

FR. AGNEL

ASHRAM NEWS

August 2024



In Independence, we roar! Together, we soar!

AUGUST 2024

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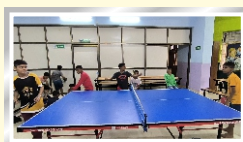
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THE NATIVITY OF BLESSED VIRGIN MARY - BANDRA FEAST - 2024



Dear Friends and Well-Wishers,

Let us celebrate with joyful hearts the birth of Virgin Mary, of whom was born our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It is a time of rejoicing and our little Agnelite angels, the Balbhavan children across all centres of the Agnel Region, also look forward to the day.

We appreciate your contribution in assisting us in caring for our children. Your financial assistance will be very special, on this occasion.

We wish you a Happy Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary and assure you of our daily prayers for your special intentions by our children.

With a grateful heart,

Fr. Superior

Fr. Agnel Ashram

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PRAY FOR POLITICAL LEADERS THIS MONTH

-Fr. Fio Mascarenhas, SJ

As many of our Readers may know, Pope Francis last month signed Statutes for PWPN (*Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network*), making it an official work of the Vatican, and entrusting its organization and promotion to the Jesuits. Every month, the Pope prays and asks God to reveal what are the most pressing needs of the world and the Church for *today*, and he then recommends to PWPN what he believes the Holy Spirit has revealed to him as being the most important need to urgently beseech the Lord for.

In August 2024 that need is **FOR POLITICAL LEADERS**: All Catholics are asked to pray much (and work) **“that political leaders will be truly at the service of their people, working for integral human development and the common good, taking care of those who have lost their jobs, and giving priority to the poor.”**

Let me place this prayer intention in the context of these striking words from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 8:22-23: ***“The whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; for the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God.”***

Every important spiritual leader of today's world are confirming that the problems humanity is facing are all of our own making, and cannot be blamed on a capricious God! Pope Francis has written two whole encyclicals (*“Laudato Si”* Part 1 & 2) on this topic, and Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew, and other world leaders (including the United Nations Secretary General, etc.) are also frequently highlighting it.

Truly, we cannot blame God for the suffering that comes to us from man-made problems. Many terminal illnesses like cancer, and recurring plagues like swine flu, Aids, etc., are caused or aggravated by man-made pollution of air, land and sea, and by the inadequate way we handle the tensions of life. We cannot selfishly destroy our world and then, like a spoilt child who repeatedly breaks a nice toy, keep calling out to Dad to mend

it and make it new (only for us to spoil it again, and in new ways)!

The technological advances of the last 100 years have created the illusion that human beings are in control of their destiny as never before. We have cracked the DNA code, we can create life in test tubes, we can genetically modify crops, we can put men on the moon – but we have lost our balance, externally and within. Wealth generated in the developed world has not put an end to suffering. The explosion of knowledge has not been accompanied by an increase in wisdom; we have not realized that the Creation is an interdependent, undivided whole, not an assemblage of isolated, unrelated parts that can be eliminated, replaced or modified as we see fit.

Creation is groaning! We have lost half of the great forests of the world to the demand for timber and for conversion to agriculture, without thinking that these giant wet sponges are responsible for the delivery of much of the fresh water. Irrigation for agriculture takes 70% of global demand for water, and some of the world's greatest rivers are so depleted by the influence of humans that they no longer flow to the sea; and those that do, are carrying in their waters all the chemical fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides and waste materials they have collected along their course. We are building bigger nuclear arsenals and armaments, and rich nations are crazily providing more luxurious standards of living for their small populations (e.g. indiscriminate air-conditioning). Other activities of industrialization have produced a major ecological crisis for all: pollution on all fronts and global warming. We are consuming earth's resources and destroying its capital, as if there is no tomorrow.

“Subdue (or dominate) the earth's forces” (Gen 1:28) is God's specific will for his human creatures, for their own good and for God's greater glory. Everyone has a part to play, and a responsibility in conserving creation: our successes or failures, personal and collective, determine the lives of billions. Our decisions, ***especially those of political leaders***, personal and collective, determine the future of the planet.

Closer to home, here is a list of the dangers and actual harm done to us citizens, especially to our poor and marginalized sisters and brothers, by the policies decided, and vigorously carried out, by **politicians**, especially those in Government:

1. Education and NEP2020: Changes have been made in the content of school and college syllabi and textbooks, which include suppression of themes like democracy and secularism and even some foundational truths of science, besides slanting accounts of history; and a take-over of minority schools' appointment of teachers and Principals.

2. Economy: A population of 900 million are below the poverty index, inspite of India being very rich in all natural resources; farmer suicides have increased; high unemployment is prevalent; the Electoral Bonds were a means for the ruling parties to unconstitutionally accept huge donations, with allegations of extortion. All this indicates that the economy has been damaged to the detriment of the common man and the benefit of a very few.

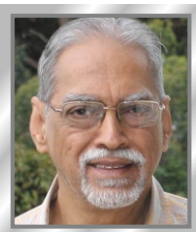
3. Violence and Hate against: Muslims, Christians, Dalits, Tribals ... with Manipur an extreme example but incidents are reported all over India; the proposed Delisting of Christian Tribals in Chhattisgarh, will remove all Scheduled Tribes rights from Christian Tribals.

4. The Apparent Suspension of Democracy: With the mainstream Media allegedly not being free to critique the Government; hundreds being arrested under the amended UAPA and PMLA

laws with their stiff bail restrictions, including professors, students, lawyers, opposition politicians and even Chief Ministers; even the Judiciary seeming to be under pressure (with judges recusing from politically sensitive cases). The new Criminal Laws are feared to have made any dissent a possible act against the State, leading to a virtual Police State.

HENCE, it is extremely important to achieve a **change of Policies** in Maharashtra and many other states. **The Unorganized MAJORITY** need to come out and vote. We must strengthen democratic forces that will work for the majority of the people. To quote again, *“for the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons and daughters of God; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God”*(Rom 8:23).

Pope Francis asks the members of the PWP (you, and me) to pray much this month **“for political leaders.”** They “control” their peoples' destiny and well-being by the way in which they conscientiously and far-sightedly carry out their duty as leaders in government, judiciary, etc. Pray, and work for it by wisely and courageously voting.



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

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, A BOON AND YET....!

-Fr. M.K. George, SJ

You think you can survive without Artificial Intelligence?

When you went to McDonald's to order your favourite food, they were using A.I. Now, *The New York Times* (24 June 2024) reported that McDonald's ended A.I. ordering of food amid errors.

Artificial Intelligence is “the theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages”(Oxford Dictionary).

