' of religious life, a young Jesuit will definitely have smoother and more comfortable 'ride' through his mission. He will have better balance and steadier direction at his 'steering-wheel' in life. As he will be more energetic, his mission will have a longer life span. As a driver with a well- aligned car, he will have better road grip, better road safety, and less of a risk to the pedestrians and his co-travelers on his way. It is crucially important for us Jesuits, because for us 'our journey is our destination'. ❖

Michael T. Raj, SJ (JAM), a former Provincial of Jamshedpur, is now the Rector of Loyola School, Jamshedpur and animator of the Province Young Priests Forum. He can be reached at: miketrajs@gmail.com.



Educating for Excellence

Title: *Educating for Excellence*

- *The Jesuit Way of Forming Persons for Others*

Author: Francis Swamy, SJ

Publisher: Gujrat Sahitya Prakash, Anand

Pages: 224

Price: ₹ 325.00

What inspired you to write this book?

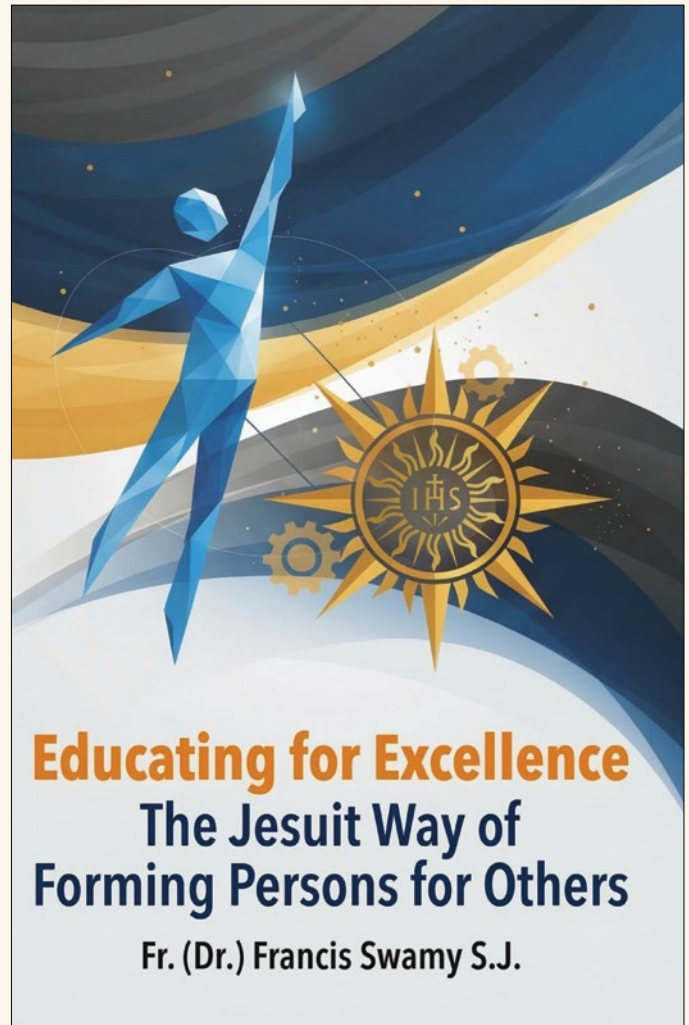
My doctoral research centered on the pursuit of human excellence, a theme that has profoundly shaped and inspired my educational ministry over the years. Building upon that foundation, I have since expanded the research into this comprehensive book, enriched with deeper insights, practical applications, and perspectives that engage meaningfully with the challenges and opportunities of the contemporary context.

Briefly, what is the Jesuit way forming students?

The Jesuit way of forming students is a holistic approach rooted in the Ignatian tradition, which seeks to develop the whole person rather than focus only on academic success. It combines intellectual formation with moral, social, and spiritual growth, helping students grow into mature and responsible human beings. A key feature of this approach is Ignatian pedagogy, where students learn through experience, reflection, and action. They are encouraged to think deeply about what they learn, relate it to real life, and act on their values, making education meaningful and transformative. In essence, the Jesuit way forms not only successful students, but people of character who are prepared to make a positive difference in the world.

Who will benefit from your book?

