



**FR. AGNEL**

# **ASHRAM NEWS**

**DECEMBER 2024**



*Welcoming the Prince of Peace in our Hearts!*

**CELEBRATING THE JOY OF CHRISTMAS!**

**DECEMBER 2024****CONTENTS**

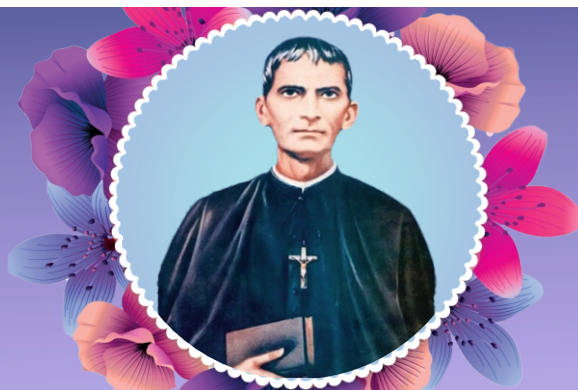
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[website : www.agnelashram.org](http://www.agnelashram.org)**VEN. FR. AGNELO'S 156TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY****Tuesday, 21st January 2025****PROGRAMME****SPECIAL NOVENA SERVICES | 12TH TO 20TH JANUARY 2025****Every day****Morning** : 7.00 a.m. & 9.30 a.m.: Holy Mass and Novena Prayer in English.**Evening** : 6.00 p.m. : Holy Mass and Novena Prayer in English.**N.B.**

On Sunday, 12th and 19th January, all Masses and Novena Services will be held as on normal Sundays.

On Sunday, 12th and 19th January, Novena Services will be in Gujarati at 3.00 p.m.

**21ST JANUARY (TUESDAY) : 156TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF VENERABLE FR. AGNELO****Morning** : Mass followed by Novena Prayers at 7.00 a.m. & 9.30 a.m. (English)**Evening** : A Solemn Concelebrated Mass will be held at 6.00 p.m. (English) in the Ashram Compound, followed by Novena Prayers.**Most Rev. Rethna Swamy, Bishop of Ahmedabad,  
will be the main Celebrant on 21st January 2025.**

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**

P.B. No. 6656, Bandstand, Bandra (West), Mumbai – 400 050, Maharashtra, India.

**Tel.: 022 - 67114000 | Mobile: 091 - 7738009137****Website : [www.agnelashram.org](http://www.agnelashram.org)****Bus No. 211 : Special Bus Service to Ply from Bandra Railway Station to Fr. Agnel Ashram Gate.**

# MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL SUPERIOR



As we enter the four-week season of Advent, an important event on the church calendar, we prepare for the arrival, "advent", of Jesus Christ's Nativity at Christmas and Christ's expected return in the Second Coming.

The poet and theologian, Howard Thurman, wrote the beautiful poem, "I Will Light Candles This Christmas." The poem says:

*I will light Candles this Christmas,  
Candles of joy despite all the sadness,  
Candles of hope where despair keeps watch,  
Candles of courage for fears ever present,  
Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days,  
Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens,  
Candles of love to inspire all my living,  
Candles that will burn all year long.*

This poem reminds me of the ritual of the lighting of the four candles, which represent the four Sundays of the season of Advent, and they symbolize hope, peace, joy, and love, respectively. Mother Teresa once said, "Peace begins with a smile" and a smile can make a big difference to people's lives.

During the final days of Advent, from December 17 to 24, we focus on our preparation for the celebrations of the Nativity of our Lord.

Christmas is a time of togetherness, sharing and caring for our family. People travel thousands of miles from different parts of the world to be with their family on Christmas Day.

On 27th December, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. Let us imbibe their good values in our lives too.

On 3rd December, we celebrated the Feast of St. Francis Xavier, the patron saint of our Society who dedicated his life in the service of the marginalised. It was an inspiring experience witnessing the Exposition during our Priests' Retreat in Goa recently and seeking the blessings of the saint. The Exposition is on until 5th January, 2025.

Last month, on 20th November, we celebrated the 97th Death Anniversary of Ven. Fr. Agnelo D'Souza. Devotees are praying for the beatification and the canonisation process is on.

As 2024 draws to a close, let us thank the Lord for the innumerable blessings received this year. In case we have lost a loved one, let us pray for their souls. Now it is time to look forward to the new year with renewed hope and confidence.

**Wishing each one of you a Blessed Christmas and a New Year full of peace, good health, happiness, success and prosperity.**

**- Fr. Bento Rodrigues**



# CHRISTMAS - THE SEASON OF BIBLICAL JOY

From Creation to Christ! From Genesis to Revelation!

-Leon Bent

The season of Advent is known as one of “Joyful expectation.” The Catholic Church names the third Sunday of Advent as *Gaudete Sunday* or “Joyful Sunday,” as our waiting for the Messiah is nearing its end.

Then, on 25th December we wish each other a “Merry Christmas,” as we share meals, exchange gifts and treasure loved ones at this time of year. Yet, the irony is that for many, the joy of Advent and Christmas is hard to come by. Yes, Christmas can be a time of joy for some, but it can be a time of sadness for others for a variety of reasons. It is not the same for everyone. Where then can joy be found? When we look into the Bible and our faith Tradition, we discover a number of important points about the experience of joy.

But the Catholic imagination ranges well beyond beasts wild and tame, beyond humans, however “sane” (for we all stand in need of the Saviour’s *sanation*: Latin for healing). It breaks through secularity’s stifling “immanent frame” to catch the melody of angelic choirs whose singing glorifies the Lord. So, Luke recounts the angelic apparition to the shepherds announcing the Good News of the Saviour’s birth. Not surprisingly, the angels cannot contain their joy and burst into song: “Glory to God in highest heaven; and on earth peace to men of goodwill” (Lk 2:14), and Isaiah 6:3 sings mellifluously: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of your glory.” No words more magnificent have ever been uttered. Here was the Holy of Holies (Abraham Joshua Heschel, p.115), the six-winged seraphs chanted before His heavenly throne. Psalms inhabit the hills, the air is hallelujah. Hidden harps. Dormant songs!

I am also led to think more meditatively of those “animalia,” of the Stable, the Crib. These simple

creatures mirror the Old Testament’s prophetic hope for the restoration of all creation at the Messiah’s coming. As we heard on the Second

Sunday of Advent, Isaiah foresaw a Messianic age, when the wolf will show hospitality to the lamb, calf and young lion will happily converse, and lion and ox sit down to an amicable supper-fellowship – all emerging unscathed and refreshed and sprightly!

Nor could one imagine for a moment Gabriel travelling all the way to Nazareth only to pronounce greetings, “Hail, full of grace!” Clearly, he sang out, or at the very least chanted, the words, extraordinarily musical, lavish and profuse in the original Greek: “*Chaire, kechairitōmene!*”

(Lk 1:28) And could he, though appearing in a dream, do any less for Joseph? Especially when intoning, with all reverence, the sweet name, “Jesus” (Mt. 1:21). After all, the revelation of the Saviour’s Name is not a mere matter of fact, but a happening of stupendous joy.

All these harmonious voices, of angels, animals, women, and men, conspire together. Each one’s song but a sounding of that *magnum mysterium* (*O Magnum Mysterium* is a text from the Holy Matins of Christmas describing the wonderment of the animals as they gaze on Christ: “O great mystery and wonderful sacrament, that animals should see the newborn Lord, lying in a manger!”), the Gospel for the Fourth Sunday of Advent proclaims. “Emmanuel: God is with us” (Mt. 1:23). The voices harmonize, forming one exultant hymn, both, intimate and intense, scandalously particular and comprehensively Catholic. Its ‘serene tranquility,’ “unadorned, understated beauty” and “quiet radiance,” lift our spirits to receive the Boy Child, Jesus Christ!





In many a parish church, on Christmas Day, an intrepid choir will essay Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus." Often the sopranos will strain to reach the high notes, while basses struggle to plumb the depths. But they will all sing out lustily, knowing that theirs is but the earthly echo of the angelic choir. And that long before Handel imagined aurally the earthly tones, it was already being sung in heaven – in tune, and in perfect melody.

Nor could one imagine for a moment Gabriel travelling all the way to Nazareth only to pronounce prosaically, "Hail, full of grace." Clearly, he sang out (or at the very least chanted) the words, so musical in the original Greek: "*Chaire, kechairitōmene!*" (Lk 1:28). And could he, though appearing in a dream, do any less for Joseph? Especially when intoning, with all reverence, the sweet name, "Jesus" (Mt. 1:21). After all, the revelation of the Savior's Name is not a mere matter of fact, but a happening of stupendous joy – "a Name above every other name" (Phil.2:9).

And what shall we say of that wearisome journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem – eighty-some miles over four anxious days? How did they hasten the time and dispel fear? By singing the psalms undoubtedly. But also, later compositions: Zechariah's lilting "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel who has visited his people to set them free" (Lk. 1:68). And surely Mary hummed her own heartfelt, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour" (Lk 1:46).

Part of the reason why many of us struggle to find joy at Christmas is because we confuse joy with feeling good. In the world of advertising which peaks at times like Christmas, we are encouraged to feel good all the time, and to get whatever it takes to make our lives happier. The truth is that no amount of material things, stimulants, or comforts can compensate for a lack of joy that, resonates in the

depths of their soul. The source of our joy is not in what we have. It lies in the promised Messiah's birth for which the Jews awaited expectantly and on tenterhooks for.

Christianity is a religion of joy. It is truly "glad tidings" for humanity. As Christmas approaches, we may well experience feelings of melancholy or

sadness for many legitimate reasons. But let us also have the courage to rejoice in the Lord – in his presence, in his gift of salvation, in our praise of him, in his ways, in our hope of heaven, and even in his Cross. God is the source of our joy, for he is the God of joy. The true meaning of Christmas is the celebration of God's act of love in becoming human through Jesus Christ. The biblical verse Luke 2:10 says, "Do not be afraid. I bring you Good News that, will cause great joy for all the people."

