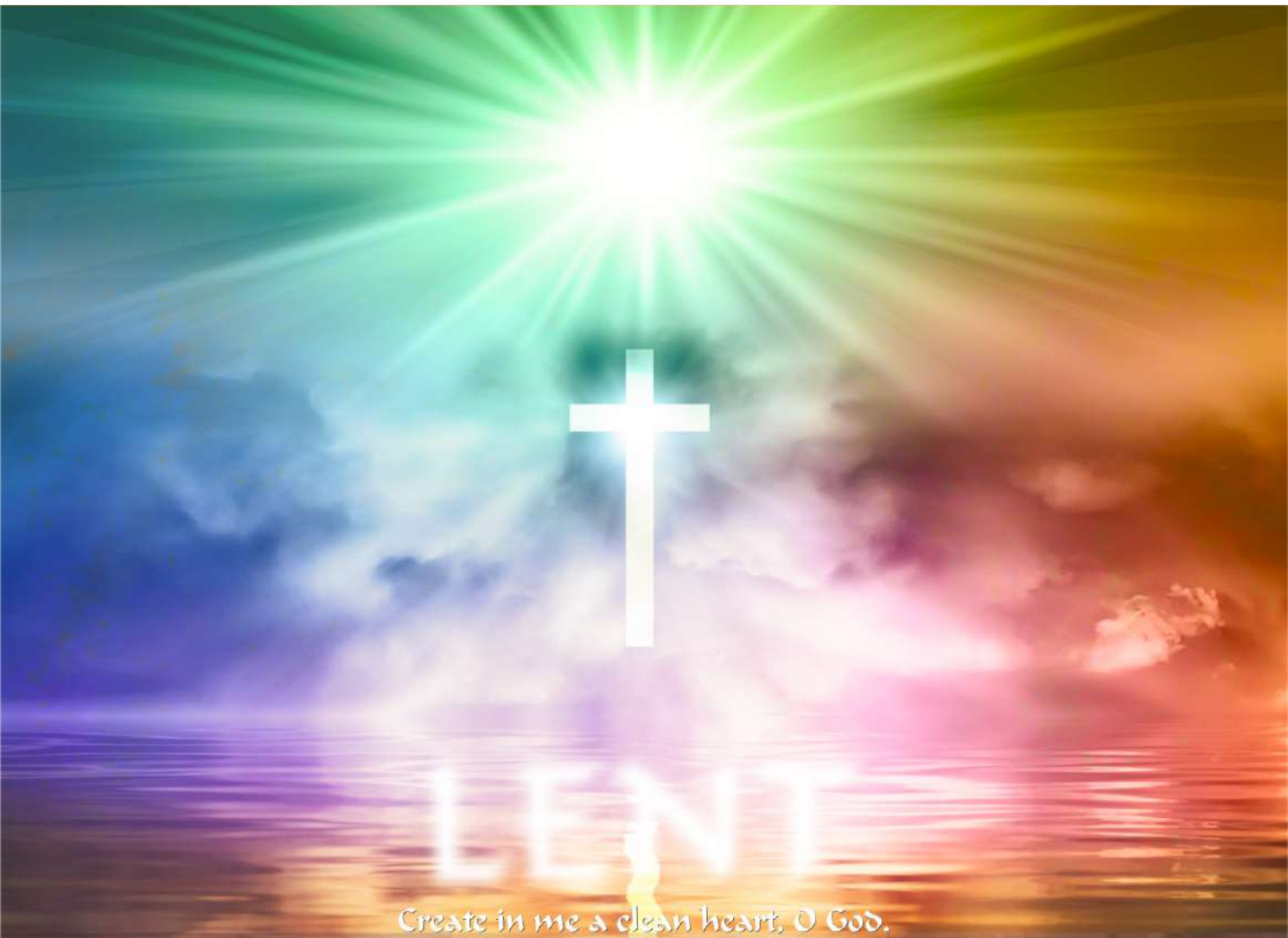




FR. AGNEL

ASHRAM NEWS

March 2023



Create in me a clean heart, O God.



≡ PRAY to express love for God | FAST to love yourself | GIVE to show love for others ≡

MARCH 2023

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HAPPY EASTER



FR. AGNEL ASHRAM

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EASTER APPEAL

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

We, the Agnel Ashram Community, together with the children of our Balbhavan, wish you all a Happy Easter.

Christ is risen. Hallelujah! May the miracle of Easter bring you renewed hope, faith, love and joy.

We are always grateful and thankful for your help and support over the years to give a future for our children in **Balbhavan** and our various other community activities. **We have over 800 orphan children, in Bandra, Vashi, Ambernath, Pune, Verna & Assagao in Goa, New Delhi, Noida and Greater Noida.**Besides we take care of many more children in the villages such as **Agnel Jan Kalyan Kendra** facility in **Khodda Colony, Ghaziabad (U.P.)**, providing them education and teaching various skills.

Easter is the time to spread the joy and happiness that Christ has brought about into our lives, to others. We hope to continue the good work with your generosity.

Wishing you and your family Christ's many blessings throughout this joyful season.

With a grateful heart and best regards

Yours Sincerely in the Lord,

Fr. Valerian D'Souza, sfx

(Superior)

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GRAPPLING WITH SUFFERING - A LENTEN REFLECTION TO EMBRACE SUFFERING AS DESIRABLE

All of us dread pain, suffering, deprivation, poverty, anxiety, frustration, failure and rejection, real or imaginary. There are other forms of pain as well, and we often tend to put all pain and suffering in the same basket, but it is not always so. Individual sports persons (not like in cricket who are on cloud nine on one day and licking the dust on the other) toil and deprive themselves of everything they love and embrace suffering to achieve their desired goals. So too, freedom fighters, prisoners of conscience embrace the very thing we dread, to stand by what they are convinced of.

On the other side of the spectrum, we have the saints of the early Christian era, around the 4th and 5th Century who chose to inflict suffering, in some cases even of extreme nature, on themselves, to punish their 'flesh' so that they can save their 'soul'. St. Paul may himself be referring to such a practice when he states in 1 Cor 9: 27, "But I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway." Much later in the 16th Century when the Jesuit missionaries introduced Christianity in Japan, the faithful there practiced self-flagellation, which is still prevalent in Philippines although it has today become more, a spectacle.

In the Opus Dei (Christian orthodox view that seems to resist any change in the practice of the Christian faith full in apparent fidelity to the doctrine), the practice of cilice (a metal or leather band with sharp pointed edges worn tight on the thigh), made popular by the mystery cum murder Da Vinci Code book and movie, is still practiced. In one of my visits to pilgrimage places beyond Rishikesh, I saw many Sadhus lying on a bed of nails and even wearing some weird devices on various parts of the body. On asking why they were doing it, I obtained varied answers, such as 'tapas', which kind of made sense but others simply said 'anubhav' which sounded more problematic. In the Indian tradition 'tapas' is existent in every mythical situation as device to obtain superhuman power and even gods seem to dread this power acquired by mortals.

THE SELF-FLAGELLATION SYNDROME

On the other side of the spectrum, substance abuse users, as well as other types of criminals endure pain, arrest and punishment and continue to do that, knowing fully well that the outcome will only yield more suffering. So we have several types of people who deal with suffering from

different poles. There is yet another form of well documented self-flagellation that is even embedded in the Indian psyche. In North India, it has got a beautiful expression, '*Uske sukh se, hame zyada dukh hai*', which simply rendered in this language means "I suffer more grief, by the joy of my neighbour than my own grief." One may want to discard this as a rarity but it pervades the life of families and homes who grieve at the progress of their neighbours and live in constant angst at whatever good happens across the balcony or across the floor.

One may be tempted to laugh at it, but this practice is endemic in all the Holy places in the world. Pope Francis is the object of daily flagellations by those who consider him an enemy of the traditional doctrine. His entire effort to try to make the Church more 'synodal', ready to experience her faith, by listening to all concerned, and make it open to those who are denied access, the gays, the same sex marriage practitioners, LGBTs, etc and more especially to the poor, much as Jesus taught in the parables of the ninety-nine sheep left behind to seek the lost one, or letting the adulterous woman go scot free because 'no one had (the moral right) condemned her', etc. or even when He described the 'sinner woman' in Lk. 7: 36-50, 'she has shown great love'. There are daily swipes at Pope Francis by those who dread the way when the Church of Christ will be more flat, where ordinary disciples of Jesus would be able to express their faith, and stop fearing the clerical hammer and the power of the hierarchy. So they are continually under the self-flagellation syndrome at what the good Pope Francis is doing and go to him hammer and tongs all the time.

More endemic is the malaise in the church institutions and religious communities which are infested with the bug of jealousy that is evidently gnawing at them as it is visible in the slanderous criticism prevalent in all and every fora where members meet, against those who work differently and are perhaps even achieving better than them, but who become a 'pain in the ass' for them, because their way of life, makes it difficult for them to live life easy. No one is immune to this virus, and unfortunately no vaccine has yet been found. Because this crab mentality is so rampant in the church institutions and in the religious communities, there is so much wastage of human and material resources, because those 'bugged' will not suffer as others go forward or will make it far more difficult for them to operate.

THE CALL TO RENEW THE HEART

The Season of Lent for most Christians is not such a welcome season, although the letter of the law makes hardly any demand on us and that too may be loosely interpreted. Gone are the days when our devout Moms would tell us stories of men, women and children too who are burning in hell fire, because they unknowingly had swallowed a piece of meat on a forbidden day. I think that our preaching today, focuses more on God's mercy than His desire to punish. What has really changed here? Have we become more aware of the merciful God in the New Testament or do we find ourselves so deeply embroiled in sinful behaviour that we have to create a fresh imagery of a more benign God who suits our present world? This calls for an interesting discussion but let us leave it for another day.