First and foremost, it is a valuable resource for teachers and educators, as it offers a clear and practical understanding of the Jesuit vision of education and the methods of forming students not only academically but also morally, socially, and spiritually. It helps teachers see their role as mentors who shape character and values, not merely as transmitters of knowledge. The book will also greatly benefit school leaders, principals, and



administrators, who are responsible for shaping the ethos of their institutions. Students themselves can draw inspiration from the book. The book is equally relevant for parents, who play a crucial role in the formation of their children. It offers insights into nurturing values, attitudes, and habits at home that complement the educational process and contribute to holistic growth. ❖

Francis Swamy, SJ (BOM) is the Director of St. Xavier's Institute of Education, Mumbai.



George Rathinasamy, SJ (MDU)

On 23 April 2026, Fr. George Rathinasamy, SJ – all called him R. George – did what only a very small group manages to do. He crossed the milestone of 100 fruitful years. Beschi Illam, Dindigul organized a grand celebration. Having run the race for 100 years with a clear mind and a phenomenal memory and no major physical ailment, Fr. George may have felt that it was time to go for a much longer rest. On 28 June 2026, around 6.35 a.m., he was rushed to the hospital. His pulse dropped gradually, and the doctors at St. Joseph's Hospital declared him brought dead.

Hailing from Kalugumalai, George was the first-born in a family of 10 siblings. His father expected him to succeed him in the match factory business. But the young George had different

plans. After completing his college studies at St. Xavier's, Palayamkottai, with the permission of his father, he joined the novitiate in 1948. After his ordination on 24 March 1960, he served in schools at Tiruchi, Oriyur, Nagercoil, and Kosavapatty in various capacities. He also served in a few colleges as Administrator and Treasurer. After retirement in 1984, he was entrusted with the nascent Vaigarai Publishing House. Interested in writing and publishing from the beginning, he nurtured it into a successful venture and wrote six books. A hymn he wrote based on the Good Shepherd Psalm 23 is still being sung.

■ Michael Pugazhendhi, SJ



Lawrence Amalaraj, SJ (CEN)

Born in Tiruchi in 1951, Lawrence entered the Society in 1969, was ordained a priest in 1983, and pronounced his final vows in 1994. After his B.A. in Economics and M.A. in Social Work, he obtained a Doctorate in the Philippines. He worked for 15 years at Loyola College, Chennai as Hostel Director, Vice Principal, and a professor of Social Work. As Principal of Arul Anandar College, Karumathur, he made the college a college of excellence, winning five stars from the NAAC. He pioneered new ventures like the College of Management and B.Ed. College at Guntur, Andhra, Christ College of Arts & Science, Kilachery, started by the Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore.

From the beginning, he radiated joy and cheerfulness. To generations of students he was not merely a teacher, but also a mentor and guide. He served also as Director of XIBA, Palayamkottai, and St. Joseph's Institute of Management (JIM), Tiruchi. Later, he devoted himself to spiritual ministry. At 10.00 pm on 24 June 2026, the Lord called him to Himself at St. Thomas Hospital, Chennai. Fr. Lawrence Amalaraj leaves behind a legacy of academic excellence, pastoral compassion, and Ignatian fidelity. His life radiated the Jesuit motto, 'Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam'.

■ Xavier Alphonse, SJ



Mariadoss Antonimuthu, SJ (MDU)

On 30 June '26, when Br. Mariadoss did not show up for the community Mass at 7 a.m., Fr. Arul G., the Minister at Maduralaya, Dindigul went to check and found that the holy Brother was lying on his cot, holding a rosary close to his chest. He must have breathed his last in his sleep without any obvious struggle, in the early hours of 30 June.

Br. E.S. Mariadoss Antonimuthu was born in Coimbatore. At the age of 22, he joined the Tamil Nadu Public Works Department (PWD) as a Junior Draftsman. His career at the PWD spanned almost 20 years. While in Chennai, thanks to the guidance of Fr. Thamburaj James, and Fr. Ama Samy, at the age of 42, he resigned his job and joined the Jesuits.

Although he was older than both his novice master and fellow novices, he accepted Jesuit formation with exemplary humility. Recognising his engineering expertise, the Society entrusted Br. Maria with several major construction projects. Wherever he was posted, his first task was to trace, organise, and systematically maintain property records. He also rendered valuable service to the province as a member of the Finance Commission, Building Committee, and Co-workers' Salary Fixation Committee. From the day he entered the Society of Jesus, until his last breath, he wore only a saffron shirt and dhoti.

■ Santhanam Arockiasamy, SJ



Can we all be Manjummel Novices?

