



FR. AGNEL

ASHRAM NEWS

FEBRUARY 2024



Lent: A Season of Renewal

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AN EASTER APPEAL

He is risen! Wishing you a Happy Easter full of blessings

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

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

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

We are always grateful and thankful to you, for extending a helping hand and support over the years to shape the future of our children in **Balbhavan** and our various other community activities. **We have over 800 orphan children, in Bandra, Vashi, Ambarnath, Pune, Verna & Assagao in Goa, New Delhi, Noida and Greater Noida.**

Besides we take care of many more children in the villages such as **Agnel Jan Kalyan Kendra** facility in Khodda Colony, Ghaziabad (U.P.), providing them education and teaching various skills.

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

With a grateful heart and best regards.

Yours Sincerely in the Lord,

Fr. Valerian D'Souza, sfx
(Superior)

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We also accept your Easter Gifts for the Balbhavan boys in kind.

MY EASTER GIFT

To,

Fr. Superior,

Fr. Agnel Ashram, P.B. No. 6656, Bandstand, Bandra (W), Mumbai – 400 050.

Dear Fr. Superior,

I am sending my Cheque/Draft/M.O. for _____ as my EASTER GIFT for the children under your care.

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PLEASE GIVE US WAY ...THE RIGHT TO FREE EXPRESSION and the Tyranny of one sided vision

(This piece is the view of the writer and not of the editorial board - Author.)

An organization's best credentials are the liberty of expression that its members enjoy. When the members of an organization do not have the freedom to express themselves or fear expressing themselves that is a sign that it is crumbling. Around our country, there is a great extent of hate writing and conversations. That represents a huge malaise that will do no good to any one, but rather lead to entrenchments in one's own views and lead to further hardening one's perspectives and understanding.

NATIONAL LEVEL

Ever since Prime Minister Modi came to power, there has been a lot of adverse comments about him and about the party he represents. Much of it is legitimate since, in a national consciousness, diversity of views and perspectives is an excellent sign of its vitality and plurality. Often times that adversarial outlook becomes a compelling force that does not allow us to see the truth as it is.

Obviously any party and its political affiliations has a world view that affects all aspects of public life, differently from another political party, and that is the very reason why any nation is called democratic. Undoubtedly all political views and objectives must comply with the existing 'Constitutional' provisions. Anything that is contrary to it, is obviously not acceptable and illegitimate. Since such a diversity is already enshrined in the Constitution, any constitutionally approved party which has been allowed to fight elections will be entitled to pursue its policies. The difference between policy and its implementation becomes the major reason why there are deep differences in the public opinion, but a faulty administration does not always, make the people in power at the highest levels liable. What makes them liable is when the persons responsible at the top, do not make their

position clear when there are blatant acts of injustice or administrative default, such as the lynching that have happened or continue to happen, around cow slaughter or cow meat.

Selective assaults on minority institutions and when they are not addressed, especially when carried out by fundamentalists of some faith on another, even if the same does not come under the purview of the highest administration in the land, must be condemned at the highest level because in the absence of such messaging, there is an appearance of lack of concern which to the perpetrators is almost a nod to go on.

Running down houses with bulldozers is the crudest form of punishment for offences and when such things happen against a minority group, it is exceptionally gruesome and unacceptable and the silence of the majority and specially those in power is a very poor show of leadership and accountability.

All these any more such colossal lapses in governance are to be unambiguously condemnable regardless of who does it. But there is a vast difference between condemnation or hate expressed by spreading in all means of communication against anyone or anything, because the effect of such a hate becomes embedded in our minds and we are unable to see beyond it, and as a result we are not able to distinguish all the good that exists.

Another sector that is widely condemned is the fact that the concentration of economic power is being limited to a few and as a result there is a clear danger of manipulation of prices or even cartelization of services. The worst part of such a policy lies in the fact that the excessive accumulation of wealth in the hands of few will obviously to the deprivation of some of it to others, especially the poor. Let us however

remember that is an economic policy that the party has adopted in its manifesto, which of course most of us do not accept but they do, as many other capitalist countries do, as a sure model of development.

Yet another policy issue that causes great distress is that although there is a very sizeable rise in the revenues, the allocation to the poor other than the distribution of free rations, does not show any increase, particularly in the education and health which touch most closely the survival and human development.

Against all the negatives that have been listed above, there is another side to the development that the country has seen in the past two decades, primarily due to the rise of revenues that allows so much infrastructure development in roads, communication, housing, transportation, etc. There are amazing changes that have happened primarily because of the introduction of GST that is a policy implementation that allowed a more rational collection of taxes. There is no doubt that a lot could change by the way that the goods and series essentially used by the poor could be exempted and needs to be done.

The direct transfer of funds to the accounts of individuals without wastage is also a great relief to the poor. Needless to state that these developmental initiatives would have been done by any government in power, because its time had come, but it cannot be denied that it has happened in this dispensation. Another very important development that has happened during the last 2 decades that have climaxed during this decade is the standing and the respect that India has gained in the Comity of nations. Never in the history of India, did any foreign minister of our country could or did speak boldly to the western nations as fearlessly and clearly about our interests as we do now. This is a huge development that should make us proud about what we are.

What I have stated above throws light on two things: India is growing both internally and externally although there is so much that has to be done to alleviate poverty and the conditions of the poor. There are tensions about groups especially based on religion and they need to be addressed. A one sided expression of what does not happen does not allow us to see the other side, which together make a real picture.

CLOSER AT HOME

On the Christmas Day of 2023, the Prime Minister invited some Christian leaders of all denominations for a Christmas celebration in his residence. The tirade of opposition, press conferences let loose, kept me wondering what is the purpose of such vitriolic furore. The accusations were that we should not have attended, that we should not have praised the Prime Minister and that we should have spoken to him about what is happening in Manipur and the assaults against Christian institutions and the cancellations of FCRA licences.

They must all be well meaning individuals, great lovers of our faith and great guardians of our religion and our personal persuasions. But the question that arises is, do they or for that matter any one, has some exclusive right to state how anyone in India, will talk or respect the person who is the Prime Minister of the entire nation? Do they want to say that any meeting between two people should only be about what divides them and not about what unites them? Do they want to say that individuals, even in positions of responsibility cannot decide how and what they will do when they meet with each other or when they meet with their political or national leaders?

Or do they want to say because they cannot see anything good in our nation, or what is happening around us, everyone else too should look at it with their own glasses? Do they want to state that they possess the ultimate truth about what every one in this country should behave? Or do they if they consider someone, a bad person, a Christian should not deal with him or her with respect and understanding?

The greatest freedom that Jesus gave to us is the freedom of being God's children, and Jesus said it rather unambiguously "I came to seek the lost, those who need the doctor..." if seeking them, or dealing with them is a scandal to those of our brothers and sisters who see differently or who want that every one else see it as they see, that surely is not what Jesus did! ***Cheerio for now, and please give us way out of hate and despondency.***

Fr. J.A. Carvalho
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Lent, a time to repent and renew

-Fr. M.K. George, SJ

Most of us are not grave sinners. We say lies; we cheat and may occasionally be unfaithful even. But, does that demand a call to the period of Lent and its accompanying practices like fasting and penance. Yes, it does. Not because we are unforgivable sinners, but because it is a call to renew and refresh; to live as real children of God, that we are called to be (1 John 3, 2).

Meaning of Lent: official and personal

Every religious practice has an official meaning and a personal meaning. The closer we are to the official meaning, the more beneficial it will be. However, quite often there is such a difference even as to negate the real and official meaning. A classic example is Christmas. Christmas, in its original meaning is a celebration of the birth of Christ in a manger. However, today for many it has become a commercial celebration bereft of any religious meaning.

Hence, aligning the official and personal meanings of religious activities is a challenge.

Lent, according to Catholic teaching and practice, is a liturgical season consisting of forty days of fasting, prayer and penance, which begins on Ash Wednesday and concludes on Holy Thursday. The season of Lent is in preparation for Easter, when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, which gives the ultimate meaning of Christian life and practice.

Unfortunately at a personal level, for most people Lent has become a few days of compulsory fasting and abstinence. It feels bothersome.

History of Lent

Preparing for Easter has been a practice from the early Christian days. In the early period, it was just for three days. In some places, it became extended to one week. In Rome, it is said, the practices extended to three weeks. It was 'by the fourth century (when Christianity was legalized in the Roman Empire), Lent had developed into its current length of forty days. Forty days is significant for Christians because it is the length of the fast and temptation of Jesus in the desert (Lk. 4,1-13). Recently, research has suggested that the development of Lent was also influenced by the forty-day span of fasting practiced by many in the early Church (especially monks).'