Every Christmas season we hear "Joy to the World,"

proclaimed in song, while painfully aware of a world in utter turmoil. In a 2012 Sunday Angelus address, late Pope Benedict XVI spoke of the "Woman of Christmas" – the Blessed Virgin Mary – and the experience of joy. He concluded: "In this season of Advent, Mary Immaculate teaches us to listen to the voice of God that, speaks in silence; to welcome His grace, which liberates us from sin and from all egoism; to taste, therefore, true joy." And so, we pray: Mary, Cause of Our Joy, pray for us!



**Leon Bent** frequently contributes Researched Articles to numerous Newsletters, Catholic Magazines and Theological Journals across the Globe, and Digital Online Portals in India and Worldwide, sometimes with a reach of 40 million readers.

# DILEXIT NOS – CHRIST LOVES US!

–Fr. Fio Mascarenhas, SJ

As Christmas approaches, let us look happily at a few points in the recent Encyclical of our dear Pope Francis *“on the human and divine love of the heart of Jesus Christ.”*

Jesus Christ is the most lovable and *loving* King, not of earthly kingdoms, but of billions of hearts. Therefore, Christmas (the Feast of his Nativity) is celebrated with great joy all over the world, from the remotest villages to the grandest of cities. The Pope highlights the importance of the human heart, our own, and especially of Jesus' **Sacred Heart**. Writing appealingly that *“in a time of social upheaval, we need to start speaking once more about the heart,”* he insists that *“In this age of **artificial intelligence**, we cannot forget that love is necessary to save our humanity.”*

First among the words that we use in normal conversation is the word **“heart.”** We speak of having a “heavy heart,” of a “broken heart,” and of undergoing a “change of heart.” We say we are “young at heart,” that someone’s “heart is in the right place,” and we advise people to “follow their heart.” We say our “heart goes out” to those who are suffering – and if others’ don’t, we call them “hard of heart,” and we plead, “Have a heart!”

Francis explains that the heart is necessary for understanding what it is to be human. That we say people have a “heart of gold” shows that **the human heart symbolises what is most essential to each person**. Spiritual practices like recollection and discernment help us learn the language of the heart.

The Pope declares that the heart is “the centre” of our “very selves.” We “find it in our heart to forgive,” and speak of what is in “our heart of hearts.” He invites us prayerfully to reflect on our own hearts – the “deepest” and “least known” part of us – in a world full of noise and distraction.

Openness to others is called being “big-hearted.” If we attune ourselves to our heart in prayer, we will connect to others. There is a peculiar spiritual truth

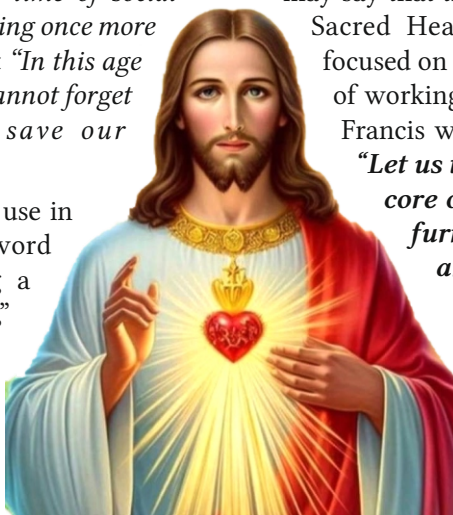
at work here: the “mysterious connection between self-knowledge and openness to others, between the encounter with one’s personal uniqueness and the willingness to give oneself to others.” This sort of self-knowledge is not easy to cultivate today. We are in danger of spiralling into an increasingly individualistic, cold and violent world – “a world that has become heartless.” *Dilexit nos* invites us to step back. “Perhaps the most decisive question we can ask is, **“Do I have a heart?”**”

Those with a sophisticated theological education may say that the pious devotionism of the old Sacred Heart Devotion was shallow, and focused on individual sanctity at the expense of working for a more just world. But Pope Francis writes with a passionate intensity: **“Let us turn to the heart of Christ, that core of his being, which is a blazing furnace of divine and human love and the most sublime fulfilment to which humanity can aspire.”**

He then considers what devotion to the heart of Christ consists of. **“It is not the veneration of a single organ apart from the Person of Jesus, what we contemplate and adore is the whole Jesus Christ... The expressive and symbolic image of Christ’s heart is not the only means granted us by the Holy Spirit for encountering the love of Christ, yet it is ... an especially privileged one.”**

The Pope alerts us to the fact that today we face a new Jansenism, not only “a powerful wave of secularisation” but a distracting busyness inside the Church, “in communities and pastors excessively caught-up in external activities” and “worldly projects.” Against this background, *Dilexit nos* devotes a chapter each to two aspects that a “contemporary devotion to the Sacred Heart needs to combine.”

The first relates to “personal spiritual experience.” He warmly approves of the First Friday devotion as a jolt to our forgetfulness of “the strength of the Eucharist.” Also, the idea that Jesus’ heart suffers from human contempt and ingratitude is given





considerable attention – we are called to “comfort him in the midst of his sufferings” – let “no one make light of the fervent devotion of the holy faithful people of God, which in its popular piety seeks to console Christ.” Beware of those “who claim a more reflective, sophisticated and mature faith.”

The other aspect: “The blazing furnace of Christ’s heart sets aflame our own hearts with missionary zeal. The practice of reparation is connected to **cultivating fraternity and solidarity with others.**” He revisits the notion of “social sin,” explaining that a heartless world is socially structured (through its forms of “production and consumption”) in ways which “make it more difficult to offer the gift of oneself” to others.” Pious devotion and service to the poor and work is not an either/or; the first leads to the second!

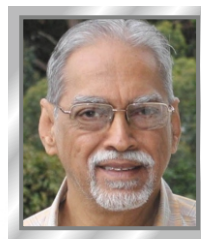
Pope Francis then offers a brief conclusion in which he makes the case for the devotion’s continued relevance. *“Christ’s love can give a heart to our world and revive love wherever we think that the ability to love has been definitively lost.”* The Church itself needs this love, “lest the love of Christ be replaced with outdated structures and concerns, excessive attachment to our own ideas and opinions, and fanaticism in any number of forms.”

In this encyclical we glimpse something of Francis’ heart, behind and beyond all the noise and polemics

of our fractured Church and our increasingly heartless world. It is reminiscent of Francis’ first major document, the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. It leaves the heavy issues of contemporary Catholic life to one side. Jansenism is discussed without linking it to traditionalist “rigidity.”

Devotion to the Sacred Heart rapidly grew in popularity because in its emotional intensity it challenged the arid and threatening Jansenism of Counter-Reformation France. Today we face a new Jansenism, Francis warns, not only “a powerful wave of secularisation” but a distracting busyness inside the Church, “in communities and pastors excessively caught-up in external activities” and “worldly projects.” So in this 4th Encyclical, our 88 years old holy and wise Pope Francis commends the vast evangelistic potential of popular piety.

**Happy Christmas! Sacred Heart of Jesus our new-born King, set our hearts on fire with love for you, for your Body the Church, and for all of humanity!**



*Fr. Fio Mascarenhas, SJ, DMin recently celebrated his Diamond Jubilee in the Society of Jesus, and writes and teaches biblical spirituality. His 27th book, **PILGRIMS OF HOPE**, has just been published. His contact: [frfiomas@gmail.com](mailto:frfiomas@gmail.com)*

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# JESUS, THE FIRST-BORN OF CREATION

- Norma Kamath

In Biblical tradition, all children received an equal share of the inheritance, but the first-born received a double portion. Scripture speaks of the blessing of the first-born as a birthright blessing. The first-born could sell his rights as Esau did to Jacob (Gen. 25:29-34). In taking this position of first-born lightly, he sinned against God and his family, incurring the displeasure of God (Heb 12:15). We see this when Catholics make compromises, join other denominations or/and give up their faith. The rights of the first-born could be lost, as Jacob denied Reuben the blessing of the first-born, because of sin (Gen 49:3-4).

## JESUS, THE FIRST-BORN

The first mention of the first-born in the New Testament is in Lk. 2:1-7, when Joseph went with Mary his betrothed who was with child to Bethlehem, Judea, the city of David to be enrolled. It is here that Mary gave birth to her first-born, wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the inn."

"Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body the church; He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything He might be pre-eminent" (Col 1:15-18). When God brings the first-born into the world, he says, "Let all the angels worship him" (Heb 1:5).

## ISRAEL, THE FIRST-BORN IN CHRIST

The nation of Israel was identified as God's first-born in the Holy Bible. It had a special place of privilege and blessing among the nations as first-born (Jer 31:9). God's choice of first-born goes back to Abraham, "I will make of you a great nation, and by you all of the families of the earth shall bless themselves" (Gen 12:13). God called Israel to be holy, set apart, to worship and serve him, and through them, all the nations would come to Him (Gen 12:13).

Israel lost all the privileges of the first-born due to

the sin of unbelief and false worship of idols. When God sent his only-begotten son Jesus, the promised, and much awaited Messiah to Israel, they rejected Him as their Saviour and King, and crucified Him. Therefore God rejected them as the People of God, the first-born. Paul says in Rom 11:11, that through their trespass, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

## THE PEOPLE OF GOD - THE NEW ISRAEL

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet: 9).

The Roman Catholic Church, with its office in the Vatican, built on the foundation of the twelve Apostles and the prophets, with the Pope, the successor of St. Peter, as the head, occupies this privileged position among the nations.