They refuse to leave until the lost is found

In June 2006, twenty young men made a bold, defining choice to step into the unknown. They entered the Jesuit novitiate, dispersed across three distinct locations but united in a single vision. Twelve began their journey at Mount St. Joseph in Bangalore; four entered the Xavier Training College in Belgaum; and four stepped into the Andhra Novitiate in Guntur.

Over the years, six of them chose a different way of life. The remaining fourteen pressed onward, eventually being ordained to the priesthood at various times. Recently, marking exactly twenty years since that pivotal day in 2006, eleven of those fourteen companions gathered for a profound session of faith-sharing.

We are those fourteen companions. And our story is what I call 'the Manjummel Novices.' 'Manjummel Boys' (2024), a blockbuster Malayalam film, chronicles a group of eleven friends from a small town in Kerala who embark on a budget-friendly vacation to the scenic Kodaikanal hills in Tamil Nadu. While exploring the breath-taking landscape, tragedy strikes. One of the friends accidentally plunges into the treacherous depths of the infamous Guna Caves, in the hills - a place long considered a death trap from which no one returns.

When authorities write off the situation as hopeless, the group refuses to leave. They resolve to stay until the lost is found. Ultimately, it takes one companion - driven by a grit that refuses to fade - to descend into the dark, suffocating abyss to pull his friend back into the light.

This is the exact essence of Jesuit companionship. Over twenty beautiful, chaotic, and grace-filled years, we have stood by each other. We have shared the highs of ordination and successful ministries, and we have quietly carried the lows of exhaustion, doubt, and administrative burdens. True companionship is not tested when the sun is shining on a picnic; it is tested when a companion falls into a dark, seemingly unrecoverable place.

During formation, community life offers us a unique opportunity to strengthen the bonds of Jesuit



Pic courtesy: in.pinterest.com

companionship. However, during active ministry, that connection can take its toll. Therefore, let us act before it is too late. The film reveals a simple truth: True companions never abandon their own.

During our recent anniversary gathering, our batch arrived at a unanimous, heartfelt realization: we must be more than just batch mates who share a history. We need to be Manjummel Novices. We have committed to sticking by one another through every high and every low. We vow to hold onto one another with fierce perseverance, deepening our bond to create an unbreakable spiritual safety net. If one of us stumbles into the dark caves of discouragement, isolation, or crisis, the rest of us will not walk away. We will stay. We will lower the rope. We will go down into the depths to bring our brother back. When darkness surrounds, one gentle word of assurance becomes the lone beacon. Yes, we can lift others up - even when hope has abandoned them.

'The Manjummel Boys' inspired its viewers with a portrayal of human loyalty. May they inspire us, the Manjummel Novices, to live out our sacred Jesuit companionship with the very same relentless love.

Can all Jesuits be Manjummel novices? We are called to offer such loyal companionship to all our fellow Jesuits. But even if that remains an ideal, we can offer such fierce, unwavering companionship to those who were our co-novices, those who are our batch mates. ❖

Jeevan Gomes, SJ (KAR) recently completed his Tertianship at Sacred Heart College, Shembagnur, Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu.



During their final journey

Film: *A Time for Heaven* (2017)