In the season of Lent, we celebrate the extreme and excruciating Passion and Death of Jesus followed by the triumphant Resurrection. Maybe, we can try to understand the Passion and Death of Jesus that Paul in 1 Cor 1: 23 describes as "we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles." Although at Incarnation when God becomes man, God hits the rock bottom as Paul states "but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in human likeness" (Phil. 2: 6-8), he endures His suffering and Death which undoubtedly must have a contextual meaning and purpose to our lives.

The complete abasement of God-Man is caused by the need to bring about complete reconciliation between man and God, where although man is a sinner, the onus of propitiation and undoing, falls on God. It is the complete reversal of the natural process. A creditor can forego his debtor's death, but in this case, the creditor tracks back to the same path that the debtor had taken, and takes on himself the burden of debt (sin), which is the sin of arrogance (Adam), jealousy and hate (Cain and Abel), rebellion of the people of Israel throughout the Old Testament and seeks forgiveness by accepting the due punishment, arising as a result of losing God's gift of immortality, suffering and death. And significantly the Jewish leadership has no accusation against Jesus, except that he abrogated for himself the name and the authority of God, and therefore must be condemned to suffering and death. The suffering and the death of Jesus is the painful retreating path from the sin of arrogance that rejects God, that refuses to accept His sovereignty and that ignores the existence of his brothers and sisters, which is the sum total of humanity's sinful existence, topped of course by arrogance.

Our arrogance has many forms, the self presumption that one is superior to others in intellect, studies, success, holiness (this is most dangerous perhaps, because it entitles one to judge and condemn others), higher position or even baser forms of superiority of caste, colour or material resources. Other forms of arrogance are, that one has found greater acclaim from people around him or her and one has the hunger to let it be seen through many ostentatious exercises, or other baser forms of better dressing, possessing, etc. Our arrogance does not allow us to treat others with respect, or appreciate their talents and we even try by all means to muzzle them, and we do all that with a sense of impunity because we feel entitled. The Gospel portrays the man who had been forgiven 10,000 talents who is obviously very rich to have had so much money, and he is not able to forgive one who owed him much less.

The excruciating passion of Jesus is the result of the arrogance of the Jewish religious leadership who is not willing to give in to the call of Jesus to be more human, more understanding and discover the spirit of the Torah (Jewish Law). Coming back to Jesus, coming down from the high pedestal of individual and class arrogance (clericalism) demands a path of suffering of admitting one's vulnerability, accept synodality and above all accepting the truth, that comes to us in so many ways and through so many people. The suffering that is caused to others (such as endured by Jesus), is the reiteration of human behaviour which when blinded with arrogance inflicts more and more pain on the poor, the needy, the 'pagans', those with different persuasions than ours, those who do not choose the rotten path that we have adopted as sane and holy, and those of other gender, faith, or sexual preferences.

Pope Francis has been unapologetic about calling the bluff of the Roman Curia, when he reformed the Curia and stated that the administrative positions are not reserved for those who have been ordained alone, told the clergy who consider themselves a 'class' apart, to 'smell the sheep', be part of people's struggles and admonished them over their long and tedious sermons.

So there is quite a case for embracing suffering as our walk back to Jesus in the Season of lent. Come let us walk together to the redeeming Cross.



Fr. Jose Alarico Carvalho
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RECEIVING DIVINE ENERGY IN LENT!

-Fr. Fio Mascarenhas


Only a few weeks remain of the holy Season of Lent! To profit in a special way from it, the Church has been recommending that every Catholic undertake a 40-day program of **“special devotion to the word of God”** – to receive Spirit-inspired wisdom and energy (as promised by Jesus who declared solemnly, **“My words are spirit and life”** – Jn 6:63). This 40-day program involves our trying earnestly to become familiar with the New Testament, and of even learning key scripture texts by heart (at least a dozen?) and, obviously, of prayerfully contemplating the most important Gospel scenes.

The famous words of Cardinal Suenens (repeated by our late Pope Benedict XVI) have perhaps become a cliché, but are nevertheless still very true – that many well-meaning Catholic Christians are **“sacramentalised, but not yet evangelised!”** This means that they **“hear”** Sunday Mass out of habit or obligation, perhaps occasionally also receive the sacrament of Reconciliation, and maybe pray a daily Rosary, or attend weekly prayer-meetings or pious novenas. However, a Catholic who is truly **“evangelised”** shows evidence of having **fallen in love with Jesus**, and is keenly aware of **what Christianity is really all about!** Jesus loves his disciples


infinitely, and wants each one of them to experience God's love personally and intimately, **and to reciprocate it in daily life!**

Mark Twain reportedly said, tongue-in-cheek, “There are Christians who get all worked up about the things in the Bible that they *don't* understand; as for me, I get all worked up by the things in the Bible that I *do* understand.” To wonder how Noah could find and fit into the Ark two of every species of life (a scientific impossibility!) and other such biblical stories is a useless pastime. Far better to grapple with Jesus' easy-to-understand commands, **“Forgive one another seventy times seven!”** or **“Pick up your cross daily and follow me!”**

Falling in love with Jesus does not mean that one must become a “bible fundamentalist!” So it is very important that we not just “know the Bible,” but that we *interpret it correctly* so as to practise a **“genuine biblical spirituality.”** What the world and the Church needs to have happen more and more, especially in our post-modern, super-secular, and exaggerated hedonistic culture, is the *attractive* witness of an *authentic* Christianity. To help this process, we have just authored and published a book to help Catholic Christians discover a BIBLE that is AGLOW, filled with and transmitting truly health-promoting Wisdom and




Dr. Renu Rita Silvino, OCV, STD, is a member of the Order of Consecrated Virgins since 1992. She earned a Doctorate in Sacred Theology from the Pontifical University Angelicum, Rome, in 1991. She was nominated by Pope Benedict XVI to participate in the 2008 Synod of Bishops in Rome on The Eucharist in the life and mission of the Church. She is the Emeritus Director of the Catholic Bible Institute, Mumbai (1997-2021). She was Vice-President of the National Service Team of the Catholic Church in India. She was in India, and a member of the Executive Committee of the worldwide Catholic Biblical Federation. She has authored several books, including *The Mother of Jesus*; *Seeking Jesus in the Old Testament*; and *God's Word is Spirit and Life* and was the Editor of Bible Aglow magazine till it completed its 100th issue in 2021.



Dr. Fiorello Mascarenhas, SJ, DMIn, has been a priest for 47 years and is now Emeritus Chairman of the Catholic Bible Institute, Mumbai (1979-2021). He was awarded the Doctor of Ministry degree (Biblical Spirituality) by the Catholic Theological Union, Chicago. Pope Benedict XVI had nominated him to participate as an "expert" at the 2008 Synod of Bishops in Rome on "The Word of God in the life of the Church". He is a past Director and then Chairman (1981-1987) of the International Council for Catholic Charismatic Renewal, resident in Vatican City. He has visited over 40 countries to preach at Clergy Retreats, Bible Seminars, and Laymen Conferences. He has delivered 18 books, some of which have been translated into nearly 15 foreign and Indian languages. His latest books are *Contemplating God's Word: Jesus Laughed*; and *Broadening the Horizons of our Minds*.

THE EUCHARIST & PERSONAL PRAYER

INSIGHTS FROM POPE FRANCIS'S *DESIDERIO DESIDERAVI* AND FROM SACRED SCRIPTURE




This book lucidly shows us how our personal prayer is really a response to God's constant loving invitation to his beloved children. God is always the first to initiate this communion, and if we fail to respond to that invitation with eagerness and regularity, we are the losers!

In his Foreword to this book, the world-famous Catholic surgeon Dr. Christopher de Souza declares that as a "lay" and very busy professional, "I was captivated, amazed, and awed at the incredible insights the authors provide to the reader about participating fruitfully in the Eucharist, and about the dynamic role personal prayer can and must have if, in our busy lives in the secular world, we desire communion with God..."

Writing convincingly from their own personal experiences of biblical spirituality, the authors substantiate their points with inspiring references to Pope Francis's wonderful teachings and to Sacred Scripture.

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Dr. Renu Rita Silvino, OCV, STD
Dr. Fiorello Mascarenhas, SJ, DMIn

Energy: ***“THE EUCHARIST & PERSONAL PRAYER – insights from Pope Francis and Scripture,”*** by Dr Renu Rita Silvano OCV, STD and myself, St Paul Publications, Mumbai.

Perhaps here I could make bold to share some advice to first-time readers and bible-study beginners: please don't start to read from Genesis to Malachi (the *Old Testament*), and only then go on to the books of the *New Testament*! Remember that the OT is the primary book of “instruction” (Hebrew *torah*) of the Jews, whereas **the primary source book of Christianity is the NT**. So go to Jesus first, to receive “nourishment” (*‘spirit and life’* - Jn 6:63) from the 4 Gospels and the rich books of the NT. Remember also that a **Christian** is not just a circumcised follower of the Law but is someone ***“born from above of water and spirit”*** (Jn 3:4), he/she is a disciple of the Word-made-flesh, of a Divine-Human Person.

Only *Christians* sincerely acknowledge Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord, not the Jews! Hence it is right that a Christian should first seek to be truly evangelized by the ***kerygma*** (the Good News of Jesus Christ), which teaches that the promised Messiah has come already, and is alive and with us as the Risen Lord, as the true and eternal ***Emmanuel***.

Therefore, give priority of time and effort to first read and study God's word in the Gospels, the Acts, and the abundant riches (*still not well-known*) of the Letters of the Apostles Paul, Peter, James, and John. The Bible itself assures us that the NT is the fulfilment of all God's promises given under the Old Covenant, and that therefore it supercedes whatever was written or understood earlier. God's Final and Most Important Word is His Son Jesus Christ:

“In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word” (Heb 1:1).

No wonder, then, that the Second Vatican Council declared with lucidity and conviction: ***“Such is the force and power of the word of God that it can serve the children of the Church as strength for their faith, food for the soul, and an abundant and pure fount of spiritual life”*** (DV n.21). Let us take these words seriously and to heart, and personally verify the truth of its teaching during this Lent 2023.