(<https://www.aboutcatholics.com/beliefs/lent-in-the-catholic-church/>)

The core practice

The core practices of Lent are fasting, prayer, and penance along with some almsgiving. The Church exhorts the faithful to fast and abstain from meat on prescribed days. Fasting meals limiting the food, usually to one full meal a day. Abstinence usually refers to avoiding meat and fish. The Church prescribes the days, and the category of people who are to fast. Catholics between the age of 16 and 59 are to fast and abstain on such days.

For most Catholics now, unfortunately, the Lenten season turns out to be a period of compulsory fasting, prayer and confession, in preparation for Easter.

A genuine celebration of Lent leads to Joy and sharing

In a world where every 15 persons out of 100 are undernourished, where children die of malnutrition, the call to fasting is a call to share your food. In a world where sin rules, in the form of corruption, violence, injustice and war, Lent is a call to work for peace and justice. In a world where there is huge gap between the rich and the poor, Lenten practices are to do justice to the poor. As a popular saying goes, 'More money for you does not mean growth in your standard of living, but a growth in your standard of giving.'

Papa Francis reminds us, "Lent, is a time to break the chains of our individualism" and to rediscover "our companions along the journey of each day...and to learn to love them as brothers and sisters."

During this Lenten season, can we practice fasting, abstinence, penance and almsgiving and go beyond too. Speak up for Truth, Justice, Peace and genuine democracy.



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

A LENTEN SPIRITUALITY???

-Fr. Fio Mascarenhas, SJ

2024 is the run-up to the 2025 Jubilee Year. Pope Francis asks that all Catholics observe 2024 as a Year of Prayer. What better time to involve ourselves in this 2024 Year of Prayer than the Season of Lent, beginning 14 February?

So what can this mean for us, Catholics at the grassroots level? One meaning is surely that we should rediscover, relish, and grow in **Catholic spirituality**. But what does “spirituality” mean?

Well, since it contains within itself the word 'spirit,' spirituality means that particular way in which the Holy Spirit inspires different individuals (in keeping with their personal circumstances and charisms) to follow God's will, and so to grow in wholeness or holiness. Therefore there can be, and there is, a wide variety of valid “spiritualities,” both Christian, and of other faiths, being practised in the world today.

Not surprisingly, within Christianity itself there are many different spiritualities, Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Pentecostal. Even within Catholicism, the Spirit has led the founders of the religious orders to *emphasize different aspects* of the Gospel in their special following of Christ. Hence the spirituality of the Jesuits is different from that of the Trappists (thank God!), or of the Dominicans, or Carmelites, etc. So too, *lay* spirituality is different from religious or priestly spirituality, and among the laity the spirituality of married couples is different from that of single persons, etc. What is common to all Christians is “**Trinitarian spirituality**,” that is, belief in, and devotion to the mystery of the Blessed Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is the foundational *biblical* spirituality, drawing on the revelation of both the Old and the New Testaments.

We must remember that Old Testament spirituality is *pre-Christian*. It is the way the Spirit inspired the Jews of the OT (the patriarchs, Moses, the kings, the prophets and the psalmists) to relate with God and with each other. New Testament spirituality is *Christian*, and is the way the Spirit inspires the followers of Jesus Christ to love and serve God. Something of OT spirituality is included in that of the NT, but there are many

significant differences, since Christians are not called to be just Jews! (A good example is Saul before his conversion and *Paul* after he became a Christian).

OT spirituality might be called a spirituality of “conversion to the covenant.” Some of its ingredients are: belief in YHWH, the one God (Dt. 6:4ff); “fear of the Lord”; the covenant; the conviction that God intervenes in human history to save (Exodus); trust in YHWH/Ps. 23; the understanding that the Jews are the Chosen People; the law of retribution; the recognition that they, as a People, have been unfaithful to the covenant and are repeatedly called to conversion. A typical General Response of the OT might well be: “*Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we are sinners!*”

NT (Christian) spirituality might be called a spirituality of the *new* covenant, or of “life in the Spirit.” Some of its ingredients are: belief in the Blessed Trinity; faith-experience of the Father's personal love (Gal. 4:5-6, Rom. 8:15-17, Luke 15, etc); invincible conviction that Jesus Christ is both personal and universal Saviour and Lord, whose death and resurrection has brought about the free gift of salvation for all human beings; the willingness to be a *disciple* and follow Jesus' example and teachings; vivid devotion

to the Holy Spirit, including openness to his gifts and inspirations; strong love for and loyalty to the Church, including Mary and the Pope; love for and familiarity with the word of God and the sacraments; acceptance of the cross in personal ways, with ongoing (daily) efforts to obey Jesus' new commandment, thus becoming a “witness of the Risen Jesus.”

A typical General Response of the NT might be: “Thank you God, for making us your own People, *a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, set apart to proclaim the mighty deeds of God!*” or, “*Thank you, Abba, for making me a co-heir with Christ!*”

St. Paul is a foremost exponent and model of New Testament spirituality. Being equally at home with Jews and Gentiles everywhere, he is the most cosmopolitan figure of the entire *Bible*! Paul also had a keen and disciplined mind, with excellent qualities of leadership and organization. His



spiritual determination was steeled by his complete identification with Jesus Christ whom he preached with great zeal and calm confidence. Paul's theology is fundamental for Christianity, and no one will question his position as its *most creative thinker!*

Paul's life has so many inspiring lessons for all Christians today! If I have to choose just *one*, it would be that **“the Resurrection” and “the Cross” of Jesus are inseparable.** When choosing Paul (already from his conversion), and mandating him to be a great apostle, the Lord Jesus had added, *“I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name”* (Acts 9:16). These words came true, very literally, as is amply demonstrated by the story of Paul's 30 year-long apostolic life. But not only the Cross, **simultaneously also the presence of the Risen Lord, and of his Holy Spirit,** was most evident in Paul's life! Our own vocation and mission to love and serve the Lord, as expressed in our own spirituality in this Year of Prayer, cannot be different.

So if asked to choose just 3 texts from Paul's writings that could best characterize Lenten

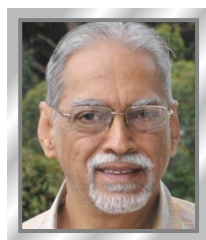
Spirituality (and which in turn I want to see verified in my own Christian life), they are:

Gal. 2:20: *“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me!”*

2 Tm. 1:12, 13: *“I know the One in whom I have put my trust, and I am certain that he is able to keep safe until that Day what I have entrusted to him!”*

Rom. 8:35, 37: *“Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us!”*

What about you, dear Reader? Please choose some special NT texts to guide your own personal Lenten spirituality!



Dr. Fiorello Mascarenhas SJ DMin recently celebrated his Diamond Jubilee in the Society of Jesus, and writes and teaches biblical spirituality. His contact: frfiomas@gmail.com



There is no Joy Greater than the Joy of GIVING

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

Please accept our humble Christmas gift of Rs. 40,000 for your orphanage children. We have received bountiful blessings through Fr. Agnel's intercession. I am 100% sure Fr. Agnel is always praying for us.

Carol Mathias, Mangalore, Karnataka

I have donated Rs.1,00,000 via NEFT towards the food, education, stationery and other essentials for children at Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra. I appreciate and pray for your mission. Thank you also for your prayers, wishes and blessings, for me and my family. I look forward to support you in future too.

Poonam & Gaurang Mehta, Kanjurmarg (East), Mumbai

We are more than happy to sponsor one boy at the Balbhavan home, which we have been regularly doing throughout the year. We appreciate the work done for the children and wish to do our part for them. Hence, please accept our contribution of Rs.15,000, towards the Yearly Sponsorship Scheme of a single child.

Walter F. Crasta, J.B. Nagar, Andheri (East), Mumbai

As always, we are donating Rs. 10,000 towards the education of any one kid of your choice. We are happy that the Ashram is in good shape and will continue to help the needy children for years to come. Thank you for praying for us.

Kavita N. Shirsat, Ahmednagar, Maharashtra

We are donating a small amount of Rs.50 to Fr. Agnel Ashram. We are very grateful to Fr. Agnel for the many favours received through his intercession.

Sherin Joseph, Bangalore, Karnataka

As my Christmas gift, I have transferred Rs.1000, on behalf of my mother Lissy Joseph and father AC Joseph. Please keep them both in your prayers.