Director: Craig McMahon

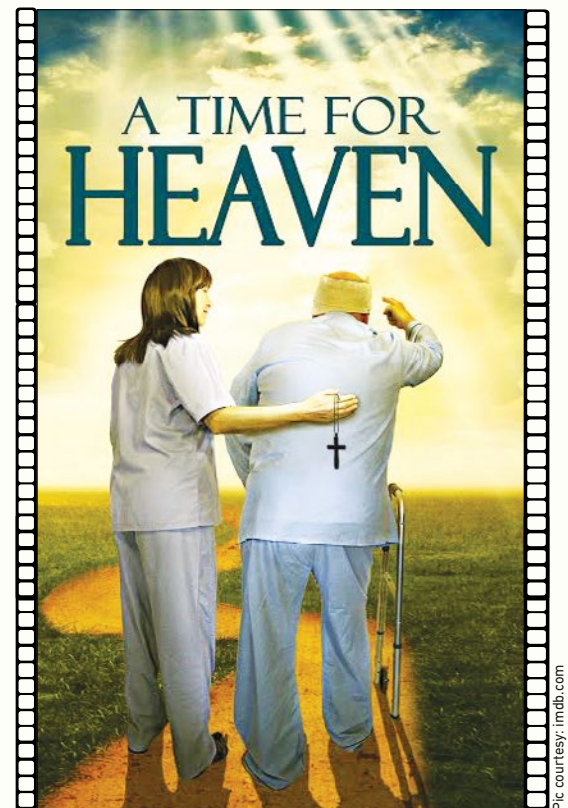
Run time: 88 minutes

A Christian drama inspired by a true story, this film highlights the power of faith that heals broken hearts and restores lives in amazing ways. The story follows the life of Julie, a compassionate healthcare professional working in a hospice. She serves terminally ill persons and helps them face death with hope, faith, and reconciliation. As a committed Christian, Julie shares her faith with the patients and provides them consolation and joy during their final days on earth.

Old Ronald Mitchell, a diabetic atheist, estranged from his family, is assigned to Julie's care. He has been given only a week to live. Mitchell is embittered, and peevish towards all. He naturally repels Julie's efforts to bring him to God, making it clear that religion and God are loathsome to him. Not giving up, Julie up cares for him like a daughter. She learns that Mitchell has no relatives and is either divorced or separated from his wife for a long time.

From a photograph recovered from Mitchell's drawer, she learns that the old Mitchell had children. A friendly detective helps her recover the records relating to Mitchell's family, eventually revealing the shocking truth that she is, in fact, Mitchell's daughter, and had a brother. Confronting her adoptive mother who had kept the fact from her, she discovers the whereabouts of her brother. Julie's original name had been Elizabeth and her brother was William. She recovers her mother's parting gift to her long ago – a photograph of her children with a loving letter scribbled at the back.

Mitchell admits that he had given her up for adoption when his marriage fell apart after the birth of her brother and the mother took to alcohol and drugs. He had hoped that the children would have a better life and he had no knowledge of their whereabouts. He also does not want to meet them at this stage. With the help of the detective, Julie discovers that her lost brother is actually her acquaintance Stefan, the electrician. She traces him out but has a hard time convincing Stefan of the situation and to bring him to their father's death bed. Mitchell is finally reconciled with his family and makes his peace with God.



The film emphasizes the need to accompany people during their final journey with dignity, respect, and hope. Grounded on the central theme that death is not the end but the threshold of eternal life, the film invites viewers to reflect on heaven, salvation, and trust in God, who works through ordinary people and unexpected circumstances to bring healing and restoration. ❖

Prof. Gigy Joseph Koottummel, a former Professor of English, is a writer, translator and columnist.



The Question We All Carry

I was present at a private conversation in 1992 between Father Bede Griffiths and a prominent Australian businessman. They sat in comfortable chairs, afternoon light slanting through windows, overlooking the Southern Ocean; two men from vastly different worlds. Father Bede attracted thousands to his talks in Australia. Yet in conversation he was remarkably quiet. He listened attentively, as though silence itself had become his native language. The businessman, not himself a Catholic or any religion for that matter, leaned forward and asked as clear as a bell: “Father, do you think you will be met and welcomed when you travel to the other side?”

Bede’s face softened with that gentle smile of his. “Yes, I do actually. I have always believed that.” They talked for hours after that - about death, meaning, what lies beyond. Six months later, the businessman died in an unforeseen catastrophic accident.