The transforming power of the word of God is really marvellous, and it has brought about the conversion of many of our saints. Sometimes people remark, “Catholics are not familiar with the Bible, whereas other Christians know it very well.” My reply is, “But that's not true of our Saints! They knew the contents of the Bible very well, they read it with devotion, and they obeyed it!” For instance, the lovable Little Flower, St. Therese of the Child Jesus, wrote in her autobiography, *“When I read all those learned books about righteousness and holiness, my poor little brain is quickly fatigued and my heart dried up. Then I put away those learned volumes and I turn to the sacred scriptures – then all becomes light and refreshment.”*

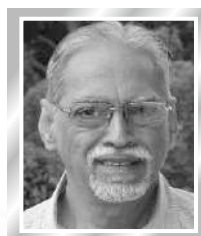
A most important text about the word of God is this one (learn it by heart!):

“The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division between soul and spirit... and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12).

The words, “division between soul and spirit” mean precisely the *subconscious* area of the mind where the most negative memories of the past are stored up; “discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” means to set a person free by strengthening the positive feelings and healing the negative ones. So, devotion to the word of God is

therapeutic, it brings inner freedom, inner healing! Jesus himself promised this: ***“If you make my word your home*** (Jerusalem Bible translation), ***you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free!”*** (Jn 8:31).

To conclude, devotion to God's word brings new and deep “faith” (see Rom 10:15), and this faith enlightens and strengthens a Christian for a “life in the Spirit.” That is what all the spiritual exercises of Lent are meant to lead to – not just more “piety” but the *“abundant life”* Jesus came to give, and for which he died on the cross and rose to new life!!!



Fr. Fio SJ, now in his 80th year, writes books on spirituality and preaches biblical retreats. He can be contacted at frfiomas@gmail.com

The Season of Lent – Journeying through Distraction

-Christopher Mendonca

It has been said that the 'way we pray, is the way we live'. The converse is also true. The way we live, is the way we pray. Our experiences in prayer are meant to overflow into daily living. Yet we often find that our prayer is contaminated by 'not so helpful' attitudes we routinely manifest in day-to-day living. A closer examination of how we pray may reveal that our prayer is often self-centred, pre-occupied with getting what we most desire, and distraught at our imperfections. Our distractions in prayer reveal our "distractedness" in life, the fact that we have steered off course. The Greek word "*hamartia*" used by St. Paul when speaking of sin translates as "missing the mark". It is the fatal flaw that severs our relationship with God.

We have seen earlier that the Desert Fathers considered 'distraction' to be the Original Sin. Jesus asks his disciples to 'leave self behind'. His Death and Resurrection personifies the 'return to the Father' that we must all make if we are to be his faithful disciples. Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving are the expressions of our Lenten Observances. While the latter two are outwardly discernible, the first one, Prayer, is meant to be more than mere outward observance in the form of attending a Lenten Service, Stations of the Cross, a Pilgrimage or any other spiritual practice. It is meant to be the foundation of the other two. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells us not to make a show of our fasting and almsgiving in the same breath as he instructs us "to pray in secret." The practice of interiority, of learning to pay attention is to be an essential part of our Lenten Discipline.

Setting aside a time for our twice daily practice of meditation is a good place to start. We immediately discover our inability to pay attention, while our mind races away with wave after wave of thoughts and images, and a high and low tide of emotion. Our distractions reveal our feebleness, our weakness, our dissatisfaction with ourselves. The more we try to fight against them, the more they persist. The wandering mind mirrors the fact that we have strayed from the

path. These distractions stem from the Ego which is self-seeking. By not paying attention to them and gently returning to saying our sacred word (Ma-ra-na-tha), we so to speak return to paying attention to our True Self.

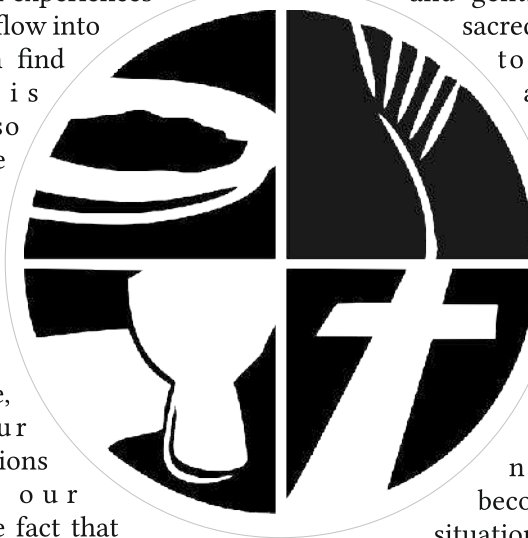
Every return to once again reciting our sacred word, represents a death to self and a rising to a new life. This is the death-resurrection event that becomes part of our lives.

Very unconsciously we are changing our brain patterns as well. We are creating new neuropathways that will become part of our responses to situations instead of 'reacting' to them

by default. By exercising our right brain, we come to realise that we are only part of a bigger picture. We realise our insignificance and come in poverty before the LORD. It is much easier to give up a certain food / drink during the Season of Lent, to routinely attend a Way of the Cross, rather than spend time identifying in silence the ways we have strayed from the straight and narrow path.

Jesus began his ministry only after he had spent 40 days in the desert, literally confronting his inner demons, to indicate that in as much as he shared our human nature, he too must renounce the need we have to be spectacular, powerful and relevant when it comes to matters of religion. He calls on us to make our Lenten observance unobtrusive, not to make a show of it, not to look gloomy when we fast and in our almsgiving not to let our right hand know what our left hand is doing. We are asked to ensure that almsgiving doesn't degenerate into a display of power, that it is not a 'favour' we do to those who have not, but rather a recognition of the common bond we share as children of the Father. He is asking us not to measure our religion by the 'results' that can be seen, a kind of proof that what we are doing is 'worthwhile' and relevant.

These subtle snares can only be detected if we are prepared to come into Silence and allow our so called 'distractions' to be a source of healing. The practice of Meditation subtly embodies the Death-Resurrection event. In dealing with the Temptations in the desert, Jesus set "Dying to self" as the benchmark for his ministry. To take up our



cross and follow him, we must first leave self behind. Meditation allows us to practice this meaningfully in daily life. It is a journey from ATTENTION through AWARENESS to COMPASSION.

Learning to pay attention not to self, but to our sacred word, we come to an awareness of the divine presence within us. John Main had said that the aim of Christian Meditation is to allow God's mysterious and silent presence within us to become more and more not only a reality but THE REALITY that gives meaning, shape and purpose to everything we do, everything we are. It is this awareness of God's presence that overflows on to others, enabling us to reach out in compassion to them in selfless almsgiving or other corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

In the practice of Meditation, we experience the consolation of God, knowing that each time we return to our sacred word, we return to the Prodigal Father who is rich in mercy. We experience forgiveness with no questions asked. Each return is a new beginning. It is the joy of being forgiven, 'the consolation we receive from God, in order that we ourselves may comfort others in any trouble of theirs, to share with them the consolation we ourselves have received from God. As Christ's cup of suffering overflows, and we are confronted with it in various forms each day, we suffer with him so that through him our consolation and joy overflows' (cfr. 2 Corinthians 1:1-5).

In his book "Sensing God" – *Learning to Meditate during Lent*, Fr. Laurence Freeman states, "the forty days and nights of Lent are about simplification, getting priorities re-established and remembering that God, not my ego is the centre of reality." As he says a few lines later, 'Meditation is the *ascesis*, the spiritual exercise

that helps us shed some unnecessary mental fat, toning the muscles of attention and patience.'

The Hebrews of the Old Testament together with Moses journeyed through various distractions in the desert, falling back into old habits, forgetting the wonders the LORD had done for them. Each time, however, they returned to the LORD, with a renewed AWARENESS of the LORD's faithfulness, not calling to mind their offences (as we are often prone to do to ourselves and others) but rather as in meditation allowing for NEW BEGINNINGS, each time we have strayed from the path of the Journey to the Centre of our being. Descending from the head, leaving behind all the thoughts, ideas and expectations conjured up by our mind, we come to the heart and there experience the God who is faithful, even if we are unfaithful. All he asks is not that we be perfect, but rather that we be faithful as he is faithful, because as St. Paul says 'Love is faithful . . . it keeps no account of wrongdoing, there is no limit to its faith, its hope, its endurance' (I Cor. 13:5, 7).

Meditation is the daily journey we make to the Heart of our being. As we journey faithfully each day through distraction in Lent, may we experience in some measure the Joy of Homecoming at Easter.



Christopher Mendonca is a writer on Spirituality in the Christian Biblical Tradition. He is committed to teaching the practice of Christian Meditation, as part of the World Community of Christian Meditation (WCCM) in the Archdiocese of Bombay. He can be contacted at cjwm1943@gmail.com



Pope appeals for Turkey, Syria quake victims, Ukraine War & New Zealand cyclone



Crates of aid for quake affected people in Syria and Turkey at the Port of Naples, located on the Western coast of Italy.

During his recent Sunday Angelus, Pope Francis issued an appeal for help for all those suffering and killed by the devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, as the death toll climbs toward 50,000; the war in Ukraine; and the cyclone in New Zealand.

Addressing the thousands gathered in St. Peter's Square, the Pope said, his thoughts go at this time to the peoples of these countries, hard hit by natural disasters, and war, that caused thousands of deaths and injuries.

"The love of Jesus," he said, "asks us to let ourselves be touched by the situations of those who are tried."

"I think especially of Syria and Turkey, of the many victims of the earthquake, but I also think of the daily dramas of the dear Ukrainian people and of so many peoples who suffer because of war ... poverty, lack of freedom or environmental devastation...."

This marks the latest exhortation of the Holy Father to help the earthquake victims and those suffering because of the war in Ukraine.

24th February will mark a year since the start of the devastating war which has claimed countless lives, a year full of Pope Francis' appeals for peace, aid, and an end to the violence.