We can identify over twenty uses of Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) in our everyday life. There are the taxi booking apps (who doesn't use Uber in a city?), Voice Assistants (the Alexa, the Google Assistant and others), chatbots (who doesn't know chatGPT? Recently, I prepared a full lecture with it), entertainment streaming Apps (will you be able to survive without Netflix?), personalized marketing, Image recognition through Google Lens, Social Media Algorithms, (who does not use Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and so on?), smart input keyboards, Fraud detection in banking, Navigation and Travel (aren't the days of printed maps over? Google Maps lead you everywhere), gamified therapy, Fall detection and car crash detection, Self-driving vehicles, facial recognition technologies (maybe your password is your face), AI-driven speech recognition, security and surveillance, e-mail filtering, AI image generators (don't you see it all over), weather prediction, and the Internet of things. The last opens up a plethora of opportunities to develop smarter home appliances that require minimal human interference to operate. The use of AI in medicine, in war and education pose potentially massive changes in life.

The Promise

And the future is hugely promising. “Artificial Intelligence will reach human levels by around 2029. Follow that out further to, say, 2045, we will have multiplied the intelligence, the human biological machine intelligence of our civilization a billion-fold” (Ray Kurzweil).

Yet, the dangers...

Just as people are all out praising the future prospects, there are doomsayers. For instance, Stephen Hawking told BBC, 'the development of full artificial intelligence could spell the end of the

human race.... It would take off on its own, and re-design itself at an ever-increasing rate. Humans, who are limited by slow biological evolution, couldn't compete, and would be superseded.”

Pope Francis on Artificial Intelligence

On a more balanced note, while addressing the leaders of the recent G7 summit, Pope Francis highlighted both the beauty of artificial intelligence and the risks involved. He said, 'it is a very attractive tool that can produce good results at the same time as other man-made tools, and a terrible force capable of causing damage.’

He warned the world leaders of the risk of using artificial intelligence for war purposes. “Self-contained weapons” with lethal strike capabilities pose a threat to the lives of ordinary human beings.” He added, 'at a time when the use of artificial intelligence is increasing in the medical field, in the workplace, in

cultural communication, education and even in political arena, we must not forget how powerful and terrible this device can become.”

Towards a balanced use of Artificial Intelligence

In ensuring a healthy and balanced use of AI, Pope Francis reminds us, the most important factor is ensuring of ethical standards. He says, “I am certain that this potential (of A.I.) will be realized only if there is a constant and consistent commitment on the part of those developing these technologies to act ethically and responsibly.” A.I. can make the world a better place only if it serves the “common good” and does not increase inequalities. Human dignity should remain the core concern.

While the Pope has called on the world leaders for responsible use of artificial intelligence, ordinary people like you and me can also contribute to this goal. We all need to engage in a critical reflection on the uses of artificial intelligence with the perspectives suggested by Pope Francis. And, not the least important is to say 'no' to the use of A.I. when it violates human dignity.



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

CONTRIBUTIONS OF CHRISTIANS IN THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE

-Jacqueline Kelly

India being a secular country, has a glorious past and Indians are proud of their rich cultural heritage. For decades, even prior to independence of our country in 1947, the Catholic Church had been empowering people through education throughout the country, even in the most unreached areas, in rural areas, and spreading the light as ordained by Christ. **We are proud of the fact that a patriotic law-abiding community of Christians in India who constitute only 2.3% of the nation's population contributes nearly 30% of the total educational institutions.**

The health mission of the Catholic Church in India plays a vital role in alleviating the pain and suffering of the sick, especially of those who are poor and cannot afford adequate treatment. There are some private healthcare hospitals and health centres run by some private Christian institutions but many of the healthcare institutions are run by the Church, the religious Priests and Nuns and others affiliated to the Church.

The Christian Community in India has made tremendous contributions and dedicated their lives to the Indian freedom struggle and upliftment of the people of India. Besides the clergy, many Christians across the country were involved in the freedom struggle. Some of the prominent Christians were:

Thevarthundiyl Titus or Titusji [1905-1980]

Titusji belonged to a Marthoma Syrian Christian family. On March 15, 1925, Mahatma Gandhi visited Titusji's house in Maramon [Theverthundiyl] on his way to the famous Hindu temple in Aranmula near Chengannur. He was one of the 78 marchers selected by Mahatma Gandhi, in the historic Dandi march of 1930. He served as Governing Secretary for Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram milk project near Ahmedabad. He is pictured on the old 500 rupee note.

Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya [1861-1907]

Brahmabandhav was a journalist, theologian and freedom fighter who converted to Christianity and played a leading role in the Swadeshi Movement. He was the Editor of *Sandhya*. He fought for India's freedom through his powerful writings.

Kalicharan Bannerjee [1847-1907]

K.C. Banerjee was a lawyer from Bengal, who converted to Christianity in 1864. He was a freedom fighter and one of the pioneers of the Indian Christian Movement. He was also one of the main orators and founding member of the Indian National Congress.

Madhusudan Das [1848-1934]

A well-known leader from the Christian Community in Odisha, popularly known as 'Utkal Gourab'. He was the first graduate and advocate of Odisha, formerly known as Orissa.

Harendra Kumar Mookerjee [1887-1956]

Harendra was the Vice-President of the Constituent Assembly of India for drafting the Constitution of India before Partition of India, and the third Governor of West-Bengal after India became a Republic. He was an educationist, a prominent Christian leader of Bengal and was the Chairman of the Minority Rights Committee and Provincial Constitution Committee of the Constituent Assembly.

A.J. John [1893-1957]

Anaparambil Joseph John was a Travancore freedom fighter and statesman. He was the Chief Minister of Travancore – Cochin and Governor of Madras [Chennai] State.

Venkal Chakkarai [1880-1958]

Venkal was an Indian Christian theologian, missionary, independence activist, politician and trade unionist. He was the former President of AITUC [All India Trade Union Congress] and participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement.

T.M. Varghese [1886-1961]

Varghese was a freedom fighter and statesman. He was the founder member of the Travancore State Congress Party.

K.C. Mammen Mappillai [1873-1953]

Kandathil Cheriyan Mammen Mappillai was an Indian journalist, who became an editor of the Malayalam language daily *Malayala Manorama* after his paternal uncle, Kandathi Varghese Mappillai died. He was an Indian independence activist and served as a member of the Sree Moolam Popular Assembly in Travancore.

Jerome A. Saldanha [1868-1947]

Jerome Antony Saldanha who represented the South Canara district in the Madras Legislative

Council, became a sincere admirer of Mahatma Gandhi. Though not an active freedom fighter, Jerome supported the freedom movement through his articulate writings, especially in the Mangalore Magazine. He was the President of the South Canara District Congress Committee.

Krishna Mohan Bannerjee [1813-1885]

Krishna Bannerjee converted to Christianity and was the first President of the Bengal Christian Association. He was a prominent member of the Young Bengal group, an educationist, linguist and Christian missionary.

J.C. Kumarappa [1892-1960]

He was a strong supporter of Satyagraha and encouraged Christian participation in the national movement and was the editor of *Young India*. His original name was John Jesudason Cornelius.