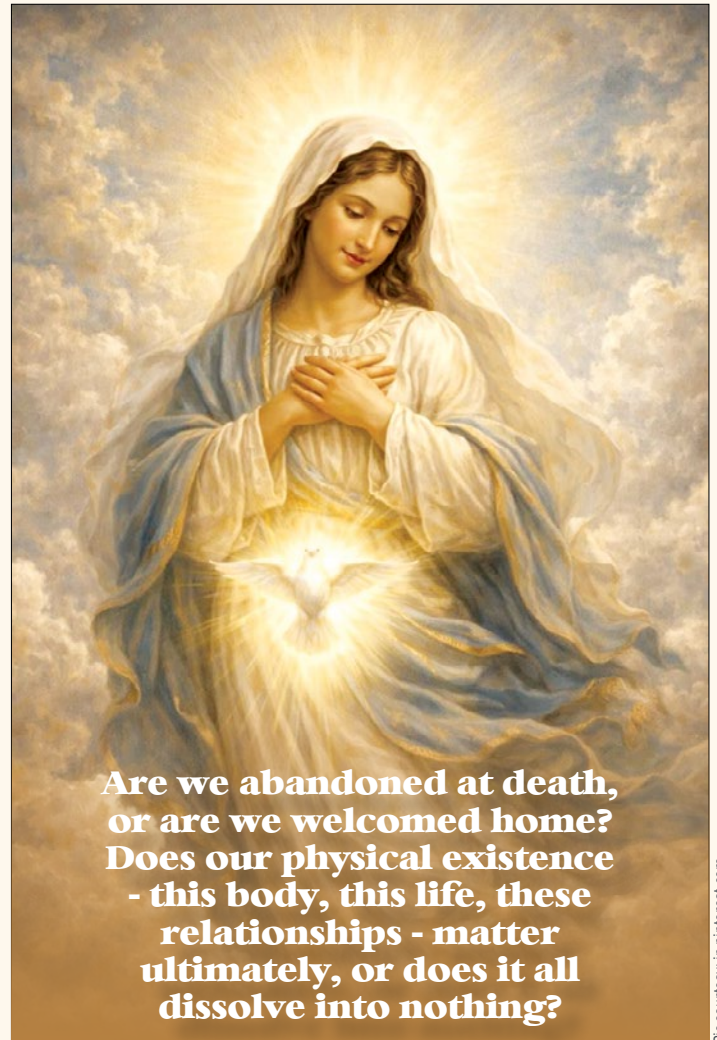
It was mid-August, just days before the Solemnity of the Assumption - the feast celebrating Mary being received, body and soul, into heaven’s welcome. As I reflected on their conversation later, I understood why the businessman had asked his question with such urgency. He wasn’t seeking abstract theology. He was asking what the Assumption proclaims: Are we abandoned at death, or are we welcomed home? Does our physical existence - this body, this life, these relationships - matter ultimately, or does it all dissolve into nothing?

That afternoon, Bede demonstrated something essential about spiritual depth: the capacity to meet ultimate questions without fear, to face mortality with gentle confidence, to believe that God’s presence extends beyond the boundaries of this visible life.

The businessman wasn’t asking for theological arguments. He was asking what every human soul eventually asks: Will I be abandoned at death, or welcomed home?

These questions shape how we live now, how we love now, how we face loss and limitation now. A person who believes death is absolute annihilation lives differently than one who trusts in ultimate welcome. Differently. And anyone preparing for lifelong commitment must explore this territory together.

Bede’s answer had not been borrowed from books or television documentaries. It had been slowly formed



through decades of silence, prayer, suffering, and steady friendship with God. He had touched, in prayer and in life, the ground that doesn’t shift. He knew himself to be held by One, larger than his thoughts about it.

This is what the Assumption proclaims: that Mary’s lifelong “yes” to God - her trust even when she didn’t understand, her faithfulness through suffering and loss - culminated not in abandonment but in being received fully, body and soul, into God’s presence. She is the sign that death does not mean falling into nothing.

