

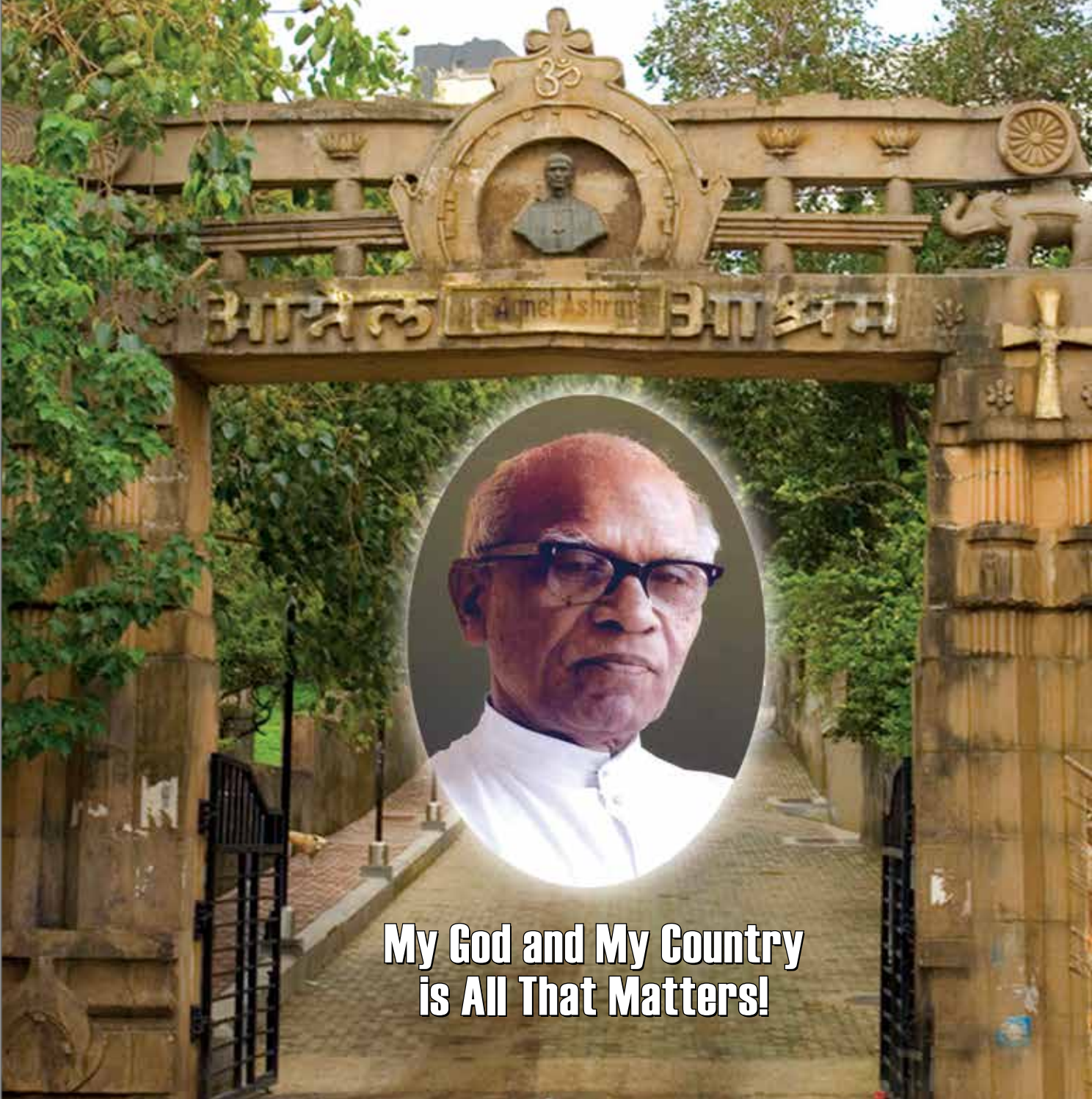


FR

February 2018

# AGNEL

SHRAM NEWS



**My God and My Country  
is All That Matters!**

FR. AGNEL  
ASHRAM

# NEWS

February 2018

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## Mini Sponsorship Scheme Our Orphan Children need your Helping Hand



The Scheme offers the Benefactors of Fr. Agnel Ashram an opportunity to share in our noble work of bringing up 800 orphan children in our Orphanages at : Bandra in Mumbai, Vashi in Navi Mumbai, Pune, Goa and Greater Noida.

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- We also have a Full Sponsorship Scheme for members paying ₹.9,000 or more per year. The amount also can be paid in monthly installments of ₹.750.

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### THE JOY OF GIVING

Become a  
Cheerful Giver



Letters from some  
Benefactors and  
Friends of our  
Balbhavan Children

#### **Augustine Abraham, Bangalore**

*I am enclosing cheque of Rs.1000/- for the children in your orphanage. Please pray for us. Thank you.*

*and education of the orphans under your care. Kindly remember us in your daily prayers.*

#### **Susy Joseph, Kerala**

*I enclose a cheque of Rs.5000/- to be used for the orphan children in your Balbhavan. Please pray for our family, especially for our daughter's early settlement in marriage. Thanking you.*

#### **Sajish Tom, U.K.**

*Please find enclosed a cheque of £100/- towards your educational and charitable activities, especially taking care of orphan boys. Kindly pray for us. Thank you.*

#### **Honeymol Wilson, Australia**

*I am sending a gift of Rs.2000/- for the orphan children in your Balbhavan. Please pray for us, especially that we may purchase a house in a good locality.*

#### **Sanjay Viera, Vasai**

*Please accept my Gift Garden contribution of Rs.9000/- towards the maintenance*



# Sixty Years and Counting

-Hansel D'Souza

Sixty years ago, an idea was born ! While mere mortals seek to establish an Institution in their lifetimes, our Founder sought to sow a thought! Rev. Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues founded the Agnel Ashram on June 9, 1957, not as just another Catholic Institution, but as a movement with a clear mission!

Fr Rodrigues was a visionary. He believed in what would be called in today's lingo, "disruptive innovation". To understand his vision, it is imperative to understand the context in which it was born. After all, a seed grows with the help of the soil and ambience in which it is planted.

The 1950's were the early years of the Indian Union. The concept of India was taking shape under the watch of our first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. Till 1947, India was an agglomeration of 565 princely states under British suzerainty. For the British, India was the Jewel in the Crown – a source of cheap raw materials that fuelled the industrial monolith on the British Isles, and a willing market for their finished goods!!