George Joseph [1887-1938]

George was one of the three members of the Home Rule sent to England in 1918. He was a part of the first batch of Barristers who engaged in the national work and joined the Non-Cooperation Movement. He led the Vaikom Satyagraha and was a prominent Syrian Christian from Kerala to join the freedom struggle. In 1937, he was elected to the Central Legislative Assembly.

Joseph Baptista [1864-1930]

Joseph “Kaka” Baptista was an activist and politician from Mumbai. He was closely associated with Lokmanya Tilak and the Home Rule Movement. He was the first President of the Indian Home Rule League established in 1916 and was elected as the Mayor of Bombay [Mumbai] in 1925. He gave voice to the workers in Mumbai exploited under British rule. He was also one of the founders of the All India Trade Union Congress [AITUC].

Paul Ramasamy [1906]

Paul was born in 1906 and was another important Christian who took part in the freedom struggle. In 1930, he joined the freedom movement during the Salt Satyagraha days.

T.V. Thomas [1910-1977]

One of the first generations trade union leaders in Kerala and was actively involved in the Indian Independence Movement.

Joachim Alva [1907-1979]

He was a lawyer, journalist and politician from Udupi, Mangalore. Advocated the concept of Swadeshi and human brotherhood. Pioneer of the Youth Movement in India. He devoted himself whole-heartedly to the National Movement and

gave up his lucrative job in order to participate in the freedom struggle.

C.M. Stephen [1918-1984]

He was one of the founding fathers of the Indian National Trade Union Congress, the trade union wing of the Indian National Congress. He was a politician and Union Minister in the Republic of India.

D.C. Kizhakemuri [1914-1999]

Dominic Chacko Kizhakemuri was a well-known writer, activist, freedom fighter and book publisher from Kerala.

P.T. Chacko [1915-1964]

Pulloli Thomas Chacko was a prominent politician of Travancore and later Kerala. He was the first leader of the Opposition of the newly formed State of Kerala. As a student leader in 1938, he launched himself into the freedom movement and the struggle for self-government in the princely state of Travancore.

Lambert Mascarenhas [1914-2021]

He was a journalist, freedom activist and writer from Goa.

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio [1809-1831]

He was a young Catholic poet from Kolkata, formerly Calcutta, who wrote the first freedom poem, *'To India - My Native Land'*. He was a young Professor at Hindu College and the youngest freedom fighter and freedom poet of India.

He spread his rationalist ideas through the Young Bengal Movement, which he started in the 1820s.

M.M. Thomas [1916-1996]

Madathilparampil Mammen Thomas was raised in the Marthoma Syrian Church, Kerala. He was one of the most remarkable Indian Theologian, an outstanding scholar and a prolific writer. He was a staunch supporter of the Indian National Movement and was actively involved in the freedom struggle in co-operation with Gandhi. Thomas associated himself with the Christian Movement and in 1947 became the Secretary of WSCF [World Student Christian Federation].

Sushil Kumar Rudra [1861-1925]

He was a Bengali convert and an educationist. The first Indian Principal to St. Stephen's College in 1906 and a close associate of Gandhi. He encouraged nationalism among students. Gandhi revered him as a “silent servant” and described him as a silent but deeply interested spectator in the happenings of the national struggle.

Alfred D'Cruz [1921-2012]

As a student Satyagrahi, Alfred D'Cruz was inspired by the clarion call for the Quit India

Movement given by Mahatma Gandhi on 8th August 1942, at August Kranti Maidan (Gowalia Tank), Mumbai, which he attended. He was at the editorial desk of *The Times of India*, Mumbai, from 1947 to 1982. His headline '*India wakes up to a new life*' adorned the front page of the newspaper on 15th August, 1947. The power of the pen made the Portuguese realise it was time to leave Goa, in an independent India in 1961, when the Indian Army entered the state and they surrendered.

Another noteworthy Christian who participated in the National Movement was Samuel Aaron. His participation began with the Salt Satyagraha movement in 1930.

At the Madras meeting of the Indian National Congress in 1887, out of the 607 delegates, 35 were Christians. Some of the prominent Christian leaders in the Congress were R.S.N. Subramanian, a prominent barrister from Madras, G.G. Nath, a barrister from Lahore, Peter Paul Pillai, of Madras. Philopose Elanjikkal John [1903-1955] was another prominent member of the Travancore State Congress. Nirad Biswas, who later became the Bishop of Assam of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon [CIBC] joined the National Movement in making salt outside Calcutta [Kolkata] in 1932.

Another supporter of the freedom movement was Felix Albuquerque Pai from Mangalore. Inspired by Gandhi, Pai manufactured salt in defiance of British law in 1930. In the same year, K.T. Paul went to England to participate in the Round Table Conference.

Marcel A.M. D'Souza was a supporter of the freedom movement too. John Francis Pinto, Bombay based Mangalorean Catholic who was pre-occupied in politics became an admirer of Gandhiji. In Mangalore, Pinto was known as Gandhi Pinto.

When the Non-Cooperation Movement was started in 1920, there were Indian Christians in the whole of India who took part in it.

Indian Christian Women Freedom Fighters

Indian Christian women dedicated their lives to fighting for independence, advocating social justice and helping to build the institutions of a newly independent India. The significance of these Christian women is that they came to the forefront to fight for India's Independence at a time when Indian women were largely confined to their homes.

In the 1930s, there was an entry of three Canara Catholic couples in the freedom movement. Thomas and Helen Alvares, Cyprian and Alice Alvares, Joachim and Violet Alva from Mangalore.

Thomas and Helen Alvares were drawn to the cause of freedom by the Mahatma himself. Helen was a staunch supporter of Satyagraha and expressed it through public speeches.

Cyprian and Alice Alvares were arrested in November 1942 and put in separate lock-ups in Bombay (now Mumbai). Alice joined the Quit India Movement with her husband. With regard to the involvement of Joachim and Violet Alva in the freedom movement, it has been said: "They served the country to the full extent of their ability which they had in plenty."

In the Congress Session of 1889, among the ten women delegates, three were Christians: Pandita Ramabai, Mrs. Triumbuck and Mrs. Nikambe.

Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati [1858-1922]

Ramabai was born as Rama Dongre, into a Marathi speaking Hindu Brahmin family. She received the titles of '*Pandita*' and '*Sarasvati*' in 1878 from Calcutta University in recognition of her Sanskrit works.

Following the death of her husband in 1882, when she was 23 years, Ramabai began to dedicate her life to women's rights. She founded the Arya Mahila Samaj which promoted the cause of women's education and to abolish child marriage. In 1883, she travelled to the United Kingdom where she converted to Christianity.

Ramabai was involved in the Indian Freedom Movement and was one of the 10 women delegates to the Indian National Congress in 1889. She was an author of several books and her contributions as a nation builder, devout Christian and women's rights activist have earned her many laurels.