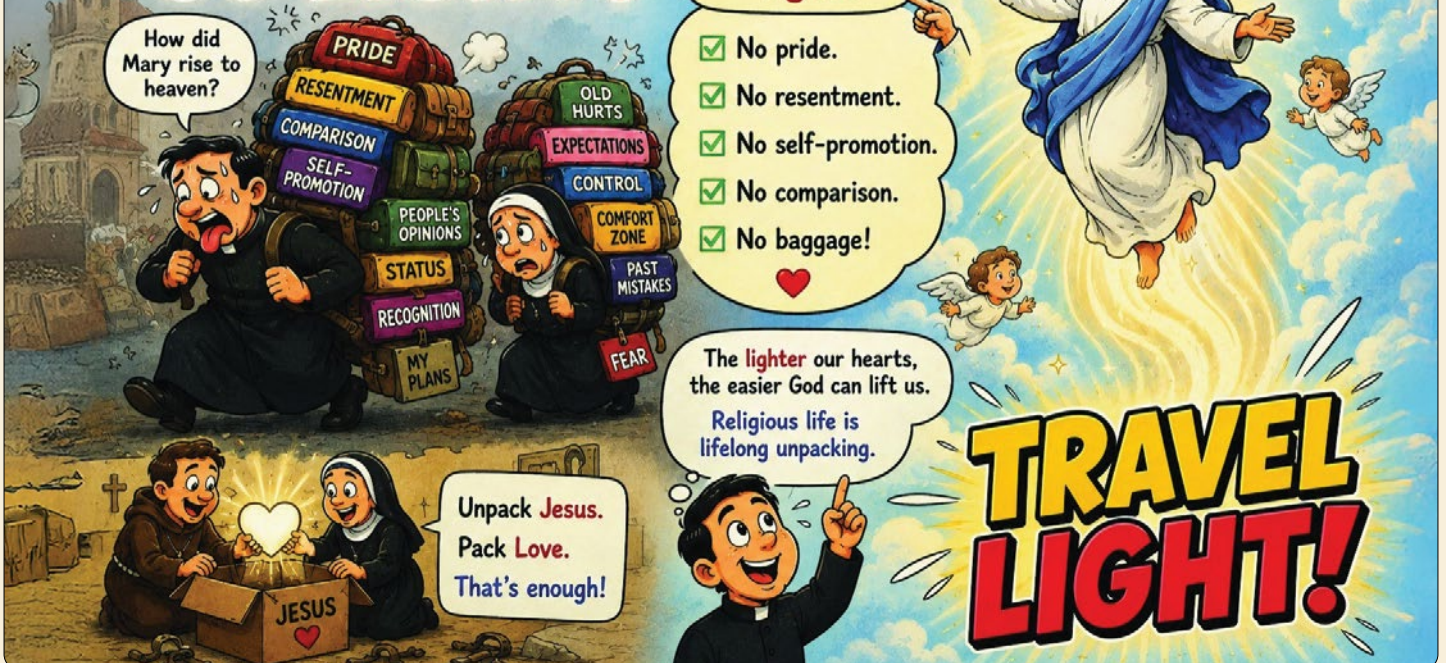
We fall into Love. We are travelling towards a Welcome. ❖

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

WHO COLONIZES YOUR HEART?



WHY WAS MARY SO LIGHT?





The Idea of India

No other country in the world embraces the extraordinary mixture of ethnic groups, profusion of mutually incomprehensible languages, varieties of topography and climate, diversity of religions and cultural practices, and range of levels of economic development that India does. And yet India, as I have repeatedly argued, is more than the sum of its contradictions.

Those contradictions were repeatedly stressed by British rulers in self-justification for their rule. Thus Benjamin Disraeli argued that India was not a nation: it lacked a common language, a common religion, a shared tradition, a historical experience, a cohesive majority, and a defined territory, all of which he regarded as the essential ingredients of a nation. But Indian nationalists had an effective riposte. India is a country held together, in the words of Nehru, 'by strong but invisible threads...a myth and an idea, a dream and a vision, and yet very real and present and pervasive.'

There are deep continuities, therefore, in the imagining of Indian nationhood that transcend centuries of internal division. In that sense, the idea of India is as old as antiquity. However, the idea of India as a modern nation ... despite the mystical influence of Tagore, and the spiritual and moral influences of Gandhiji, is a robustly secular and legal construct based upon the vision and intellect of our founding fathers, notably (in alphabetical order!) Ambedkar, Nehru, and Patel. The Preamble of the Constitution itself is the most eloquent enumeration of this vision.

To me, Indian nationalism derives its political legitimacy not from ethnicity, religion, language, culture, or any of the immutable trappings that people acquire from birth, but from the consent and active participation of our citizens, as free members of a democratic polity. For our nationalism to rise above the "Hindi-Hindu[tva]-Hindustan" idea of India proclaimed by the present ruling dispensation, we must preserve the idea of India embedded in the Republic our founding leaders created — sustained by liberal democratic institutions, constitutionalism that guarantees freedom of speech and association, and representative democracy that empowered the



Pic courtesy: in.pinterest.com

individual citizen irrespective of caste or creed, region or religion, language or literacy. When our present rulers tell us that to disagree with them is anti-national, or that to be a true Indian one must be a Hindi-speaking Hindu, we can answer by pointing to the Constitution, whose idea of India they so shamelessly disregard.

Uniformity comes at the price of unity; the insistence on conformity destroys the imperative of consensus. An India that denies itself to some of us could end up being denied to all of us. ❖

(Excerpts from his article in https://shashitharoor.in/writings_my_essays_details/467)

WELL SAID

*"Some birds are not meant to be caged, that's all.
Their feathers are too bright, their songs too sweet and wild.
So, you let them go. And the part of you that knows
it was wrong to imprison them in the first place rejoices, but still,
the place where you live is that much more drab and empty for their departure."
- Stephen King, Rita Hayworth*



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