Through faith in Jesus, our Baptism and the working of the Holy Spirit, we become children of God, the first-born

in Christ, and Jesus becomes the first-born among many brethren, making us fellow-heirs with him to the priceless heritage of our Father in Heaven. We can call our Father, Abba and Jesus our brother (Rom 8: 15-17, 29).

We are the People of God, the New Israel, heir to the promises of God in the Old Testament.

## PRIVILEGES OF THE FIRST-BORN IN CHRIST

- 1) In Jesus the first-born, we are called to conform to His image, and in Him, we are called, justified and glorified (Rom 8:29; Eph 1:3-4).
- 2) As first-born in Christ, we are reconciled to God, and to one another, through the Blood that Jesus shed on the Cross for our salvation, bringing us His Peace (Col 1: 15; Eph 1:7-10; Eph 2:13-22)
- 3) As first-born in Christ, we can seek repentance through the power of His Cross and receive salvation (Jer 31:9; Zech 12:10).
- 4) Jesus is the first-born from the dead. In Him we can claim deliverance and the healing of our bodies, through the power of the Resurrection and the Lordship of Jesus (Col 1: 18-19; Rom 10: 9-10; Rev 20:6; Rom 8:11).





## MY EXPERIENCE OF DELIVERANCE AS THE FIRST-BORN IN CHRIST

After a severe fall and operation, I was confined to a wheelchair for several months. For the first three months, I had an efficient caregiver, but the next fell short. I found it difficult to accept her ways, and I became impatient, and negative. I kept justifying my behaviour, as I was paying her a high salary, and had to get value. I found it difficult to focus on prayer, but followed the online adoration.

Through God's mercy, the word from Exod 4:4 that God commanded Moses to say to Pharaoh, touched me. "Israel is my first-born son, let my people go, that they may serve me." I started to claim this word, as first-born, repeatedly during my time of personal prayer, and I heard the Lord say, "Why do you persecute me?" I was blinded, but now saw my sin in God's light, and connected it with St. Paul persecuting the Christians. It brought about a conversion of heart and mind.

Soon after I felt a great urge to write, and started writing for Christian magazines. It brought to my mind a prophecy of Fr. George from the R.R.C.

whom I went to for counselling years ago, who told me the Lord would call me to write.

As the church invites us to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ at Christmas, let us come with gratitude to Jesus, for all the privileges we have received as first-born in Christ, not forgetting our responsibilities as first-born to serve, and to share the good news of salvation to our non Christian brethren, so God's plan will be worked in us, and through us, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

**Christmas-eve 2024, will be an added blessing as the Pope opens the Holy Door of St. Peters Basilica in the Vatican, inaugurating and declaring open the Jubilee Year of 2025, the Year of Hope for the whole Church.**



***Norma Kamath** lives in Bangalore. She experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in 1983 and was called to serve in the intercessory, counselling and healing ministry.*



## There is no Joy Greater than the Joy of GIVING

### **Darragh Smail Logistics, Kochi**

I have made a monthly contribution of Rs.1000 through NEFT towards the various charitable activities of Fr. Agnel Ashram and maintenance of Balbhavan boys.

### **Melini Joseph D'Souza, Dadar, Mumbai**

I have made a contribution of Rs.10,000 through NEFT towards the education and healthcare of the Balbhavan boys.

### **Anthony Rodrigues, Jogeshwari, Mumbai**

I am pleased to offer a humble amount Rs.5000 through UPI for the welfare of the Balbhavan children at Fr. Agnel Ashram.

### **Heather Hyrapiet, Kolkata**

As a token of thanksgiving for various favours received through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have donated an amount of Rs. 2000 through UPI for the welfare of Balbhavan and Fr. Agnel Ashram.

### **Vinod Shah, Mumbai**

We are pleased to donate herewith an amount of Rs. 20,000 towards the maintenance and care of the Balbhavan children of Fr. Agnel Ashram.

### **Denise Marie D'Souza, Mahim, Mumbai**

I am contributing an amount of Rs.15,000 through cheque towards daily charitable services by Fr. Agnel Ashram and fulfilling the daily needs of the Balbhavan boys.

### **Shailesh Ishwarlal Mistry, Borivali, Mumbai**

I am happy to donate an amount of Rs. 2000 through cheque as a thanksgiving to Fr. Agnel Ashram.

### **Catherine Alves, Santacruz, Mumbai**

I have made a contribution of Rs. 10,000 by cheque for the maintenance and well-being of Balbhavan boys. Fr. Agnel Ashram is doing yeoman service by seeing to their education, food and other daily needs.

# THE STAR IN MY HEART

-Ninette D'Souza

During World War II, a certain Christian gentleman wanted to communicate to the soldiers at a base camp, the message of God's great love for them. According to army regulations, he was not to 'proclaim religion' at the camp. But he was strongly determined to carry out his mission, so he devised a unique way of doing it. He bought several thousand hand mirrors and had them delivered to the soldiers through the army Chaplains. On the back of each mirror, he had printed from the gospel of John: "For God so loved the world He gave His Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not die, but have eternal life." Below the text he inscribed, "If you wish to see whom God loves, turn to the other side."

The season of Advent feels like the right time to reflect on: a) the mystery of God's love as embodied in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, b) the mystery of the goodness and largesse of God, in embracing our humanity, so that He can be present in us, as He was in a human way in His Son, Jesus, c) the mystery of God using us, as effective instruments of His saving mission in the world today, by letting Himself take flesh in us, d) the mystery that, believing that, through His birth, Jesus Christ has made an impact on our planet for the better, e) ... the list is endless.

*Into a world oppressed and torn, of boundless hate and forces wild,*

*Where men were hungry, lost, forlorn, God sent a child.*

*Into a world maimed and dead, of nation each with selfish plan,*

*Where men were leaderless or misled, God sent a man.*

*And when an age has lost its way, and power is valued more than men,*

*In lives where He has voice and sway, GOD WILL COME AGAIN.*

-John Morrison

Truly one tiny child, one gigantic revolution for humankind!!



Advent offers us the chance to do a little meaningful introspection and contemplation on the events, the atmosphere and the people involved in the circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth. It allows us to grow in our enthusiasm for, Jesus Himself, in our eagerness to not just know about Him, but to know Him better, with a knowledge that springs forth from love, and leads to love, so

that we are able to follow Him more closely.

In the year preceding my retirement at Canossa High School, Mahim, I had asked the students of my Religion Class of standard X to maintain a notebook wherein they were to record their personal experiences of the different activities conducted. One of the projects was to ponder upon and answer some hard-hitting questions so relevant today. e.g. Should Abortion and same sex marriages be made legal? What is the validity of Live-in relationships and Inter Faith marriages? amongst others. Another was to reflect and bring out the aspect of Mercy that they saw predominantly in a person.



I had carried the books home to peruse at leisure during the Diwali vacations, with the intention of trying to get to know the mindset of these young adults, the NOW of our Church, soon to take on the big bad world. While many different examples of Mercy came forth, ranging from Saints of yore to present day social activists, one of the students stood out, for this is what she wrote. "A few people came to mind including St. Teresa. Then it occurred to me that I had second-hand knowledge of these people and did not know what they were really like, except what I had heard and read about them which was how others saw them.

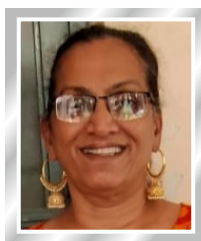
The person who was a missionary and a symbol of mercy and a good one too was my own Mother. My mom had made it her life's mission to be a housewife and a mother to me and my family. My mom has never been selfish and never put herself first before her family. I have never been starved or been without her endless love. Like other famous missionaries who served the world, my mother too needed a lot of courage. She could have continued at her job, drawing a handsome salary and she could have easily gone off to kitty parties but she didn't. She made the supreme sacrifice of thinking about me before thinking about herself. I am very lucky to have a 'Missionary Mother', my very own 'Angel of Mercy' as if to say."

When I read this reflection, I was immediately reminded of the instinctive feeling of nurturing that arose in Mary, making her rush to her aged cousin's aid, sharing in her pregnancy with care and concern, rather than basking in her own glory. All of us face a struggle most of the time in understanding God's will for us, and even if we do, balk at accepting it unconditionally.

And then ADVENT comes along, providing us with a reason to meditate on someone like Mary, to whom God communicated His desire that she become the Mother of our Saviour. This season offers us the opportunity to ask our Blessed Mother to intercede for us, that like her, we too may experience deep; abiding FAITH and TRUST in God.

Till a while back, I had often wondered why God chose a life of poverty for His Son. Archbishop Oscar Romero opened my eyes when he stated: "We must not see the child Jesus only in the pretty figures in our Christmas cribs and children's plays. We must seek Him in the undernourished who have gone to bed tonight without eating."

Now I believe at Advent, I am called to pray for a heart that reaches out in sensitivity, to the least of my brothers and sisters. While I work hard to secure my own fragile life and the lives of my family members, I must be open to understand the challenges that the less fortunate face, and the fortitude they need to stay faithful to Christ, within the messy reality of their lives. I also believe that this season grants me the grace and courage to follow, "The Star" – the Star being the inner light in me till I find Christ. Because when I find Christ, the crib in my heart will be complete, and voila, it's going to be Christmas every day in my life.



*Ninette D'Souza is a prolific writer and retired teacher of Math and Science at Canossa High School, Mahim. She is also the author of Lamplighter and Lamplighter 2.0.*

## READER'S FEEDBACK

We have increased the number of pages of *Fr. Agnel Ashram News*, from 20 to 28, to bring you more interesting articles. We would love to hear from you. Share your views at **[agnelashramnews@gmail.com](mailto:agnelashramnews@gmail.com)**

**This magazine is available online.**

**Visit us at [www.agnelashram.org](http://www.agnelashram.org)**

# AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Bandra

## Fr. CRCE wins Technovate 2.0 Open Hackathon 2024

Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues College of Engineering, Bandra, Mumbai, is known for their prowess in winning Hackathons across India. This time, they have won the **Technovate 2.0** 24-hour Hackathon held on 9th and 10th November 2024 at Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan's Sardar Patel Institute of Technology, Andheri, Mumbai. It was organised by **Rotaract District Organisation, R.I.D. 3141**.

