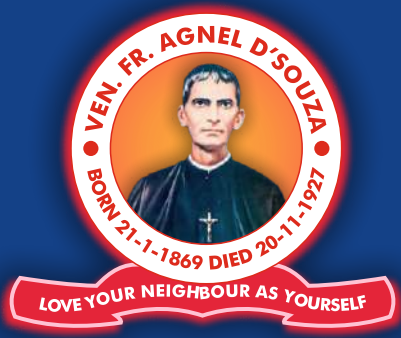


JANUARY 2023



FR

AGNEL

SHRAM NEWS



**GIVE
WINGS
TO YOUR
DREAMS**

== open your wings and let your dreams fly for every thought counts ==

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VEN. FR. AGNELO'S 154th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY
Saturday, 21st January 2023

PROGRAMME

SPECIAL NOVENA SERVICES | 12th to 20th January 2023

Every day

Morning : 7.00 a.m. & 9.30 a.m.: Holy Mass and Novena Prayer in English.

Evening : 6.00 p.m. : Holy Mass and Novena Prayer in English.

N.B.

On Sunday, 15th January, all Masses and Novena Services will be held as on normal Sundays.

On Sunday, 15th January, Novena Services will be in Gujarati at 3.00 p.m.

21st January (Saturday) : 154th Birth Anniversary of Venerable Fr. Agnelo

Morning : Mass followed by Novena Prayers at 7.00 a.m. & 9.30 a.m.

Evening : A Solemn Concelebrated Mass will be held at 6.00 p.m. in the
Ashram Compound followed by Novena Prayers.



Most Rev. Lourdes Daniel

Bishop of Nashik, will be the main Celebrant on 21st January 2023.

Thousands of devotees will participate in this Annual Novena and celebration. Over one lakh of favours, some of them truly miraculous such as cure of cancer, T.B., Paralysis etc. have been received through the powerful intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnelo.

Favours obtained and petitions to be placed at the Shrine of Ven. Fr. Agnelo may be sent to the following address:

Rev. Fr. Superior

FR. AGNEL ASHRAM

Bandstand, Bandra (West),

Mumbai - 400 050, India.

Bus No. 211 : Special Bus Service to Ply from Bandra Railway Station to Fr. Agnel Ashram Gate.

Millions of people commit to New Year's resolutions each year, yet most sadly give up pretty quickly on their new found personal promises. The goal is generally some form of transformation, whether it be a



new quest for physical fitness, healthy eating or a more organised lifestyle. The best way to start a new beginning, though, is to turn to God.

New Year's Eve is widely celebrated across the globe with much enthusiasm and merrymaking. The month of January is said to be named after the ancient Roman god, Janus, the deity of beginnings, journeys, transitions and endings. Hence, New Year celebrations signify overcoming impediments and welcoming progressive possibilities.

Human beings have always associated the arrival of a new year with a fresh lease of life and aspired for new beginnings. Around this time, most of us follow the old tradition of making New Year resolutions to bring significant changes in our life. Although different people make different resolutions, the following seem to top the New Year resolutions survey lists: Eating healthy, exercising regularly, quitting addictions, nurturing relationships, working for self-growth, doing charity, conserving the environment and natural resources, helping others and connecting to the Divine.

In a new year, people have initially a lot of excitement and tremendous motivation for working toward realising their new dreams, but as time passes by, they lose momentum completely. A research conducted at the University of Washington reveals that around 75% people fail to sustain their New Year resolutions. Subsequently, they seem to wallow in defeat, stop trying, embrace old behavioural patterns and unconsciously decide to wait for another special occasion. However, making a new beginning and persevering in chasing your dreams is not very complicated.

All you have to do is believe in yourself - yes, it's terribly simple. Swami Vivekananda states, "All power is within you. You can do anything and everything. Believe in that. Do not believe that you are weak...stand up and express the divinity within you." Psychologists have also found that

self-efficacy and self-esteem, our belief in our ability to shape our life, determines how we perceive ourselves and whether or not we successfully achieve our goals, including fulfilling New Year resolutions.

Individuals with low self-esteem believe that they are doomed because of factors beyond their control. These are the people who find their goals very overwhelming and get discouraged as soon as they encounter the first obstacle on their path. They chose to remain in their comfort zones and refrain from getting passionately involved with their aspirations. In contrast, those with high self-esteem have complete faith in their ability to reclaim their life. They embrace setbacks and challenges as opportunities for new learning and self-growth, keep fighting till the end and emerge as winners. These people are zealous about turning their dreams into reality and put their body, mind and soul in realising their aspirations.

The Bible affirms that we are created in the image of God and are blessed with an intrinsic perfection and capacity to reach the epitome of holiness. However, we have forgotten the divinity within and instead, we have allowed ourselves to fall into an abyss of pessimism. In this coming New Year, let us resolve to make a new beginning by changing ourselves and consciously aligning with the Divine plan.

When we do struggle and feel weak, we must call on God to be our strength and help to get through our trials. We must stand firm in our faith regardless of what obstacles we encounter and no matter how our family or friends question our faith.

Our struggles don't just come out of nowhere, but rather they are permitted by God for a purpose. We might not always understand that purpose until much later, even if that means we have to wait until we get to heaven to ask God Himself, but if they are permitted by God, there is a reason. Being a good and faithful servant, obedient to God's word, will bless us in more ways than if we tried to control our life in our own way.

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

JESUS, OUR NEXT-OF-KIN

- Fr. Fio Mascarenhas, SJ

We begin 2023 by doing a Bible-study on *who Jesus is to each of us*, and reflect about the main practical result for us personally that *“the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us.”* This will fill us with wonder and gratitude to our Father God for his tremendous love for each of us personally and individually, and this in turn will strengthen us with new faith, hope and love for our daily life as Catholic Christians.