Catherine & David Fobler, Ontario, Canada

We are offering a thanksgiving donation of Rs. 10,000 for prayers answered. We truly need your prayers and blessings. Ven. Fr. Agnelo, please intercede for us all. Peace. Amen.

ABRAHAM – THE FATHER OF BELIEVERS

(Genesis 12:1-25:11)

-Fr. Trevor D'Souza, OFM

Abraham ("father of a multitude" in Hebrew), revered in the Bible, is the patriarch of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, leaving a lasting legacy of unwavering faith and ethical values. Living around 2000 BCE in Ur of the Chaldeans and Haran (Gen 11:26-12:4), his journey reflects Bronze Age complexities, impacting our world.

The Bible spotlights Abraham's divine calling (Gen 12:1-9), marking the commencement of his journey and the establishment of the covenant (Gen 17), shaping the destiny of his descendants. God's promises to Abraham in Genesis form the cornerstone of the Abrahamic covenant, influencing theological narratives in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Symbolized by circumcision (Gen 17:10-14), a name change (Gen 17:5), and sacrificial rituals, the covenant signifies a lasting and unique relationship between God and Abraham's descendants.

Abraham's journey involves leaving his homeland, trusting God's promises, and facing profound tests of faith, notably the Akedah (Binding of Isaac) (Gen 22:1-19). This episode serves as a poignant example of his unwavering faith. His relationship with Sarah, marked by faith and partnership, played a crucial role, extending to the founding of the twelve tribes of Israel and significantly influencing the development of the Abrahamic religions.

Abraham's hospitality towards strangers (Gen 18:1-15) symbolizes righteousness and reflects cultural virtues. His ethical principles, demonstrated in dealings with others, emphasize justice and fairness, as seen in interactions with Lot (Gen 13:8-9). Divine encounters, including visions and dialogues, shape Abraham's understanding of God's will, serving as critical tests of faith and obedience in his spiritual journey.

Abraham's life imparts enduring lessons in faith, trust, obedience, hospitality, intercession, patience, and forgiveness - virtues celebrated across religious traditions. His perseverance through trials demonstrates endurance,

unwavering faith amidst challenges, and skilful navigation of family conflicts. Abraham's adaptability and consistent trust in God serve as enduring lessons for believers.

Abraham, central in Judaism, is revered for founding the covenant with God, a cornerstone of the faith. Considered the father of the Jewish people, his unwavering faith, symbolized by the willingness to sacrifice Isaac, is decisive. The promise of Canaan, his acts of hospitality, and the binding of Isaac shape Jewish theology, ethics, and history. The binding of Isaac is associated with Rosh Hashanah, symbolizing repentance and divine mercy. Sarah and Isaac, integral to the narrative, contribute to the spiritual foundation connecting God and the Jewish people.

In Christianity, Abraham is a crucial figure known as the "father of faith." His trust in God's promises, obedience, and role in salvation history serve as examples in the New Testament. The covenant with Abraham is seen as a precursor to Jesus Christ's new covenant. Christian interpretations draw parallels between Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac and Jesus Christ's sacrificial nature, emphasizing redemption and obedience themes. Included in Jesus' genealogy, as noted in Matthew and Luke, Abraham's significance in the Messiah's lineage is emphasized. The Apostle Paul refers to Abraham as the "father of all who believe" in Romans 4:11, linking his faith to Christian salvation. Abraham's enduring impact is mentioned across New Testament books, affirming his revered role in Christian theology, forming a foundational element in Christianity.

In Islam, Ibrahim (Abraham), a revered prophet in the Quran, exemplifies unwavering faith and engages in debates with idolaters. His mission emphasizes monotheism (Tawhid) and worship of Allah, credited with constructing Mecca's Kaaba for Hajj. The sacrifice of Ishmael symbolizes profound submission to God's will. Islamic rituals, shaped by Ibrahim's devotion, include daily



prayers and pilgrimage rites. Titled the "Friend of God," Ibrahim's intimate connection reflects his devotion. His legacy extends to sons Ishmael and Isaac, both prophets, forming the foundational Abrahamic tradition in Islam. Followers are encouraged to emulate Ibrahim's faith, drawing inspiration for their spiritual journey and devotion to Allah, rooted in his unwavering commitment.

Abraham's enduring legacy exemplifies shared heritage and values, making him a unifying figure, and his influence continues to inspire believers seeking guidance and connection across diverse religious traditions.

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

QUIZ QUESTIONS ON THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ABRAHAM

1. Who is considered the father of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the Bible?

- A. Moses
- B. Abraham
- C. Noah
- D. David

2. Where did Abraham originate before his journey, as mentioned in the Bible?

- A. Egypt
- B. Haran
- C. Canaan
- D. Babylon

3. What event marks the beginning of Abraham's journey according to the Bible?

- A. The Exodus
- B. The Akedah
(Binding of Isaac)
- C. The Covenant
- D. Divine Calling

4. Which biblical covenant is associated with Abraham?

- A. Noahic Covenant
- B. Mosaic Covenant
- C. Abrahamic Covenant
- D. Davidic Covenant

5. What is the symbol of the covenant between God and Abraham in the Bible?

- A. The Ark
- B. Circumcision
- C. Sacrificial Altar
- D. Stone Tablets

6. Which event is central to Abraham's unwavering faith and obedience in the Bible?

- A. The Tower of Babel
- B. The Exodus
- C. The Akedah
- D. The Battle of Jericho
(Binding of Isaac)

7. What does God change Abram's name to in the Bible?

- A. Israel
- B. Jacob
- C. Isaac
- D. Abraham

8. Who is Abraham's wife according to the Bible?

- A. Hagar
- B. Rachel
- C. Leah
- D. Sarah

9. Which city is associated to Lot, Abraham's nephew, according to the Bible?

- A. Jerusalem
- B. Sodom
- C. Nineveh
- D. Jericho

10. How old was Abraham when his son Isaac was born, as per the Bible?

- A. 75
- B. 86
- C. 99-100
- D. 105

11. Which descendant of Abraham is considered the father of the Edomites in the Bible?

- A. Isaac
- B. Ishmael
- C. Esau
- D. Jacob

12. What is the meaning of the name "Isaac" in the Bible?

- A. Laughter
- B. Strength
- C. Redemption
- D. Wisdom

13. Which descendant of Abraham is recognized as a forefather of the Twelve Tribes of Israel?

- A. Isaac
- B. Jacob
- C. Ishmael
- D. Esau

14. What biblical event is associated with Abraham's hospitality towards strangers?

- A. The Last Supper
- B. The Exodus
- C. The Binding of Isaac
- D. The Three Visitors

15. Which biblical book refers to Abraham as the "friend of God"?

- A. Psalms
- B. Genesis
- C. Isaiah
- D. James

ANSWERS

1. B. Abraham (Genesis 17:5)
2. B. Haran (Genesis 11:31)
3. D. Divine Calling (Genesis 12:1)
4. C. Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 17:7)
5. B. Circumcision (Genesis 17:10)
6. C. The Akedah (Binding of Isaac) (Genesis 22:2)
7. D. Abraham (Genesis 17:5)
8. D. Sarah (Genesis 17:15)
9. B. Sodom (Genesis 13:12)
10. C. 99-100 (Genesis 17:17)
11. C. Esau (Genesis 36:1)
12. A. Laughter (Genesis 21:6)
13. B. Jacob (Genesis 35:22)
14. D. The Three Visitors (Genesis 18:1-2)
15. D. James (James 2:23)



Fr. Trevor D'Souza, OFM, is a Franciscan Priest, Retreat Preacher and a Writer. He can be contacted at jc4me2000@gmail.com

Valentine's Day is all about love

-Jubel D'Cruz

Valentine's Day is here at last and everyone is busy thinking about what to buy for their loved ones.

The festival commemorates the martyrdom of a Christian saint called St. Valentine. It is an international festival that celebrates the feeling of love and friendship.

The festival as it is celebrated today, has very little religious significance. In present times, Valentine's Day has assumed a secular and global flavour and is celebrated by people of all castes and communities. Another noticeable factor in the Valentine's Day celebration is that the festival celebrates love in all its forms and is not just restricted to romantic love. People therefore exchange Valentine's Day greetings with their parents, teachers, siblings, friends, sweethearts or anyone very special or close to them.

Valentine's Day is supposed to be an occasion to display love, affection and care for our families, friends and romantic partners. But today, it does not seem that way anymore, for families and friends are mostly wiped off the list, leaving only the partner in it.