Constance Prem Nath Dass [1886-1971]

Dass was born in a Punjabi Protestant family. She went on to become the first Indian woman to serve as the Principal of a Christian college in India, at Isabella Thoburn College.

Dass was a strong supporter of the Indian Independence Movement. She believed that students from different religious and cultural backgrounds should work together, to build up their country and promote an atmosphere of tolerance and co-operation across communities. This would be vital and a stepping stone for India's progress as a nation.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur [1887-1964]

Amrit Kaur was born in a Punjabi royal lineage with her father being the youngest son of the Raja of Kapurthala, who converted to Christianity and married the daughter of a Bengali missionary. Kaur was the youngest of ten children.

As a Protestant Christian, she joined the Indian

Independence Movement and began actively working in the freedom struggle as a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi. In 1927, she founded the All-India Women's Conference. She was imprisoned in 1942 for her involvement in the Quit India Movement. The *Time* magazine declared her the 'Woman of the Year' in 1947.

After Independence, Kaur served as Minister of Health for ten years. She held leadership roles in several public health organizations.

Violet Hari Alva [1908-1969]

Violet was a Gujarati Christian freedom fighter and lawyer. In 1944, she became the first woman advocate in India to have argued a case before a full High Court Bench.

She started a magazine titled '*Indian Women*'. She served as Deputy Chairperson of the Bombay Municipal Corporation and President of the Juvenile Court. She was involved in the Young Women's Christian Association and the Business and Professional Women's Association.

Violet was a supporter of the Indian Independence Movement and married fellow Indian Christian freedom fighter, Joachim Alva. She also started the *Forum* magazine to give fellow freedom fighters a platform to voice their ideas.

Post-Independence, Violet served as a Member of Parliament. She went on to become the Deputy Minister of State for Home Affairs and then the Deputy Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha. She and her husband, Joachim were honoured in 2007 with a portrait in the Parliament for being the first Parliamentarian couple in Indian History.

Annie Mascarenhas [1902-1963]

Annie was a Latin-rite Catholic. She earned a double post-graduation in history and economics and got into the movement for India's Independence and integration of the princely states into the Indian Union.

In 1946, Annie became one of the 15 women elected to the 299 members Constituent Assembly that prepared the Constitution of Free India. She became the first female Minister of Kerala for health and power in Independent India [1949] and was elected as a Parliamentarian from Trivandrum in 1951.

Accamma Cherian [1909-1982]

Accamma was a Syrian Catholic from Travancore, Kerala. She gave up her position as Principal of a Catholic school to participate in the freedom struggle of India. Accamma led a crowd of 20,000 at Thiruvananthapuram, formerly known as Trivandrum, capital of Kerala in 1938 to revoke a ban on the regional unit of the Indian National

Congress. Mahatma Gandhi honoured her with the title "Jhansi ki Rani of Travancore". She started the Desasevika Sangh, women's wing in the Congress that carried forward the torch of freedom. Inspired by Accamma Cherian, her sister Rosamma Punnoose and brother Varkey Karippaparambil also plunged into the freedom struggle. After Independence, Accamma served in the Travancore Legislative Assembly.

Some of the other leading Christian women from South India who took part in the freedom struggle are:

Mrs. George Joseph

Mrs. Margaret Pavamani

Ms. Mary Thomas

Ms. Matilda Kalten

Mrs. Annamma, wife of Thevarthundiyl Titus

Titus joined Mahatma Gandhi in Sabarmati Ashram and after his marriage, his wife too joined Sabarmati Ashram and donated her gold wedding ornaments to the ashram.

Mrs. Gracy Aaron, wife of Samuel Aaron

She led the women when the Salt Satyagrahis reached the village of Pariyaram near Payyannur, Kerala and showered rice and flowers on them.

The participation of the Aarons in the freedom movement was of unique importance for the Christian community in South India.

Both prior and after independence, Indian Christians have contributed in a significant and unique way to India's Independence and development. Though the Christian Community is small in number their contribution to nation - building through numerous social, theological and educational institutions is immense. They have also served the country in various services. The institutions of the Church ushered in modernity in India. We should be proud of the Church and the role of the Christian community in the field of health too.

The Christian Community with its educational institutions has helped to change the destiny of Independent India through its quality education imparted, and helped India in its progress from a developing country to an emerging political, economic and military superpower in the world today.

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

THE ASSUMPTION OF BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Mary Leads Us -Fr. Allam Sagar Manoj Kumar

Munificentissimus Deus, the defining document for the Assumption, is an ex cathedra statement by Pope Pius XII about two truths that are to be believed with the divine faith. Firstly, the dogma is divinely revealed, that is, it has always been at least implicitly contained in revelation. Secondly, Mary is exempt from the general law that the human body must wait until the end of time to rejoin its already glorious soul. The apostolic constitution defines only three points to be matters of divine faith. These refer to Mary's body as well as to her soul, to the end of her time on earth, and to her being taken into glory. Our Lady received an immediate glorification when she anticipated the Last Day, the day of the resurrection of all the redeemed, their day of entry into glory.

Assumption means, "To be taken up" body and soul to heaven. It is not Ascension, like Jesus, done by His own power, but Assumption done by the power of God. It is something God did for her, not something she did for herself. It is a gift of God as a result of Christ's redemptive power applied to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The dogma says, "The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son's Resurrection." The Assumption was God's way of finishing the will He started at Mary's Immaculate Conception, redeeming her body from the effects of sin as well.

But why Mary? It is because she was the Mother of Jesus and Jesus did what you and I would have done with our mothers if we would have the power: Jesus did not allow the hands that cared for His to be corrupted and the heart that loved Him so much. If He did it to Enoch and Elijah, in the Old Testament, why is not to His Mother?

Our Lady completed her earthly destiny. She was no longer challenged in her freedom. She had been rewarded with heaven for her abiding, earthly conformity to God's will. The faith of the Church intuited that, in view of the bodily resurrection and glorification of Jesus the Christ, this same outcome had been bestowed upon Mary. The significance of the Assumption for us is that we can gain that same glorified resurrection of the flesh and everlasting life in imitation of Our Lady. Such a hope acknowledges her perfect beatitude. Mary, the

new and perfect creation, was assumed body and soul into glory at the end of her earthly sojourn.

On the other hand, the Blessed Virgin Mary is related to the Holy Eucharist. It is very simple: except for the Blessed Virgin, we would not have the Holy Eucharist. The key to this relationship is the humanity of Jesus Christ. God was present in the world from the dawn of creation. The same Almighty power by which God brought the world into being is the same Almighty power by which He sustains the world in existence and provides for its constant activity.

It was from Mary that the Son of God took over human nature. It was from Mary that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity received His humanity. It was through Mary that Jesus Christ, who is God from all eternity, became man, lived visibly on earth and is now invisibly on earth in every church and chapel in the Catholic world where the Holy Eucharist is offered, received and reserved. Mary remains the Mother of the Divine Grace, through whom He pours out His blessings on a sinful world. As St. Pope John Paul II observed in *Redemptoris Mater*, "Mary guides the faithful to the Eucharist." The Pope in his message to the 19th Marian Congress in Poland (August 15, 1996) repeated the same message: "Let Mary lead us to the Eucharist."