The New Testament uses a variety of words to describe our relationship with Jesus: we are Jesus' *“sheep”* (Jn.10:14), his *“servants”* (Mt.24:46), even his *“friends”* (Jn.15:15); but **most of all**, we are Jesus' *“brothers and sisters”* (Mk.3:35), *“individually members of his Body”* (1Cor.12:27), and *“co-heirs”* with him of the Father's full inheritance (Rom.8:17).

In ordinary life, blood-relatives are considered one's closest kinsfolk: for example, parents, or siblings, or children. And if one is married, then one's wife/husband is considered one's next-of-kin. *Christians*, however, are gifted with a special relative, a new “closest kinsman.” This is the result of baptism, when we are *“born anew”* of water and the Spirit (Jn.3:3-6). This new relative, Jesus, becomes our “eldest Brother.” **He** now takes first place amongst all our other relatives.

It is a wonderful truth that no mere human being is *more* “next-of-kin” to a Christian than Jesus! That is why Jesus said, *“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me”* (Mt.10:37). Jesus is the *“pearl of great price,”* and the *“treasure in the field,”* to acquire which one must be ready to give up everything else (Mt.13:44f). Jesus is, and wants to be even more *uniquely*, our closest kinsman!

In the biblical Book of Ruth, the next-of-kin was expected to fulfil the obligation “to redeem” a woman if her husband died before they had children. Ruth's next-of-kin refused this right, so it passed over to Boaz, another close kinsman:

“Then the next-of-kin said, ‘Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it’” (Ruth 4:6-10). So Boaz married Ruth, and they were blessed with a son, who became the grandfather of the great King David, of whose lineage was born the Messiah.

In the Old Testament, as illustrated in this story of Ruth, the closest kinsman was considered one's “redeemer” (Hebrew, *“goel”*); it was both his obligation and right to rescue a kinsman from poverty, to redeem him/her from slavery, or to avenge a murder. In the New Testament, *our* “goel” (closest kinsman and redeemer), is *Jesus*. It was the desire of the Father that his Beloved Son should be born as a human being, and pour out his *“spirit of sonship”* upon us, in order thereby to transform us human beings into God's dear children. St. Paul explains this result in the clearest of terms:

“You did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but the spirit of sonship. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father,’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are sons/daughters of God, and if sons/daughters then heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ...” (Rom.8:15-17).

To the Galatians too Paul repeats: *“But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive sonship. And because you are sons/daughters, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So through God, you are no longer a slave but a son/daughter, and if a son/daughter, then an heir”* (Gal.4:4-7).

By redeeming us and making us like himself (with his own “spirit of sonship” indwelling each of us), Jesus has proved himself to be our closest kinsman. *“For those whom (God) foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren”* (Rom.8:29). And again, *“(God) destined us in love to be his sons/daughters through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he*

freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood..." (Eph.1:5-7). Furthermore, Paul teaches us that because of the ongoing action of the Spirit of Jesus dwelling in us, we all **"are being changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory to another"** (2Co.3:17f).

Notice that in the above key texts about the "birthing" work of the Holy Spirit, the original Greek never uses the word "adoption" or "spirit of adoption," as sadly translated by some bibles! "Adoption" is legalized fiction, it is a relationship created by law! Consequently, similar to Old Testament-oriented Jews, most Catholics too do not seek a warm intimacy with God **as Father**, instead they mostly look upon him as a far-away, stern, punishing Judge, and consequently upon Jesus too as a utopian Model (not a *real* brother/co-heir). However, **Scripture** tells us that we are what we are *by grace*! To be transformed into a child of God, we must be **"born anew of water and Spirit"** (Jn.3:5-8). A real, new (spiritual) *birth* is demanded by Jesus (in the power of the Spirit of God).

Once we accept this extraordinary and *almost unbelievable* revelation, we will be set free to actually live as sons/daughters of God, and begin to claim, with awe and gratitude, our God-given dignity as "co-heirs" with Jesus! A happy consequence of Jesus being our closest kinsman is that he, the Lord, *is always on our side* in the spiritual warfare that we are unceasingly involved in, against the world, the flesh and the devil (see 1Jn.4:4 and Eph.6:10-13). *Jesus* is our "Paraclete" (Encourager), and the Holy Spirit is "another Paraclete" (Jn.14:16). A very beautiful scene in the Book of Revelation confirms that even in heaven, the Risen Jesus wishes to

acknowledge and maintain his solidarity with humanity by *"standing among the twenty four elders"* rather than sitting on the throne in glory (Rev.5:6).

No wonder that the Early Fathers of the Church, the recent Popes, and the Vatican Councils have all encouraged Christians to relish their new identity: *"O Christian, be aware of your nobility,"* declared Pope St. Leo the Great in his Nativity Sermons. And our own dear Pope Francis repeats often: *"Being a Christian is not just about following commandments: it is about letting Christ take possession of our lives and transforming them. A Christian isn't a person who simply follows some commandments, but a person who tries to think, act, and love like Christ."*

From the outset, therefore, of this New Year, let us decide to be, not just names inscribed in a some Baptismal Register, but to become more like Jesus, in a way that we will be recognized as younger brothers and sisters of *our eldest Brother*. Let our cooperation with his "spirit of sonship" (the first and *most* important gift of the Holy Spirit to each of us) be single-minded and wholehearted! Whether in the area of prayer, or suffering, or works of love, let us steadfastly, patiently, and courageously think, and feel, and behave like Jesus! And to equip ourselves in an ongoing way for this kind of "new life," let us come daily to the devotional reading of God's word (*Lectio Divina*), to frequent reception of Jesus' sacramental body and blood, and practise a habitual "reaching out to the poor," for these are the Spirit's favourite means to fashion the close kin of Jesus into his own likeness.