With Independence, came a multi-dimensional challenge. On the economic front, Indian was a predominantly agrarian economy. Agriculture accounted for more than 50% of the GDP at that point in time. Today, it is a mere 17% of GDP. On the other hand, India was an industrial pygmy compared to the industrialized giants of the western world. Nehru knew that the only fast track to growth was industrial development. Gandhi, on the other hand, had a different idea. To him, India lived in its villages. To Gandhi, India meant people. Gandhi's idea of development was holistic. Material prosperity was just an aid to holistic growth.

Nehru, on the other hand, was convinced that

the only path to redemption lay in economic resurgence and rapid industrial growth. Fr Concessao had two choices before him. Choose the ideology of industrialization or opt for spiritual rejuvenation and holistic growth.

While most would have selected one path over another, he chose to innovate. To his mind, there was a possibility of nourishing both the concepts. Thus, the Agnel Ashram was born. It was born as a response to the challenges

of the day. The challenges thrown up at Independence, the challenge to establish an Indian identity in the emerging nation called India. In his words, "India needs its own missionaries."

The modus operandi was simple. The Agnel Ashram had a two-fold goal. The

first was to serve India and participate in its development and growth. The second was to develop a holistic practice of faith that would integrate the country while keeping its diversity.

The word "ashram" is a Sanskrit word that connotes a place where one strives towards a goal in a disciplined manner. While the obvious goal was to fuel India's march towards becoming an industrialized economy, the second goal was relatively muted.

Those who worked with Fr. Rodrigues would readily vouch for the fact that he was a staunch nationalist. He never concealed his love for India and an indigenous expression of his faith. He was a secularist to the core and believed that different faiths were merely different paths to the same Divine Being. While his mission to modernize the economy found expression in the Technical schools and Engineering colleges he established, his yearning for an indigenized expression of faith has remained unfulfilled.

Those who worked  
with Fr. Rodrigues  
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nationalist.

The Agnel Ashram has always been a crucible where different communities and faiths work together for the common good. Over the decades, the Ashram Fathers have encouraged and supported dialogue between cultures, faiths and communities. In fact, the underlying philosophy of all the work accomplished has been “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” (The World is One Family).

As the Ashram Fathers look back over the last six decades, they can do so with pride. Pride at having achieved a substantial part of their Founder’s goal of strengthening the industrial might of India through the Institutions they have nurtured. However, the second goal of integrating India remains unfinished.

It might be an appropriated moment in history to stop and ask: Have we in our enthusiasm to build Institutions, neglected our second goal of building Communities? Have we lost sight of our Founder’s vision to unite India in all its diversity, through our work and influence?

Almost a decade ago, a few Fathers at Agnel Ashram began a movement called “Agnel Seva Ashram”. The motto of this movement was “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”. Of course, such a movement might not be as exciting as setting up a School or College. It might not attract public attention and support. But, it definitely is the need of the hour.

As we look around us, we find loud voices ripping apart the gossamer thin social fabric we have built since Independence. The advent of social media has served to amplify these voices of discontent and division. There is a dire need to provide a healing touch. There is a need to bring people together to celebrate our diversity and express our unity. We need to build bridges where discord has been sown.

The goal of the Agnel Ashram was not just to “Skill India” but “Build India” into one large family. The 60th Anniversary of the Ashram is an opportune moment for us to revisit our mission and frame new goals that will keep us relevant for the next 60 years!

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## Practice Acting As If You Were Serene & It Will Grow Into a Habit

For you have not perceived that imitation whether of bodily gestures, tones of voice, or modes of thought, if they be persevered in from an early age, are apt to grow into habits and a second nature?

- Plato

What does it mean to act “as if”? When we feel angry and unforgiving, it means we act as if we forgave someone who stepped on our toes, or took our parking place, or ruined our paint brush, when we feel cold and self-pitying, it means to act as if we were warmly interested in the child or friend or spouse who has something to tell us. It can be a wonderful exercise. If we really give ourselves to the performance, we can act as if, and the mood we imitate becomes real.

Oscars will never be given for acting as if, but

the rewards are far more useful. Acting as if can salvage a bad day; it can repair or prevent a quarrel. Act as if we didn’t have a headache, and often the headache disappears. Act as if we weren’t in a hurry and often we will have time for everything.

When we were small, adults said to us: “Don’t make a face or you will freeze that way.” Now that we’re grown, we can learn how to imitate, flexibly, what we want. Instead of freezing into negative postures, we reach for agreeable ones – and so often “as if” becomes “as is”.

# My God and my Country..... is all that matters!

Sixty years ago, when he slipped past the Portuguese border officials, and landed in Bombay, he carried all that a man and a Priest needs, a pair of clothes, a pen and some paper, his pectoral Cross (not such as the Bishops wear, but a humble preacher's Cross), his Rosary beads and his Breviary. Anyway, what else does an exiled, who is leaving his birth place for his Motherland, need. The warm embrace of a loving and free land is all that mattered!

Fr. Conceicao Menino Rodrigues had always been a restless soul, and when you are asked to toe a line that seeks to belittle your Motherland, even it be, under duress from those who can (sorry, think they can) send your soul to hell, you can't take it any more. It must have been heartbreaking for a man who the Church authorities always sought recourse to, as their star polemist, to say, "sorry, not this Boss, this is against my personal conviction; India is my Motherland and her freedom is our birthright".

When you cross the bridge and have left all you treasured, far behind, you feel emaciated, but light enough, to take on more ambitious challenges. Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues landed in Bombay, after he was hounded out of Goa, for his refusal to toe the official anti-India line, of the Portuguese occupation army in Goa, that unfortunately the colonially controlled church adopted too. Men with little means, but hearts that dreamt big, do not fear losing, and do not mind stooping low, to conquer.

For a Goa-born Priest, moulded and shaped to walk the official line of the patronizing colonial government and that of church authorities, to stand up to them, was not only perilous but clearly suicidal, since the long arms of those who wield power in the Church, could easily reach him anywhere. When you choose discomfort and pain for something bigger, you are already empowered to scale higher goals. Fr. C. Rodrigues, perceived the creation of a new entity, a cradle of Institutions, that insolent might, or small-minded individuals would never again succeed to subdue.

## BELIEF WITHOUT BORDERS

Fr. C. Rodrigues was faced with that, once a life time challenge, of making a choice, where there was indeed none. Being a very devout, loyal and fiery defender of faith in Goa, to stand up against it, was like shackling oneself to a position that was fatally self-destructive; on the other hand, not to decide to pursue his life's passion for which the Society had been established, to bring Christ to India, would be the end of all that he stood for.

To join the ranks of all those Indians who were yearning for the end of colonial rule in India, was in direct confrontation with the established Church and unpardonable. To profess what most had chosen to do, the continuation of the Portuguese rule in Goa, would be in direct opposition of the fundamental Gospel value of the freedom of God's children, and a clear betrayal of the Society's primary goal – to bring Christ to India. Heroes do not falter, nor those fired by the Spirit of the Risen Lord, are held back by fear, pain, and deprivation, as Saint Paul boldly proclaims.