Turning to the earthquake, the Pope has appealed numerous times for aid and prayers for the nations' suffering people, and sent aid himself,

through the Dicastery for the Service of Charity. Crates of aid departed from the Port of Naples aboard the MSC Aurelia Cargo ship and docked in Iskenderum, Turkey in two days' time.

As well as aid from the Italian government and other NGOs, the ship carried 10,000 thermal jumpers delivered personally by Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, the Papal Almoner. The thermal garments reached the Kilis refugee camp in Turkey, 60 kms from the Syrian city of Aleppo.

In the past, the Holy Father said: "With emotion I pray for them, and express my closeness to these peoples, to the families of the victims and to all those who are suffering from this devastating calamity." The Pope thanked those who are working to bring relief, and encouraged everyone to show solidarity with those territories, "some of which have already been battered by a long war."

New Zealand's biggest natural disaster this century

"I am close," the Pope also underscored, "to the people of New Zealand, who have been hit in recent days by a devastating cyclone."

"Brothers and sisters, let us not forget those who suffer and let our charity be attentive, let it be a concrete charity!"

Cyclone 'Gabrielle' in New Zealand left thousands of people missing a week after the storm struck the country's North Island Coast.

- Vatican News

THE SPIRITUALITY OF LENT

-Leon Bent

Lent is a time to open the doors of our hearts a little wider and understand our Lord a little deeper, so that, when Good Friday and eventually Easter comes, it is not just another day at Church, but an opportunity to receive the overflowing of graces God has to offer.

The Sufi poet Rumi tells the tale of a holy man who sees a snake crawl into a sleeping man's mouth. Shouting, the holy man wakes the sleeper and forces him to eat rotten apples. He then makes the astonished man run for hours, whipping him as the man cries out in exhaustion. Finally the former sleeper collapses and vomits up the snake. Immediately, the man realizes what has happened. I bless the moment you first noticed me, he cries to the holy man. I was dead and didn't know it.... Everything I've said to you was so stupid! I didn't know. The holy man explains, you might have panicked and died of fear...if I described the enemy that lives inside men.

C.S. Lewis' insightful work, "Mere Christianity," invites us to explore a new parable, "the parable of a Turtle," in which Lewis compares the Christian spiritual journey to that of a turtle, "slow-paced-we go." Could this not be an apt description of our Christian Lent, derived from the Latin *lente*, meaning "slowly?"

The spiritual season of Lent has come to revolve around the theme of "conversion." If we apply Lewis' metaphor, then Christian conversion is a slow process of becoming transformed into the perfect image and likeness of God, in and through his beloved son, Jesus, our Christ. The long journey of Lent does ask us to pause and take a more meditative/contemplative look at our Christian spiritual journey, in order to enter more consciously into the transforming life and power of the Holy Spirit guiding our lives.

Today, during Lent, we make a three-fold spiritual commitment to immerse ourselves more deeply in daily prayer, in "fasting" or separating ourselves from whatever physical, mental or spiritual obstacles may be preventing more holistic human-spiritual growth in our journey to God, and to a more fervent outreach in charity. Thomas Merton in his work, "Seasons of Celebration," turns to the Gospel of St. John to describe the

Lenten process of conversion and transformation, "every dead branch will be purged, while every good branch will be pruned so as to bring forth more fruit (John 15:1)."

Thomas Merton suggests that while fasting and self-denial are vital expressions of Lenten spirituality, what matters most is the fruit of those practices, our faithful and Spirit-empowered efforts to share the fullness of God's life and love in our broken world. For this reason, one of my yearly Lenten spiritual commitments is to take up the Scriptures again and assess my Christian life through a meditation on the 41 parables on the Kingdom of God.

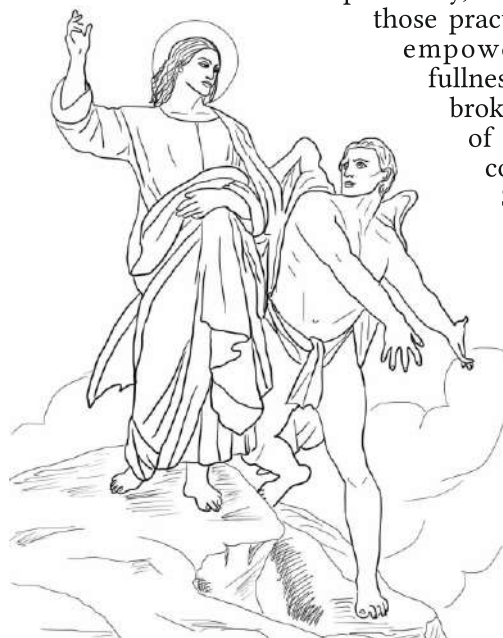
Making this daily comparison to the life of Jesus, model of life in the Kingdom, is truly a daily shock and wake-up call that, the true image of Jesus in me is still very weak and cloudy. I have yet to journey a long way in becoming the presence of Jesus in our world. I strive,

as St. Paul suggests in the letter to the Romans, Chapter 6, that having been baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ, I might walk in newness of life.

And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:33-49).

Although the nature of suffering is not one that offers itself to easy explanations or pat answers, the answers we seek seem to make the most sense in light of the Cross. There is nothing in the world - no religion, philosophy, or material comfort - that offers such a powerful answer to life's toughest questions as the two slabs of wood on which our Saviour died. Although I was drawn to Christianity in search of joy, it's the Cross that keeps me coming back day after day, year after year. It is during the Lenten Season that I am reminded of what Jesus did for me.

Lent is an intensely penitential time as we examine our sinful natures and return to the God, we have, through our own rebelliousness, hurt time and again. Lent is also an opportunity to contemplate what our Lord really did for us on the Cross. But ultimately, the purpose of Lent does not stop at sadness and despair - it points us to the



hope of the Resurrection and the day when every tear will be dried (Rev. 21:3).

Lent is Easy! It's Simply Springtime and Grace!

Like Advent, Lent is a time to open the doors of our hearts a little wider and understand our Lord a little deeper, so that, when Good Friday and eventually Easter comes, it is not just another day at Church, but an opportunity to receive the overflowing of graces God has to offer.

Lent is more frequently seen as a time of solemn observance and preparation for the celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday. "From its start on Ash Wednesday until its conclusion on Easter Sunday, Lent has been a traditional time for fasting or giving something up or abstinence. Just as we carefully prepare for events in our personal lives, as a wedding, or birthday; a commencement Lent invites us to make our minds and hearts ready for remembering Jesus' life, death, and body resurrection."

Lent is a Christian annual period that starts on Ash Wednesday lasting for 40 days (not including Sundays) representing the 40 days, Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness. This 40 day, plus-three period for Christians is a time to reflect, fast, and practice penance in preparation for the resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday.

Lent is an intensely penitential time as we examine our sinful natures and return to the God we have, through our own rebelliousness, hurt time and again. Lent is also an opportunity to contemplate what our Lord really did for us on the Cross - and it wasn't pretty. But ultimately, the purpose of Lent does not stop at sadness and despair - it points us to the hope of the Resurrection, and the day when "every tear will be dried" (Rev. 21:4).

It is a great annual retreat for the Church. God will be at work in us, changing us, transforming us. Sometimes we resist change, but the Bible is clear: God continually calls each of us to become a new person "in Christ." May Lent be a day-by-day grace that opens up God's love for us and our love for others. Then, we will be able to look back at Lent, and ourselves, and see how God has helped us grow in faith, hope and love.

During the Lenten Season, God calls us to discipleship. It means to follow Jesus to the strangest places, to mountain-tops, into deserts, towards God's kingdom, and deep within our own

souls. The only way to respond is to obey God's command to "listen to him," to Jesus. Hearing Jesus' Word is where disciples truly find God.

Lent is a time when Jesus calls us to repent and believe in the Gospel. To use Isaiah's words: "Come, now, let us set things right." Our hope should be in God, not in bank accounts, not in handbags, securities and property. Jeremiah asks us to trust in God. This is exactly what the beggar in the Gospel parable had to do. He could not trust in people, certainly not in the rich man. The poor Lazarus who begged for food teaches us a blunt lesson: In the Kingdom of God everything will be reversed.

Return to the Lord! This is how Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiah and Jesus spoke. All the Lenten Readings circle around a central theme: Return to the Lord! Lent is a penitential season, even more so than Advent. The 40 days are set aside to really examine areas of recurring sin in our lives that prevent us from being conformed to

God's Will. The Sacrament of Reconciliation or 'The Sacrament of Confession', is highly recommended for internal cleansing and outward Transfiguration.

When I look into the eyes of our suffering God, I'm in awe - suddenly the complexity of our Lord, the love of our Lord, the

humanity of our Lord, shows through. I realize God is not just some nebulous energy source or a grandfather sitting in the clouds - He is so much more. The Cross is where our faith stands when all other faiths fail. Christ's sacrifice and his subsequent resurrection are the true "cruxes" of the Christian faith. Without one there would be no salvation, without the Triduum of Feasts, no hope. This is why Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday are the most important dates in the Christian calendar - even more so than Christmas, the Incarnation of Jesus.

And, now, this final flourish! May we remember the gift of salvation in this grace-filled season!



Leon Bent is an ex-Seminarian of the Diocesan Seminary, Goregaon, Mumbai, and the author of over 60 books. His contributions are published in several theological journals and online portals worldwide.

Celebrating International Women's Day

Woman - God's Masterpiece

-Ninette D'Souza

The Lord God was trying to complete a model. This was taking time, for according to the mind of God, this model was unlike any other. Through the many roles it would play, its very life would touch those of so many others. There were some striking specifications that needed to be attended to. To list a few: a premeditated dedication to accomplish 180 things not connected to one another; without getting them mixed up, an implicit sense of sacrifice in order to be able to run on tea/coffee; dal; rice and even leftovers, a tacit spirit of willingness so as to make more time for others; while having less for self, a voluntary 360 watts smile that would allow it to endure pay cuts; problematic children; troublesome family, a never say die attitude that would assist it in persevering with what is right, even as society questions every move.