Fr. Fio is a popular retreat preacher and author. He can be contacted at frfiomas@gmail.com

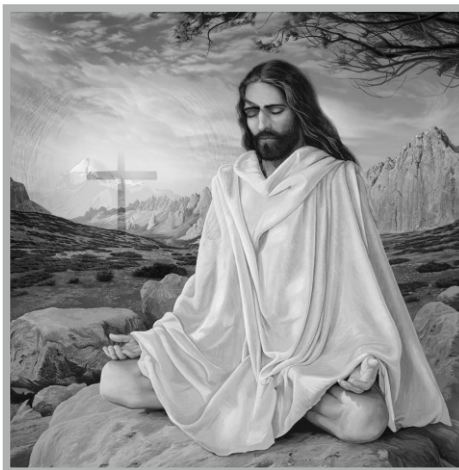


"I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE"
JOHN 14:6

What's so Christian about 'Christian' Meditation?

- Christopher Mendonca

Given the various forms of meditation that exist and especially since 'meditation' techniques are proffered in a secular context, one can understand the need for clarity in this regard. What perhaps makes the question more relevant is that the term 'meditation' has come to mean something very different from its original intent in the Christian Tradition.



So when John Main, the Benedictine monk rediscovered the practice for us in the Western Christian Tradition, he was not only taking us back to a practice that existed since the early centuries of Christianity; he was also going back to the meaning of the word in its original context. **We meditate in order to open for us the door to contemplation.**

Entering into the prayer of Christ within us:

At the heart of the practice is the recognition that 'Meditation' in the Christian Tradition is not a technique but rather a daily spiritual discipline. We hear the call of Jesus to journey within to our centre and there behold and experience his indwelling spirit that is not only a reality but the Reality which gives meaning, shape and purpose to everything we do, everything we are. Growing in an awareness of the Spirit of the Risen Lord within us, we allow the Spirit to pray within us. We no longer pray, but rather Christ prays within us. The practice allows us to enter into the Prayer of Christ within us. It is the only prayer that is pleasing to the Father. As St. Paul says in the letter to the Romans 'we do not know how to pray, but the spirit prays within us.'

A Way of Stillness, Silence and Simplicity:

The practice of Meditation is a way of pilgrimage to our centre. It involves coming to a stillness of body and a stillness of spirit. The stillness of body we acquire by sitting still. Sitting with your back upright is the only essential posture demanded. The stillness of mind comes through the repetition of a single word / prayer phrase. The prayer-phrase recommended is **Ma-ra-na-tha**. It is an

Aramaic word in the language that Jesus used. It means "The Lord comes" and is the word that ends Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthians as well as the Book of Revelation. Reciting any word phrase repeatedly, gradually brings the mind to a stillness, beset as it is with many distracting thoughts and images. As a spiritual discipline, it is best to use a scriptural phrase / text for the purpose. This helps take the practice out of the 'secular context' in which it is often

practiced. We never lose sight of the fact that this is a spiritual discipline.

The practice is essentially reciting your sacred word over and over again, silently, interiorly and then most importantly returning to reciting it when one is aware that one has been distracted. This, simple though it may sound, doesn't make it easy.

The danger of riches:

It is not easy for us to give up thinking about God, believing that the more lofty the ideas we have of God in prayer, the better it is. Inspirations, insights, and experiencing oneself transported to another world often make us think that these are the outcome of having found favour with God. At other times, we use words in carefully framed sentences, relying on the embellishments of language to adorn our prayer with a richness to make it pleasing to God. Quite the contrary. It is the prayer of the publican and not the pharisee that is acceptable to God. We are asked to come before the Lord in poverty of spirit. What better way to do this than to renounce all words, ideas, thoughts and images by limiting our prayer to the recitation of a single verse or prayer phrase. In doing so, we allow the Spirit within us to pray with us and for us. We do not know how we ought to pray. But the Spirit gives voice to our unutterable and inarticulate groans, constantly interceding for us according to the will of God. As John Cassian, one of the desert fathers puts it, the reciting of a single verse brings us with ready ease to the first of the beatitudes 'blessed are the poor in spirit.'

Leaving self behind:

Jesus calls us to leave self behind, take up our cross and follow him. This means living our lives not in response to the demands of the ego that seeks to perpetuate itself, but rather growing in an awareness of the LORD's presence within us and letting it become the source of everything we do, everything we are. In returning to saying our sacred word, every time we sense we have been distracted we choose not to pay attention to the ego and through a sustained daily practice make it a secondary aspect of our lives. Thoughts, ideas, images, feelings generated by the ego are distractions at the time of meditation. They are not to be confronted, not to be denied, but gently allowed to vanish and disappear as we cease paying attention to them and return to saying our sacred word. This helps to keep us anchored.

Coming into Silence:

We thus come into a deeper silence. Meister Eckhart, the Dominican monk, says that God is best described by silence. Indeed, Eckhart says "nothing in all creation is so like God as silence." For Eckhart silence is a requisite for listening deeply to the "Word of God" that dwells within us all. Then he goes on to add that the *WORD lies hidden in the soul, unknown and unheard unless room is made for it in the ground of hearing, otherwise it is not heard. All voices and sounds must cease and there must be pure stillness within, a still silence.* Stillness leads to an encounter with the Divine. This is the deep joy we experience as we sit in Silence, doing nothing, saying nothing, but just experiencing ourselves as being enveloped by the Divine presence.

Martha and Mary, Sisters of Lazarus:

The visit of Jesus to the house of Martha and Mary illustrates the conflict we often experience between 'action' and 'contemplation'. In chiding

Martha for her busyness, her distractedness, Jesus lets us know that any action that does not have its root in 'being' is ineffective. The daily discipline of meditating twice a day allows us to be rooted in God, the source of our being. Everything we do takes on a different meaning when it has as its source the Spirit of the Risen Lord within us. When we begin in prayer, not to pray but let the prayer of Christ rise up from within us, we experience that it is no longer we who live, but Christ lives in us.

The practice: *How to meditate*

Opening prayer: Heavenly Father, open our hearts to the silent presence of the Spirit of your Son. Lead us to that mysterious silence where your word is revealed to all who call Maranatha, Come, Lord Jesus.