Fr. C. Rodrigues turned this difficult situation into something far more beautiful, that would last far beyond that moment of martyrdom of exile and banishment and all that would follow many years later. He always said that the retribution for his act of defiance would come from those whose affinities were with the occupying powers, sooner or later.

## THE AGNEL ASHRAM PHENOMENON

Three years after landing in Bombay, and still penniless and friendless, his efforts and that of his two companions, Bro. Peter Mascarenhas and Bro. Paixao Lacerda, were focused on finding a place they could call home. They lived in a small one room tenement with others, survived on a frugal living, and kept themselves close to the people. Those apartments, if you could call them so, were one room tenements, such as Padamsee Building, off Marine Lines, Dhobitalao, sometimes with common toilets. As was their living style so was their work style, when they stood long hours outside

people's homes so that they may collect their meager monthly mite, each of which was a treasure to them.

While struggling with daily survival, Fr. C. Rodrigues was seriously toying with a much bigger dream of what he understood as God's call in that particular situation of Bombay where on the one hand, wealth was oozing out of the doors and windows of the rich at Malabar Hill, on the other hand, children rummaging through the city's dustbins, fighting with dogs and rats for their daily morsel.

What kind of a God does one proclaim to people who live and breathe a different culture, who have their own traditions of committed living, and what message does this God have for the city's poor whose daily struggles lie around the dustbins or people's throwaways. His faith constrained him to look at life's realities in a manner that they were not tainted with western or alien glasses. This surely, was not the Gospel idea!

Jesus in John. 4ss. proposes to the Samaritan woman, that there is no need of going to the temple for worship, because one can worship in spirit and truth. Jesus was unambiguous about the non-existence of any cultural bias to his message although it may have been given in a particular setting of Palestine, which also meant that wherever the message was being shared it must be so done, in its present context.

So, Fr. Rodrigues devised a plan where his new home would be known as an "ASHRAM", for reflecting the idea that he had in mind, to shelter and rescue poor children that the Society had condemned to the fringes of inhuman existence, while at the same time, it reflected the prevailing idea in the minds of millions of Indians that those consecrated to God are called to be witnesses of prayer and simplicity. It was not an Ashram that reflected the Brahmanical culture, but a place of prayer and where people although engaged with the world, lived simple lives and worked for alleviation of poverty.

Fr. C. Rodrigues believed in the power of his passion and that the Lord's promise, "I and behold, I will be with you till the end of times", became evident when he, with empty pockets, set his eyes on VILLA VIENNA ( the present

MANNAT, Shahrukh Khan's residence) as the place to plant his first Ashram. Marvel as you may, with at his madness, but the cost and travails of acquiring that place did not deter him and his companions from doing the impossible to acquire the same. Two years later they acquired the present landmark that is known as the AGNEL ASHRAM, BANDRA.

The portico integrating the Indian architectural motifs of all faiths that adorn the gate of the Bandra Ashram demonstrate beyond doubt that for Fr. C. Rodrigues the love for his land was not a convenient choice, but was deeply embedded in his mind and heart. Through that, he also made it clear that the potential of the message of the Gospel, to be embraced by millions, lied it be embedded in the culture that millions of Indians shared, and that he cast his lot with the poor, he made no mistake about what he meant. The symbolism was not directed towards a hegemonic indian culture but on the culture that embraces all.

The support that the plan of purchasing this prime plot facing the Arabian Sea met with such great support that the payments to the owners were indeed a miracle, as people came forward with small donations, and others, with bigger interest-free repayable advances.

The place once acquired became a new home to the pioneers, but little was allowed for personal comfort as the venture began with a Centre for the devotion of Fr. Agnel, and with daily and Sunday celebrations of the Holy Eucharist where people began to attend in large numbers, to pray and seek solace from the God of compassion and love, through the intercession of Fr. Agnelo, and a part of the same sheltering the orphans who were being skill-trained in carpentry, welding, fitting, smithy, etc.

Agnel Ashram, Bandra, became a Center of devotion to Fr. Agnelo D'Souza, a Centre for shelter and skilling of street urchins and at the same time a rallying point for many who saw in the exile of Fr.C.Rodrigues an opportunity to state the faith professed according to one's call is in no way a reduction or a denial to the loyalty and dedication to the Church. Thankfully these sentiments gathered ground and a lot of Christians rallied around that idea, that the Gospel of Jesus must be contextualized

or reincarnated into the soul of India, not with cosmetic adaptations alone in the area of worship but much more ingrained into our understanding that God calls each within the context of the land and culture one is born into.

### **FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY, IS ALL THAT MATTERS.....**

When you cast your lot into a system of beliefs that demand radical action like leaving your land and people, for a much greater cause of bringing Christ to India, through service to its most deprived people, and a conviction that compels one to pursue your country's interest as a necessary goal, you have to be ready for a long haul.

- The first opposition, for a further upgradation of the educational and training facilities from the non-formal to ITI (Industrial Training Institute) and Polytechnic, training Diploma Engineers, who would build the nation, came from our own, who clearly questioned why a small India-born religious Society should venture into higher level technical education, and they made no mistake about making their point clear in public. And the Agnel Ashram was the first Catholic Institution that established the first Christian Polytechnic, designed to meet the needs of the then industrial education complex that trained 1000s of Engineers that manned the wheels of industry all over the land. It was adjudged among the best in the country and praised at national and international levels.
- This was followed by a more tortuous and painful journey of misunderstanding focused on two key areas: (i) the idea that Fr. C. Rodrigues and his followers followed, that the Society of Pilar reorganized in 1939, was in response to a special call of God, to bring Christ to India and therefore had its special nuances of newness, goal and structure, and, (ii) the issue that the Church in India, to be truly prophetic must be free and unattached from any other influence that would make it appear, less embedded in Indian cultural and Indian aspirations.

Fr. C. Rodrigues was a man beyond his times and therefore, could not be contained within the confines of this time and place. His passionate idea about bringing Christ to India that eventually ended with the re-

establishment of the Society of Pilar together with his companions, his refusal to abide by the diktat of the Ecclesiastical superiors to be part of the anti-free India campaign and his eventual leadership of the idea that the Church needed to be free and unattached, to be a factor of change in India, did not go well with the authorities. In 1977, 20 years after the Ashram was established and 23 years after he went into exile to free India, an attempt was made to banish him from the very Society, of which Foundation he was the prime driving force.