In response to the food problem solving statement, the winning team built a website with a food waste tracker and two apps with surplus food distribution platform. Features included Voice Engine + OCR, Real-Time Fridge Monitoring and Tracking, AI Recipe Chef, AI Chatbot, among others.

The amazing team included **Aryan Kyatham** building the webapp, **Janice D'Cruz** and **Sharvin Gavad** with AR/VR skills, **Soham Parab** handling the mobile application and **Zane Falcao** with ML algorithms expertise.



**The winners (left) make a happy picture with the organisers and judges.**



**The winning team.**



## **Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School & Jr. College, Vashi, secures 5th place in National Finals of Aqua Regia - The School Quiz**

Dev Iyer and Rugved Gadikar, both students of Std. X of Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School & Jr. College, Vashi, secured the fifth position in the finals of Aqua Regia - The School Quiz, the ultimate All-India Inter-School Quiz Challenge, organised and conducted by Triumphant Institute of Management Education (T.I.M.E.) on 12th November 2024.

They reached the Finals after winning the Zonal and Regional levels of the quiz held on 23rd October 2024.

The quiz was open to students of Std. VIII, IX and X across all boards and it consisted of five rounds. The final round was the National Quiz.



**The winners of the Zonal and Regional levels of Aqua Regia  
who secured the fifth place in the National Finals.**

## **Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School & Jr. College, Vashi, participates in art exhibition 'Bal Disha'**

Nehru Centre, Mumbai, celebrated Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru's birth anniversary from 12th to 18th November 2024 with an Art Exhibition titled 'Bal Disha' at their Art Gallery in the Discovery of India building, Worli.

Paintings of 16 child artists were on display. Avnish Gavas, a student of Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School & Jr. College, Vashi, was one among the selected artists for this exhibition.



**Child artist Avnish Gavas with his paintings.**

# AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Assagao, Goa

## AITD organizes cultural event 'NEXUS 2024'

The much-anticipated Nexus 2024, organized by the Department of Management Studies at Agnel Institute of Technology and Design (AITD), Assagao, commenced on 15th November 2024, with an impressive turnout of students from nine colleges across Goa.

The event was coordinated by Faculty Event Coordinator Mrs. Supriyanka Govekar and the staff of MBA department. The Chief Guest for the occasion, Mr. Mandar A. Acharya, Associate Vice President of the Sales Department at Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company Limited, addressed the gathering with valuable insights on the sales domain, inspiring the audience with his expertise.

The day unfolded with a range of thrilling events such as Neptune's Helm, Riptide Strategy, Harbour Haven, Tidal Circuit, Aqua Stride Marine Minds. These events were conducted across the MBA classrooms, elective classrooms, Futsal ground, and the multipurpose hall. Participants showcased their talents in areas like critical thinking, problem-solving, analysis, and presentation, as they competed under the keen evaluation of distinguished judges.

In a fiercely contested competition, Sridora Caculo College of Commerce and Management Studies emerged as the champions, clinching the first prize followed by Rosary College of Commerce and Arts who secured the second place.



**Sridora Caculo College of Commerce and Management Studies, Goa, were the winners of Nexus 2024.**



**An impressive turnout of students from nine colleges in Goa with the officials of Nexus 2024.**



# WHO CAN BE THE TRUE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST?

- Ibonio D'Souza

Jesus recognised no religion outside conduct; and truly there is none. Pure Goodness is Religion, and outside it there is no religion.

There are innumerable doctrines and there is much strife and heated controversy, but a man is only truly religious when he succeeds in rising above these and reaches that loving place in his heart where all hateful distinctions are burnt away by the pure flames of compassion and love.

Jesus stands in this divine place and calls us all there to receive rest and peace. However, though it is great to believe that Jesus was meek, humble, loving, compassionate, and pure, it is equally essential for us to seek, as also follow, these very virtues in our own lives.

That Jesus subordinated his own will to the will of the Father, is inspiring to know, but it is not sufficient; it is necessary that we too, must likewise subordinate our wills to that of the over-ruling Good.

The grace and beauty and goodness that were in Jesus can be of no value to you, cannot be understood by you, unless they are also in you, and they can never be in you until you practice them, for apart from doing, the qualities which constitute Goodness do not, as far you are concerned, exist.

To adore Jesus for his divine qualities is a long step towards Truth, but to practice those qualities is Truth itself; and he who truly adores the perfection of another will not rest content in his own imperfection, but will fashion his soul after the likeness of that other.

No sufficiency, no blessedness, no peace can be derived from the goodness of another, not even the goodness of God; not until the goodness is done by us, not until it is, by constant effort, incorporated into our being, can we know and possess its blessedness and peace. Therefore, we who adore Jesus for his divine qualities, must practice those qualities ourselves, and then we too, shall be divine.

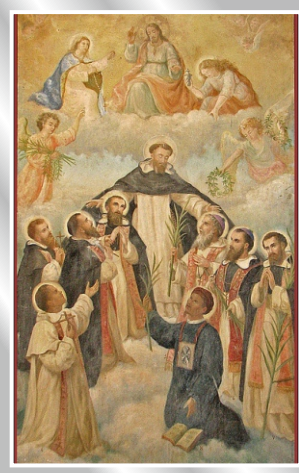
The teaching of Jesus brings men back to the simple

truth that righteousness, or right-doing, is entirely a matter of individual conduct, and not a mystical something apart from a man's thoughts and actions, and that each must be righteous for himself; each must be the doer of the word, and it is a man's own doing that brings him peace and gladness of heart, not the doing of another.

Millions of people worship Jesus and call him Lord, but Jesus does not leave us in any difficulty or doubt as to who are his disciples, as to who have entered into life. His words are directness and simplicity itself, "Not every one who says unto me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but the only one who does the will of my Father who is in Heaven." And again, "why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" And they are the doers

of Father's Will who shape their conduct to the divine precepts.

The doer of the word demonstrates and proves its truth in his own mind and life. He thus knows the Eternal Rock as a substantial reality within himself, and he builds there on the Temple of Righteousness which no rains of grief, no winds of temptation, and no floods of sin can destroy or undermine. It is only the doer of forgiveness who tastes the sweets of forgiveness; it is only he who practices love and mercy and righteousness who receives into his heart the overflowing measure of their blessedness; and none but he who dwells in peace toward all can know the boundless and immeasurable peace. Thus is the doer of the word, the disciple indeed, and continuing in that word, becoming one with it in heart and mind, he knows the truth which frees the soul from the bondage of sin.



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

# RUDOLPH, THE RED-NOSED REINDEER

- Jubel D'Cruz

Once upon a time, in a place we all know and love, lived a little reindeer named Rudolph. He was very special, as he had a very attractive and shiny red-coloured nose.

This nose attracted attention from all over the North Pole - elves, snowmen, penguins (vacationing from the South Pole), and even the relatives of Mrs. Claus would flock to see it. The elves would all gasp at the sight, saying, "Oh, what a nose! It's very shiny!"

One day, a group of penguins were waddling past Santa's workshop. Santa was tinkering away at a new toy invention, trying to curb the current elf enthusiasm for platinum. His new invention was a bicycle that trailed with fog. The faster a child could pedal, the more fog the bicycle created. Santa looked up from his workbench, as he heard a group of penguins saying:

*"And if you ever saw him...", said one.*

*"You would even say it glows!" said another.*

*"Like a light bulb?" asked the last.*

*"Like a light bulb!" replied the first two.*

Now, Rudolph did not particularly like all the immediate attention he was getting for his nose. Elves and snowmen would stare at him as he passed by.

Penguins dressed in Hawaiian shirts would snap pictures, and Mrs. Claus' relatives would force him to try their baked goodies. Worst of all, all of the other reindeer laughed and called him names like Pinocchio! But they never let poor Rudolph join in any of the reindeer games.

Now, it is important to add that reindeer games were and still are the most fun of any games in the entire world. Reindeer can play monopoly, tag, freeze tag, toilet tag, bump tag, ball tag, soccer and hide and seek, among others. What makes their games so fun is that they can fly so high into the sky that they are literally dancing on clouds. This means that a reindeer can use his or her 'Get out of jail free' card at an altitude of 40,000 feet.

Whenever Rudolph would come around with his shiny red-coloured nose, all the other reindeer would sigh and whisper, "Oh, here comes, Pinocchio!" and "It looks even brighter and redder and uglier today!"

Then, when Rudolph asked them if he could join in any of their games, the reindeer, usually Prancer or Vixen, would say, "Sorry Pinocc, I mean, Rudolph... We are playing hide and seek again today. And with your nose... well, I just don't think that's possible."

Rudolph, of course, understood why he couldn't play hide and seek with them. His nose was far too bright to do any hiding or seeking.

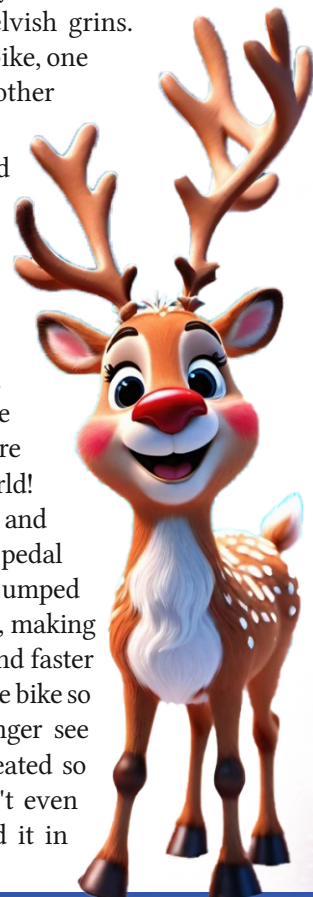
Before he left, however, he saw Blitzen with the monopoly board and soccer ball. That's when he realised that he was being lied to.