Sit down, sit still and upright with your back erect, your eyes lightly closed. Be relaxed but alert. Silently, interiorly begin to say your sacred word. The word / prayer phrase we recommend is Ma-rana-tha. Recite it as four syllables of equal length. Listen to it as you say it, gently but continuously. Do not think or imagine anything spiritual or otherwise. If thoughts and images come, these are distractions at the time of meditation. So keep returning to simply saying the word. Meditate each morning and evening for between 20 and 30 minutes.

Suggestion: Visit the World Community of Christian Meditation (WCCM)

website – www.wccm.org

For information about the Mumbai WCCM Community, email: wccmindia@gmail.com

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.



SPACE WARS

In all the animal kingdom
Spread on this strange earth
That glory gives to man
His choice adventures real
Ethereal birds sing songs sweet ecstasies
A lion in his jungle roars fiercely
From his vocal harp – I – M – KING!
That shakes man's valour brave
In blood challenge fight resolve.

But know you man, whom
God hath given power over all,
Reigns one of a kind, as distant stars,
The waste of debris in the sky –
So silent viewed through powerful telescope
Past distant planets, a trillion miles from Mars
Leave strange calling and cards on earthly soil,
Far from near sighted eyes, awakened knock
'Open sesame' : Man shuttles into space.
To mine rich asteroid mineral waste.

Gold, Silver, Copper, Iron Ore Et Al,
Diamonds, Rubies, Emeralds, stones of every hue.
Man's insatiable lust of an acquisitive race.

Its growing sudden germ warfare–another kind
Man has to face opponents consequential fate
Ingenious prying man's wry responsibility.
Drones, missiles, chemical, nuclear bombs.
Self destruction, East Versus West, a microbial
Virus war of lab escaped destructive cells to match.

The smallest bat, the rat, the monkey all were gods
Now cultured for real battle filth, death, disease
Germ Versus Man. The strains of Covid, Delta,
Omicron.
No nation safe on earth it leaves,
Shame hides man's face behind a mask
Is this a plague when Pharaoh suffered
Stubborn wrath and killed his bonded men?

But wonder not, bad times like seasons change,
Strange ways are God's return to Him,
His mercies follow like a beautiful rainbow
And that's not all, remember the silent wise
Who toil to save his fellow-man
Bless him – Make s-p-a-c-e for him!

- Leslie J. D'Souza

IN THE MOMENT I LIVED

Dedicated to the youngsters who have ventured into the wrong path due to various reasons in life. This is to remind you, that there's still hope, you can pick yourself up, reshape and replace your hopeless future with a brighter, better one ! It's human to err, but it takes an even stronger human within, to realize, reconcile and resume.

In the moment, that's where I live.
Life is uncertain, that's what I believe.
There are moments I wish to re-live.
And there are some I repent for and grieve.
Oh! Those glorious days, when life was gay.
Each day began with a hopeful and joyful ray.
This heart skipped a beat, for each romantic 'hey!'
Cheap thrills come too easy, I learnt it the hard way.

There was no regret for the mistakes I made.
For each day to be adventurous I prayed.
Below the night sky in momentary euphoria
I laid.

Not realising from home, I had strayed.

Oh Good Lord! What have I done?
Precious time has elapsed, now where do I run?
The life I lived, I thought it was fun.

I was wrong, when the blood rush told me
I had won.

Collecting the broken pieces, strongly now
I stand.

Correcting and straightening life's
self-made bend.

I pick myself up and work on changing my
past trend.

I fight this tempting world and I'm sure
I shall transcend!

I'm unaware of what the future holds.
I shall fearlessly build newer and bigger goals.
With time, life doesn't stop, it rolls.
To bring it on track, and save similar lost souls.

- Tancia Pires

-Sunil D'Cruz

On the 154th Birth Anniversary of Venerable Fr. Agnelo D'Souza, we remember his life of holiness, simplicity, spirituality and service to the poor.

He had a two-fold vision, one focused on society and the other on the eternal kingdom of God. His deep spirituality was reflected in his sermons. He was a firebrand preacher of the Love of Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Right from a young age, sermons inspired Angelo, named after Agnes, the Saint on whose feast day he was born. He would remember even the smallest details of sermons heard at Mass and would teach catechism, to other children, some even older than him.

Orphaned at a young age

When Agnelo was just eleven, both his parents passed away. As his mother lay on her death bed, she entrusted her nine children to the care of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

This was a shattering experience for the children who were now under the protection of their paternal Uncle Fr. Lazaro. He had already seen the pious disposition of Agnelo and had once uttered the prophetic words "Agnelo will one day become a virtuous priest and a renowned Preacher."

His elder brother, Fr Manuelinho, who became a priest, encouraged Agnelo to

pursue a call to priesthood. He studied philosophy and theology at the Patriarchal Seminary at Rachol. He secured the much coveted and singular honour of *accessit* in his final year of study.

After much prayer and reflection, Agnelo joined the Diocesan Missionary Society of St. Francis Xavier of Pilar on 17th July 1897. He was ordained priest on 24th September 1898 by the Archbishop of Goa and the Patriarch of the East Indies, Antonio Sebastiao Valente.

On 8th September 1908, Fr. Agnelo became a full-fledged member of the Society. His life as a priest took him to Siroda and Sanvordem in Goa, besides Kumta, near Karwar. As a missionary, he encountered the poor, the needy, the exploited and the marginalized in these places and helped them in every way.

A man of prayer that he was, he would love to spend hours in the Eucharistic presence of the Lord. He had a great devotion to Mother Mary, specifically to Our Lady of Sorrows.

He accepted sufferings joyfully and consoled others too by saying, "If Jesus suffered so much, why should we not suffer? Sufferings are for our good". He was totally detached from the material world and would give away his possessions to the poor for he didn't want to be a slave to them.

Agnelo was born frail. Not expected to live, he was baptized at home the day he was born. Even as a boy Agnelo had a frail physique which followed him into his priestly life making him prone to illness.