The Assumption of Mary is a confirmation given to us by the Father to sustain, and strengthen our faith especially when our faith, and trust in God is shaking, when we are overpowered by our own sins and weaknesses, when we seem to be lacking the faith to go ahead in life in those moments of darkness, the mystery of Mary's Assumption should remind us that we have a home and a Father waiting for us to save in His astounding watchful providence.



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

FROM OPPRESSION TO TRIUMPH: INDIA'S JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

-Tancia Pires

*In a land full of emperors, wealth and kings,
Lived people of ambition with wind beneath their wings.
While flourishing with grains, spices and rich culture,
The enemy encroached upon ruthlessly, like a vulture.*

*They broke our hearts, minds and body,
And treated us like we were nobody.
Battle of Plassey defeated the Nawab of Bengal,
Eventually Tipu Sultan, Marathas too faced a downfall.*

*They were the oppressors and 'dividers',
But with unity, we rebelled against the 'outsiders'.
National uprising called the Indian insurrection,
Marked our country's revolt and resurrection.*

*Lives were lost at the Jallianwala Bagh massacre,
Only to make our country independent and secular.
We shed blood, sweat and tears,
With a struggle that lasted for years.*

*Gandhi's policy of non-violence and civil disobedience,
Was purely to address the masses grievance.
Nehru, Vallabhbhai, Maulana Azad,
Bhagat, Laxmibai, Pandey stood like a façade.*

*Democratic, independent, republic to be,
Defeat, cries and injustice we had to see.
But we had the desire to breathe fresh air
To live freely and no oppression to bear.*

*Finally a free flying tricolor we viewed,
As the 'outsiders' powers' were totally subdued.
A lesson for us and for all who see,
India has fought against odds to be free.*

*So next time an 'outsider' tries to step-in,
Proudly remind them, that we earned our win.
The freedom struggle showed us our potential,
We proved that India is mighty and influential.*

*However, while fights and discrimination is on the run,
Let's not forget that our independence once had to be won.
Let's be patriotic, live in harmony and peace,
Remembering that struggles were turned into bliss.*



Tancia Pires, who hails from the scenic state of Goa, is currently pursuing her Ph.D. degree at the Manipal Academy of Higher Education. She is passionate about literature, performing arts, music and singing.

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

-Tony Menezes

Celebrated on 12th August every year, **International Youth Day** recognises the immense potential and impact of the younger generation. Youth play a crucial role in shaping the world's future.

The theme for 2024, “**Youth Engagement for Global Action,**” focuses on encouraging young people to actively participate in creating a better world. This theme underscores the importance of

involving youth in all areas of society.

The youth of today are not just tomorrow's leaders; they are already actively contributing to positive change. With their energy, creativity, and fresh perspectives, young people are driving innovation, advocating for social justice, and bringing attention to critical issues like environmental conservation.

ENVIRONMENT AND US

*Our planet is reeling with pollution,
All are scrambling for solution,
Let's reverse this impending calamity,
In true spirit of fraternity.*

*Marine pollution and polluted air,
Environmental damage is everywhere,
Rapid industrialisation and urbanisation,
Has caused environmental desolation.*

*Emission controls and energy renewals,
More EV vehicles, less fossil fuels,
Would empower pollution reduction,
Preserve our planet from destruction.*

*Ecojustice and sustainable practices,
Waste management and things as these,
Can aid in tackling climate change,
Assuring our wellbeing in exchange.*

*Environmental damage and air pollution,
Requires the most immediate resolution,
Let's make our world a wonderful place,
With wholesome and healthy populace!*



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

Installation of Fr. Agnel's Vidyankur School Parliament

"A Leader is one who knows the way, shows the way and leads the way"

The academic year 2024-25 of Fr. Agnel's Vidyankur School, Pune, started with the installation of the Senior Parliament on 15th June 2024 and the Junior Parliament on 18th June 2024. This is the 10th year of the School Parliament system. The Parliament system is introduced to bring about responsibility and accountability among students.

The program began with a prayer service and was followed by declaration of the theme '*I have a Dream*' for the academic year by the **Director Rev. Fr. Alexio Luis**.

The newly elected Presidents **Master Kundan Singh** and **Master Arshad Baig**, speakers **Miss Riddhi Chouhan** and **Miss Avani Hulle** of the Senior and Junior Parliament along with their Ministers and Prefects took charge of the office, and promised to serve the school with loyalty and uphold the dignity and integrity of the institution at all times.



Senior School Parliament.



Junior School Parliament.

AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Pune

Palkhi Celebration at Fr. Agnel's Vidyankur School, Pune relives tradition

Fr. Agnel's Vidyankur School helped preserve the precious and traditional culture of 'Varkaris' of Maharashtra, by celebrating the 'Palkhi Aagaman' with great enthusiasm on 16th July 2024.

The importance of the tradition was emphasized by performing a 'Dindi' in which the tiny tots of Pre Primary were dressed up like Lord Vitthal and Goddess Rakumai.

The students of Pre Primary chanted enthusiastically names of 'Gynanba Tukaram, Gynanba Mauli' and marched in the beautiful school campus.

Students showcased their best by dressing up as Varkaris adorning themselves by carrying handmade palkhis and saffron flags and danced to the beats of the dhol and played fugadi in a Ringan around the Palkhi. The students also carried banners of Good Values.



Varkaris from Alandi.

The students enjoyed replicating the **wari-procession** that heads to **Pandharpur** for the **Ashadhi Ekadashi** and also gained information about this 1000-year-old tradition. The students through this activity were taught to show respect and love to all.



Recreating the Palkhis meet at Pandharpur, Maharashtra.

AITD, Assagao, conducts TECH URJA - national level technical festival



(Standing from left to right are): Guest of Honour Mr. Caleb Fernandez, Co-Founder, Kilowott, Nordic Intent; Chief Guest Mr. Joshua Silveria, Director – India Operations, Frontline Managed Services, Goa, and Rev. Fr. Agnelo Gomes, Managing Director, Agnel Technical Complex, Assagao.

Agnel Institute of Technology & Design (AITD), Assagao, Goa, conducted its third edition of its National Level Technical Fest – Tech Urja 2024 on 1st and 2nd April 2024 in the college campus. The motive of this fest was to encourage students across the nation to come and exhibit their technical and tactical skills. Nine technical events, five non-technical events were conducted as a part of Tech Urja 2024 with a prize pool of Rs. 1,51,000.

As a part of this event, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Frontline Managed Services and AITD, Goa, to foster the Industry-Institute Connect. The technical fest witnessed wide participation from Goa and its neighbouring states.