He ran to his dear mother and sobbed. "Oh, mom! They just don't want me to play with them. I am no fun for them. I am no fun for anyone. I wish I never had this stupid red-coloured nose!"

Meanwhile, back at Santa's workshop, a couple of elves were finishing up some last minute touches on Santa's new fog-bike when they noticed the instructions sitting on Santa's beloved workbench. As they read them over, they realised what the fog-bike could actually do. They looked at each other and grinned their elvish grins.

Then, they hopped on the bike, one pedalling on the left, the other on the right.

Again, it is important to add that when elves set their minds on things, they really follow through. So, when they realised that the faster the bike pedalled, the more fog was made. So, they decided to make enough fog to fill the entire North Pole... and the world! They pedalled and pedalled and pedalled! One on the left pedal and one on the right! They jumped up and down on the pedals, making Santa's fog-bike go faster and faster and faster! They pedalled the bike so fast that you could no longer see them because they had created so much fog that you couldn't even see your hand if you held it in front of your face.





Santa woke up from his regular nap and set to getting dressed in his official Christmas suit - red pants, coat, hat and black boots. He brushed out his white beard and with the help of Mrs. Claus, combed down his white head of hair. Excited for the evening ahead, Santa stepped out into the Christmas Eve night. As he walked outside, he realised that he couldn't see his sleigh and his reindeer.

He whistled to all his reindeer. "Where are you all?"

"Here we are," they all replied in a chorus.

As they tried to take off, none of the reindeer could see where they were going!

"Oh, dear! We will crash into houses at this point," shouted Santa.

Just then, he could hear the group of penguins talking.

"My pictures aren't turning out in this weather!" shouted the first one.

"Ours too!" said the other two.

Then, Santa remembered the penguins' conversation about the little reindeer with the red nose. Santa called out loudly, "Rudolph! Rudolph!"

In the distance flickered a bright red light, brighter than anything you've ever seen. "Yes, Santa?" spoke Rudolph shyly.

The elves, the snowmen, the penguins, Mrs. Claus' relatives, Mrs. Claus, and the reindeer gasped in delight. Santa smiled and said, "Rudolph, with your nose so bright, won't you guide my sleigh tonight?"

Rudolph was placed at the head of the sleigh. He was filled with happiness. His nose was important. He was important. He began to laugh and grow even happier as the reindeer behind him began to cheer. They lifted up high into the sky with the brightness and redness from Rudolph's nose guiding them on their way.

"Ho, Ho, Ho!" Santa exclaimed.

"Yipee!" cheered the reindeer.

When they returned home after a great Christmas

Eve of delivering presents, all the reindeer began to open their own presents given to them by Santa. In Rudolph's present was his very own monopoly game. It was signed, "Love, Santa... and the reindeer." He now knew that all those at the North Pole accepted him.

Every day Rudolph played with the other reindeer, feeling their love since he could guide their way through hide and seek if it ever got stormy or, if the elves ever got hold of Santa's newly made fog-bike.

Because of his beautiful shiny red-coloured nose, all the reindeer loved him as they shouted out with glee, "Rudolph, with your nose so bright, you'll go down in history!"

And every Christmas Eve, Santa would call out to his reindeer. Did you know that according to the song, "Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer," Santa Claus had twelve reindeer? Sure, in the introduction itself it goes, "There's Dasher and Dancer and Prancer and Vixen, Comet and Cupid and Donner and Blitzen..." That makes eight reindeer. Then, there's Rudolph, of course. So, that makes it nine. Then, there's Olive. "Olive, the other reindeer used to laugh and call him names..." That makes it ten. The eleventh reindeer is Howe. "Then Howe, the reindeer loved him..." That makes it eleven. Oh, and number 12? That's Andy! "Andy shouted out with glee." The proof is in the song! And every time they took off, the elves and snowmen would shout out with glee. Mrs. Claus' relatives would eat cookies, and the penguins would snap their pictures.



*Jubel D'Cruz is a freelance writer and the author of several books for children. He lives in Mumbai.*

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## SYNOD ON SYNODALITY IS OVER, BUT THERE IS A CALL FOR YOU AND ME!

- M.K. George, S.J.

One of the most consultative processes in Church history, from 2021-2024, the Synod on Synodality concluded on 26th October 2024 with Pope Francis signing the final document. Was it a success?

In a world where even beating up of one's mother draws different opinions, it is anyone's guess. While many sound happy, there are at least those who expected concrete decisions on female deacons, approach to LGBTQ community and other matters feeling let down. But overall, the mood is of hope, that a new Church of Communion, Participation and Mission will emerge; that, Synodality will be a 'constitutive dimension of the Church'; that "Synodality will be a path of spiritual renewal and structural reform that enables the Church to be more participatory and missionary, so that it can walk with every man and woman, radiating the light of Christ."

### The call to Conversion

Perhaps the most fundamental message of the Synod is a call to conversion: Spiritual, relational, procedural, institutional and Missionary. In fact, the synod asserted that conversion is central to the whole synodal process, involving a change of heart, a change of mentality, a change in the way we live and act as followers of Jesus Christ in the Church and in the world.

### Structural Reforms/De-centralization

The call to strengthen pastoral councils at Parish and Diocesan levels stands out. While the document does acknowledge that in 'a synodal church, the authority of the bishop, of the episcopal college, and of the bishop of Rome in regard to decision-making is inviolable, it adds that, 'such an exercise of authority, however, is not without limits.'

Perhaps, a very promising step is the call to transparency and accountability: "Transparency and accountability should not only be invoked when it comes to sexual, financial and other forms of abuse. These practices also concern the lifestyle of pastors, pastoral planning, methods of evangelization, and the way in which the Church respects human dignity, for example, in regard to the working conditions within its institutions" (paragraph 98 of the final document).

Pope Francis had said: "Clericalism is a whip, it is a scourge, it is a form of worldliness that defiles and damages the face of the Lord's bride [the church]. It enslaves God's holy and faithful people." The

document envisages a Church without clericalism.

### Lay participation

The Synod document calls for an increased presence of lay people in synodal assemblies and all phases of ecclesiastical decision making. The document also proposes new procedures for selecting and evaluating bishops and expanded lay participation in diocesan leadership and canonical processes.

The Synod members also called for the creation of a new study group to evaluate the link between "liturgy and Synodality" in order "to adopt celebratory styles that make visible the face of a synodal Church." This group could also consider the topic of lay people preaching within liturgical celebrations (paragraph 27).

### Women's leadership

While the question of female deacons remains open to further "discernment," it says that the "pain and suffering" of women was a recurring theme at the Synod. The document calls for more inclusive language in "preaching, teaching, catechesis and drafting of official Church documents," as well as greater acknowledgement of women saints, theologians, and mystics.

The document calls for a "full implementation" of "opportunities regarding the role of women," and says that there are "no reasons to prevent women from taking on leadership roles in the Church."

### The call for you and me

To study this document, to be converted, to practice Synodality, in the family and wherever we are, and to make real the decisions and recommendations of the Synod remain a mandate for each one of us.

God's grace, Pope Francis said, "whispers words of love into the heart of each person." It is up to the Church to "amplify the voice of this whisper, without hindering it; by opening doors instead of erecting walls."

*Isn't that a call for everyone?*



*Fr. M.K. George, formerly Principal of Loyola College of Social Sciences, Trivandrum, is currently General Counsellor to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus in Rome. He can be contacted at [gmutholil@gmail.com](mailto:gmutholil@gmail.com)*



## KING SAUL: A TRAGIC TALE OF ISRAEL'S FIRST MONARCH

- Fr. Trevor D'Souza, OFM (Franciscan)

### Early Life and Anointment

King Saul, whose name in Hebrew means "the one asked for" or "the one asking," was a significant figure in the Bible, embodying both promise and tragedy. Born in the 11th century BC to a wealthy farmer from the tribe of Benjamin, Saul's life changed dramatically when he encountered Samuel. At around 30 years old, while grazing his father's donkeys, he had a chance meeting with Samuel, who, under divine instruction, anointed Saul as prince (1 Samuel 9:16). Saul, initially shocked, was reassured by Samuel, "the spirit of the Lord will come mightily upon you and you shall be turned into another man" (1 Samuel 10). This transformation marked the beginning of Saul's rise to power.

### Reign and Military Exploits

Saul's reign began promisingly as he took control, organized the tribal militia, and achieved early victories against the Ammonites, which solidified his position as king (1 Samuel 11). However, his rule was fraught with struggles, particularly against the Philistines. The Philistines, armed with iron weapons, presented a significant challenge to Israel's bronze-armed forces. Saul's impulsive nature led him to make critical errors, such as offering a sacrifice without waiting for Samuel, which brought a prophecy of the end of his kingship (1 Samuel 13:12-14).

### Conflict and Disobedience

Saul's reign was marked by constant conflict with Samuel, the prophet and priest. In a crucial battle against the Amalekites, Saul failed to fully obey God's command to destroy all possessions of the enemy, leading to his final rejection by God (1 Samuel 15:22-23). The spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit began to torment him (1 Samuel 16:14). This rejection and the subsequent divine abandonment pushed Saul into a state of depression and paranoia.