Significantly, the major allegation was that he had inspired lay people to demand self-reliance and self-determination free from foreign influence in matters that affect the Church in India. That was an innocent, legitimate, proud 20th century expression, but was not acceptable to some, not because they found it objectionable, but they found it objectionable that Fr. C. Rodrigues had inspired them.

The rest is history. The Ashram founded in 1957 spread to Goa, Delhi, U.P. etc. and it established world-class Institutions, that never for a day looked back, but stood a solid testimony to the idea that the call of the Gospel does not admit boundaries of caste or community, nation or culture, but needs to be contextualized right where it is. Their struggles also demonstrate that the caution that Jesus gave in Mat. 5, 13 ss, "blessed are you when they persecute you, falsely on my name, rejoice because the Kingdom of God is yours."

The urge to be all things to all men, to heal the sickness of thousands of young men and women who cannot find jobs and human dignity, who cannot stand on their own feet, for thousands of others in the urban poverty centres, is to preach the Gospel of freedom that Jesus brought to the world. Whilst staying faithful to the call of the Gospel, "he has sent me to preach the good news to the poor," it also blazes a new trail for accommodation and understanding local and national aspirations in the pursuit of God's kingdom which is not hideously linked to a particular way of life.

**-Jose Alarico Carvalho**  
alarc22@yahoo.co.in

# St Valentine

## -The True story behind St Valentine's day

-Christine D'Sylva

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*Love is the only force capable of  
transforming  
an enemy into a friend.*

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

*There is only one happiness in this life,  
to love and be loved.*

- George Sand.

Everybody knows about Valentine's day. It is celebrated on the 14th of February.

Flowers, gifts and romance- that is what Valentine's day is all about. But, the true story behind this romantic day had tragedy too.

St Valentine was a Roman Priest, who lived during the time of Emperor Claudius who persecuted the Church at that particular time. Claudius had an edict that prohibited the marriage of young people. This was based on the hypothesis that unmarried soldiers fought better than married ones since married soldiers might be afraid of the plight of their families if they were killed in war.

It must be remembered that it was a very permissive Society and polygamy was practised.

People at that time were attracted to the Christian faith. Marriage was considered sacred according to Christian doctrine, and Valentine wanted to encourage the people to marry within the church.

Valentine, therefore, secretly married young people so as to encourage them to embrace the Christian Church.

However, it was not long before he was caught. He was imprisoned and tortured for performing marriages against the command of Emperor Claudius.

One of the Judges, was a man named Asterius. His daughter was blind. Valentine prayed and healed his daughter with such astonishing effect that Asterius, himself became a Christian.

In the year, 269 AD, Valentine was sentenced

to a brutal three-part execution that entailed a beating, stoning and finally, decapitation all because of his stand for Christian marriage.

After he was killed, Valentine's remains sat in the Catacombs of San Valentino for a while before moving to Santa Maria in Cosmedin.

The story tells us that the last words he wrote to Asterius' daughter were in a note, signing it, "From your Valentine". Till, today these words are used in Valentine cards.

St Valentine was a martyr and has come to be known as the patron saint of lovers.

This story reminds us that romantic love is very beautiful but it also has the shadow of the Cross. It is accompanied by sorrow and at times disappointment. Yet, romantic love and commitment is blessed by God, despite the shadow of the Cross it carries. The story of St Valentine serves to remind us of this fact. That love also brings a little suffering and pain, it is not always a bed of roses. Likewise, marriage. It does have its share of crosses, yet one must always hope that love conquers all.

This Valentine's day, celebrate it with joy and make your loved one feel special. Valentine's day is one of the most romantic days of the year and should be celebrated with a joyful spirit.

Let's not forget these words-Love is when the other person's happiness is more important than your own. This, is what separates immature love from a lasting more mature love,

In the Bible, it is written- Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. Of all the three, faith, hope and love, the greatest of these is love.

May you have a Happy Valentine's day this month, one that reminds you of the most beautiful feeling in the world, which is the love shared between two people, who despite all difficulties and obstacles, never really do give up on each other.



# AGNEL HAPPENINGS

## Fr. Agnel Jayanti Celebration at Bandra

The 149th Birth Anniversary of Ven. Fr. Agnelo D'Souza was celebrated on 21st January 2018. Most Rev. Bishop Allywn D'Silva, Auxiliary Bishop of Bombay, was the main celebrant.

A short cultural program was put up by the students of Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School, Vashi, before the Eucharistic Celebration.

The Bishop was escorted to the Venue by the School Scouts and Guides team. The Students from Agnel Multipurpose School, Vashi enthralled the audience with their scintillating performances. They put up a prayer song as well as a prayer dance to the lyrics and music of one of the compositions of late Fr. Orlando Rodrigues.

The Bishop in his Sermon, highlighted the qualities of Ven. Fr. Agnelo D'Souza. A good number of Devotees of Fr. Agnelo were present for the Eucharistic Celebration.

Towards the end, Fr. Randal thanked the entire congregation and all those who assisted in organizing the day.



# FR. AGNEL JAYANTI CELEBRATION



Prayer Song by Vashi Students



Superior Welcomes the Gathering



Choir with Melodious Voices



Concelebrated Mass with the Bishop



Offertory Procession



Bishop Imparts his Blessing to All



# CELEBRATION AT BANDRA



*Prayer Dance by the Children of Fr. Agnel School, Vashi*



*Entrance Procession*



*Homily by Bishop Allwyn D'Silva*



*Audience listening to Inspiring words of the Bishop*



*Kiss of Relic Near the Tomb*

## Mrs. Snigdha Roy wins Excellent Educator Award

**M**rs. Snigdha Roy, Principal of **Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School & Jr. College, Vashi** was a winner of the Gloria de Souza Excellent Educator Award (2017), for her outstanding contribution in the field of education.

The awards ceremony was the culmination of the Skill Development: Global Creative Summit 2018, which was held on 11th Jan 2018 at Kohinoor Continental. This Summit was initiated by Parisar Asha with the support of Manpowergroup India

, a global recruitment firm. This platform was created for the discussion about the importance of developing skills and how different stakeholders of the community have their respective roles to play to give wings to skilling.

Shr Adv. Ashish Shelar, President of BJP, Mumbai, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest, and Mr. A.G Rao , Managing Director-

Manpower Group India, was present as the Guest of Honour.

Stalwarts from different walks of life like



*Principal, Mrs. Snigdha Roy receiving the Gloria de Souza Excellent Educator Award*

Mr. Manmeet Singh, President - Experis at ManpowerGroup India; Dr. S.A Moin, Ex-Jt. Director-SCERT, Bihar; Ms. Mrinalini Kher, Trustee & Honorary Secretary of Kherwadi Welfare Society Association and Ms. Sonali Geed, C.A.O -TIPS Group of International Chain Schools, were the eminent Panellists

who discussed in length the importance of skilling and how our education system needs to be more dynamic to offer an education system which is holistic in nature and is infused with all forms of skills. Mrs. Snigdha Roy's presentation on "Skill Development- the Agnel Experience" was appreciated by one and all.