Sainthood

Venerable Fr. Agnelo is on his way to be canonized a saint. Rev. Fr. Nazareth Fernandes, sfx, the Superior General of the Society of Pilar, informs that the process of beatification which is lengthy and rigorous, has begun.

In 2021, a miracle attributed to the intercession of Venerable Fr. Agnelo was sent to Rome. He further said that Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, the Prefect of

the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, has communicated about the acceptance of the case by the Congregation and was opened for study on 3rd November 2021.

He further informed that Rev. Fr. Antonio Marrazzo, a Redemptorist priest, who has been appointed as postulator by the Society of Pilar, to handle the process of canonization of Venerable Agnelo, by the Society of Pilar, has urged devotees to continue to pray fervently for the Almighty to grant this favour.

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



Born in Anjuna on 21st January 1869, the sixth child of Miguel Arcanjo Mariano D'Souza, and Maria Sinforosa Perpetua Magalhaes, little Agnelo was christened after St. Agnes on her feast day.

AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Vashi

AGNEL SCHOOL OF MUSIC, VASHI, ORGANISES CONCERT

The Agnel School of Music is a recent addition to the Fr. Agnel institutions in **Vashi, Navi Mumbai**. Instituted in August 2022 under the able leadership of Fr. Myron Sequeira, this music school organised its **first concert** on 10th December 2022 at the Agnel Complex in Vashi.

Rev. Fr. S. Almeida (Managing Director), who inspired, encouraged and supported the setting up of the Agnel School of Music did the honours of welcoming the Chief Guest Mrs. Sharmila Sarkar, Guest of Honour Mr. Prakash Vaithilingam, Fr. Eleuterio Fernandes (the new Local Superior) and all the parents, grandparents, teachers and well-wishers gathered at the venue.

Around 50 budding musicians consisting of guitarists, violinists, vocalists and keyboard players, enthralled the audience with their heart-winning performances. Every performance reflected the effort put in by the children under the dedicated guidance of Fr. Myron Sequeira and the two music teachers, Clyde Do Rosario and Vailanni Fernandes.

The programme concluded with an entertaining instrumental music performance by **Agnel Balbhavan boys**, who are also trained at the school of music.



**The Agnel School of Music
was newly set up at
Vashi, Navi Mumbai.**

Kudos to this spectacular new beginning and best wishes to the Agnel School of Music for an enriching journey ahead.

AGNEL HAPPENINGS

TEAM AGNELS, VASHI, WIN LAURELS AT ALL INDIA CHORUS SINGING CONTEST



The Winning Team

Team Agnels from Vashi (Navi Mumbai) competed with the best teams in the country at the **All India Chorus Singing Contest** organised by Bharat Vikas Parishad at Bilwara (Rajasthan) on 18th December 2022. After a nail-biting competition, Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School team won the coveted **First Prize for the Hindi song** and **Second Prize for the Sanskrit song**. Besides the talented

students, music teacher Sri Swaroop Muppana, violinist and teacher Ms. Vaillani Fernandes and Tabla artist Sri Umesh Patil were also felicitated with the winner's trophies.

Many hours of practice and diligent work went behind this final achievement. It was no doubt a very memorable journey and victory for the Agnel melody makers. The Agnel Family is truly proud of them!

FR. AGNELS, VASHI, EMERGE CHAMPIONS AT DSO STATE UNDER-19 FOOTBALL

Fr. Agnel School under-19 football team emerged champions at the Maharashtra state interschool football tournament held in Kolhapur on 30th December 2022.

Earlier the Agnel players qualified for the state tournament by beating Vidya Vikasini college 2-0 at the Interschool division match held at the KJ Somaiya ground.

The state tournament was organised by the District Sports Office, Kolhapur, in association with Sanjay Ghodawat International School at the Sanjay Ghodawat University ground in Kolhapur. The quarter final match was smooth sailing for the Fr. Agnel team with a score of 2-0 against the Rabani school team from Nagpur.

The semi final match was played against Krida Prabodhini school, Pune which ended in an easy win for Agnels with a score of 3-0. Vedant Naik, Bikram Singh and Sayyam Desai secured one goal each to seal the victory taking the Agnels team to the finals.

Maharashtra college, Kolhapur was the other team to make it to the finals. The final match resulted in a tie where both teams scored a goal each and led to the tie breaker. The Agnel boys led by Vedant Naik, Pranay Dhammal and Roshan Malla managed to hold their nerves and take the Fr. Agnel School to victory in the tie breaker with a score of 4-2.

Fr. Agnel team is coached by the school coaches Suprit Jathanna, Jerome Dias, Harinder Mall and Severin Godinho who kept the players focused throughout the tournament.

Fr. Saturnino Almeida, managing director of Fr. Agnels, Vashi, also accompanied the players to the match. An elated Fr. Almeida said, "I am very happy as our players played exceedingly well and the final match was very exciting for all. The credit for the win goes to the players and the school coaches whose efforts have resulted in this success for the school."



The football champions

CIRCLE OF HAPPINESS

- Jacqueline Kelly

When a festival or vacation approaches, holiday gifts, aromas and decorations are temporary at its best. They leave us with memories but the happiness is temporary and short-lived at that point of time.

Temporary happiness is only a part of the entire circle of happiness. The circle of happiness is only completed when our spiritual lives are in tune with the Lord our God.

If, we do not experience happiness at its fullest, we should begin to make an inventory of our life which includes finances, relationships, professional life, spiritual life and our health. We should find out what is amiss in our life and why has the spark gone out of our life.

Bonaventure nailed it when he said, "No one can be happy unless he rises above himself, not by an ascent of the body but of the heart."

For a human being to be happy, it is important for us to be aware of our environment in order to be sensitive to the needs of others around us. In order to find happiness, we should ask God for directions in our lives in order for us not to go astray.