While these seemed challenging enough, they paled before the six pairs of hands that were needed to reach out to all who asked, and the three pairs of eyes. Three pairs? One to see the good in others; the abilities in them that most would consider disabilities. A second pair in the back of the head to see what should not be seen, but what is important to know. The third pair in the front are meant to look at all the model will encounter in life, from birth to death. Without uttering a word, they are meant to reflect the sentiment, "I understand you and I believe in you."

The Lord God had come very close to creating something much like Himself. Someone who would work even when sick, always teach children right from wrong, have a special place in the heart for the marginalized and needy, understand the struggles and difficulties of others, never get cross with family even when taken for granted. Though the model seemed to be too soft hearted, it could be tough when the occasion demanded. There was to be no limit to its endurance. It could not only think but also reason out and negotiate. As the Lord God gave His

model a final look over before certifying it ready, He realised He had forgotten to add tears that would trickle with joy and pride at a child's accomplishment; no matter how insignificant, tears that shared the loneliness of those who didn't fit into society, tears that came from the pain of not being able to achieve goals due to lack of encouragement, tears of disappointment when discriminated against.

Above all, tears as a sign of compassion and forgiveness for the very people who persecute and torment it. Finally satisfied with His handiwork, the Lord God named this unique creation - **WOMAN**, and sent her forth. She was not just meant to be the other half of man, but his equal in everything.

Women, please cultivate relationships and build an ecosystem of other women, who will nurture, protect and aid in navigating personal and professional challenges. We are a self-doubting tribe. Despite scaling heights in life, even controlling novel careers, we choose not to speak of them. We need to get out there. Never mind if we stumble, or fail. Stand your ground, applaud yourself and your achievements. Self-confidence and a positive self-esteem are important virtues, to prevent society from dictating terms to us. Our ability to keep up with the times depends on stepping outside our comfort zones and embracing unfamiliarity. We have the sense and the strength to take up even the most daunting tasks, without baulking. Don't we? So dear women, while the world (especially the menfolk) will try to validate our existence on the **8th of March** each year, it is up to us to decide to take our own decisions, stop seeing ourselves as a reflection of someone else. Let the Lord God rejoice in His masterpiece.



Ninette D'Souza is a prolific writer and retired teacher of Canossa High School, Mahim.

AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Swimmer Reva Nikhil Parab does Fr. Agnel School, Vashi, proud



Reva Nikhil Parab, a Std. V student of **Fr. Agnel School, Vashi** came 2nd at the Sunk Rock to Gateway of India Sea Race held on 12th February 2023 in the Arabian Sea, off the Gateway of India.

Reva participated in the Girls under-11 category and swam the 2 kms race in 23 minutes, bagging the 2nd spot in a close

finish. Reva has to her credit many open water swims including the Elephanta to Gateway of India solo swim in 2022.

Reva, an aspiring open water swimmer trains at the Fr. Agnel swimming pool and looks forward to doing international solo swims in the future.

**"I trained 4 years to run 9 seconds....
and people give up when they don't see results in 2 months"**
- Usain Bolt

ALMSGIVING DURING LENT

-Sunil D'Cruz

The *Three Pillars of Lent* are Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving. While almsgiving is most closely associated with Lent, the practice of giving alms should be a year-round spiritual activity, for all Christians. Giving alms is essential to fostering a deep spiritual life because it allows us to look beyond ourselves and focus on the needs of others.

Almsgiving is the act of donating money, food or other items. The word 'alms' has its origin in ancient Latin and Greek words, meaning mercy and pity. Similarly, the root of the word 'charity' comes from the Latin 'caritas', meaning love.

Proverbs 19:17 says, "*One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his good deed.*"

Almsgiving or charity is an outward sign of Christian love for others. More than simply giving money, almsgiving is an act of love that can deepen our prayer life and bring a greater sense of meaning to fasting.

Almsgiving backs the spiritual practices of prayer and fasting. It reveals our care for our neighbours in need. It deepens our prayer life, as it brings us into contact with our brothers and sisters who live in poverty. It gives us a better understanding of what it means to go without food, while fasting.

We have all experienced hunger and satisfy it by having food. Can we spare a thought for those who cannot afford a meal and have to go to bed hungry? There are several orphanages and old age homes in India and throughout the world. We can sponsor a child's meals or education. We can bring a smile to their faces and a ray of sunshine, through almsgiving. We can also sponsor the education of underprivileged boys to priesthood.

In Luke 18:22 when a wealthy ruler asked Jesus what must he do to attain eternal life, after keeping all the commandments, Jesus said to him,

"One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

In Mark 12: 41-44, the poor widow who put two small copper coins in the temple treasury caught the attention of Jesus. It was all she had and yet offered them to God. Before her, several rich people offered large amounts of money. Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than the others. They all gave out of their wealth, but she, out of her poverty, put in everything - all she had to live on." Through this, Jesus teaches us that it is not the amount of money given that is important but rather the sacrifice made in the offering.



During Lent, many of us, forgo a family meal at a restaurant or skip going to watch a movie at the local cinema and curb spending on shopping and entertainment. The money saved is offered for the needy.

While repenting for his sins, the tax collector Zaccheus said to Jesus, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much."

So let us make a meaningful beginning to Lent by giving alms today. God loves a cheerful giver.



Sunil D'Cruz is on the Editorial team of Fr. Agnel Ashram News.

SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT THROUGH RETREATS

-Judith Almeida

Retreats are meant for each one of us to enrich our souls and our faith and to inch more towards Jesus Christ. They are not just meant for the priests, religious, holy and virtuous people. How many of us are of the opinion that Retreats are just a waste of time. In our free time, most of us have time for shopping and vacations, but no time for retreats? Many people are full of negativity, when advised to attend retreats -'Oh, it takes up too much of time', and 'No miracles are happening even after attending retreats!' Without faith, without that deep, inner, sincere prayer to our Lord, nothing can stop us.

Are we willing to reach out in faith, to Jesus Christ? Bringing to mind the parable of Jesus Christ and the woman who touched His cloak in order to get healed of hemorrhage, not all were healed, who came in contact with the cloak of Jesus, even as Jesus pushed himself through the crowds. But only the woman who had that 'Faith' she would be healed if she only touched His cloak was healed of her disease. This brings out the unimaginable and enormous power of prayer and faith. Hence, pray unceasingly with faith and watch the changes or miracles that take place.

Some people feel there is no change, in a person or an alcoholic or drug addict who has attended a retreat. In fact, the person has become worse than before. In the parable of Jesus, '**Mathew 12:43-45** "*When a defiling evil spirit is expelled from*

someone, it drifts along through the desert looking for an oasis, some unsuspecting soul it can bedevil. When it doesnt find anyone, it says, Ill go back to my old haunt. On return it finds the person spotlessly clean, but vacant. It then runs out and rounds up seven other spirits more evil than itself and they all move in, whooping it up. That person ends up far worse off than if hed never gotten cleaned up in the first place. "Thats what this generation is like: You may think you have cleaned out the junk from your lives and gotten ready for God, but you werent hospitable to my kingdom message, and now all the devils are moving back in."

Regular retreats should be done particularly in these cases, by the alcoholic or addict, so that the individual works hard on his spiritual front to become stronger in faith, to resist, overcome and drive out these evil habits or evil spirits that our devouring his body and soul. It is in this struggle of trying to become perfect and to enter Heaven through the narrow door, that we will attain salvation for our souls. Jesus has clearly advised us to never lose faith and to pray unceasingly.

The Holy Spirit helps us and looks after us in all that we do, think and say. Hence, we have to do what is 'Right', follow Christ and strengthen our Faith by attending Retreats. As is given in *the Bible - John 14:6* "**Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life."**



POPE FRANCIS LIKELY TO VISIT INDIA IN 2024



PM Narendra Modi met Pope Francis in Rome on 30th October, 2021 and had extended an invitation to visit India.

Speaking to reporters about his planned journeys on board the papal plane on his way back to Rome from South Sudan, His Holiness Pope Francis said, “I think India will be next, next year. On September 29, I will go to Marseilles, and there is the possibility that from Marseilles I will fly to Mongolia, but it has not yet been decided. It's possible. I don't recall another one this year, Lisbon.”

Pope Francis had received Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 30th October 2021 at the Apostolic Palace, just before his two-day G-20 summit in Rome, ahead of the COP26 climate summit at Glasgow in Scotland.

After the meeting, the Prime Minister had tweeted, “Had a very warm meeting with Pope

Francis. I had the opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues with him and also invited him to visit India.”

Before the invitation, Pope Francis had signalled many times his desire to visit India which is home to 24 million Christians – around 2 per cent of the total Indian population.

It was on 26th November 2017, that Pope Francis flew from Rome on his apostolic journey to Myanmar and Bangladesh as a messenger of 'Peace' but his India visit did not materialize.

Late John Paul II was the last Pope to visit India in 1999 when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the Prime Minister.

LENTEN TRADITIONS

-Jacqueline Kelly

As we begin the holy season of Lent, commencing with Ash Wednesday, we are called to walk with Jesus all the Way to the Cross, where he died to save us from sin and that we may rise with Him to a New Life. We will stay beside Him, the entire journey - to the Cross, the symbol of His unending Love, that will roll away the stone of the tomb, leading to the New Life which is the challenge and promise of the Holy Week. This meaning of New Life is a gift of everlasting "Life with Him" in Heaven.

Lent is a special time of grace in the Church. Lent is like a desert in our life, providing the stillness we need for prayer. The liturgy highlights the need for reconciliation and the faithful practice, the discipline of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Parishes organise Missions, Passover services and Stations of the Cross.

Lent, the period of prayer and fasting in preparation for Easter, is 40 days long, but there are 46 days between Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent in the Roman Catholic Liturgical Calendar, and Easter.