AITD conducts cultural festival FACT 2024

Agnel Institute of Technology and Design organised an intra-college level cultural event, **FACT (Fusion of Art, Culture and Talent)** on 5th and 6th April 2024, in a spectacularly constructed and fabricated open air stage on the campus playground. FACT 2024 was inaugurated by the Chief Guest **Mr. Vardhan Kamat**, Goan Actor in Films and Guest of Honour, **Ms. Shreya Singh**, Model and Influencer, **Rev. Fr. Isaac Fernandes**, Assistant Director of Agnel Technical Education Complex, **Principal Prof. Laxmikant Bordekar** and FACT Coordinator **Prof. Shreedatta Sawant**.

FACT 2024 provided a platform to the students to showcase their talent and skills to a whole new era, representing the fusion between art and culture. **The Computer Engineering Department** emerged victorious, clinching the prestigious rolling trophy for FACT 2024.

AITD students win 2nd place in intercollegiate swimming competition

AITD college women's team secured the 2nd place in the prestigious intercollegiate swimming championship. AITD student **Mithika Kara** gave an outstanding performance, winning **2 gold medals**. In the men's category, the college team also achieved remarkable success, finishing as runners-up. **Yash Gaonkar** delivered an exceptional performance, winning **1 gold and 1 silver medal**.



(Left) AITD's winning women's swimming team. (Right) Mithika Kara with her gold medals.

CARLO ACUTIS, THROUGH THE EYES OF HIS MOTHER

-Jubel D'Cruz

Carlo Acutis was born in London on May 3, 1991 to a wealthy Italian family, Andrea Acutis and Antonia Salzano Acutis of Irish and Polish roots.

His parents were financially well-off and worked in Germany and the United Kingdom before settling down in Milan, Italy, in September 1991.

From a very young age of three, Carlo demonstrated great interest in Catholic churches and often wanted to see them. At the age of seven, he received his First Holy Communion at the convent of St. Amdrogio and Nemus. He was often seen praying before the Blessed Sacrament before and after Mass. He also went to Confession once a week.

"Our soul is like a hot air balloon," he would often say. "If by chance there is a mortal sin, the soul falls to the ground. Confession is like the fire underneath the balloon, enabling the soul to rise again."

He also enjoyed visiting Assisi where St. Francis of Assisi is entombed and loved to pray the rosary and would tell people - "The Virgin Mary is the only woman in my life."

After he received his First Holy Communion, he went for Mass as often as he could. In addition to his love for the Catholic Church, he was deeply interested in computers and taught himself how to code and build websites while still in primary school. His brief high school career was spent in the care of the Jesuits at the Institute of Pope Leo XIII.

He was also known to give away his pocket money to the poor and the needy and would speak up in defense of the disabled. He also had the habit of inviting children to his home whose parents were on the verge of divorce to support them.

He used his knowledge of computers and coding to build websites for Catholic organisations. His most popular website was the one that listed miracles from around the world based on a catalogue he compiled since the age of eleven. He completed the site shortly before his death.

Carlo also showed great interest in the lives of

saints, especially St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francisco and St. Jacinta Marto, St. Dominic Savio, St. Tarcisius, St. Bernadette Soubirous, and St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi. He is said to have prayed to his guardian angel frequently and exhibited a special devotion to St. Michael, the Archangel.

He said: "Our goal must be the infinite and not the finite. The infinity is our homeland. We are always expected in heaven."

As a part of his devotion, he asked his parents to take him to various Eucharistic shrines, although his declining health made his travel increasingly difficult.



He died on October 12, 2006 at the age of 15 from a fulminant leukemia disease and offered his life for the Pope (Benedict XVI) and for the Church. His story has aroused deep admiration of all those who knew him.

On October 10, 2020, he was beatified by Cardinal Agostino Vallini on behalf of Pope Francis at the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi in Italy.

His heart, which can now be considered a relic, is displayed in a reliquary in the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi in Italy. His mother said that his family had wanted to donate his organs when he died, but were unable to do so because of the leukemia which he suffered from.

This is what he said shortly before his death: "The more Eucharist that we receive, the more we will become like Christ so that on this earth, we will have the foretaste of heaven."

Just a few minutes before his death, he told his family and all those present by his bedside: "I am happy to die because I've lived my life without wasting even a single minute of it on anything displeasing to God."

There are a few steps to be followed before the church could declare a person a saint. On May 23, 2024, Pope Francis recognised a second miracle attributed to the intercession of Carlo Acutis and approved the promulgation of canonisation to

finalise the process of making him the first millennial saint.

The miracle attributed to his intercession occurred in 2022 when a Costa Rican woman named Valeria had fallen off her bike and suffered a brain haemorrhage with doctors giving her a low chance of survival. Valeria's mother, Lilliana, prayed to Carlo Acutis and visited his tomb. The same day, Valeria began to breathe and was able to walk the next day with all evidence of the haemorrhage having disappeared.

On July 1, 2024, Pope Francis presided at an Ordinary Consistory of Cardinals, which approved the canonisation of 15 people, including Blessed Carlo Acutis.

Canonisation is the declaration of a deceased person as an officially recognised saint, specifically, the official act of a Christian communion declaring a person worthy of public veneration and entering their name in the canon catalogue of saints, or authorised list of that communion's recognised saints.

The process to make someone a saint cannot

normally start until at least five years after their death. This is to allow time for emotions following the death to calm down, and to ensure that the individual's case can be evaluated objectively.

Saint Bede, the theologian died in 735 but had to wait for 1,164 years before he could be declared a saint.

Carlo Acutis will most probably be proclaimed a saint at some point in 2025 during the church's jubilee year.

His biography titled *"My Son Carlo: Carlo Acutis Through The Eyes Of His Mother"* has been jointly written by his mother Antonia Salzano Acutis and journalist Paolo Rodari. The book was published by 'Our Sunday Visitor' in March 2023.



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



There is no Joy Greater than the Joy of GIVING

Kersi Kapadia, Bengaluru

I have contributed an amount of Rs.10,000 via NEFT for the Balbhavan boys at Fr. Agnel Ashram. It is good to see them developing into skilled citizens, ready to contribute to nation-building in the future.

Jose Gilbert John, Dombivli

As a token of thanksgiving for various favours received through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have donated an amount of Rs.30,000 through cheque, for the welfare of the Balbhavan boys and Fr. Agnel Ashram.

Melini Joseph, UAE

I am pleased to donate an amount of Rs.10,000 through NEFT for fulfilling the daily requirements of the Balbhavan boys at Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra.

Shawn Sanjay Lopes, Vasai

I have made a contribution of Rs.10,000 through cheque for the expenses of the Balbhavan boys. Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra and other centres in the Agnel Region, are doing yeoman service for the community, for decades together.

Reynold Pires, Mumbai

We are happy to provide a donation of Rs. 2000 to Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra, the place where devotees flock, for their prayers to be answered, through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel.