### Relationship with David

A pivotal aspect of Saul's story is his relationship with David, who was secretly anointed as his successor by Samuel. Initially, David served Saul loyally, even soothing him with music (1 Samuel 16:14-23). After David's victory over Goliath, he

was appointed as the commander of the army, but his growing popularity sparked Saul's jealousy (1 Samuel 18:6-9). Saul's admiration for David quickly turned into fear and paranoia, leading to multiple attempts on David's life, all thwarted by divine intervention. This tension was exacerbated by the close friendship between David and Jonathan, Saul's son, which further strained Saul's mental state.

### Decline and Tragic End

Saul's decline was marked by his obsessive pursuit of David, which consumed much of his strength and focus. In his final battle against the Philistines, Saul sought God's guidance but received no answer (1 Samuel 28:6). Desperate, he turned to a

medium and confronted the spirit of Samuel, who foretold his impending death and Israel's defeat. In the ensuing battle, Saul witnessed the death of his sons, including Jonathan, and ultimately took his own life by falling on his sword (1 Samuel 31:1-6). Saul's reign, which lasted about 20 years, ended in tragedy and despair, epitomized by 1 Samuel 14:47-48: "He fought against all his enemies on every side... he did valiantly... delivered Israel out of the hands of those who plundered them."

### Relevance of Saul's Character in the Bible

King Saul's life serves as a powerful narrative of potential and tragedy. His story highlights the dangers of pride, jealousy, and disobedience to divine directives. Saul's rise and fall provide a cautionary tale about the importance of humility and adherence to God's commands. Furthermore, his complex relationship with David underscores themes of loyalty, betrayal, and the shifting nature of divine favour.

### Conclusion

Saul's legacy is mixed. While he unified Israel and achieved military successes, his failures overshadowed his accomplishments. His story sets the stage for David's rise, illustrating the contrast between a king chosen by human preference and one chosen for his heart after God (1 Samuel 13:14).

**Resources:** *Dictionary of the Bible; Reader's Digest, Who's Who in the Bible; Internet sources and AI Tools.*



## BIBLE QUIZ ON KING SAUL

1. To which tribe did King Saul belong?

- a) Judah
- b) Benjamin
- c) Ephraim
- d) Levi

2. Who anointed Saul as the king of Israel?

- a) Samuel
- b) David
- c) Solomon
- d) Joshua

3. Why did the people desire a king like the other nations?

- a) To have a strong military leader
- b) To be more powerful
- c) To judge them
- d) All of the above

4. What was Saul's reaction on being anointed king?

- a) He was overjoyed
- b) He was confused
- c) He hid among the baggage
- d) He declared a feast

5. What event led to God rejecting Saul as king?

- a) Saul's disobedience in the battle against the Amalekites
- b) Saul's failure to build the temple
- c) Saul's refusal to anoint David
- d) Saul's alliance with the Philistines

6. What was Saul's reaction to David's popularity?

- a) He rejoiced
- b) He was jealous
- c) He offered David a position in his army
- d) He planned to make David his successor

7. How did Saul try to kill David?

- a) By sending him to battle
- b) By throwing a spear at him
- c) By poisoning him
- d) By ordering his army to attack David

8. Why did Saul consult the witch of Endor?

- a) To inquire about the outcome of a battle
- b) To seek advice on governance
- c) To summon the spirit of Samuel
- d) To interpret a dream

9. What tragic event marked the end of Saul's life?

- a) His defeat in battle against the Philistines
- b) His assassination by David
- c) His suicide on Mount Gilboa
- d) His exile to Babylon

10. Who was anointed king after Saul?

- a) Jonathan
- b) Ish-bosheth

c) Solomon

d) David

11. How did Saul die?

- a) He was killed by David
- b) He was struck by lightning
- c) He fell on his own sword
- d) He was trampled by horses

12. What was Saul's occupation before becoming king?

- a) Herdsman
- b) Farmer
- c) Soldier
- d) Tax collector

13. Name of Saul's daughter who loved David?

- a) Michal
- b) Merab
- c) Bathsheba
- d) Abigail

14. Where did Saul and his sons die?

- a) Mount Sinai
- b) Mount Nebo
- c) Mount Carmel
- d) Mount Gilboa

15. What was the ultimate lesson from Saul's life?

- a) Faith without obedience is meaningless
- b) Obedience is more important than sacrifice
- c) Sacrifice is the highest form of faith
- d) Faith and obedience are unrelated

## ANSWERS TO THE BIBLE QUIZ ON KING SAUL

1-b) Benjamin (1 Samuel 9:1)

2-a) Samuel (1 Samuel 10:1)

3-d) All of the above (1 Samuel 8:4-5)

4-c) He hid among the baggage (1 Samuel 10:22)

5-a) Saul's disobedience in the battle against the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:22)

6-b) He was jealous (1 Samuel 18:6-7)

7-b) By throwing a spear at him (1 Samuel 19:10)

8-a) To summon the spirit of Samuel (1 Samuel 28:7)

9-c) His suicide on Mount Gilboa (1 Samuel 31:4)

10-d) David (2 Samuel 5:1)

11-c) He fell on his own sword (1 Samuel 31:4)

12-a) Herdsman (1 Samuel 9:1-3)

13-a) Michal (1 Samuel 18:28-29)

14-d) Mount Gilboa (1 Samuel 31:2-3)

15-b) Obedience is more important than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22)



*Fr. Trevor D'Souza, OFM, is a Franciscan Priest, Retreat Preacher and a Writer. He can be contacted at [jc4me2000@gmail.com](mailto:jc4me2000@gmail.com)*



# JUST FOR FUN

-Christine D'Sylva

*We are in the month of December and it's the festive season to commemorate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. A season of joy and cheer that precedes the New Year.*

*So on that joyous note, let's begin...*

## The Gift of the Magi



The American writer O'Henry penned this tale and it became one of the most popular Christmas stories. It was first published in 1905.

A young couple, Jim and Delia are very poor but love each other very much. Their

poverty does not draw them apart but it binds them together. Delia wants to buy a Christmas present for Jim and Jim has the same urge. But both are very poor and it would be hard to do so.

Jim had his grandfather's precious gold pocket watch that he always treasured. Therefore Delia wanted to buy him a watch strap. However with no money, she is very lost as to what to do. In desperation she decides to sell her beautiful long hair that was her pride to a hairdresser. With the money she obtains, she buys the watch strap.

Jim too has no money to buy something suitable for Delia. But his love for her was so immense that he parts with his pocket gold watch, although it was hard to do. With that money, he buys Delia lovely hair combs for her hair. To lose her long beautiful hair was very difficult for Delia and she was close to tears but her love for Jim was too immense to feel too badly about it for long.

Christmas dawns and both discover their gifts. Delia is surprised to get the hair combs which will not be of much use for her hair because she had shorn most of it off. Jim on receiving the watch strap is at a loss what to do because his pocket watch has been sold.

However they both sit down to dinner and are not angry with each other. Instead of getting upset which could have been the case, they realise just how much they really loved each other. This incident only draws them closer and their poverty becomes more bearable for them.

### What is the message we can learn?

We learn that people who truly love each other make personal sacrifices and will do a lot to make their loved ones happy. True love is selfless never selfish, and always put the loved one's interest first.

We learn where there is love, even hard circumstances can become more bearable.

We can also learn that gifts are not only what people

need at Christmas time. Christmas is a season of hope, of love, forgiveness and a reminder that since the New Year lies ahead so close, it is a time of looking forward with hope and faith to a happier year ahead.

## Quiz

### Christmas Celebrations



1. Which church celebrates Christmas on January 7th?
2. Which Pope declared Christmas day to be a civic holiday?
3. Why do people in Norway hide their mops and brooms during Christmas?
4. Which country celebrates Christmas first?

## Spider Webs in Ukraine



Do you do spring cleaning during Christmas season and dust off the cobwebs? But in Ukraine, this rarely happens.

During Christmas season in Ukraine, it's common to see spiders and spider webs

dangling from Christmas trees. They could be gold, silver or a whole range of colours. Some may be jewelled while others may be plain.

Its origins are said to lie in the folktale called The Legend of the Christmas Spider.

This story is about an impoverished widow and her kids who are looking forward to celebrating Christmas by decorating the pine tree that grew in their garden. However, they cannot buy any decorations because of a lack of money.

The spiders hear the family crying and because of this one night they decide to adorn the branches with their webs. The next morning this beautiful spectacle is witnessed by the family and the silky webs seemed to glitter gold and silver in the sunlight.

After this miraculously the family was never short of anything.

Spiders are often associated with good luck and even ordinary cobwebs in the home are not removed during the holiday season for they represent good luck for the coming year.

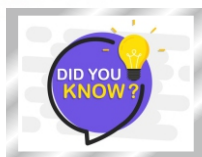
## What's the Good Word?



1. The year in which carol singing was banned in England. 2. A Christmas carol that enabled a temporary truce between the British soldiers and the German soldiers in World War I.

3. The original name of the song Jingle Bells.
4. The French name for Christmas.

### Interesting Facts



Did you know that the song Jingle Bells was the first song to be played in space?

On December 16, 1965 during NASA's Gemini 6A space flight, astronauts from Gemini 6 and 7 played a prank on NASA mission

control. They claimed to have seen an Unidentified Flying Object (UFO) referring to Santa Claus on his sleigh. To the wondering audience at the base, they then played Jingle Bells.

Jingle Bells written by American songwriter James Lord Pierpont in 1850 was originally called The One Horse Open Sleigh. It was actually meant for Thanksgiving but today it has become entrenched as part of the Christmas celebrations.

### Smile Please



There were two twins. One was a pessimist and the other was an optimist. Both looked exactly alike. Just to see what would happen, their father on Christmas day loaded the pessimist's room with every imaginable toy and game. In

the optimistic son's room he filled it up with horse manure.

When he passed the pessimist son's room, he found him sitting amidst all the toys and crying.

"Why are you crying?" asked the father.

"I will have to read all the instructions of the toys, my friends will get jealous, and I will need new batteries and eventually all my toys will break."