The festival started with a priest named Valentine who lived in Rome during the third century AD. At that time, Rome was ruled by an emperor named Claudius II. Valentine did not like the emperor as he wanted to have a big army and expected men to join it. Many men just did not want to fight in wars. They did not want to leave their wives and families behind. Hence, not many men signed up. This made the emperor furious which led him to a crazy idea. He thought that if men were not married, they would not mind joining the army. He then decided not to allow any more marriages to take place in the country.

Young people thought his new law was cruel and preposterous. Being a priest, his (Valentine's) job

was to marry young couples. Even after Emperor Claudius II passed his law, Valentine kept on performing marriage ceremonies secretly. He would lead the couples into a small candlelit room. They would then whisper the words of the ceremony, listening all the while for the footsteps of soldiers who would arrive any moment and arrest them.

Valentine's time was over when he was caught one day. He was thrown into prison and was told that his punishment would be death.

Consequently, many young people came to the jail to visit this priest. They threw flowers and notes up to his window. History says the men and women wanted Valentine to know that they too believed in love. One young woman who visited him was the daughter of the prison guard. She helped Valentine to keep up his spirits. She agreed that Valentine did the right thing by ignoring the emperor and going ahead with the secret marriages. One day, he left his female friend a note thanking her for her friendship and loyalty. Valentine signed it as 'Love from your Valentine'.

In honour of Valentine's heroic death, the Pope declared that February 14th would henceforth commemorate the soft-hearted St. Valentine. Today, Valentine's Day has become an iconic day for celebrating love and spending a lot of money on various gifts for our loved ones.

Valentine's Day is actually a day to be happy and to spend it with the people you love and care.

This is how Valentine's Day came to be celebrated.



Many couples get married on Valentine's Day.



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

VALENTINE'S DAY

-Tony Menezes

In February's embrace, love takes flight,
It's Valentine's Day, a beacon of light.
Where hearts entwine in love's embrace,
There's symphony of love at every place!



Roses bloom in hues of red,
Love and affection quickly spread.
Cupid's arrow does its part,
Striking at every yearning heart.



Two souls entwine in eternal bliss,
A tapestry of emotions, tightly squeezed.
Whispers of affection quickly spread,
Hand in hand two souls embed.



On Valentine's day, love just feels right,
As two hearts melt, in fond delight.
No words can capture the depth we find,
In language of the heart, by love's design.



From simple whispers to grand displays,
It's all about love on Valentine's Day.
The meeting of hearts is an enchanting sight,
Showing tales of love with much delight.



So let us gather this beautiful day,
Embrace love's essence in a special way.
Spread kindness, warmth and gentlest smile,
With unbound passion, and enchanting style!



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

Lent: The Season of Cleansing

-Fr. Allam Sagar Manoj Kumar

Moses spent forty days in the presence of the Lord. By His Word and by the fire from the bush, God cleansed Moses and gave him power to lead the people of Israel in the wilderness for forty years. Let us also spend these forty days of Lent in the presence of the Lord and plead with the Holy Spirit to cleanse us. We must live a pure and holy life and God will work miracles. God loves holiness because, He is the Holy God of Holiness. Therefore, Joshua says, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you" (Joshua 3:5).

Here we need to understand that living a holy life means having love, kindness, goodness and patience. But an unholy life is full of hatred, jealousy, vengeance, selfishness and worldly pleasures and such people will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21). Let us ask the Holy Spirit to remove all that is unholy in our lives.

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God" (Mt. 5:8). Pure in heart means those who have been cleansed from all unrighteousness. If the heart does not function properly, the doctors operate and set it right. Similarly, the filth in the hearts of people can be cleansed only by our Lord Jesus. We have to cry out to the Lord like David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24).

"Above all guard your heart, for it is the well spring of life" (Prov. 4:23). We must ask the Lord Jesus to remove every kind of evil from our heart like hatred, fear and envy. Then we must ask the Lord to preserve His word in our hearts. That is why, His words are life and Spirit.

We always need to remember that God's spirit will make us holy through the blood of Jesus and by His word. All we need to do is to confess our sins to Jesus and He, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:9). The blood of Jesus will

cleanse us from every sin (1 Jn. 1:7).

For instance, we see in Luke's Gospel regarding the Prodigal Son that he lost everything by going away from the Father. He distanced himself from the love of the Father. When he was suffering with hunger, and had to eat the pods that the pigs were eating, his eyes were opened. He returned to his Father with repentance in his heart and asked forgiveness with open arms. His Father forgave him and celebrated his return joyfully. Let us also

confess our sins and ask for forgiveness from our Heavenly Father. This is the time of Reconciliation and Repentance.

Another dimension of Lent is that we need to care for and help the poor. It is very important to help the poor during this gracious season. The Lord declares in Is. 58:6-7 "Is not this kind of

fasting I have chosen; to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter; when you see the naked to clothe him and not to turn away from your own kin?" Let us do the kind of fasting, prayer and almsgiving which is chosen by the Lord and receive His abundant blessings.

So during this Lent season, let us purify our hearts and turn them into God's temple. Let us read and meditate on God's word to live a victorious life over sin and worldly pleasures. Let us also follow our Lord's teaching and help the poor and destitute and bear fruit for the Lord and bring Glory to His Holy name.



Fr. Allam Sagar Manoj Kumar is from the Diocese of Guntur. He has authored two books on Important Feast Days in the Liturgical year and contributed Articles to various National and Local magazines. He is also available for talks and retreats: allamgnt2020@gmail.com

Fr. C. Rodrigues Institute of Technology secures 1st Runner-up Rank in Student Innovation Festival 23 - Space Hackathon

Team Hashbytes of Fr. C. Rodrigues Institute of Technology secured 1st Runner-up Rank (out of 54 final selected teams and 4600+ registered teams) in the **Student Innovation Festival 23 - Space Hackathon** (Organized by **ISRO-National Remote Sensing Centre**), held in Faridabad from 17th to 19th January 2024.

Under the support and guidance of Principal **Dr. S. M. Khot** and Faculty Mentor, **Dr. Shubhangi Vaikole**, the team achieved this remarkable success.

Team Hashbytes worked on the project "**Conversational AI Triumph: Revolutionizing Query Resolution with**

Voice-Activated Search Assistants." Implementation incorporates two distinct approaches: **online and offline**. These independent strategies provided flexibility, with the online approach handling personalization tasks and the offline approach managing faster response times. The NLP logic employed in this implementation is **custom designed by the team**. **No third-party APIs or tools are integrated** into this system, ensuring that the logic is proprietary and tailored to specific needs.

The team comprised **Shriraj Patil** (Team leader) (TE- IT), **Harshali Patil** (TE -IT), **Shreyash Pawar** (TE-IT) and **Rahul Deoghare** (TE-EXTC).



The Hackathon team which secured the 1st Runner-up position.



Agnel swimmers win medals at National School Games 2023-24

Rishabh Das, a Std. X student of Fr. Agnel, Vashi, once again made his mark at the National School Games Swimming Championship by breaking three National Records and **winning all three Gold medals in the under-17 category**. Rishabh won a gold each with a national record in the 100 metre backstroke, the 200 metre backstroke and the 100 metre freestyle. He also anchored the **Maharashtra relay teams to a Gold in the 4 x 100 Freestyle and the 4 x 100 Medley Relays**.

Rishabh's teammate **Shlok Khopade**, a student of Std. XI Commerce, won the Gold in the **200 metre Breaststroke in the boys under-17 category** but had to be satisfied with a Silver in the 100 metre event. He also got a **Gold medal as a part of the 4 x 100 metre Medley relay for Maharashtra**.

Atharva Patil, from Std. VII won two **Gold medals in the 4 x 100 metre freestyle and medley relays for Maharashtra in the under-14 category**.

Jamboree organised by ISHRAE FCRIT Student Chapter

The annual event, JAMBOREE, organised by the Indian Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers (ISHRAE), Mumbai Chapter, was hosted by Fr. C. Rodrigues Institute of Technology (FCRIT), Vashi. 103 students from 11 colleges all over Mumbai and Navi Mumbai participated in this event. Various technical and non-technical events were conducted.

Fr. C. Rodrigues Institute of Technology, Vashi, received the highest number of points and was declared the 'Best ISHRAE Student Chapter for year 2023-24.'