More than 300 educators attended this symposium.

## National Tricolour Hoisted At Agnel's, Ambernath



*Scholarship Awardees*

**T**he national Tricolour was hoisted and honoured with great joy and enthusiasm by the Staff and students of Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School and Jr. College, Ambernath, on Republic Day.

The honour of hoisting the flag on this auspicious occasion, was awarded to Mr. and



*Patriotic Song by Jr. College Students*

Mrs. Tekwani , the Chief Guests and proud parents of Sneha Tekwani, who topped the School SSC Board results in 2017.

The ceremony began with a prayer of peace for the nation. Speeches, in English and Marathi, highlighting the glorious traditions and beauty of our nation along with the urgency of upholding our values to restore peace and progress, were delivered with patriotic fervour by the students of Std. VI, VII and VIII.



Scholarships were awarded to the SSC Board toppers of 2017 . Ms. Sneha Tekwani (96.2 %) received the Late Mrs. Ezabel Manuel Arlappan Scholarship, Ms. Kunika Verma & Ms. Aishwarya Mahajan (94.8%) received the Mrs. Laxmi Gaba Scholarship and Ms. Drisshia Anil & Ms. Simran Rohra (93.8%), the Mr. Ved Kumar Bhandari Scholarship. Other meritorious students of Std. X were also awarded scholarships.

Kiara Dennis George of Std. IV recited the poem “Santa and the Mouse” which won her the 3rd position at the Interschool Poetry Competition organised by Fr. Agnel School, Bandra.

The programme was interspersed with patriotism –themed songs, with messages of courage and perseverance, Udd Chale, Jeete Hain Chal among others, presented melodiously by the school choir.

The students of the Junior College sang “Pyaara Hindustan” which brought out the need to protect our countrymen from discrimination and about living together in brotherhood.

With hearts brimming with national devotion and lips humming tunes of patriotic vigour, the students offered a memorable tribute to their Motherland.

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## Balbhawan Day, Greater Noida – 13th January, 2018

**1**8 years and going strong. That’s how old the Balbhawan is.....18 years.

Fr. Bento, in his opening Address announced this with pride. And for 18th time, the Balbhawan Day (2nd Saturday of the New Year) opened its curtains to clear blue skies and bright warm sun.

The Balbhawan Day has seen all weathers chilly winds, biting cold, fog, blue skies and the sun. Nothing has deterred the spirit of two men who made the miracle of love happen-Fr. Bento & Fr. Carvalho... come rain, come shine... the Balbhawan Day will carry on and grow in strength.

For the guests who had gathered, it was heart-warming listening to Fr. Bento read out he long list of the Children of the Balbhawan who have moved into the world to carve out a niche’ for themselves. There are chefs and musicians, teachers and coaches. The crowning moment of 2017 was when there was a wedding in the family of Balbhawan. The first time, the Bride and the Groom were both from Balbhawan!!

And so began the program with God as the President, Fr. Agnelo as the Chief Guest and the guest of Honour was everyone in the audience.

A dance from Jharkhand set the tone for a morning of music, dance & good cheer. This year each House (Balbhawan is divided into 8 Houses where the children enter and are cared for by their respective Mothers and remain in touch with their House Mother even when they shift the Hostel ) decided to stage a program

and the audience was treated to a delightful array of song, dance, music and art from the Anurag, Astha, Ashray, Muskan, Nikunj, Anusha, Saher and Surabhi Houses. Punctuating this sequence was the signature style of the Balbhawan Day-Senseless Wisdom that left guests smiling. The audience was mesmerized by the innovative music created by the Houses. From the little broaches of handmade flowers, to the lovely cards, to the decoration on the stage, to the announcements...every House proudly presented their creation.

Fr. Carvalho’s stirring address was a clarion call to all of us to share the gift of love we are blessed with and to experience the joy of giving.

And then it was turn for the Balbhawan Choir to steal our hearts with their amazing music and singing. Every year they are getting at their craft. The audience loved the rendering of the Mohammed Rafi’s “The World is One”.

The program closed with the final song by the Choir “One People”.

The Astha House thanked everyone for the contribution of the audience and for the blessings and the good wishes they have received in abundance.

But there was one final show before we could call it a day... the scrumptious spread of food by our very beloved Billoo uncle.

So long... farewell.....until we meet again...to the sound of music.

-Photos on back cover

# The Marvellous 60 Years

-E.F Joseph

The Fr. Agnel Ashram is celebrating Diamond Jubilee of its glorious existence with varied programmes and activities in 2018. Yes, of course it is an auspicious occasion for immense joy and pleasure, and also a moment of great pride to those who love and support the Ashram in its educational, charitable as well religious activities for the last 60 years. The growth, progress and expansion of the Ashram and the educational institutes under the dynamic leadership of its founder, Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues and the team of brilliant and dedicated Priests, popularly called Agnel Fathers can be put in a nutshell as from zero to hero status. So splendid and amazing was the growth of the Ashram within a short span of time. It is the culmination of commitment, hard work, vision and above all Providence. The words of Jesus Christ is quite relevant in the present context of the Ashram that “you are the light for the world, a city built on a hill can not be hidden, .... your light must shine before the people so that they will see the good works you do and praise your Father in Heaven (Mt.5.14). Yes, that is what the ashram has been doing for the last 60 years.

The Agnel Ashram was founded on 9th June 1957 by young dynamic priest Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues, member of the Missionary Society of St. Francis Xavier, Pilar, Goa. The Ashram stands on a hilltop facing the expanse of the Arabian sea, at Bandstand, Bandra west, popularly called queen of the suburbs, in the metroplitan city of Mumbai. It was founded with the aim of fostering love and understanding among the people of various communities in India through educational and charitable activities and thus contributing towards national integration, development and self reliance of the country. Although the Ashram is existing in a predominantly Christian locality, ironically most of the benefactors and majority of devotees of Fr. Agnel are non christians. the

Ashram is a miniature of secular India where people of all faith irrespective of their culture and custom throng at the Cenotaph (Samadhi) of Fr. Agnel invoking his heavenly intercession. It is now a prominent centre (shrine) of devotion to Fr. Agnel and also a centre for accademic excellence with international acclaim. It is a matter of pride for the faculty and the staff that students and parents alike give preference to Agnel Institutes while seeking admission for academic career. The Agnel Ashram Complex at Bandra is a Take Off point for several staff members and students for better prospects.