History takes us back to the earliest days of the Church. Christ's original disciples, who were Jewish, grew up with the idea that the Sabbath - the day of worship and of rest - was Saturday, the seventh day of the week, since the account of creation in Genesis says that God rested on the seventh day.

Christ rose from the dead, however, on Sunday, the first day of the week, and the early Christians, starting with the apostles (those original disciples), saw Christ's Resurrection as a new creation, and so they transferred the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday.

Since all Sundays, and not simply Easter Sunday, were days to celebrate Christ's Resurrection, Christians were forbidden to fast and do other forms of penance on those days. Therefore, when the Church expanded the period of fasting and prayer in preparation for Easter from a few days to 40 days (to showcase Christ's fasting in the desert,

before He began His public ministry), Sundays could not be included in the count.

Thus, in order for Lent to include 40 days on which fasting could occur, it had to be expanded to six full weeks (with six days of fasting in each week) plus four extra days - Ash Wednesday and the Thursday, Friday and Saturday that follow it. Six times six is thirty-six plus four equals forty. And that's how we arrive at the 40 days of Lent.

SHROVE TUESDAY



Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday is also popularly known as Pancake Day or Pancake Tuesday.

In Mumbai city, Catholic mothers wake up early and prepare pancakes for their family members. I recall my Mum would prepare colourful pancakes and roll them into cigars which were lip-smacking.

The custom of eating pancakes on that day dates from at least the 16th Century. The bell that was rung at 11 a.m. calling people to confession, was also the signal for work to stop and festivities to begin, namely frying pancakes. In many areas of England, the bell was known as the PANCAKE BELL.

The PANCAKE RACE is run at Olney, Buckinghamshire, England. It is said that a

housewife who was making pancakes suddenly heard the bells summoning her to Church and dashed along the road with her frying pan still in her hand. That was in the 15th Century. The race now takes place just before mid-day and lasts only about a minute, though it attracts great media attention.

The housewives taking part in the race must wear an apron and a headscarf, and must toss their pancakes three times during the sprint of just 400 yards. The first to reach the church porch and the runner-up get prayer book gifts from the vicar.

EGG SHACKLING is observed by some school children in a few English villages. On Shrove Tuesday, the children take eggs with their names written on them to school. The eggs are placed in a sieve and shaken gently together. As they crack, they are removed until only one remains. The winner in each class gets a small cash prize provided by an old legacy. The cracked eggs are then returned to the owners for them to make pancakes and some are sent to the local hospital.

FOOTBALL is a very popular game played during Shrovetide. Though it may have had ritual significance, evidence is lacking.

ASH WEDNESDAY

After Christmas, the Church draws back to almost six to seven weeks to the Season of Lent. Ash Wednesday is the prelude to the coming weeks of preparation for Easter, the Resurrection of Christ.

Basically, the theme for the seven weeks is centered on the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. From Ash Wednesday, Lent begins taking us along the path of fasting, penance and prayer, in a special invitation to return to God. Ash Wednesday, initiates the period of Lent, and asks us to repent for our faults and to prepare our spirit in the mystery of redemption.

Prophet Isaiah calls for repentance with ashes: "O daughter of my people, gird on sackcloth, roll in the ashes."

In the Old Testament, Fasting was to put on sackcloth and ash as a sign or repentance. Ash Wednesday reintroduces the Christian Season of Lent, placing before us the enigma of redemption, in a way that we should meditate in its totality and undertake to participate in it.

The norm to burn palm branches from the previous Palm Sunday began in the 12th Century. Parishes often asked their members to bring their old palms before lent for a ritual burning after Mass. It was Pope Urban II who called for the use of ashes and later it was called ASH WEDNESDAY.

In Maccabees (3:47), it is stated, "They fasted that day, put on sackcloth and sprinkled ashes on their heads and rent their clothes."

The Book of Daniel, Chapter 9:3, says, "Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking Him by prayer and supplications with fasting and sackcloth and ashes."

In the Apocrypha, The Book of Sirach, Chapter 17:32, "All human beings are dust and ash."

Ash Wednesday is the starting point for personal renewal in preparation to highlight the act of penance and reconciliation during Holy Thursday which was started by the Order of Penitents.

We should open Ash Wednesday by attending the celebration of Holy Mass, and return home with ash on the forehead as a sign of our repentance.



Jacqueline Kelly is a regular contributor of articles to different publications.

Vanity of Vanities: All is Vanity!

- Ibonio D'Souza

With limitless wealth at his disposal, **Solomon, son of David and King of Israel** during the tenth century BC, pursued satisfaction with breathless abandon. History touts him as the wisest man in the world at that time, and he was certainly one of the richest. He recorded his findings in the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes. Solomon's raw, irreverent reflections on the subject of satisfaction and the true meaning of life are shocking and sometimes offensive. But they are honest. He speaks from his heart as one who has truly “been there, done that.” He records what will satisfy us and what will leave us feeling as if all we did with our lives was chase the wind.

PHYSICAL HEALTH:

Good physical health is a key “quality of life” indicator, to be sure. Few would deny that being healthy adds to one's enjoyment of life. But on deeper considerations, Solomon cuts to the chase regarding our time here on earth:

“Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever.....No one remembers the former generations, and even those yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow them.”

EDUCATION: Solomon was renowned for his wisdom. No one knew more than he did in the



KING SOLOMON

has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge.' Then I applied myself to the understanding of

tenth century BC world. This was no accident - Solomon was purposeful about obtaining knowledge. And for many like him, education seems a logical path to finding a life that satisfies. But will it pay off? Here is what he experienced: “I applied my mind to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under the heavens....I said to myself, 'Look, I have increased in wisdom more than anyone who



wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind.”

PLEASURE: Solomon embraces extreme hedonism thinking a good bottle or barrel of wine will lighten him up and bring him happiness. He engages in unbridled pleasure seeking, a never-ending college frat party. Let the good times roll. “Laughter”, I said, “is madness. And what does pleasure accomplish?” I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly.” People learn the hard way that wine, drugs, sex, gambling, food, or anything else people use to anesthetize their pain, does not lead to a satisfied life. It all eventually feels like chasing the wind.



WEALTH: Solomon spoke of his wealth thus: "I bought male and female slaves and had other



slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces." Solomon was driven. He was focused. And thinking wealth would fill the void in his life, he pursued it wholeheartedly until he was the wealthiest man around. Yet he was empty inside.

SEX: Sex is one of the most common forms of futile satisfaction-seeking we hear about. People who use sex as a means to fill the ache in their souls are not alone; Solomon tried this path as well: "I acquired.....a harem as well....the delights of a man's heart." Scripture records that Solomon acquired "seven hundred wives of royal birth and

three hundred concubines." These were women from all over the world and from every religion. As Scripture notes, "his wives led him astray."

BEEN THERE! DONE THAT: Solomon sums up his worldly attempts at filling the void in his life: "I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labour, and this was the reward for all my toil. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun."

Solomon ends the book of Ecclesiastes with this cut-to-the-chase conclusion:

"Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind."



Ibonio D'Souza is the author of the widely read motivational tome 'Rise And Shinethe lotus way', columnist, and a social activist.



There is no Joy Greater than the Joy of GIVING

Mulraj Jayantilal & Bharti Sheth, Chowpatty Seaface, Mumbai

I feel in my heart, that after a long period and continuous daily prayer since the last one year, my prayers have been finally answered. Ven. Fr. Agnel, through his kind intercession, has blessed the favour I sought. I am a devotee since many years and numerous favours were granted in the past. This was a very special favour, I had requested for his intercession and that has put me in a very good frame of mind by receiving it. With great pleasure, I with my wife Bharti, am sending a cheque of Rs.10,000 for all the Balbhavan children under your care.

Judian Malini Remedios, c/o Mary Pereira, Bandra, Mumbai

I wish to donate Rs. 25,000 to Fr. Agnel Ashram and the Balbhavan orphanage. Please keep us in your prayers.

Sosamma Saji, Al Ain, U.A.E.

Please accept our humble gift of Rs. 45,000 for your orphanage children. I have received lots of blessings through Ven. Fr. Agnel's intercession. I am 100% sure that Fr. Agnel is always praying for us. Please pray for our health, job and studies.

Prabhakar Fanse, Pune

My wife Mangala Fanse expired this year. This donation of Rs. 5,000 is in her memory.

Marie Shanti Lucien, Chennai

I am donating Rs. 6,000 as a humble donation for your noble cause. Please pray for the intentions of our family.

Saveena David, Dubai, U.A.E.

I just wanted to inform you that I have sent INR 8,000 towards Sponsorship of lunch for a day for the boys of the Balbhavan orphanage. Please do keep me in prayers.

ANGER MANAGEMENT

-Tony Menezes

It is not uncommon for us to express our anger at persons and events, both external and internal, that affect our lives. The intensity of our anger can vary from petty irritation to profound fury and rage. Many a time justified anger within limits is a good thing, as long as we do not let our anger control us.

What is anger? Anger is an emotion, typified by provocation towards someone or something that you feel has deliberately done us wrong. Many may wonder if anger is always a bad thing. Justified anger within self control enables us to express our negative feelings and reduce stress.

At the same time excessive anger can have unhealthy consequences.

Anger management and its positives explained:

The aim of anger management is to curtail both your emotional feelings and psychological arousals before they get out of control. The bottom line is you cannot change people's attitudes and behaviour towards you, but you can definitely condition your mind to change your reaction towards them. The same rule applies for external events in our lives.

Here is a management principle that we could apply to explain why at times justified anger within limits can have positive consequences. Below is an easy to recall acronym for reference:

D - Disturbance

I - Introspection

S - Self Realisation

C - Corrective Action

DISTURBANCE: Excessive anger and our subsequent reaction results in a troubled state of mind. We are mentally disturbed.

INTROSPECTION: In hindsight this angry reaction disturbs us so much that it causes us to introspect our behaviour and the emotional flaws that go with it.

SELF REALISATION: The resultant introspection of our inner self leads to self realisation.