Passing the optimistic son's room, the father found him dancing with joy in the pile of manure.

"What are you so happy about?" he asked.

The optimistic twin replied, "There has got to be a pony here somewhere and I always longed for one."

*Moral - One cannot keep an optimistic person in the dumps for long.*

### Popular names of Christmas



These are some of names of Christmas that are very popular.

For boys it is Christian, Noel, Christopher, Angel, Rudolph. For girls, Natalie, Noelle, Noella, Holly, Ivy, Natasha, Nicole, Christine, Christina,

Kristen, Maria, Angelica and Carol.

Did you know Christmas is also a name of a person? Christmas is also a name of either a boy or girl and is of Old English origin.

### The Fir Tree



The Fir Tree is a popular Christmas story by Hans Christian Andersen.

A fir tree was in its early youth, ad hungry for stature. "Oh, if only I was a big tree like the others." The tree would sigh and complain.

The fir tree took no pleasure in the sunshine, in the birds, in crimson clouds that sailed overhead both morning and evening. It longed to be a magnificent ship's mast, shorn of its branches and travel across the sea.

The rays of the sunlight aided the fir tree to enjoy its growth and the young life inside of it. Yet it was never satisfied.

Finally the fir tree grew big and a wood cutter using his axe felled it down and brought to the town. The fir tree knew it would never see its friends of the forest again which were the other trees and birds like the sparrows.

Now the fir tree was kept in a room and lavishly adorned with beautiful decorations. This made it feel special and so happy. The paper gold star on its top made it feel grand. The children took off all the decorations in a frenzy for they were really gifts.

After Christmas it was dragged out of the parlour and up the stairs in the dark attic and had to live for months with the mice in the attic. Then one day the fir tree was dragged down the stairs and its boughs were withered and yellow. A little child playing in the courtyard referred to it as, "The horrid old Christmas tree."

It was now chopped into pieces and put in the fire to burn. It soon became a heap of ashes. The poor fir tree was reduced to ashes.

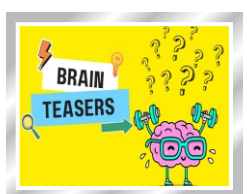
Impatience was its biggest fault.

What do we learn?

*We learn we must not be impatient we must learn to enjoy the present. If we live either in the past or future, we cannot savour the beauty of the present moment. The future is uncertain and sometimes the present may offer us more joy than an uncertain future that may have its share of troubles.*

*So this Christmas let's be thankful for our circumstances and enjoy our life with gratitude.*

### Brain Teasers



1. I come in different shapes and sizes. Parts of me are curved, other parts are straight. You can put me anywhere you like but there is only one right place for me. What am I?

2. If you drop me I am sure to crack but if you smile at me I will smile back. If you cry I will cry too. What am I?

3. Turn me upside down and I look the same, cut me in



half and I am nothing. What am I?

4. A farmer has 17 sheep. Ten are sick, four are to be fleeced the next day. All but 6 die. How many sheep has he left?

5. Why did the math textbook feel sad?

### Inspirational Quotes about Christmas



1. "Gifts of time and love are surely basic ingredients of a truly merry Christmas." - **Peg Bracken**

2. "My idea of Christmas whether old fashioned or modern is very simple – loving others." - **Bob Hope**

3. "Remember if Christmas is not found in your heart, you won't find it under a tree." - **Charlotte Carpenter**

4. "Christmas is a time when everybody wants his past forgotten and his present remembered." - **Phyllis Diller**

5. There has to be at least one day of the year to remind us that we are here for something else besides ourselves." - **Eric Severeid**

### Riddles



1. In a big one-storey house at the corner of the street, the five bedrooms were yellow, the living room was white, the kitchen was blue, the garage was grey and the entry hall was pink. What was the colour

were the stairs?

2. Sam's grandparents have five grandchildren. They are Huey, Lewis, Mark and Tom. What is the fifth grandchild's name?

3. I get wet while drying.

### Wisdom Message of the Month - A true story



Emily was a little girl who resided in a small town nestled beneath the mountains. She was a very loving and kind child. Her desire for a Christmas gift was a puppy. Every night she would close her eyes and wish upon the

brightest star for the gift of a puppy.

Her parents knew this but realised that with a puppy came great responsibility that must not be taken lightly. They were very wise parents.

Emily confided in her parents that for Christmas she wanted a puppy.

Her parents explained to her that with this gift came lots of commitment and responsibility. Her dad told her that they would write a letter to Santa and ask for the puppy. But he told her he would make a list of things that she needed to learn about taking care of it. She had to promise to study it well.

Emily said happily, "That sounds fair."

Emily and her parents wrote a letter to Santa and also explained that Emily was preparing herself to learn how to take care of it. Emily kept her promise. She borrowed books from the library about dog care, watched online videos and spoke to her neighbours about dogs. She learnt about grooming, feeding and training. Her parents were impressed by her commitment.

On Christmas morning, Emily rushed to find her gift and discovered a beautiful box which contained the puppy. The previous night on Christmas Eve she had thoughtfully placed milk and biscuits under the Christmas tree for the puppy.

The puppy was the softest adorable puppy she had ever seen. Its eyes sparkled with curiosity and its wagging tail showed pure joy.

He was named Coco and Emily became a very responsible person taking great care of him. That Christmas Emily's family celebrated with warmth and love. They realised that the magic of the season was not just about gifts but the joy of giving and love that bounded them together. With Coco as a new member of the family, their hearts were even fuller.

The years passed and the bond between Coco and Emily was unbreakable. It served as a reminder and testament to Emily's commitment, responsible nature and the love that brought them together on that magical Christmas morning.

Emily grew up to be a mature and responsible lady who undertook every venture she did with sincerity.

We learn that becoming responsible often starts early from our childhood and carries over to our adulthood. Also whenever we are given a responsibility, we must take it seriously and not try to cut corners. This helps us to become mature and sincere people.

**That's all for this month. Happy Christmas and God Bless!**

### Answers

#### Quiz

1. Roman Orthodox Church. 2. Pope Julius in 529 A.D. 3. Because they wanted to prevent evil spirits. 4. England.

#### What's The Good Word?

1. 1644 2. Silent Night. 3. The One Horse Open Sleigh. 4. Noel.

#### Brain Teasers

1. A puzzle piece. 2. A mirror. 3. Number 8. 4. 6. 5. Because it was full of problems.

#### Riddles

1. There were no stairs, it was a one storey house. 2. Sam. 3. The moon. 4. Towel.



***Christine** is an author of over 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.*



## FR. AGNEL'S BLESSINGS

### THANKSGIVING FOR CURING SKIN INFECTION AND ITCHING PROBLEM

**SANTACRUZ (EAST):** I have been praying continuously to Ven. Fr. Agnel for the last one year. I earnestly requested the Venerable to cure me from skin infection and itching which has been troubling me for more than a decade. I applied holy oil available at the Ashram. While applying the 4th bottle, I got cured. Thank you Ven. Fr. Agnel for healing me.

- Stanly D'Souza

### THANKSGIVING FOR SECOND SUCCESSFUL OPEN HEART SURGERY

**MUMBAI:** My 11-year-old daughter Urshitavaishnavi is grateful for all prayers for her second successful open heart surgery. She is now doing well with all your prayers and is happy for this miracle. I wish to thank each one who prayed for her and a special thank you to Ven. Fr. Agnel.

- Bhoomika M. Thirthani

### THANKSGIVING FOR SUCCESSFUL BUILDING OF A CHURCH

**ANDHRA PRADESH:** We prayed to Ven. Fr. Agnel for his intercession in building a church. Our wish has been fulfilled and we now celebrate Mass in our new church.

- Gevan Jyoti

### THANKSGIVING FOR THE GIFT OF A CHILD

**VASAI:** Ven. Fr. Agnelo has answered my prayers and blessed us with a child. We have immense faith in the Venerable and thank the Fr. Agnel Ashram Fathers too for keeping us in their prayers.

- Melwyn Almeida

### THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

**GUJARAT:** We often pray to Ven. Fr. Agnel and have been blessed immensely. Whenever we are in Mumbai, we make it a point to visit Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra which has the sacred relics of the Venerable.

- Alen Kamlesh Parmar

### THANKSGIVING FOR HAPPY SETTLEMENT OF DAUGHTER IN MARRIAGE

**BANDRA, MUMBAI:** Ven. Fr. Agnel has answered my prayers and blessed my daughter with a suitable life partner. We have immense faith in the Venerable and thank the Fr. Agnel Ashram Fathers too for praying for us.

- Elizabeth Ferreira

### THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

**GOA:** I thank Ven. Fr. Agnel for his intercession and blessing me always. Given the innumerable miracles the Venerable continues to perform, we pray for his early canonisation as a saint.

- Noela Fernandes

### THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS ON FAMILY

**GUJARAT:** As a devotee of Ven. Fr. Agnel, we pray for his kind intercession. Our family has been blessed in many ways. The Venerable listens and intercedes for us with the Heavenly Father and Lord Jesus Christ.

- Sylvia Fernandes

### THANKSGIVING FOR NEW JOB

**MUMBAI:** Through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, my prayers have been answered and I have secured a new job. This has increased my faith and devotion.

- Rita Chettiar

### THANKSGIVING FOR ALL BLESSINGS RECEIVED

**NERUL:** I am thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for answering my prayers. I have immense faith in the Venerable and Lord Jesus Christ.

- Rupesh Shinde

### THANKSGIVING FOR PRAYERS ANSWERED

**MUMBAI:** I prayed to Ven. Fr. Agnel for his kind intercession in helping our family in difficult situations. My prayers have been answered.

- Raj Gopal & Family

### THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

**CANADA:** I always look up to Ven. Fr. Agnel for his intercession. I am indeed grateful for all the blessings received here in a new country.