The history of the Ashram will not be complete without the heroic history of its founder Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues. Both are correlated to each other like two sides of a coin. At the realm of his youth he had to leave his mother state Goa due to some political reasons as he had taken an adamant stance on certain issues during the Goan liberation movement. When anything untoward takes place in life, most of the people would call it bad luck, but young Fr. Conceicao was an exception to such kind of pessimistic thinking, he found a divine touch in every crisis, and did believe that God makes everything good for those who are called as per his plan. His life was a struggle with challenges and obstacles but he did not back off, rather overcame every obstacle with uncommon zeal and confidence and turned them to stepping stones to success, instead of resorting to revenge and retaliation. Once in a staff meeting he said that life is a challenge, it is not meant for cowards, dare it with confidence and success will be yours. His inspirational talks have motivated several people to change their mindset and achieve goal in life. Yes, that is what we can see in the saga of his life. He was a shrewd missionary with great vision and brilliant plans for industrial growth of the country, out of this concept came up all huge technical institipons comprising Technical Schools, Jr.

Technical Colls, Polytechnic (Diploma) ITI, Trade schools, Engineering colleges at Degree, Post Graduation and Ph.D level. (Electronics, Computer, IT, Production and Mechanical engineering) Maritime Academy, Catering colleges, MBA Institutes and also Overseas Placement service & Trade Test Centre for recruitment of skilled workers and engineers in view of influx to the middle east countries for jobs in the seventies, and other numerous charitable activities under one roof are typical examples of his brilliant ideas.

Fr. Conceicao did not confine his missionary activities at Bandra only ; he wanted to spread the message of brotherhood and the importance of technical education for industrial growth to other parts of the country. As such, he made 3 teams of 2 young priests each who are his faithful lieutenants , initially Fr. Fr. Anslem D'sa and Fr. Proto Rodrigues were sent to Verna, Goa, Fr. Orlando Rodrigues and Fr. Saturnino Almeida were assigned with mission in Vashi, Navi Mumbai and Fr. Bento Rodrigues and Fr. Alarico Carvalho were entrusted with mission in New Delhi, later Noida and greater Noida in UP. Virtually, these 3 teams of dynamic priests made wonders in the respective areas and made the Agnel institutions pride of the country. The similar way institutions came up at Pune and Ambernath in Maharashtra under the direct supervision of Fr. Jeronimo Pereira and Fr. Francisco Diniz, who were superiors in respective times. Meanwhile, during this period of growth and expansion, dedicated service given by Fr. Sebastian Rodrigues, Fr. Peter Martin Rodrigues, Fr. Mariano Pereira, Fr. Alcantra Gracias Fr. Alfred Almeida and Bro. Paxio Lasrado at various levels, in their positions were of great value and support for the Ashram.

Lacs of students from Agnel Institutes are well placed in India and abroad with reputed companies, and many of them have set up their own enterprises also, and the similar way, thousands of orphan children, who could have been otherwise, derelicts of the society are given right direction with job oriented technical courses according to their flair and talents, and enabled to become skilled workers and self reliant. Nearly 3000

thousand staff and employees are directly employed in Agnel Institutions across the country and much more are indirectly benefited from the brilliant works of AGNEL FATHERS, who are motivated by the noble mission that there is no greater charitable work than that of providing education and employment to people and make them enlightened and self reliant. The Ashram is still growing cutting across the barriers of faith, religion, culture and language , spreading the message of love and spirit of national integration among the people.

It is a matter of great pride for the Agnel fathers and also a milestone in the history of the Ashram that once former Prime Minister of India Mrs Indira Gandhi visited the ashram at Bandra during her regime in 1973 and lauded the works done by the Ashram. Similarly, former President of India Dr. Zail Singh visited the complex at Verna, Goa in 1986 and inaugurated the Balgram cottages (home for orphan & destitute children) and he very much appreciated the humanitarian works undertaken by fathers, and exhorted the people to do such kind of noble works for the upliftment of the poor and the marginalised in the society. The central and state govts. of respective times have always appreciated and encouraged the works of the Ashram and entrusted it with many rural projects. Since space restricts, I am unable to highlight the achievements made by the ashram fathers in detail.

However, it is sad that despite yeoman service to the country, Fr. Conceicao was not conferred a national award, or at least a posthumous award until now, for his outstanding contributions to the field of technical education and for the upliftment of the poor and the down trodden, ..... but I am sure that God the Almighty would have definitely conferred on him the greatest award of eternal life in heaven.

May the Ashram continue to be shedding its light brighter and brighter to generations for the years ahead . Let me Conclude with a bouquet of hearty congratulations to all Agnel Fathers on this occasion for their sincere and dedicated service to the country.



# Fr. AGNEL'S BLESSINGS

## GIFT OF A SON AFTER 15 YEARS

**Jharkhand:** I am having 3 daughters. Naturally I was longing for a son. Bad luck I did not conceive after giving birth to three daughters. I had to hear all sorts of piques covertly and overtly from my in-laws. My visit and prayers at different Shrines did not bring any hope in my life. Advised by a friend, I sent a petition to the Agnel Ashram in Bandra and started his powerful Novena. I am now very happy to inform you that by the grace of Ven.Fr.Agnel I have been blessed with a son. Today I have come to the Ashram with my husband and son to give our thanks offering of Rs.3000/- to the Ashram.

-Anupa Ekka

## GRACEFULL YEARS

**Chennai:** I am an ardent devotee of Ven. Fr.Agnel for the past 70 years. Now I am celebrating my 81st birthday. Ven.Fr.Agnel has showered innumerable blessings in my life. Even at this age I am keeping good health by his grace. My heartfelt thanks to Ven.Fr.Agnel with an offering of Rs.3000/- being my birthday gift to the orphans.

-Mary Ignatious Colene

## CURED OF NUMBNESS IN THE HEAD

**Margaon-Goa:** My daughter was ill with her head getting numb on the left side. We consulted many doctors and took the medication but there was no respite. In this moment of anxiety I prayed to Ven.Fr.Agnel to intercede to God to bring her healing and peace of mind. I am now very grateful that Ven.Fr.Agnel heard my prayers as my daughter is now gradually recovering. My thanks to Ven. Fr. Agnel and I pray for his early canonization.

-Marioneta Miranda

## CURED OF STOMACH PAIN

**Mulund:** I was suffering from severe stomach pain for quite some time. Although I was under medication, it did not bring much relief. My health was getting worse. I turned to Ven.Fr.Agnel and prayed fervently for his healing touch on me. Now by the grace of Ven. Fr.Agnel I am completely cured of the stomach pain. With a grateful heart an offering of Rs.101/- to Ven.Fr.Agnel.