CORRECTIVE ACTION: Subsequently, we realise our errors and work towards correcting our flaws that lead us to our intemperate anger.

Anger is a feeling that all of us experience at some time or another. It is a natural and normal emotion that can help us to protect our rights and stand up for ourselves. However, when anger is expressed in an uncontrolled or destructive way, it can be harmful to us and to those around us.

If you find that you are frequently angry, or that your anger is causing problems in your life, you may want to consider seeking help from a professional anger management therapist.

Anger management therapy can help you to understand and manage your anger in a healthy way. The therapist will work with you to develop coping skills and strategies to help you deal with anger in a positive and constructive way.

Tips to tame your anger:

There is no one-size-fits-all answer to this question, as the best way to control anger will vary depending on the individual. However, some tips on how to control anger include:

-Identifying the things that tend to trigger your anger, and then developing

strategies to deal with those triggers. For example, if you get angry when someone cuts you off in traffic, you might try to take a deep breath and count to 10 before reacting.

-Identifying and expressing your feelings honestly. Bottling up your anger can lead to explosive outbursts, while expressing your feelings in a healthy way can help to diffuse them.

-Staying positive. Focusing on the positive things in your life can help to diffuse negative emotions like anger.

-Exercising regularly. Exercise can help to release tension and stress, and can be a helpful way to deal with anger.



Tony Menezes is a writer, aspiring poet, hospitality management professional and animal lover.

JUST FOR FUN

-Christine D'Sylva

Hi!

The month of March is significant for International Woman's Day falls on 8th March.

Let us remember the importance of women in the world. Women have come a long way from the past. They have gained recognition in almost every field, even those dominated by men.

So let's begin with a short quiz.

Quiz Time

1. She is also known as The Lady with the Lamp.
2. She is canonised today and founded the Missionaries of Charity.
3. A Hollywood actress, she is dubbed as the Mother of the Wi-Fi.
4. She is the best-selling novelist of all time.
5. She was the first woman Prime Minister of India.

Helen Keller - An Inspiration to Us



We all know Helen Keller as an author and a blind lady whose exemplary life is filled with courage.

She longed to see. We take our eyes for granted but being blind she was devoid of seeing anything. The world was filled

with darkness.

She, however, said that if by some miracle she could see just for three days, then she would want to see the following. On the first day, she wanted to see the people whose kindness made her life worth living and of course all her friends and pets too.

On the second day, she wanted to view the beauty of dawn and see the thrilling miracle by which night was transformed into day. She wanted to view nature in all its beauty and glory.

On the final last day of sight, she wanted to see New York City. She wanted to see the many scenic

sights, the tall towers and skyscrapers and even the Empire State Building.

Her words touch our hearts as she says, "People's eyes are blind to magnificent sights because it is so familiar to them."

Well, we all need to realise our eyes indeed are windows to the world, never to be taken for granted. Our sight is God's precious gift to us.

Riddles

1. Why did the woman wear a helmet at the dinner table?
2. A girl is sitting in the dark reading a book but it is completely dark with no light. How can she see?
3. I am a five letter word. Take away the first letter and I become a country.



Smile



At a party, a young wife admonished her husband, "That is the fourth time you have gone back for ice cream and cake. Doesn't it embarrass you?"

"Why should it?" replied her husband with a grin, "I keep telling them it is for you!"

A teenager brings her new boyfriend to her home to meet her parents.

They are appalled by his haircut, his tattoos and his piercings.

"Dear, he does not seem to be a very nice boy." The mother whispers.

The daughter says, "Oh come on, mum. If he was not a nice boy, he would not be doing 500 hours of community service."

“Nothing looks good on me.” The lady customer wailed to the salesman in the department store.

“Nonsense, that dress says it all.” The salesman said reassuringly.

The lady peered at the mirror dejectedly, “That is the problem. I need a dress that keeps its mouth shut!”

Brain Teaser

A red house is made from red bricks, a blue house is made from blue bricks and a yellow house is made from yellow bricks.

What is a greenhouse made from?



Incredible Facts on Saints



St. Beatrice of Silva

A Portuguese noblewoman, she is the foundress of the monastic order of the Immaculate Conception. She is known as the patron of prisoners. At the court of the King of Castile, she was presented and thrown into prison by

a queen who was jealous of her beauty. But she was saved miraculously by Mother Mary when she prayed to her. On her death bed at sixty-four years of age, a miraculous event occurred. A luminous light radiated from her face and filled the room causing a star to remain on her forehead.

Answers

Quiz

1. Florence Nightingale
2. Mother Teresa
3. Hedy Lamarr
4. Agatha Christie
5. Indira Gandhi

Riddles

1. She was on a crash diet.
2. The girl was blind and reading Braille.
3. Woman – Oman

Brain Teaser

Glass

Well, that is all for this month. Take care and keep smiling.



Christine is an author of 30 books available on Amazon worldwide in paperback and Kindle. She also enjoys playing the piano and has a YouTube cooking channel Christine D'Sylva's fusion kitchen.

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You can join the Ashram Family by becoming a member of Agnel Co-operators and enjoy the fruits of a Special Sunday 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.

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



FR. AGNEL'S BLESSINGS

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

ANDHERI: My prayers have been answered. I have received many favours, through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel. A thanksgiving offering has been sent to the Ashram.

-J. Gomes

THANKSGIVING FOR SECURING A GOOD JOB

DAHISAR: I am very much thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for helping me get a good job. I have come to the Ashram and made an offering.

-R.M. D'Souza

BLESSINGS ON FAMILY

VASAI: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, our family has been blessed abundantly. With a grateful heart, I have come to the Ashram and made a love offering.

-N. Pereira

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

BANDRA: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have received many favours. With a grateful heart, I have made a love offering to Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra.

-M. D'Souza

THANKSGIVING FOR PRAYERS ANSWERED

CHEMBUR: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have received many favours. A love offering has been given at Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra.

-R. Fernandes

THANKSGIVING FOR A HOUSE

THANE: I am thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for helping my son Sunil get a dream home. I have come to the Ashram and made an offering.

-J. Quadras

THANKSGIVING FOR A GOOD JOB

ANDHERI: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have been blessed with a good job. A thanksgiving offering has been given to the Ashram.

-P. Fernandes

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

NALLASOPARA: I am thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for favours received. With a grateful heart, I have come to the Ashram and made a love offering.

-C. D'Souza

THANKSGIVING FOR A HAPPY FAMILY

BANDRA: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, the prayer requests of our family have been granted. A thanksgiving offering has been sent to the Ashram.

-The Cardoz Family

COUNTLESS BLESSINGS

VASAI: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have been blessed abundantly. A thanksgiving offering has been sent to the Ashram.

-D. D'Souza

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

ANDHERI: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have been blessed immensely. A love offering has been sent to the Ashram.

-T. Chetyar

BLESSINGS RECEIVED

MUMBAI: We are thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for all the blessings received. A love offering has been placed at the Fr. Agnel Ashram.