Smith Herold Almeida, Palghar

We have made a love offering of Rs. 2000 to Fr. Agnel Ashram, for various favours received.

Monica D'Souza, Pune

I have contributed an amount of Rs.1000 to Fr. Agnel Ashram, to continue the good work of community service.

GIDEON (JERUBBAAL) - LET BAAL CONTEND AGAINST HIM (JUDGES 6:32) (JUDGES 6:11-8:35)

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

Gideon, "Gidon" in Hebrew which translates as "slasher" or "hewer."

Gideon, also known as Jerubbaal, is a prominent figure in the Book of Judges in the Bible. His story is a testament to faith, obedience, and God's power working through human frailty. Gideon's life is marked by several key events that highlight his journey from doubt to a decisive leader of Israel.

Gideon's story begins with Israel in a state of spiritual and social turmoil. The Israelites had turned away from God, leading to their oppression by the Midianites. For seven years, the Midianites devastated Israel, driving them to seek refuge in mountain clefts, caves, and strongholds (Judges 6:1-2). In their distress, the Israelites cried out to God for deliverance.

God's response to Israel's plea came through Gideon. An angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon while he was threshing wheat in a winepress, hiding from the Midianites. The angel greeted him with, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior" (Judges 6:12). Gideon, however, was sceptical and questioned why Israel was suffering if God was with them. He also doubted his own ability, citing his family's low status and his own insignificance (Judges 6:13-15).

To reassure Gideon, God provided several signs. First, fire consumed an offering Gideon prepared, convincing him of God's presence (Judges 6:20-21). Later, Gideon requested and received further confirmation through the famous fleece tests. He placed a wool fleece on the threshing floor, asking that dew appear only on the fleece and not on the ground. God granted his request, and the next morning, the fleece was wet with dew while the ground remained dry. Gideon reversed the test the following night, asking for the ground to be wet and the fleece dry, which God again fulfilled (Judges 6:36-40).

Once convinced of God's call, Gideon assembled an army to confront the Midianites. Initially, he gathered 32,000 men, but God reduced this number to 300 to demonstrate that Israel's victory

would be by divine power, not human strength (Judges 7:2-7). Armed with trumpets, empty jars, and torches, Gideon and his men launched a surprise attack on the Midianite camp at night. The sound of the trumpets and the sight of the torches caused confusion among the Midianites, who turned on each other in panic. This miraculous victory delivered Israel from Midianite oppression (Judges 7:19-22).

Gideon's leadership continued as he pursued the fleeing Midianite kings, Zebah and Zalmunna, ultimately capturing and executing them (Judges 8:10-21). This act not only avenged the deaths of his brothers but also solidified his role as a judge and deliverer of Israel.



Despite his successes, Gideon's later years were marred by ambiguity. After his victory, the Israelites offered him kingship, but he declined, insisting that the Lord would rule over them (Judges 8:22-23). However, he made a significant misstep by creating an ephod from the spoils of war. This ephod became a snare, leading Israel into idolatry (Judges 8:24-27). Gideon's death marked the end of peace, as Israel once again turned away from

God (Judges 8:33-35).

The importance of Gideon lies in his journey from doubt to faith and from weakness to strength through God's guidance. His story illustrates that God often chooses unlikely individuals to achieve His purposes, emphasizing that human limitations are not a barrier to divine plans. Gideon's initial hesitation and need for reassurance are relatable human traits, showcasing that faith can grow even in the presence of doubt.

Moreover, Gideon's victory with a small, ill-equipped force underscores the theme that success comes from reliance on God rather than human might. This narrative encourages believers to trust in God's power and timing, even when circumstances seem insurmountable. However, Gideon's later failure to guard against idolatry serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of

complacency and the need for continuous faithfulness to God.

In conclusion, Gideon's life is a compelling blend of triumph and caution. His story is a powerful reminder of God's ability to use imperfect people for His glory and the necessity of steadfast devotion to avoid the pitfalls of success.

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

BIBLE QUIZ ON GIDEON

1. Who appeared to Gideon to call him to deliver Israel from the Midianites?

- A. A prophet
- B. An angel of the Lord
- C. Moses

2. What was Gideon doing when the angel of the Lord appeared to him?

- A. Praying
- B. Harvesting grapes
- C. Threshing wheat in a winepress

3. What was Gideon's response when the angel called him a mighty warrior?

- A. He immediately accepted the call
- B. He questioned why all the calamities had happened to Israel
- C. He ran away in fear

4. Which tribe did Gideon belong to?

- A. Judah
- B. Ephraim
- C. Manasseh

5. What sign did Gideon first request from God to confirm his calling?

- A. Fire consuming an offering
- B. Rain falling only on his crops
- C. A burning bush

6. How did God reduce Gideon's army?

- A. By sending some men home because they were afraid
- B. By choosing only those who lapped water with their tongues
- C. Both A and B

7. How many men did Gideon take to fight the Midianites?

- A. 300
- B. 3,000
- C. 30,000

8. What items did Gideon's men carry into battle?

- A. Swords and shields
- B. Trumpets, jars, and torches
- C. Bows and arrows

9. What was the result of Gideon's surprise attack on the Midianite camp?

A. The Midianites surrendered peacefully

B. The Midianites fled in confusion and turned on each other

C. Gideon was captured

10. What did Gideon create from the spoils of war that led Israel into idolatry?

- A. The golden calf
- B. An ephod
- C. A high place

11. How long did the land have peace during Gideon's time?

- A. 20 years
- B. 40 years
- C. 7 years

12. What was Gideon's other name?

- A. Jerubbaal
- B. Joshua
- C. Elihu

13. Who did Gideon defeat after crossing the Jordan River in pursuit?

- A. Zebah and Zalmunna
- B. The Amalekites
- C. The Philistines

14. What did the Israelites want to make Gideon after his victory over the Midianites?

- A. Their king
- B. Their high priest
- C. Their prophet

15. What was Gideon's response to the offer of kingship?

- A. He accepted it eagerly
- B. He declined, saying the Lord would rule over them
- C. He said he needed time to think

ANSWERS

- 1 - B (Judges 6:12)
- 2 - C (Judges 6:11)
- 3 - B (Judges 6:13)
- 4 - C (Judges 6:15)
- 5 - A (Judges 6:20-21)
- 6 - C (Judges 7:3-7)
- 7 - A (Judges 7:7)
- 8 - B (Judges 7:16)
- 9 - B (Judges 7:21-22)
- 10 - B (Judges 8:27)
- 11 - B (Judges 8:28)
- 12 - A (Judges 6:32)
- 13 - A (Judges 8:10-12)
- 14 - A (Judges 8:22)
- 15 - B (Judges 8:23)



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

CAUSE AND CURE OF DEPRESSION

-Ibonio D'Souza

Ups and downs or mood swings, as we call them, are a part of life. In most cases, the feeling passes, the sun shines and we go back to being ourselves. Sometimes, this can linger, causing it to infect our minds and our spirit. And, how do we cope up with this affliction?