Best ISHRAE Student Chapter Award 2023-24



ISHRAE AQuest - National Level Quiz Competition

The final year mechanical engineering ISHRAE student members of Fr. C. Rodrigues Institute of Technology (FCRIT), Vashi, excelled in the semi-finals of ISHRAE AQuest National Level Quiz competition, held in Nagpur on 27th January, 2024.

Team 1 comprising **Mayur Patil** and **Omkar Patil** were **winners of the semi-finals**, bagging a cash prize of Rs. 15,000. They will be directly competing in the national level finals. **Team 2** consisting of **Kaustubh Patil** and **Rupesh Chaudhari** qualified for a **wild card entry in the finals**.

The national level finals will be held on 15th and 16th February, 2024, during Acrex in Delhi. The winner will be awarded a cash prize of Rs. 50,000. 18 colleges in the Mumbai chapter participated in the initial competition.

Aquest National Level Quiz is organized annually by ISHRAE (Indian Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers). The competition attracts top talent from across the country. The competition is renowned for testing participants on their knowledge and proficiency in the field of heating, refrigeration, and air conditioning.



Team 1 - Mayur Patil and Omkar Patil winning the semi-finals



Team 2 - Kaustubh Patil and Rupesh Chaudhari qualifying the semi-finals

The FCRIT students were able to achieve these remarkable feats under the guidance of **Dr. Aqleem Siddiqui**, Head of Mechanical Department, **Ms. Neha Pandit**, Faculty Advisor and constant support of **Dr. Kavita Dhanawade**, ISHRAE Student Chair Mumbai Chapter.



Annual Sports Meet at Fr. Agnel's Vidyankur School, Pune

The Annual Sports Meet of Fr. Agnel's Vidyankur School, Pune, was held on 9th December 2023, a day filled with excitement. The Chief Guest for the day was **Dr. Shirish More**, a member of the Pune District Kho-Kho Committee and **Dr. Sharad Aher**, Professor of Maharashtra Mandal's Chandrashekhar Agashe College of Physical Education.

Students from Std. V to IX participated in a variety of events, like 100m, 200m and 400m sprint race, relay, obstacle race which alternated by vivid and

energetic presentation of various drills like fan drill, ribbon, flag drill, wriggly caterpillars. The highlight of programme was Lezim, performed by students of Std. IX.

The Chief Guest awarded the winners with medals and certificates. The House Trophy was awarded to **Courage House** and the Runner-up House to **Compassion House**. The Best Sportsperson Trophy was awarded to **Ayush Belhekar** and **Iti Jain**.



The house trophy was won by **Courage House**.



Swaying in rhythm to the **Lezim**.

"Come to me, all you who are weary ..."

-Tancia Pires

When troubles come, when sickness engulfs us, shaking the foundation of good health, there comes crumbling down; our faith in the Almighty. Questions arise in our minds: 'Why?? Why me? What have I done to deserve this? For which sin am I being punished?', so on and so forth...

In times as these, and to answer similar questions, **Pope John Paul II initiated the 'World Day of the Sick' to be celebrated annually on the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes on the 11th of February.** He said, "Christ does not explain in the abstract the reasons for suffering, but before all else, he says: 'Follow me!' Come! Take part through your suffering in this work of saving the world.... Gradually, as the individual takes up his cross, spiritually uniting himself to the Cross of Christ, the salvific meaning of suffering is revealed before him."

What a noble thought, behind introducing this day to be celebrated worldwide annually. It gives a totally contrary meaning to suffering and sickness, it aids in building new hope in those in distress and misery, it gives the sense of partaking in the trials and hardships of our Lord. It is an opportunity to embrace our fate or suffering and deepen our faith in the Almighty. Just as Job praised and thanked God in sickness that pleased God, the deep-rooted faith and glory to God, even in the lowest phase of oneself, will undoubtedly please God.

This day not only commemorates the hardships faced by the sick people but also those around them, the families of the sick, the caregivers at homes for the aged, at hospitals, who wholeheartedly provide them with the much-needed care and compassion. It is a day to remember and be grateful to the services provided by them, with such minute care, selflessness and determination.

It gives an opportunity to the kind-hearted enthusiasts to extend support and a helping hand. It reminds each of us to reflect upon the troubles in the lives of those afflicted with illnesses. It urges the world to show solidarity with those suffering, by offering prayers and good wishes, not only on this day, but every other day in life. It serves as a reminder to empathize with people around us, especially with those struggling with sickness.

When we talk about sickness, and suffering, it's not only the physical diseases that people undergo. Those in despair and suffer from loneliness, those longing for love and care, those who cannot express the exact amount of hurt or pain they are hiding behind their bright smiles, the difficulties one has to go through as a result of not being able to pay for their treatments or those who don't even have access to basic healthcare needs and hygiene. All these people also deserve the care and

support of people around them, may it be their families, the government or any healthcare organisation, that need to be sensitive towards the needs of these people.

The World Day of the Sick stands as a beacon of compassion, healthcare advocacy, and global solidarity. So, let this day be a day to remember the sick and be empathetic towards them. Let's embrace our sickness and grow in faith, let us carry our toils and troubles in prayers and offer it to Jesus, as Jesus himself said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."



Tancia Pires is on the Faculty in MIT, Dept. of Radiodiagnosis, SRM Medical College Hospital and Research Centre, Chennai. She is passionate about writing, acting and singing.

THE JUBILEE YEAR 2025

-Norma Kamath

Pope Francis has declared the year 2025 as the 27th Ordinary Jubilee of the Catholic Church, 10 years after the Extraordinary 2015 Jubilee Year of Mercy, and 25 years since the Great Jubilee of 2000 convoked by Pope St. John Paul II.

In the year 1300, Pope Boniface the VIII established the Holy Year as a centenary observance in the church. In 1342, Pope Clement VI reduced the interval to 50 years, and it was later changed by Pope Paul II to 25 years, so that an individual could experience it in his lifetime.

The Jubilee Year is marked by the opening of the Holy Doors in four major basilicas of Rome, St. Peter's, St. John Lateran, St. Mary Major and St. Paul's. The door of St. Peter's will be opened first on December 24th, 2024 to signify the open arms of the church to her broken yet beloved faithful. Pilgrims walk through these doors to obtain graces, and through observance of certain devotional practices receive the Jubilee Plenary Indulgence. The Door is symbolic of Jesus the Good Shepherd, who said, "I am the Door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved, and go in and out to find pasture. I came that they may have Life, and have it abundantly."

FULFILMENT OF PROPHECIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Apostle John writes of the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah 22:22 in Rev. 3:7-8 and Rev 4:1. The prophecy of Isaiah 61:1-2 in the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament in Lk. 4:18-19, 21. It is revealed to John in the Spirit through an angel in Rev. 5:1-10.

Jesus opens the scroll at the synagogue in Nazareth in Lk. 4:18-19 and reads, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the accepted year of the Lord." Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing (Lk. 4:21) The day of the Lord's favour is the Jubilee Year. Isaiah 58:6 speaks of authentic fasting, to break every yoke, and let the oppressed go free.

The Jubilee Year in the Old Testament, Lev. 25:10. "You will declare the 50th Year sacred and proclaim the liberation of all the inhabitants of the land. This is to be a

jubilee for you. It is a year of atonement and mercy, when debts are forgiven, and conversion is widespread."

POPE PAUL'S GUIDELINES FOR THE JUBILEE YEAR 2025

We are called to have a spirit of generosity, to work for the liberation of the human person, both Christian and Non-Christian, especially in the area of sin. It requires an openness of heart in union with the Heart of Jesus our Saviour, and the Word. We need to guard against certain attitudes of possessiveness which is incompatible with the spirit of the Jubilee.

THE MOTTO PILGRIM OF HOPE is chosen by Pope Francis, in lieu of the poverty experienced in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the migration of refugees due to war and persecution. We need to reach out with compassion to the cries of the poor. The Jubilee Year is meant to restore access to the fruits of the earth to everyone. The Pope has called us to be instruments of unity in diversity. As Adam and Eve were entrusted to till and keep their habitat, the Garden of Eden, so the onus of caring for God's creation rests on mankind.

PREPARATION FOR THE JUBILEE YEAR 2025

The faithful are encouraged to reflect on the four Constitutions of the 2nd Vatican Council (1962-1965)

- (1) The Sacred Liturgy
- (2) The Church as The People of God
- (3) Scripture
- (4) The Church in the Modern World.

2024 - The focus will be on Prayer.

2025 - Major Jubilee events dedicated to,

- (1) The World of Communications
- (2) Families
- (3) Young People



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.

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

This magazine is available online.