-B. Suvarna

OUT OF THEIR BOUNTY

P. Srivastava	Mumbai	65,000	C. Engles	Punjab	2,000	A. D'Souza	Palghar	1,000
A. Benjamin	Mumbai	50,000	G. Xavier	Kerala	2,000	Irudayaraj M.	Tamil Nadu	1,000
S. Thakur	Telangana	20,000	Jayalekshmi M.	Kerala	2,000	R. Lopes	Palghar	1,000
H. Bajaj	Mumbai	15,000	V. Fernandes	Mumbai	2,000	D. D'Silva	Mumbai	1,000
P. Bhatt	Canada	15,000	A. Dhingreja	Mumbai	2,000	D. Alphonso	Mumbai	1,000
P. Gawde	Mumbai	12,000	G. Nautiyal	Thane	2,000	S. Philip	Kerala	1,000
S. Henriques	Vasai	10,000	M. Patel	UK	2,000	G. Rajesh	Ahmednagar	1,000
A. Bhoir	Mumbai	10,000	P. Joseph	Kerala	2,000	R. Johnson	Kerala	1,000
R. Pereira	Mumbai	10,000	J. Chackochen	Kerala	2,000	R. Pachickara	Kerala	800
C. Jojo	Kerala	10,000	H. Gala	Mumbai	1,800	S. Mehra	West Bengal	700
R. D'Costa	Vasai	10,000	E. Jesly	Kerala	1,520	C. Nariman	Mumbai	600
J. Puthur	Kerala	10,000	G. Dumasia	Mumbai	1,502	M. Kurian	Karnataka	501
E. D'Sylva	Mumbai	8,500	F. Jivan	Diu	1,500	Dr. A. Raykar	Mumbai	501
T. Kumrawat	Mumbai	8,000	J. D'Souza	Mumbai	1,500	L. Machado	Vasai	500
I. Mandal	Mumbai	8,000	C. D'Souza	Mumbai	1,500	J. Pereira	Palghar	500
C. Mandal	Mumbai	6,000	A. Thomas	Kerala	1,500	K. Rajani	Thane	500
A. Fernandes	Mumbai	6,000	A. Kuttikadan	Thane	1,500	W. D'Souza	Mumbai	500
B. Engineer	Mumbai	5,005	A. Jadhav	Kerala	1,500	B. Pereira	Vasai	500
A. Thakkar	Mumbai	5,001	L. D'Cruz	Kerala	1,500	P. Vora	Mumbai	500
Subramaniam R.	Mumbai	5,000	F. Jivan	Diu	1,500	D. Sawant	Mumbai	500
B. Colaco	Vasai	5,000	J. Korah	Kerala	1,500	J. Lopes	Vasai	500
R. Parikh	Mumbai	5,000	S. D'Souza	Mumbai	1,400	A. Selvan	Mumbai	500
V. Mahida	Mumbai	5,000	B. Dalvi	Pune	1,275	H. Savani	UK	500
Namrata/Tushar	Mumbai	5,000	P. Puri	Delhi	1,100	S. Balid	Thane	500
M. Rodrigues	Goa	5,000	Z. D'Silva	Vasai	1,001	A. Sheth	Kenya	500
M. A. Naik	Gujarat	5,000	S. Patel	Mumbai	1,001	H. Prasad	Navi Mumbai	500
J. Goveas	Mumbai	5,000	S. Rangoonwala	Mumbai	1,000	J. Parekh	Thane	500
M. John	Kerala	5,000	B. Dutt	Kolkata	1,000	D. Desai	Gujarat	500
D. Conrath	Tamil Nadu	5,000	M. Cardoz	Mumbai	1,000	R. Surve	Palghar	500
T. D'Almeida	Karnataka	4,000	O. Martins	Australia	1,000	S. Rajesh	Mumbai	500
R. Nadar	Mumbai	4,000	D. D'Silva	Australia	1,000	T. Gogri	Mumbai	500
C. Alvares	Mumbai	4,000	M. Sojan	Kerala	1,000	S. Paleja	Mumbai	500
J. Nagarsheth	Gujarat	4,000	J. Chacko	Kerala	1,000	A. Raj	Tamil Nadu	500
L. Remedios	Dubai	4,000	J. Saldanha	Mumbai	1,000	A. Fernando	Tamil Nadu	500
C. Gomes	Delhi	3,300	S. Anoop	Kerala	1,000	T. Kotak	Gujarat	500
N. Rodrigues	Palghar	3,000	A. Fernandes	Mumbai	1,000	N. Tribhuvan	Pune	500
Techno Prods.	Chennai	3,000	J. Daniel	Mumbai	1,000	K. Kochala	Kerala	500
S. D'Souza	Mumbai	3,000	G. Theizer	Netherlands	1,000	R. Fernando	Thane	500
K. Fernandes	Mumbai	3,000	D. Pancholi	Mumbai	1,000	M. Abnave	Pune	500
J. Patrick	Mumbai	3,000	S. Lopes	Palghar	1,000	J. Mascarenhas	Mumbai	500
J. Alex	Mumbai	3,000	B. Gonsaves	Mumbai	1,000	N. Nande	Navi Mumbai	500
S. Carvalho	Mumbai	3,000	P. Lopes	Vasai	1,000	V. Mistry	Mumbai	500
A. Daruwalla	Mumbai	3,000	D. Kumar	Mumbai	1,000	H. Kapadia	Mumbai	500
S. Inigo	Tamil Nadu	3,000	A. Doshi	Mumbai	1,000	Sterlina Oil	Nigeria	500
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R. Dias	Mumbai	3,000	A. Kadam	Thane	1,000	D. Patel	Palghar	500
U. Macwan	Gujarat	2,500	S. D'Souza	Mumbai	1,000	N. Amolik	Ahmednagar	500
Sebastian C.	Kerala	2,500	G. Fonseca	Mumbai	1,000	H. Jacob	Kerala	500
C. Estibeiro	Goa	2,500	A. Lobo	Mumbai	1,000	V. Sophia	Tamil Nadu	500
F. Solanki	Palghar	2,500	B. Dabre	Vasai	1,000	Santhosh V.	Tamil Nadu	500
R. Goel	Mumbai	2,100	L. Lymon	Mumbai	1,000	R. Victor	Tamil Nadu	500
A. D'Souza	Mumbai	2,015	A. Santhappan	Tamil Nadu	1,000	Perfect Chem. Carriers	Kerala	500
C. Pacis	Mumbai	2,000	A. Stephen	Tamil Nadu	1,000	R. Bhatia	Gujarat	500
V. Fernandes	Mumbai	2,000	Mahavir Paper Mart	Mumbai	1,000	A. Nadar	Mumbai	500
A. Nagarsheth	Gujarat	2,000	H. Mascarenhas	Mumbai	1,000	R. Patel	Gujarat	500
A. Fernandes	Mumbai	2,000	S. Shamuji	Mumbai	1,000	R. Mistry	Mumbai	500
J. Fernandes	Mumbai	2,000	L. Dahe	Vasai	1,000	K. Shah	Mumbai	500
P. Hendricks	Tamil Nadu	2,000	S. Puriwal	Kolkata	1,000	B. Narottam	UK	500
A. Corden	Mumbai	2,000	G. Arputharaj	Tamil Nadu	1,000	L. George	Kerala	500
N. Jain	Mumbai	2,000	M. Mathai	Kerala	1,000	Machado & Sons	Tamil Nadu	500
A. Elavia	Mumbai	2,000	D. Fernandes	Mumbai	1,000	V. Fernandes	Gujarat	500
R. D'Souza	Mumbai	2,000	J. Sequeria	Vasai	1,000	I. Varghese	Kerala	500
R. Francis	Kerala	2,000	M. Antony	Kerala	1,000	D. Afrine	Canada	500
V. D'Souza	Mumbai	2,000	S. Correia	Palghar	1,000	Agnelo	USA	500
V. John	Palghar	2,000	M. Joseph	Pune	1,000	T. D'Costa	Vasai	500
R. Saheb	Mumbai	2,000						

Bob's Banter

by Robert Clements

A Mighty Fall...!

It all happened in a jiffy.

One moment walking tall!

The next moment, a mighty fall!

There I lay sprawled on the ground last evening, helpless for a moment, as I struggled to reactivate my traitor hands and feet that had let me down, in a moment when my brain, instead of concentrating on stairs below, had let my mind wander.

I scrambled up, my knee hurting from the impact, a little blood on my palms, but otherwise none the worse for wear.

I looked at my fancy footwear, they had not even tried to help, at the clothes I had worn, all set for the party, they had dirtied like any other clothing, and looked slightly crumpled.

on the beaches, finally defeating Hitler!

Yes, Hitler was defeated, not by an egoistic General Montgomery, not even by the shrewd Eisenhower but more often than not by fate, in the form of weather lending a hand in the battles!

Yet, we walk, and talk, stride, bully and bluster our way around as if we control our tomorrows.

I had chosen what to wear for last evening. Looked forward to the conversation I'd have with my friends. Decided the route I'd take to reach my destination, and yet could not even control my next step.

'A Mighty Fall' is how I've captioned this piece, but it would have served more the purpose if I'd written instead, 'How the Mighty Fall!'

The world's third richest man, who the whole country thought was infallible, fell with a



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Nothing I'd surrounded myself with; the shoes, the clothes, or even my physical fitness, my less than fifty-six-inch chest, had prevented me when the unexpected happened!

I smiled up at the One above, thinking what His thoughts were as He saw us little pygmies thinking we were the most powerful in the world. How, we got ourselves photographed with stern look and definite step, kurta in place, a jacket neatly fitted, and yet, and that is why He smiled, we did not know whether our next step would be seeing us sprawled on the ground like me!

How the mighty fall! As I read accounts of World War II, again and again I see seemingly impregnable armies laid waste by either a sleeping general, a wrong decision, or as had happened in the landing at Normandy, inclement weather suddenly turning good, and helping the allies land

thundering roar, because of an otherwise unknown company casting doubts. It was not a giant who felled a giant, but a little mouse!

Was there something behind my fall? Was it to warn the mighty here around, that...

'It could all happen in a jiffy,

One moment walking tall!

The next moment a mighty fall..!'

Robert Clements is a newspaper columnist, whose column has graced over 80 newspapers and on certain days has a readership of over 6 million. He can be contacted at bobsbanter@gmail.com

Episcopal Ordination of Rev. Fr. Sebastião Mascarenhas SFX as the New Bishop of Baroda



Archbishop of Goa and Daman Cardinal Felipe Neri Ferrao imposing his hands on Bishop Sebastiao Mascarenhas, during the Episcopal Consecration ceremony in Vadodara, Gujarat.

Former Superior General of the Missionaries of St. Francis Xavier (Society of Pilar), Rev. Fr. Sebastião Mascarenhas SFX was ordained Bishop of Baroda at the Episcopal Consecration ceremony held at Rosary High School Ground in Vadodara, Gujarat, on 18th February 2023.

The Principal Consecrator was His Eminence Oswald Cardinal Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay Archdiocese, while the Co-Consecrators were His Eminence Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrão, Archbishop of Goa & Diu-Daman Archdiocese, and His Grace Metropolitan Archbishop Thomas Macwan, of Gandhinagar Archdiocese. The Nuncio for India and Nepal, Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli, was also present for the event.

The Episcopal Consecration was attended by 22 Bishops, around 330 to 350 priests, about 400 to 500 religious sisters, and 7000 to 8000 lay faithful, among other dignitaries from Goa.

Bishop Sebastião Mascarenhas SFX is the third bishop from the Society of Pilar. His brother Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas, Auxiliary Bishop of Ranchi and Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Daltonganj in Jharkhand, and Bishop-Emeritus of Port Blair Alex Dias are two other bishops from the religious congregation which was formed in 1887.

Bishop Sebastião Mascarenhas SFX began his early Priestly Ministry in the Parish and School in Vapi, and at various intervals served in the missions of Nagar Haveli.

After his Licentiate and Doctorate abroad, he joined the Mission Seminary, Pilar, Goa, as Professor and Animator from 2000-2002 and then served as Rector and Professor of the Seminary 2002- 2009. From 2009-2012, he was Provincial Superior of Mumbai Province, Society of Pilar. Then from 2013-2017 he was Superior of the Mission of Daman. In 2017, he was elected Superior General of the Society.

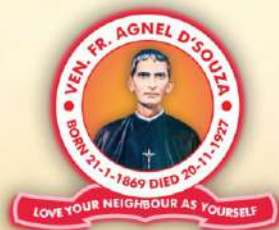
After laying down his office in 2022, he was appointed to the mission of Khempur (Ahmedabad) in December. In that same month, His Holiness Pope Francis appointed him as the Bishop of Baroda Diocese.

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**Fr. Agnel Ashram Community congratulates
Rev. Fr. Sebastião Mascarenhas SFX
on his Episcopal Ordination as the New Bishop of Baroda**



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