We should make an effort to help where we can and in whatever small way we can, we should be kind to as many as possible, ready to forgive those who have hurt us in any possible way and live a peaceful life in the quest for happiness.

Saint Claire of Assisi said, which is very close to the words of wisdom. "Have caution in not allowing yourself to be struck down by adversity nor becoming vain by prosperity."

It is very important for us to know and realize that God loves us and wants to have a close relationship with us. Not because He needs us but because he wants us to stay close to His heart. God is love and God is good. He is a forgiving God. He wants us to know Him and have tremendous faith in Him and to enjoy His magnificence. We can achieve God's love through prayer and forgiveness. Prayer takes us closer to God. It helps



us to examine our conscience and enlightens our souls and we get an insight into our faults and wrongdoings.

It is indeed difficult to forgive those who have hurt us and especially our near and dear ones. This is the time when we need to pray fervently and have faith that God will instil the Holy Spirit in us to help us in the right direction and guide us on the right path and the

threshold of life. Faith is a gift from God. In order, to have it and to enjoy it, we need to turn to God in repentance and humble prayer.

Faith is the most challenging way of life. In [Cor 1-13:13], it is stated that "There are three things that last: Faith, Hope and Love and the greatest of this is Love."

The very same God who created this universe desires a relationship with us. We are significant to Him because He is our creator and He designed us in His own image and likeness. Whatever, race or caste or religion we might belong to, God still loves us. We might be of any colour or creed it is not of any significance or importance to God. God is concerned with our Love for Him and the Purity of our Hearts.

God is committed to our well-being. He cares about us. He not only has plans for our future and our lives but He has mapped out a perfect course for our lives that will result in our utmost joy and fulfilment. The only obstacle that keeps us away from God and makes God unhappy is SIN. Have we really thought about our own personal sin? God cannot tolerate when we sin. So, he makes a way for sin to be no longer a barrier. He has a solution to prevent us from hurting Him. He died for us. That shows how much He loved us. Jesus paid the penalty for our sins. So, that we can spend eternity in heaven with God. Jesus is the only way to heaven. Spiritual new birth is the Gateway to a new beginning. The start of our journey with God.

A mother of five children had a voluntary abortion the first time she discovered herself to be

pregnant. After, that dramatic experience, her life changed completely, so much so that she became a mother of five children. This means that from the experience of ill-doing may arise a new spring towards good and a change of lifestyle. In fact, our sins often awaken our conscience and help us return to the Almighty. The fear of God can guide us in doing the examination of our conscience and it will help us to compare our own life and examine ourselves according to our misdeeds.

God is going to take care of us. He is the anchor that will never leave us. The Spirit will always be inside our hearts. We should be thankful that God allowed and gave us the ability to change our

mind, to repent and to take a different course of action. It is a wonderful thing that God allowed us to be able to stop when we are in trouble and depressed and weakened by sin and allows us to bounce back and start over.

We should not let fear keep us from sharing the hope that we have in God. As Saint Padre Pio has rightly said, 'Pray, Hope and do not Worry.' For the Lord is your Tower and He will give you the Power in any difficult Hour.

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



There is no Joy Greater than the Joy of GIVING

Paul Aloysius D'Silva, Bangalore

Please accept our donation of Rs. 50,000 via NEFT, as a Christmas gift to the poor children under your care. We greatly appreciate the work done by Fr. Agnel Ashram in the field of education and training provided to the boys of Balbhavan.

Hazel B. Alphonso/Bridget Scholastica Helen D'Cruz, Malaysia

We have sent a donation of Rs. 19,800 to Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra. Please continue the good work in the New Year and always.

Michael & Margaret Partridge, Australia

Please accept our donation of Rs. 2,691.75. It gives us great joy to contribute for many years to Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra.

Ajila George Marangoly, Australia

I have sent a donation of Rs. 25,000 to Fr. Agnel Ashram. I have been a regular contributor for the past few years. Please keep us in your

prayers. I would now like to sponsor Balbhavan children.

Jaipaul Berchmans, Chennai

New Year wishes to all. Praise the Lord. I have sent an amount of Rs.1,50,000 to Fr. Agnel Ashram and the Balbhavan orphanage.

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

Please accept our humble Christmas gift of Rs.40,000 for your orphanage children. Please remember us in your daily prayers. I have received lots of blessings through Fr. Agnel's intercession. I am 100% sure Fr. Agnel is praying for us. Please pray for our health, wealth and our daughter's exams.

Arunabela Carey Ninotchka Sequeira, Campal, Panaji, Goa

As a token of thanksgiving and for good health, I have given a donation of Rs. 50,000 to Fr. Agnel Ashram and your Balbhavan orphanage, for the needs of the children.



FR. AGNEL'S BLESSINGS

THANKSGIVING FOR PROGRESS IN BUSINESS & GOOD HEALTH

VILE PARLE: My prayers have been answered. I have received the favour of success in business and good health. A thanksgiving offering has been sent to the Ashram.

-N. K. Bhat

FAVOURS RECEIVED

TUTICORIN: 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.

-B. Corera

THANKSGIVING FOR SECURING A GOOD GOVT. JOB

VASAI: I am very much thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for helping me get a good Government job, in spite of all the difficulties. I have also started receiving my salary on a regular basis. I have come to the Ashram and made an offering of Rs. 5000.

-R. D'Silva

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.

-L. Lopes

THANKSGIVING FOR GOOD HEALTH

VAKOLA: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, my prayers have been answered. I have been blessed with good health. A love offering has been given at Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra.

-J. Dias

THANKSGIVING FOR SUITABLE LIFE PARTNER

THANE: I am thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for helping me get a compatible life partner. I have come to the Ashram and made an offering.

-J. Paul

THANKSGIVING FOR A GOOD JOB

VASAI: 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.

-S. P. Patel

THANKSGIVING FOR VISA RECEIVED

VIRAR: I am thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for getting a Visa. With a grateful heart, I have come to the Ashram and made a love offering.