Visit us at www.agnelashram.org



THE JUBILEE PRAYER

Father in heaven,
may the faith you have given us
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,
and the flame of charity enkindled
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
reawaken in us the blessed hope
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us
into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.
May those seeds transform from within both
humanity and the whole cosmos
in the sure expectation
of a new heaven and a new earth,
when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,
your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee
reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope,
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.

May that same grace spread
the joy and peace of our Redeemer
throughout the earth.

To you our God, eternally blessed,
be glory and praise for ever.

Amen

Franciscus

Pope: Never let children stop being children



Pope Francis commends the Real Club de Tennis Barcelona on its 125th anniversary, emphasising tennis as a means of personal growth through respectful play and urging the club to prioritise the integral development of children.

Pope Francis welcomed members of Spain's "Real Club de Tennis Barcelona" as they celebrated the 125th anniversary of their founding as a sports club. "I am pleased," the Pope said in his discourse, "to be able to emphasize once again the opportunities that sport offers for the growth of each person and society."

Speaking about their sport in particular, Pope Francis noted that tennis is not a team sport, and that it therefore "presents an interesting aspect for our consideration."

"It would seem that the challenge between players has mainly to do with the desire to prevail over the opponent," noted the Pope.

However, he continued, through the history of the club, it is clear that it is in fact "an expression of the founders' openness to what good could come from outside and to a dialogue with other cultures, which allowed them to create new realities."

Pope Francis went on to note that in tennis, just as in life, "we cannot always win," but that it will be an enriching challenge if, by playing politely and according to the rules, "we learn that it is not a struggle but a dialogue that involves our effort and allows us to improve."

"On the playing field, as in the field of life, we sometimes feel alone, other times supported by those who play this game of life with us. But, even when we play 'alone', we are always in the presence of the Lord, who teaches us what it means to respect and understand others, in constant communication."

Bringing his discourse to a close, Pope Francis emphasized the great work the team has done in training international players.

"It is a great challenge, but when we work with these children, who dream of an excellent sporting future, the demands of training cannot prevail over their integral growth; there is nothing more important than this human and spiritual development."

Therefore, he concluded, "take care of children, those who can benefit from the values of sport in complex social environments, and also those who might succeed in high-level competitions. Let them not stop being children!"

- VATICAN NEWS

The month of February is a special month for romance and it is a month to celebrate Valentine's Day. Gifts, cards, flowers are all the special things that couples do for each other to celebrate their love.

So with Cupid striking in this romantic month, let's begin...

True Romance



Amelia and her husband were wed for a few years. Their love for each other was very strong and they were committed to each other.

However, on Valentine's Day, Amelia received a beautiful bouquet of flowers that took her breath away.

She was so pleased that she counted the flowers. She found a short note. It read: My love for you will last till the last flower of this bouquet dies. The note made her feel a bit unsure and she wondered whether her husband who had left for a business trip wanted to end their relationship.

She soaked the flowers in water. Each day, the flowers grew less lovely and blooming, and slowly one by one, they withered away.

But she noticed only one flower was left and it looked fresh.

Then she touched it and realised in that bouquet it was the only artificial flower that would last forever.

She smiled as she understood how deeply her husband loved her.

What do we learn from this story?

We learn as human beings, we may become insecure in our relationships at times but we must draw strength from recalling good memories and realising our insecurities are at times natural and should be overcome. Also men are very practical and know artificial flowers do last longer than real flowers that wither away soon. So when men shy away from giving flowers, it is not that they are unromantic but simply being practical. However that being said, romance and Cupid through the centuries have never been renowned to be very practical, admittedly.

What's the Good Word?



1. The Mughal emperor who built the Taj Mahal and for whom?
2. The author of the book *Love Story* that was later made into a successful movie.
3. Eros is the Greek God of love. Who is the Roman God of love?
4. The most popular Valentine's Day gift.
5. The most popular flowers given on Valentine's Day.

Fun Valentine's Day facts. All about chocolates.

Chocolates are considered as an aphrodisiac since the Aztecs. This means it is said to contain a substance that inflames love and desire. Therefore unsurprisingly, chocolates are very popular on Valentine's Day and heart-shaped chocolate boxes are very popular.

So if you are thinking about giving your loved one chocolates, here are some of the top chocolates that few girls can resist.

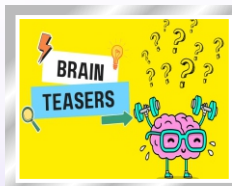


Lindt, Cadbury, Ferrero Rocher, Hershey's, Nestle Dairy, Toblerone, Mars, Amul, Godiva chocolate and Galaxy. Also the fairer sex can rarely resist Mackintosh

Quality Street. This brand is now acquired by Nestle and is sold in an attractive tin box. Every tin holds 12 delicious varieties and wrapped in colourful paper. It had been first manufactured in 1936 in West Yorkshire. The most popular sweet amongst them, loved by many is the purple one that is a perfect mix of chocolate, hazelnut and caramel.

Well, that got your mouth watering, didn't it? Undoubtedly besides flowers, chocolates do top the list of Valentine's Day gifts.

Brain Teasers



1. How many people can be in an empty room?
2. Tom ran a five thousand metre marathon and beat Mark in third place. Where is Tom in the race?

3. A girl was rushed to the emergency room and the doctor said, "I cannot operate on this girl. She is my daughter." But the doctor was not the girl's father. How could this be?

4. What is yours that other people use more than you?

5. There is a hanged man in a room. But nothing else other than a puddle of water on the ground. There is no piece of furniture in the room. So how did he hang himself?

6. A multiplied by B = C. C is greater than 20 and less than 24. A is an odd number while B is an even number.

What is the value of A, B and C?

Smile Please



1. Knowledge is knowing that a cucumber is a fruit and wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad.

2. Did you hear about the Italian chef who died? He pasta-way.

3. Two windmills were standing on a wind farm.

One asked, "What is your favourite type of music?"

The other said, "I am a big metal fan."

4. "I was born in Mumbai."

"Really? Which part?"

"All of me."

5. There were three restaurants on the same block.

One of them put up a sign - **The Best Restaurant in the city.**

The other not to be outdone put up a sign - **The Best Restaurant in the country.**

The last was a small cheaper one. Not to be outdone, it put up this sign - **The Best Restaurant in the Block.**

6. Girl: "You would be a good dancer except for two things."

Boy: "What two things?"

Girl: "Your feet."

The Taj Mahal - A monument of True love

When it comes to romance, history has many stories of love that are inspiring. From the fictitious Romeo and Juliet to the more modern romances, love stories are often captivating.

The Taj Mahal, our beautiful monument, is an awesome spectacle in white marble with precious



and semi-precious stones that make it undoubtedly one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

Situated in Agra, near Delhi, it is a major tourist attraction. The

Taj Mahal was built by the fifth Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahan in 1631, in memory of his third wife, his favourite, Mumtaz Mahal, a Persian princess who was beautiful and a devoted mother.

She suddenly died while accompanying her husband in Berhampur in a campaign to crush a rebellion after giving birth to her 13th child. The Emperor Shah Jahan was so crushed that in a few months, his hair and beard grew snow white in grief and shock.

Mumtaz Mahal when she had been alive had extracted four promises from him. The first was that he build the Taj, the second he should marry again, the third was that he should be kind to their children and the fourth was he should visit her tomb on her death anniversary. However, sadly due to house arrest by his own treacherous son and successor to the throne, Aurangzeb, this barred him from keeping his last promise.

The Taj Mahal with its semi-precious stones glowing in white marble is an epitome of grandeur and beauty. It is said that when the Emperor was under house arrest, he used to intensely view the Taj lying on his bed through a diamond fixed on the wall in front at a particular angle.

This awesome monument is a reminder to mankind that true love is beautiful and eternal.

Quiz on St. Valentine

1. The Empire during the life of St. Valentine that persecuted Christians.



2. The type of people whom St. Valentine conducted weddings for.

3. The person he wrote a letter signed, "Your Valentine" before his execution.

4. The romantic symbol in Italy on St. Valentine's Day.

5. The first recorded celebration of the feast of St. Valentine.

Riddles



1. What 5-letter word typed in capital letters can be read the same upside down?
2. Which is the most expensive fish in the world?
3. A ship sunk in the Pacific Ocean. Ten bodies were recovered. Where were the survivors buried?
4. What kind of band never plays music?