-Dinesh Rachh

## SAFE DELIVERY DESPITE COMPLICATIONS

**Vasai:** My daughter's maiden delivery would have been very complicated as she had a number of problems during her pregnancy period. I entrusted her to the protection of Ven.Fr.Agnel and earnestly prayed for her safe confinement. Now by the grace of Ven.Fr. Agnel my daughter had a safe and normal delivery of a healthy baby boy. Both are doing well. My sincere thanks with an offering of Rs.2000/-. To ven. Fr. Agnel.

-Mathew Pereira

## RECOVERY FROM FATAL INJURIES

**Loutolim-Goa:** The 17 year old son of our neighbour met with a major accident and was in unconscious condition. The doctors had given up hopes and said it would take at least three months for him to come back to normal condition. At this critical time, we fervently prayed to Ven.Fr.Agnel for his speedy recovery. Suddenly the boy regained consciousness and he is now fast improving towards recovery. Our heartfelt thanks to Ven. Fr.Agnel and we pray for his early canonization.

-Filomena Carvalho



### GOT A GOOD JOB

**Khandwa-M.P.:** My son was trying for a job for quite some time. I prayed to Ven.Fr.Agnel to help him start a good career. Now by the grace of Ven.Fr.Agnel my son got a very good job in a reputed company in Baroda. With a grateful heart an offering of Rs.1000/- to the Ashram.

-Christine Mathias

### DIVORCE AVERTED

**Mumbai:** My daughter in the U.S.A. was not in good terms with her husband for about 5 months due to some misunderstanding. Advices and persuasion for a reconciliation did not bring any result. At this critical time I sought the powerful intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel and tearfully prayed to him for my daughter. I have now great pleasure to

inform you that they gave up their adamant approach and attitude and reconciled with each other. Both are now leading a happy and peaceful life. With profound gratitude an offering of R.10,000/- to Ven.Fr. Agnel.

-M. Pereira

### CURE OF ILLNESS

**St. Mathias-Goa:** My daughter was struck with Bells Palsy. We consulted with various Doctors and took the necessary medication. However, this did not bring any relief. I sought the intercession of Ven.Fr.Agnel and prayed fervently to him to cure my daughter. I am now happy to say that my daughter has recovered from her illness and she is gradually regaining her normal health. I thank Ven. Fr.Agnel and pray for his early canonization.

-Joaquim A. Menezes

### Fr. Agnel Ashram - Bandra MASSES and NOVENAS ON SUNDAYS

MORNING			
TIME	MASS	TIME	NOVENA
07:00 a.m.	English	07:45 a.m.	English
08:00 a.m.	Konkani	08:45 a.m.	Konkani
09:30 a.m.	English	10:15 a.m.	English
TIME	NOVENA	TIME	MASS
10.30 a.m.	Tamil	11.00 a.m.	Tamil
EVENING			
TIME	NOVENA	TIME	MASS
03.00 p.m.	Gujarati & Marathi	03.30 p.m.	Marathi
06:15 p.m.	English	06:30 p.m.	English
07:15 p.m.	English	07:30 p.m.	English

#### Weekdays Mass in English at 6.00 p.m.

Novena Prayers and Kissing of Relic are held on every Saturday after 6.00 p.m.

Mass Favours obtained, petitions and offerings may kindly be sent to :

Rev. Fr. Superior

Fr. Agnel Ashram

P.O. Box – 6656, Bandstand,  
Bandra (W), Mumbai – 400 050.

Tel : 67114000.

Fax : 67114100.

Email : agnelashramnews@gmail.com

Web : <http://ash.fragnel.edu.in>

Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement.  
Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.