- Sylvester Mukesh Macwan

### THANKSGIVING FOR INTERCESSIONS

**CHENNAI:** I always seek the intercession and blessings of Ven. Fr. Agnel. He supports me in every way.

- Smilan Retharana

### THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

**GOA:** We are indeed grateful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for blessing us always. The Ashram Fathers are continuing his legacy of service to the marginalised sections of society.

- Antonio D'Souza

### THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

**VAKOLA, MUMBAI:** Ven. Fr. Agnelo has showered his blessings on our family always. We have immense faith in the Venerable who intercedes on our behalf.

- Michael Lopes & Family

### THANKSGIVING FOR PORTUGUESE PASSPORT

**THANE (WEST):** Thank you Ven. Fr. Agnel for blessing my son, Stanley Mergulhao, to travel abroad with his Portuguese Passport. I had prayed for the last one year and I am happy that my prayers have been answered.

- Maria Mergulhao



## OUT OF THEIR BOUNTY

Praveen Srivastava	Mumbai	40000	Royal D'Britto	Mumbai	3000	Jose kutty	Mumbai	2000
Norma Ferreira	Mumbai	25000	Aline Morenas	Mumbai	3000	Attely Kuttikadan	Thane	1750
Anil Parmar	Mumbai	25000	Niharika R. Mekwan	Gujarat	2500	Philomina Joseph	Kerala	1500
Sandra Rocha	Mumbai	25000	Joseph Correia	Mumbai	2500	Marian D'Souza	Mumbai	1500
Mohan Dhariya	Mumbai	21555	Theresa Porathur	Mumbai	2500	Michael Swamy	Bihar	1500
Vinod Shah	Mumbai	20000	Jaison Chackochen	Kerala	2000	Paul Nadar	Mumbai	1250
Katy Gotla	Mumbai	20000	Sabina Fernandes	Mumbai	2000	Selina K. K.	Kerala	1000
Denise D'Souza	Mumbai	15000	Anthony Fernandes	Mumbai	2000	Elen J. Shah	Mumbai	1000
Manoj Porathur	Mumbai	12000	Alan George	Mumbai	2000	Jinal Patel	Mumbai	1000
Jesu Dason	Mumbai	12000	Isabel Hendricks	Tamil Nadu	2000	Sangita Patel	Mumbai	1000
Thelma D'Souza	Mumbai	12000	Rajeev Solanki	Mumbai	2000	Ghanshyan Patel	Mumbai	1000
A.P. Johnny	Mumbai	12000	Alban Pereira	Mumbai	2000	Ankit G. Patel	Mumbai	1000
Antonio Alphonso	Mumbai	12000	Rajesh Macwan	Gujarat	2000	Fitech Industries	Mumbai	1000
Michelle Moishe	Vasai	11000	Dominic D'Almeida	Mumbai	2000	Myra Pednekar	Mumbai	1000
Janak Kiran	Mumbai	10000	Rohin Bomanji	Mumbai	2000	Gulnar Katak	Mumbai	1000
Melinda D'Souza	Mumbai	10000	Sahaya Nadar	Mumbai	2000	Sylvia Fernandes	Gujarat	1000
Anika Braganza	Mumbai	10000	Lawrence D'Silva	Thane	2000	Rajesh Parmar	Mumbai	1000
Zenia Machado	Mumbai	10000	Hariet Luke	Nagpur	2000	Sajayan Joseph	Kerala	1000
Melini D'Souza	Mumbai	10000	Floyd Fernandes	Mumbai	2000	Subramaniam R.	Mumbai	1000
Allan Rodricks	Mumbai	10000	Rija Anna Francis	Kerala	2000	Tia Cusher	Vasai	1000
Suju Gujar	Mumbai	10000	Sharon D'Souza	Bandra	2000	Vasudev Tayaole	Mumbai	1000
Joy Creado	Mumbai	10000	Angeline M.	Thane	2000	Paresh Thakker	Thane	1000
Catherine Alves	Mumbai	10000	Rochelle D'Souza	Thane	2000	Preet Thakkar	Thane	1000
Warren Fernandes	Mumbai	6000	Y. J. Joseph	Mumbai	2000	Sanjay Parmar	Gujarat	1000
Hutoxi Bharucha	Vasai	5500	Baby Poojari	Mumbai	2000	Swati Patel	Gujarat	1000
Dina Irani	Mumbai	5000	A. Joseph	Mumbai	2000	Agnelo Kemu	Mumbai	1000
Afegine Tuscano	Vasai	5000	Riya Deshpande	Mumbai	2000	Josekutty Thomas	Mumbai	1000
Jacob Puthur	Kerala	5000	Stany D'Souza	Mumbai	2000	Nilesh Mathak	Vasai	1000
Beena George	Kerala	5000	Heather Hyrapiet	Kolkata	2000	Rockhenry Chettiar	Thane	1000
Golda Alos	Vasai	5000	Donald Aranha	Mumbai	2000	Gavin Fonseca	Mumbai	1000
Karin Saldanha	Mumbai	5000	Kousaliya Amolik	Mumbai	2000	Samaira Noronha	Mumbai	1000
Mira Saldanha	Mumbai	5000	Raju R. Hatkar	Mumbai	2000	Paul D'Mello	Gujarat	1000
Bertha Fernandes	Mumbai	5000	Assuciana Soares	Mumbai	2000	Ganita Sartape	Mumbai	1000
Jignesh Panariya	USA	5000	Pamela D'Costa	Vasai	2000	Natasha Correia	Mumbai	1000
Akshay Gajria	Mumbai	5000	Cherag Bardolwala	Mumbai	2000	Lily D'Souza	Thane	1000
Sneha Randive	Ambernath	5000	Manuel Noronha	Mumbai	2000	Aditi Shinde	Mumbai	1000
Shilpa Gonsalves	Vasai	5500	Agnello Coutinho	Mumbai	2000	Santana Miranda	Virar	1000
Leediya D'Souza	Vasai	5000	Hyacinth Kenny	Mumbai	2000	Sanskriti Randive	Mumbai	1000
Biju K.V.	Kerala	5000	Amrin Bhilakhia	Mumbai	2000	Reres Rodriguez	Mumbai	1000
Geeta K. Bhatt	Mumbai	5000	Mikhayal Shamuvel	Mumbai	2000	Sagayam Fernando	Mumbai	1000
Anthony Rodrigues	Mumbai	5000	Robin Fernandes	Mumbai	2000	Magdaline Almeida	Mumbai	1000
Lovely Antony	Kerala	5000	Aaron Gonsalves	Mumbai	2000	Diago Silveira	Mumbai	1000
Jason Bastian	Solapur	5000	Rion Pereira	Vasai	2000	Cherie Saldanha	Mumbai	1000
Falguni Solanki	Mumbai	4040	Josan D'Souza	Kerala	2000	Celsa Tandon	Mumbai	1000
Techno Products	Chennai	3000	K. P. Fernandes	Kerala	2000			

# BOB'S BANTER

by Robert Clements

## And The Baby Kicked Mary..!

Mary smiled as the baby inside her gave a kick, "I know you're waiting to meet the world!" she whispered to the unborn child inside her, "But there's still a few weeks to go!"

"Rest little one inside me, there's a world of love and hate waiting to meet you! I know you are coming to save the world, but I wonder whether the world is interested in being saved? In a week we will reach Bethlehem, and Joseph says, there'll be a big welcome there, but my baby I have my doubts, and maybe, just maybe you'll be born in the most despicable of places!"

Mary smiled as the babe inside her moved, but ever so comfortably, "Ah my little one, are you already soothing an anxious mother? Already telling me not to worry? Yes, Gabriel, the angel said you were

came from her womb, and smiled, now not one that was sad, but a smile that became a girlish giggle.

Joseph looked up sharply from the ass he was trying to feed, the same one that would carry them to Bethlehem, "What's that giggle for? You alright Mary?"

Mary felt the baby move again, and looked up at her husband, who was not the father of the child, "He's kicking!" she said simply.

Joseph left the stubborn ass and came and sat by her side, "He's getting ready to change the world!" he said simply.

Both husband and wife looked at each other with smiles of joy, "Have you ever wondered Joseph," said Mary, "Whether we'll be good parents to this child in me?"




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the son of God, and only a God would be able to tell His earthly mother, she need not worry!"

Mary felt a small kick again and caressed her stomach, "Yes little one, I know you hear my thoughts. And like any other mother I am anxious for you. I know your path won't be easy, that even as you tell people around you about the heaven you left to come down to earth, that they will ridicule you, even despise you! There's very little I believe I will be able to do, except feel your earthly pain and wipe away your tears. But in this one week before you are born, rest my baby rest, for this one week maybe the last before you face a world gone harsh and cruel!"

Despite her motherly thoughts, she felt a peace that

Joseph looked down with love at his beautiful young wife, "Maybe we'll be the first parents whose child will look after his parents!"

They both chuckled, and then Mary giggled her girlish giggle, as Joseph guffawed, even as Mary took her husband's hand and placed it on the baby inside, "He's laughing with us," she whispered as they both felt a peace, that was beyond any peace they'd ever felt before!

A peace that passed understanding..!

*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](mailto:bobsbanter@gmail.com)*



# VEN. FR. AGNELO'S 97TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY



**Most Rev. Thomas Macwan, Archbishop of Gandhinagar, was the main Celebrant on 20th November 2024, at Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra.**

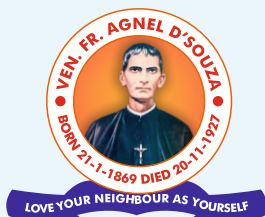


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*Fr. Agnel Ashram Community and Balbhavan Children  
wish all our friends and benefactors  
a Blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year 2025*



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