True facts about ROMANCE

1. When two lovers gaze at each other's eyes, their heart rates synchronize.

2. Falling in love has neurological effects similar to those of taking the drug cocaine.



3. Couples who are too similar to each other are not likely to last, yet couples who are too different also share the same problem.

4. Heartbreak is not just a poetic melancholy word but has actual physical effects like chest pains, shortness of breath and even pain in one's heart.

5. Love on a plane? One in every 50 travellers has met their soulmate on board a plane in a survey of more than 5,000 travellers.



A touching love story

February is a very romantic month that makes us celebrate love. We honour St. Valentine, a Roman Catholic priest and physician who died a martyr because of his preaching and performing the wedding ceremonies of Christian soldiers. We can conclude with a heart-warming inspiring love story.

A young man named John, drove past a house in the summer of 1958, in San Diego, America. He now passed through a newly built street on his way home. The house was not grand or awesome but a bit unremarkable. Pale green and on the north side of the street. Yet he felt irresistibly drawn towards it like a moth to a flame. It beat all comprehension and he was puzzled.

Fall came after summer and he began studying photography at college nearby. He met a pretty, red-haired classmate named Ruth. By now he had forgotten about his attraction to the green house.

He asked her for a date because he felt very attracted to her. She gave him her address.

He pulled up in his car and got a total surprise. Ruth lived in that same familiar green house with her father while she went to college. He understood then why he had felt drawn to that house. His mind had somehow uncannily had known his lady love was living inside. They married and at present have been wed for 60 years.

I guess sometimes our hearts know more than our logical minds. True love is often unexpected, mysterious and beats human comprehension.

Well, that's all for this month. Take care and see you next month.

Answers

What's the Good Word?

1. Emperor Shah Jahan for his wife Mumtaz. 2. Erich Segal. 3. Cupid. 4. Chocolates and sweets. 5. Roses particularly red roses.

Brain Teasers

1. Not any person or else it would not be an empty room. 2. Third place. 3. The doctor was the girl's mother. 4. Your name. 5. The man climbed on a large ice-cube and hung himself then the ice-cube later melted.

6. A=11, B=2, C=22.

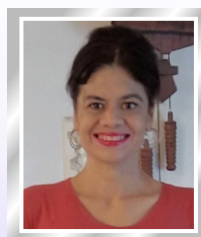
Quiz on St. Valentine

1. Roman. 2. Christian soldiers. 3. Jailor's daughter. 4. Saint Valentine's keys.

2. February 14 in the 8th century.

Riddles

1. SWIM. 2. Goldfish. 3. Survivors do not need to be buried.
4. A rubber band.



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 PRAYERS ANSWERED

GERMANY: I am thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for the several favours received, through his kind intercession. The Venerable has been my constant intercessor, over the years.

-Conci Wendt

THANKSGIVING ON SUCCESS IN BUSINESS

CHEMBUR: Many years ago, I prayed to Ven. Fr. Agnelo for his kind intercession in helping me start my coaching classes. Today, my Agnel Classes is a boon to students and is running successfully. Every year, I come for the Agnel Jayanti celebrations at Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra, to offer my grateful thanks to the Venerable.

-Bhawin Vijay Singh

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

GHATKOPAR: I am thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for interceding for me and blessing me in every way. It fills my heart with joy to visit Fr. Agnel Ashram and see the rich legacy continued by the Ashram Fathers.

-Patsy Dias

THANKSGIVING ON GOLDEN JUBILEE WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

VAKOLA: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, Manuel and Felicidad D'Costa celebrated 50 years of a happy married life. The couple are thankful to the Venerable and Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra, for the blessings received.

-Diedra D'Mello

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

DUBAI: I am very much thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for helping and interceding for me at all times. I am his staunch devotee and make it a point to visit Fr. Agnel Ashram in Bandra, during my visits to Mumbai.

-Fernandes & Family

BLESSINGS ON THE FAMILY

NEW DELHI: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, our family is thankful for the graces and blessings received for our salon business.

-Cecilia Gomes

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

VIRAR: Ven. Fr. Agnel has blessed me in many ways. I always look up to him for his kind intercession with Lord Jesus.

-Anil D'Cunha

THANKSGIVING FOR INNUMERABLE BLESSINGS RECEIVED

KHAR: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have received many favours. My family turns to him to intercede for us, whenever we have special intentions and he has never let us down.

-Mary Anand

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

VASAI: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, we have blessed at all times. We have complete faith in Lord Jesus and the Venerable.

-Lila Gonsalves

THANKSGIVING FOR SHOWERS OF BLESSINGS RECEIVED

KARNATAKA: I would like to thank Ven. Fr. Agnel for the innumerable favours received, through his kind intercession. I just can't count my blessings received, through the power of Lord Jesus Christ.

-Deepak Lobo

THANKSGIVING FOR KIND INTERCESSION

VASAI: Ven. Fr. Agnel has blessed me in many ways. I always look up to him for his kind intercession with Lord Jesus.

-Maria Rocha

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

GOA: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, our family received several favours. We have tremendous faith in the constant intercession of the Venerable.

-Bosco Rodrigues

THANKSGIVING FOR GOOD HEALTH

ARNALA: Ven. Fr. Agnel has blessed me with good health. I am indeed grateful for all the favours received.

-Josephine Johnson Lili

THANKSGIVING FOR VISA

GUJARAT: Through the kind intercession of Fr. Agnel, I have obtained my visa to travel abroad. It is a dream come true.

-Mital Paul

THANKSGIVING FOR PRAYERS ANSWERED

VAKOLA: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, we have been blessed immensely. Our family always looks up to the Venerable.