-P. D'Mello

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

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

-E. Pereira

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

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

-P. Lopes

BLESSINGS ON FAMILY

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

-J. P. Foss

THANKSGIVING FOR GETTING PROMOTION

VIRAR: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have been blessed with a promotion. A love offering has been sent to the Ashram.

-D. P. Patel

OUT OF THEIR BOUNTY

P.Srivastava	Mumbai	65,000	G. Xavier	Kerala	3,000	B. Dutt	Kolkata	1,000
Mark/Zenia	Vasai	50,000	A. Kelawalla	Mumbai	3,000	M. Parmar	Gujarat	1,000
J. D'Souza	Mumbai	42,000	S. Condillac	Mumbai	2,500	D. Naidu	Mumbai	1,000
T. D'Souza	Mumbai	35,708	J. Fernando	Mumbai	2,500	S. Waste	Mumbai	1,000
J. Dharajia	UK	27,000	R. Patnaik	Mumbai	2,021	P. D'Lima	Goa	1,000
M. Aranha	Mumbai	25,000	S. Kamath	Karnataka	2,000	R. D'Souza	Mumbai	1,000
L.Jacintha	Tamil Nadu	20,000	E. Sebastian	Kerala	2,000	Rosy	Thane	1,000
W. Rodrigues	Vasai	16,000	A. Elavia	Mumbai	2,000	Sharon	Mumbai	1,000
J. Mathew	Kerala	15,000	L. Pereira	Mumbai	2,000	S. D'Costa	Vasai	1,000
J. Raphel	Palghar	12,000	R. Pereira	Vasai	2,000	Josephine	Mumbai	1,000
S. George	Muscat	11,000	S. Mukherjee	Gurgaon	2,000	A. Fernandes	Mumbai	1,000
D. George	Kerala	10,500	M. Philip	Karnataka	2,000	S. Randive	Mumbai	1,000
Swaroop/Susan	Dubai	10,000	A. Daruwalla	Mumbai	2,000	J. Saldanha	Mumbai	1,000
Mariaraj	Bangalore	10,000	A. Coutinho	Vasai	2,000	A. Santhappan	Tamil Nadu	1,000
K. Saldanha	Mumbai	10,000	V. Salunkhe	Maharashtra	2,000	S. Dam	W. Bengal	1,000
S. Barboza	Mumbai	10,000	R. Francis	Kerala	2,000	Elikutty/Manu	Kerala	1,000
A. Avasara	Vasai	10,000	R. D'Silva	Vasai	2,000	K. Khandagale	Ahmednagar	1,000
O. D'Souza	Mumbai	10,000	P. Ved	Mumbai	2,000	Irudayaraj M.	Tamil Nadu	1,000
M. D'Souza	Mumbai	10,000	D. Remgis	Mumbai	2,000	V. Sophia	Tamil Nadu	1,000
K. Valsamma	Kerala	8,000	I. Lopes	Vasai	2,000	D. Dimney	Canada	1,000
R. Shah-ExSyn Corp	Mumbai	8,000	I. Hendricks	Tamil Nadu	2,000	A. Jadhav	Lakshwadeep	1,000
Z. Bharucha	Vasai	7,000	J. D'Souza	Karnataka	2,000	H. Gupta	Mumbai	1,000
A. Das	Thane	6,501	S. Bist	Delhi	2,000	J. Manuel	Navi Mumbai	1,000
M. Kolhi	Thane	6,000	P. Blaise	Kerala	2,000	E. Christian	Gujarat	1,000
J. Srampickal	Mumbai	6,000	V. Pijwala	Gujarat	2,000	Sajan	Mumbai	1,000
E. D'Sylva	Mumbai	5,600	T. Fernandes	Thane	2,000	R. Tauro	Mumbai	1,000
G. Popat	Mumbai	5,100	Solanki N.	Diu	2,000	M. Joseph	Kerala	1,000
L. Rebello	Mangalore	5,000	S. Babulal	Mumbai	2,000	K. Dave	Mumbai	1,000
M. Alfonso	Goa	5,000	T. Rodrigues	Mumbai	2,000	A. D'Souza	Mumbai	1,000
Subramaniam R.	Mumbai	5,000	V. Nirmal	Gujarat	2,000	A. Rane	Mumbai	1,000
L. D'Cruz	Mumbai	5,000	S. Nadar	Mumbai	2,000	G. Arputharaj	Tamil Nadu	1,000
J. Machado	Mumbai	5,000	D. Alphonso	Mumbai	2,000	Darragh Smail & Co.	Kerala	1,000
J. Ghosh	Mumbai	5,000	S. Carvalho	Mumbai	2,000	S. Dias	Vasai	1,000
J. Puthur	Kerala	5,000	C. Engles	Punjab	2,000	H. Ariwala	Mumbai	1,000
M. Bharucha	Mumbai	5,000	N. Antony	Kerala	2,000	A. Solanki	Mumbai	1,000
R. Pereira	Vasai	5,000	N. Karadekar	Mumbai	2,000	C. Nariman	Mumbai	1,000
N. Pinto	Mumbai	5,000	S. Kurunduwade	Maharashtra	2,000	M. Joseph	Pune	1,000
G. Pereira	Palghar	5,000	N. Manuel	Mumbai	2,000	A. Stephen	Tamil Nadu	1,000
H. Jasani	Mumbai	5,000	N. Ramon	Gujarat	2,000	S. Stephen	Tamil Nadu	1,000
S. Majumdar	Thane	5,000	S. Umarani	Tamil Nadu	2,000	C. Devassy	Kerala	1,000
A. Ghatge/Yash	Maharashtra	5,000	U.Nair	Mumbai	2,000	E. Jose	Kerala	1,000
C. Jones	W. Bengal	5,000	Lakshmi/Mini	Kerala	1,950	S. Sales	Tamil Nadu	1,000
D. Vessaokar	Maharashtra	5,000	V. Jesrani	Thane	1,600	I. Macwana	Mumbai	1,000
P. Pinto	Karnataka	5,000	J. Roche	Tamil Nadu	1,500	R. Sanga	Mumbai	1,000
C. Vinjor	Ahmednagar	5,000	A. Patel	Diu	1,500	Antony M.	Kerala	1,000
P. Pinto	Mumbai	5,000	N. Fernando	Mumbai	1,500	A. Varghese	Delhi	1,000
B. Kotwal	Mumbai	5,000	A. Kuttikadan	Thane	1,500	P. Sastry	Thane	1,000
R. Valentine	Mumbai	4,000	G. Fonseca	Mumbai	1,500	S. Kapadia	Rajasthan	1,000
C. Alvares	Mumbai	4,000	M. Pichairaj	Tamil Nadu	1,500	S. Alexander	Mumbai	1,000
A. Alangaram	Tamil Nadu	3,600	K. Vyas	Navi Mumbai	1,500	D. Patrao	Karnataka	1,000
S. Jhaveri	Mumbai	3,000	R. Joseph	Kerala	1,500	O. Rodrigues	Karnataka	1,000
S. Nadar	Mumbai	3,000	K. Limbaji	Ahmednagar	1,500	A. Donnel	Kerala	1,000
M. Cardoz	Mumbai	3,000	J. Dubash	Mumbai	1,500	D. Fernandes	Pune	1,000
S. Inigo	Tamil Nadu	3,000	T. Simon	Navi Mumbai	1,500	G. Babu	Tamil Nadu	1,000
Jacob	Kerala	3,000	S. Thomas	Kerala	1,200	J. Pinto	Karnataka	1,000
S. Kamath	Karnataka	3,000	R. Johnson	Kerala	1,200	Mary Helen	Kerala	1,000
F. Solanki	Mumbai	3,000	I. Rortveit	Pune	1,200	G. Rajesh	Ahmednagar	1,000
S. Inigo	Tamil Nadu	3,000	D. Singh	Karnataka	1,200	S. Sebastian	Kerala	1,000
J. Fernandes	Mumbai	3,000	M. Peter	Thane	1,200	T. Joseph	Kerala	1,000
K. Thomas	Kerala	3,000	C. Monteiro	Mumbai	1,111	N. Meera	Kerala	1,000
L. Lopes	Vasai	3,000	M. Sheth	Mumbai	1,001	S. Kotal	Mumbai	1,000
U. Bangera	Navi Mumbai	3,000	H. Prasad	Navi Mumbai	1,001	J. Morris	Mumbai	1,000
K. Nadar	Mumbai	3,000	G. Desai	Mumbai	1,001	T. Shetty	Mumbai	1,000
J. D'Souza	Mumbai	3,000	A. Nayak	Mumbai	1,001	D. Raja	USA	501