-Helen Keller

## Out of Their Bounty

P. Srivastava	Mumbai	50000	P.R. Surati	Canada	2000	Gigi Thachil	Kerala	500
Homi R. Mistry	Mumbai	50000	S. F. Fernandes	Vasai	1500	M.J. Sheth	Mumbai	500
T.M. Bhatia	Mumbai	20000	M. Silveira	Vasai	1500	M. Chacko	Jabalpur	500
H. Nachia	Bangalore	12000	A. Jayasimhan	Mumbai	1500	K.S. Rao	Mumbai	500
Mukesh Raiyeni	Dahisar	11000	K.G. Lopes	Thane	1200	S. John	Kerala	400
Sajeevu Mathew	Kerala	10000	S. Dalvi	Mumbai	1200	T.V. Scaria	Keraa	350
F.R. Fernandes	Mumbai	10000	M. Hatton	Kolkata	1050	K. Varghese	Kerala	300
John J. D'Souza	Mumbai	10000	A.D. Karbari	Mumbai	1001	K. A Nirmala	Kerala	300
Mario Curtis	Thane	9000	Ravi B. Chopra	Mumbai	1000	S.P. Mistry	Pune	300
V.N. Heldt	Secunderabad	9000	D. D'Silva	Mumbai	1000	M.K. Pereira	Pune	300
P.M. Colaco	Vasai	8000	Jennifer D'Silva	Mumbai	1000	T. Joseph	Kerala	300
C. J. Pathiyil	U.S.A.	6477	Annie D'Silva	Mumbai	1000	Gracy Mathew	Gujarat	300
Punam Bajaj	Mumbai	6300	G. D'Silva	Bangalore	1000	R. Johnson	Kerala	300
B.V. Patel	Gujarat	5000	A. N. Cardoz	Mumbai	1000	S.V. Mohite	Pune	300
W.D. Bathena	Mumbai	5000	Alice Saldanha	Mumbai	1000	Sheela Varghese	Delhi	300
P. Krishnan	Thane	5000	A.G. Kelawalla	Mumbai	1000	Jose Mathew	Kerala	300
Sunil S. Rane	Nallasopara	5000	D. Modi	Bhayander	1000	T. Thomas	Kerala	300
Urvi Agency	Bhayander	5000	Luiza Rodrigues	Palghar	1000	V.M. D'Souza	Ahmedabad	300
Shreya S. Rane	Nallasopara	5000	S.S. Rane	Vashi	1000	A. Johnson	Kerala	300
Alden J. Sequeira	Bangalore	5000	J.E. Colaco	Vasai	1000	K. K Michael	T.N.	300
Hugh & Coleen	Mussoorie	5000	M. Gonsalves	Vasai	1000	Joseph C.N.	Kerala	300
R. Monteiro	Mumbai	5000	N. Manuel	Mumbai	1000	M.J. Pereira	Pune	300
J. Berchmans	Chennai	5000	K. Patel	Surat	1000	T Joseph	Kerala	300
Lina D'Souza	Canada	5000	G. Veeramani	Chennai	1000	Anna George	Kerala	300
Susan D'Souza	Dubai	5000	M. S. Lucien	Chennai	1000	Alex Pais	Karnataka	300
Y. Anchan	Mangalore	4000	S. Rangoonwala	Mumbai	1000	S.M. Macwan	Surat	251
Avinash Bali	Mumbai	4000	Linda D'Cruz	Kerala	1000	A. Paul	T.N.	250
G.J. Parakal	Kerala	4000	I.S. Raj	Bangalore	1000	Ally Jose	Kerala	250
Audrey Iyer	London	3422	L.N. Idnani	Mumbai	1000	J. Fernandes	Kerala	250
Betty Joseph	U.S.A.	3150	L. G. Fernandes	Gujarat	1000	Molly John	Kerala	250
Liza & Charamel	U.S.A.	3150	V.S. Bilolikar	Mumbai	1000	J. Lune	Kerala	250
J. Alex	Mumbai	3000	M.A. Elamana	U.S.A.	945	J. Fernandes	Kerala	250
Z.J. Bharucha	Vasai	3000	J. James	Mumbai	700	V.L. John	Kerala	201
P.P. Desai	Mumbai	3000	F. Joshi	Mumbai	501	Uma Rajah	Chennai	200
Satish Rajput	Mumbai	3000	J.J. Menachery	Aurangabad	501	J. Achuthan	Mumbai	200
A. Chakkalayil	Kerala	3000	Precila Machado	Vasai	500	R. D'Mello	Virar	200
M.N D'Cruz	Malaysia	3000	P. K. Gaikwad	Kalyan	500	U. Doraiswamy	Kalyan	200
T. Peters	Malaysia	3000	Suhil & Asha	New Zealand	500	R.Doraiswamy	Kalyan	200
Jean Baldrey	London	2139	A. J. Tharance	Nagercoil	500	R E. Doraiswamy	Kalyan	200
N. C. Creado	Mumbai	2000	Caroline D'Souza	Mumbai	500	N.E. Kavoor	Kerala	200
D. Antia	Mumbai	2000	D. Patel	Virar	500	C.P. Mathew	Kerala	200
B. W. Gonsalves	Vasai	2000	J. Khoti	Mumbai	500	Robet Correia	Kerala	200
Ancy Fernandes	Goa	2000	P.G. Kelawalla	Mumbai	500	A.T. John	Kerala	200
A.P. Naik	Nagpur	2000	Cruz Cardoz	Mumbai	500	Mary Thomas	Kerala	200
J.R. Ghosh	Mumbai	2000	Luis K. Dabre	Vasai	500	C.P. Joseph	Kerala	200
A.M. Alphonso	Vasai	2000	L.P. Fernandes	Vasai	500	B. David	Chennai	200
J. Castelino	Mumbai	2000	Natty Gomes	Mumbai	500	Jerome lobo	Karnataka	200
S. Chaudhuri	Kolkata	2000	Sian Carlo	Mumbai	500	Vinod Victor	Kerala	200
L. Gomes	Mumbai	2000	Usha Pereira	Vasai	500	Susheela Thomas	Keala	200
A. B.M. Pereira	Mumbai	2000	Alwyn Pereira	Vasai	500	A. D'Souza	Chennai	200
Stanly & Lita	Mumbai	2000	Valley Barrow	Mumbai	500	V.J. Antony	Kerala	200
Suresh Mathews	Pune	2000	G. Sonawala	Vasai	500	D. Mathew	Kerala	200
Lela Jose	Kerala	2000	A. Joseph	Mumbai	500	S. Thakur	Gujarat	200
P.P. Varghese	Kerala	2000	Vidya Johnson	Mumbai	500	C. Xavier	Kerala	200
Arva Corpn.	Mumbai	2000	Albin Cardoz	Mumbai	500	S. Maniben	Gujarat	200
Agnel Taders	Kerala	2000	V. Meenakshi	Jamnagar	500	L. Pereira	Mangalore	200
			Jayalakshmi	Kerala	500	L. Smith	Pondicherry	200

# Lent A Season of Spiritual Renewal

-P. A. D'Mello

Ash Wednesday is the day that starts the 40 days period of Lent. This is the day when Christians all over the world flock to Churches to receive the holy ashes; a day when we are invited to enter a period of alms-giving, fasting and prayers.

On Ash Wednesday the forehead of all Christians are signed with ashes. This is a sign of repentance and to remind us that dust you are and to dust you will return. Lent is the time when we must think what it means to serve. What we need to render to the Lord above. Right from the Old Testament penance to be meaningful has to have an inner conversion completely transforming ourselves. Jesus preached that the Kingdom of God could only be entered by an act of repentance or a real change of heart.

Lent is a period of self-denial for Christians. The whole purpose of penance is to make room in our hearts for the love of God. While penance conjures up grim pictures of bodily austerity, sackcloth and ashes, this external element is not the heart of true repentance. For the Christians life to be meaningful and fruitful both faith in God and works of love are essential ingredients that unite us with the Master above.

The three main pillars of Lent are fasting, prayer and almsgiving. These aspects of

self-purification are present in all major religions. Prayer was the very essence of Jesus' life and His mission. It was an integral part of His whole life. When He was led into the desert, He spent forty days in fasting, prayer and struggle with the powers of evil, preparing for His public mission (Lk.4, 1-13).

Fasting and almsgiving are closely related. Fasting teaches us to keep away from being selfish. As Isaiah said: "Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house?" Almsgiving is meant to turn our hearts towards our neighbours through giving. St. Augustine tells us that during this solemn season of 40 days, we should fast more frequently, spend our money sparingly and give generously to the poor and needy. The poor are not merely those who are deprived of food, clothing or shelter. The poor are also those who are lonely, or deprived of love.

The exercise of almsgiving, prayer and fasting brings us to the joy of Easter which is the feast of the resurrection - passing of death to a new life. A complete transformation of oneself. Let it be a time for strengthening against the forces of evil and let it be a time for renewed communication with God. This will truly bring about God's justice, love and peace.

"The greatest thing anyone can do for God or man is pray."

-S.D. Gordon

## AGNEL CO-OPERATORS

You can join the Ashram Family by becoming a member of Agnel-Cooperators and enjoy the fruits of a Special Daily Mass offered at Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra for all the members. You will also enjoy the fruits of all the prayers and good works of the Agnel Ashram Fathers and entire Agnel Ashram Family.

Membership Fees:-

Ordinary Co-operators : Individual ₹.100/-

Family : ₹.500/-

Benefactors : ₹.1000/-

Patrons : ₹.5000/-

Please contact :

Rev. Fr. Superior. Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandstand,  
Bandra(W), Mumbai-400 050.



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## Balbhavan Day - Greater Noida



*The Action Song by Class I & II*



*Jharkhandi Dance performed by Anurag House*



*Dance performed by Surabhi House Children*



*The Final Thank You Prayer followed Prayer Before Meal*