-Blossom Ferrao

OUT OF THEIR BOUNTY

L. Rebello	Karnataka	40,000	S. D'Abreo	Vasai	5,000	Sojan/Josmy	Mumbai	2,000
M. Aranha	Mumbai	30,000	K. Pinto	Mumbai	4,900	N. Fernandes	Goa	2,000
A. Marangoly	Australia	27,206	Sharon D.	Mumbai	4,750	Y. Mistry	Mumbai	2,000
N. Anthony	Mumbai	25,000	M. Mehta	Mumbai	4,000	L. Thomas	Kerala	2,000
N. Parmar	Gujarat	25,000	R. Shah	Kenya	4,000	S. Bhikhubhai	Mumbai	2,000
S. John	Kerala	20,000	W. Vaz	Mumbai	4,000	I. D'Souza	Mumbai	2,000
S. Sequeira	Vasai	20,000	C. Alvares	Mumbai	4,000	M. Dias	Mumbai	2,000
D. D'Cruz	Mumbai	15,000	J. Sheikh	Mumbai	4,000	F. Thekketh	Kerala	2,000
D. D'Mello	Mumbai	15,000	P. Hendricks	Tamil Nadu	4,000	P. Lalwani	Mumbai	2,000
S. Nair	Mumbai	15,000	M. D'Mello	Mumbai	3,750	H. Karkaria	Mumbai	2,000
A. Das	Mumbai	12,000	L. Shetty	Mumbai	3,100	V. Vasu	Pune	2,000
M. D'Souza	Mumbai	11,500	R. Thakkar	Mumbai	3,002	K. Sangani	Mumbai	2,000
A. Gaikwad	Mumbai	11,400	P. Swamidas	Mumbai	3,000	Lilly	Mumbai	2,000
S. Keluskar	Mumbai	11,000	R. Radhakrishnan	Tamil Nadu	3,000	Tony I.	Kerala	2,000
Janak/Kiran/Nikunj	Mumbai	11,000	S. Condillac	Mumbai	3,000	Lifeway Holidays	Kerala	2,000
M. D'Souza	Mumbai	10,000	F. D'Souza	Thane	3,000	A. Nadar	Mumbai	2,000
D. D'Souza	Mumbai	10,000	M. Lam	Mumbai	3,000	T. Menezes	Mumbai	2,000
R. Deewan	Mumbai	10,000	C. Achrekar	Mumbai	3,000	K. Sangani	Mumbai	2,000
Gemsons Engg.	Mumbai	10,000	S. Parmar	Mumbai	3,000	R. Deshpande	USA	2,000
S. Deshpande	Mumbai	10,000	Z. Bharucha	Vasai	3,000	Rebecca	Mumbai	2,000
S. D'Costa	Vasai	10,000	Justin J.	Kerala	3,000	Jayalekshmi M.	Kerala	2,000
G. Gonsalves	Vasai	10,000	N. Parekh	Canada	3,000	P. Michael	Kerala	2,000
D. Deb	Kolkata	10,000	P. Mendonca	Mumbai	3,000	M. Lopes	Canada	2,000
R. D'Costa	Vasai	10,000	S. Kalivda	Mumbai	3,000	S. Purohit	Mumbai	1,980
M. Nadar	Mumbai	10,000	Techno Prod.	Chennai	3,000	Y. Chindalia	Mumbai	1,700
Michelle	Mumbai	10,000	V. Sherigar	Mumbai	3,000	Jason/Charles	Pune	1,600
K. Saldanha	Mumbai	10,000	S. Venkataramanan	Mumbai	3,000	M. Pichairaj	Tamil Nadu	1,500
R. Shelke	Pune	10,000	L. Remedios	UAE	3,000	M. Gandhi	Gujarat	1,500
Melwyn	Mumbai	10,000	S. Valan	Tamil Nadu	3,000	L. D'Cunha	Bangalore	1,500
S. Rane	Mumbai	10,000	A. De Souza	Mumbai	3,000	S. Fernandes	Vasai	1,500
G. Lobo	Karnataka	9,000	Marian	Mumbai	3,000	A. Naidu	Mumbai	1,500
Jose P.	Kerala	8,300	J. Patel	Mumbai	3,000	J. Manuel	Navi Mumbai	1,500
E. D'Cunha	Mumbai	8,000	Adrian/Anthony	Vasai	2,700	N. Asher	Mumbai	1,500
J. Kotino	Vasai	7,500	Abhay Jha	Mumbai	2,500	S. Rangoonwala	Mumbai	1,500
E. Rebello	Mumbai	7,500	L. D'Souza	Mumbai	2,500	A. Kuttikadan	Mumbai	1,500
R. Valentine	Mumbai	6,000	S. Elas	Maharashtra	2,500	A. Jadhav	Kerala	1,500
F. Solanki	Mumbai	6,000	H. Silveira	Vasai	2,500	Irudayaraj M.	Tamil Nadu	1,500
J. Gonsalves	Vasai	5,555	C. Mathias	Mumbai	2,200	J. D'Souza	Mumbai	1,500
G. Nunes	Mumbai	5,500	M. Prabhu	Navi Mumbai	2,007	S. Noronha	Mumbai	1,500
R. Albuquerque	Mumbai	5,500	Aaradhya/Aashrita	Mumbai	2,002	N. Thakkar	Gujarat	1,500
B. Parekh	UK	5,100	T. Antony	Kerala	2,001	J. D'Souza	Mumbai	1,250
Subramaniam R.	Mumbai	5,100	Jose K.	Kerala	2,001	N. Atram	Mumbai	1,250
Melinda	Mumbai	5,100	S. Mistry	Mumbai	2,001	L. D'Souza	Mumbai	1,200
Jean/Nicolette	Mumbai	5,000	S. Dias	Palghar	2,000	G. Pujara	Mumbai	1,200
R. Alphanso	Vasai	5,000	S. Sebastian	Kerala	2,000	T. Nangre	Mumbai	1,100
G. Varghese	Kerala	5,000	J. Pinto	Karnataka	2,000	S. Noronha	Mumbai	1,100
I. Menezes	Mumbai	5,000	M. Pereira	Mumbai	2,000	G. Bhatt	Mumbai	1,100
S. Hewale	Mumbai	5,000	J. Cherian	Mumbai	2,000	P. Barot	Mumbai	1,100
L. Sequeira	Vasai	5,000	D. Gonsalvez	Tamil Nadu	2,000	B. Jain	Mumbai	1,098
J. Jacob	Mumbai	5,000	M. John	Kerala	2,000	B. Asani	Mumbai	1,008
B. Naik	Pune	5,000	Cranetech Equip.	Mumbai	2,000	A. Auti	Mumbai	1,002
C. D'Souza	Karnataka	5,000	A. Monteiro	Mumbai	2,000	A. Shenai	USA	1,001
S. Varakala	Mumbai	5,000	P. Thakker	Mumbai	2,000	M. Rukhana	Mumbai	1,001
S. Kadam	Navi Mumbai	5,000	D. Dutt	Mumbai	2,000	A. Shirali	Mumbai	1,001
B. Pereira	Mumbai	5,000	A. D'Cunha	Mumbai	2,000	U. Kanani	Mumbai	1,001
K. Kapadia	Karnataka	5,000	M. Balani	Mumbai	2,000	G. Charan	Mumbai	1,001
N. Rosamma	Kerala	5,000	G. Xavier	Kerala	2,000	K. Desai	Gujarat	1,001
A. Steby	Kerala	5,000	Theyyamma M.	Kerala	2,000	M. Panicker	Palghar	1,000
R. Parikh	Mumbai	5,000	D. Sekhran	Mumbai	2,000	R. D'Souza	Vasai	1,000
N. Gohil	Maharashtra	5,000	C. Almeida	Mumbai	2,000	J. Saldanha	Mumbai	1,000
A. Morenas	Mumbai	5,000	U. Shah	Mumbai	2,000	W. Leon	Tamil Nadu	1,000
R. Noronha	Mumbai	5,000	A. Elavia	Mumbai	2,000	J. Sequeira	Mumbai	1,000
S. Pinto	Mumbai	5,000	P. Alois	Gujarat	2,000	R. Lopes	Palghar	1,000
N. D'Mello	Vasai	5,000	K. Ghogare	Mumbai	2,000	J. Jamble	Mumbai	1,000
M. Jariwala	Gujarat	5,000	R. Johnson	Kerala	2,000	E. Abraham	Kerala	1,000
P. Popat	Mumbai	5,000	R. Francis	Kerala	2,000	N. Meera	Kerala	1,000
B. Pereira	Vasai	5,000	S. Joseph	Kerala	2,000	A. Shaju	Kerala	1,000
D. Masurkar	Mumbai	5,000						

Bob's Banter

by Robert Clements

Outside the Closed Door..!

The little boy was weeping outside the closed doors of the church. His tears flowed like tsunami waves down his cheek. A stranger passing by, stopped and enquired, "Why are you crying little boy, that too outside a church?"

The little boy looked up to the stranger and said, "The priest could not pray for my mother! She's dying, but before I could reach the priest to ask him to pray for her, the doors were closed!"

The stranger sat next to the little fellow, and gave him a tissue to wipe his eyes, "Many years ago, " said the stranger, "Jesus was preaching to people like the priest inside and others like me, and suddenly little children came running, creating a disturbance and wanting to speak with Jesus. "Ssshhh" said the crowd, but what do you thing Jesus did?"

near them, "Son, you're here," said a woman's voice.

"Ma!" whispered the little boy, "I thought you were sick!"

"Sick people recover my son," said the smiling mother as she hugged the little boy who threw himself into her waiting arms. The man watched as the little boy came back and hugged him, then walked away with his mother.

All outside the church's door.

The man then sighed and then looked up to the heaven's above, "Jesus," he said, "You tore the veil, so that no special person was needed to intercede for me. No priest. No elder. That my prayers are equal to the saints of God, because with your death, I have been made a saint!"

He felt a God above smile as he continued, "I was



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The little boy had stopped crying as the stranger gave him another tissue and continued, "Jesus called the children to himself, put them on his knee and spoke to them even as they conversed with him!"

"Will Jesus do it now?" asked the little boy hesitantly.

"Whatever Jesus did then," said the stranger with conviction, "He did, so we would realise He would do the same today! Shall we talk to Jesus about your mother now?"

The stranger had tears in his eyes as he heard the little boy pray about his mother and the healing required. His tears flowed as he heard about how the little fellow felt, frightened and scared. They were so busy praying, they did not hear footsteps

like that dying thief, next to you on the cross, nearly beyond redemption, looking for someone, maybe a priest who would pray to you for me, and then I spoke straight to you, and you forgave me and took me in!"

The man looked up, even as he saw the child waving to him, and he waved back. Two saints outside the closed doors of the church, who needed no one to pray for them, because their own prayers were as powerful as the ones inside those doors..!

***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*

**155TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF VEN. FR. AGNELO CELEBRATED
AT FR. AGNEL ASHRAM, BANDRA, MUMBAI**



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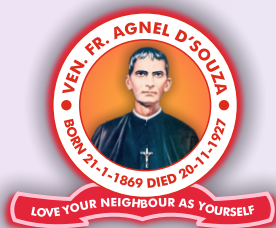
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LENT

A TIME TO PREPARE



**May this Lent be a season of grace for you and your loved ones,
a season to realize how much you are loved and cared for by God!
HAVE A BLESSED LENT!**



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