Bob's Banter

by Robert Clements

Two Thousand Twenty Two hadn't been in the best of moods in last few days of her reign on earth, "I'm not sure I want to go!" she'd said, to no one in particular, but she knew she was being heard by the years past and the years that were going to come in.

"Why not?" asked one of the previous years, "Every Year, serves her time, then rests in history, why not?"

"I somehow feel I wasn't used well by the people!" said Two Thousand and Twenty-Two.

"It's better than what I achieved," said Twenty-One bitterly, "Everybody thought they'd got rid of the dreaded Covid, and bang came the second wave!"

"In fact, mine was even worse!" whispered Twenty-Twenty.

"And you don't think the people learnt that?" asked Twenty-Three curiously.

"Look at them," shouted Twenty-Two angrily, "Look at that Russian bully for instance, as he tries to overpower a weaker nation, do you think he learnt anything?"

The years both lying in history, and those swaddled in the shrouds of the Future nodded, "He certainly learned nothing!" they all whispered.

"But look at India!" said baby Twenty-Three, "You made an Indian become the third biggest billionaire! That's quite an achievement Twenty-Two! You've made a nation proud!"

"Proud?" asked Twenty-Two sadly, "That is exactly why I wish I could remain a few more months on earth!"

"To make him numberone?" laughed baby



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"That's where you both are so wrong!" said Twenty-Two, "When Covid came, the world also came together to fight the dreaded virus, and I rejoiced because I thought the world had learnt what it was to join and fight a common foe!"

"And they did just that!" said Twenty-Twenty and Twenty-Twenty-One together!"

"On top of that I also thought people would realize how precious life was and that whether you were rich or poor, death could strike and drag you to your grave. I really thought people the world over had learnt a lesson that life should be treated with a new attitude.."

"What attitude?" asked baby Two-Thousand and Twenty-Three, suddenly getting interested in the conversation.

"An attitude of living life to the fullest so that even if death struck suddenly, there would be no regrets!" said Twenty-Two.

Twenty-Three, "Well I can do that now that it's my time on earth!"

"No!" whispered Twenty-Two, "To make the people of that nation realise that wealth going into the hands of one person or a hundred is not something to be proud of, but that when the poorest of the poor get three square meals a day, when the country looks at each other as brothers and sisters, and not as 'us and others' then and only then will a nation be great!"

The years wrapped in history shook their heads sadly and whispered, "Let's hope Twenty-Three, you will achieve this and more!"

Twenty-Three gave a nervous giggle, "I'll try," she said, "If the people try with me..!"

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

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS AT FR. AGNEL ASHRAM, BANDRA, MUMBAI



Spreading happiness all around
during Christmas.

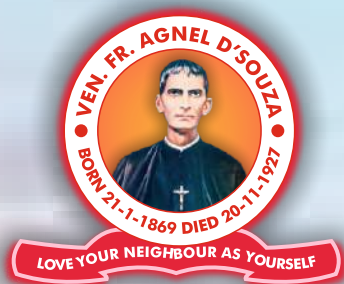
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to all our friends, benefactors & well-wishers

From Fr. Agnel Ashram Community & Balbhavan Children



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