Down the ages, the terms used to describe depression may have changed, but the symptoms remain the same. Depression can lead to emotional and physical problems. One is engulfed by a constant feeling of sadness which leads to lack of interest in our daily activities. In extreme cases, patients think life is not worth living and experience despondency, anger, fear, helplessness, dejection and delusion. It is up to us to fight these feelings.



We have to first identify the problem. Note whether the problem is temporary or permanent. Depression changes the way people feel about themselves, impacting energy levels and sleep patterns. No one knows for sure what causes depression. Sometimes, a life changing event like death, loss of employment or divorce could trigger it off. Or it could be genetic or brought about by drug or alcohol abuse.

Western psychology calls this mental condition of staying away from the world in a state of inaction and indolence in the darkness of loneliness, the disease of depression. But depression is not a disease. When a mentally evolved person or an emotional and sensitive person finds the world without meaning, then a kind of a state of plateau is created. The wise person, however, recognizes these symptoms, does self-analysis, suitable changes in his routine and daily activities and maintains discipline. He uses his willpower or soul power to get a new life, new energy to move forward. He doesn't indulge this state, as it leads to

mental imbalance – an insult to his inner powers.

Medication may provide temporary relief, but the root cause remains to be tackled. We need to help ourselves, and this is the most effective way to beat the insidious malady. Medical science may not have all the answers, so we need to look within ourselves to find them.

There may be many reasons to be sad, but there are reasons to be happy too, and on these we need to focus. There may be many things we cannot change, but then there are others we can. So, take charge. There is so much we dislike about ourselves, but then there is much that is wonderful too. Yes, it is easier said than done, but let us at least try. We must be strong to control our depression, and not allow

it to control us.

Depression is not an illness that can be fixed with antidepressants. It is a feedback from nature that it is time to learn something. Taken in the right perspective, depression leads to improved awareness and spiritual growth, to knowledge and wisdom. Regular meditation and adopting of a spiritual way of life, including service to the needy and less fortunate, can be of great help in your progress.

Only the person who goes through depression and emerges as a better human can contribute towards humanity, as also face effectively all his future challenges.



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

JUST FOR FUN

-Christine D'Sylva

We are in the month of August. August is an important month for us Indians for we celebrate Independence Day, on August 15 when we obtained our independence from the United Kingdom. We also celebrate Friendship Day on 4th August, a gentle reminder to never take people who are our friends for granted but to foster the bond of friendship in a deeper manner.

So on that positive note, let's begin...

Global Warming



If one compares the climate of our country twenty years ago to the present day, we can see the marked changes. Global warming is a worldwide phenomenon.

It is not a laughing trivial matter for it has many

unfavourable consequences.

Let's take Ramesh as an example, a shoemaker from Uttar Pradesh. A daily wage-labourer he makes leather shoes. But he says, "I lose nearly half an hour every day from my productive work hours due to the high heat. The heat exhausts me and I cannot make as many shoes as I want."

India loses around 101 billion hours a year because of high heat.

Global warming is the brutal reality of our times resulting in climate change. It endangers marine life. The main reason for it, is the greenhouse effect, the depletion of green cover and the increase of gases like CO₂ in the atmosphere. Deforestation and mindless use of our natural resources is another cause. The glaciers are melting and the sea levels rising. The temperature of the sea water also is rising. Many animals and birds are getting extinct because of these climatic changes

So what steps can we take and teach our kids to take?

We can plant more trees and control the emission of harmful gases into the atmosphere. We should conserve natural resources. We should take public transport more often, use energy-sufficient appliances at home and do our best to conserve natural resources. Solar energy is very beneficial in curbing climatic changes.

Global warming is a very serious problem and should be taken very seriously with all efforts to curb it.

Quiz

Our Freedom Struggle



1. What was the first freedom fight in India?
2. Who was the first freedom fighter of Indian history?
3. Who was the first lady freedom fighter of India?
4. Which female freedom

fighter was an ardent supporter of both Irish and Indian self-rule?

True Story

Keanu Reeves - A Survivor



Keanu Reeves is a famous Hollywood actor known for his iconic roles in movies such as the *Matrix* and *John Wick*.

His life was fraught with troubles and challenges. Abandoned by his father at the age of three, he only met his dad again at 13 years of age. He was brought up by his

mother who remarried four times, while he was growing up. Much of his childhood was being raised by his grandparents.

He had to constantly change schools because he was moved from school to school and he had learning difficulties as a result of dyslexia. He had been expelled from school once too.

In his adult life he lost his closest and best friend, actor River Phoenix because of a drug overdose. He was very devastated. He lost his child in 2001 when it was born stillborn. This resulted in splitting from his love, Jennifer Syme who 18 months afterwards died in a car accident.

But he was a survivor and refused to let these setbacks drown him in sorrow. He pursued his acting career and became a big star.

He has founded Leukaemia hospitals and cancer foundations amongst other charitable organisations. He decided to fight against leukaemia because his younger sister had been diagnosed with it and overcame it.

What can we learn from this notable actor?

We learn that life is not a bed of roses and as one comedian Bob Hope said, "Life is a bowl of cherries if you can swallow the pits."

But life is beautiful and a precious gift. It is a gift to make the best of and despite difficult circumstances we must learn to face challenges bravely. We must leave no stone

untuned in our quest to improving our circumstances and trying to find happiness. Keanu Reeves is an example of determination and fortitude, two traits that are essential in our lives.

Smile Please



1. Why did the tomato blush?
Because it saw the salad dressing.
2. Never criticize someone until you have walked a mile in their shoes. That way when you criticize them,

you will be a mile away and you will have their shoes.

3. Harry: "Have you heard about the new restaurant called Karma?"

Roger: "No."

Harry: "Well, when you get there you will get what you deserve."

4. Somebody actually complimented me on my driving today. They left a little note, it said, "Parking Fine."

5. I once had a teacher with a lazy eye. She could not control her pupils.

Inspiring Quotes Our Freedom Fighters

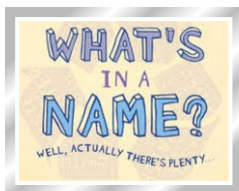


1. "Life is all about a card game. Selecting the right card is not in our hands. But playing well with the cards in hand determines our success." - Lokmanya Tilak.
2. "No one can hurt me without my permission." - Mahatma Gandhi.
3. "Our greatest ability as humans is not to change the world but to

change ourselves." - Mahatma Gandhi.

4. "If you are stronger, you have to help the weak." - Sarojini Naidu.

What's in a Name?



Harold - English and German origin. It means heroic army leader.

Jennifer - Cornish origin and it means fair one or white wave.

Brooke - English and German origin and it means water or small stream.

Paul - Latin origin and it means small or humble.

Inspiring Saint of the Month

St. Clare of Montefalco

Clare had a tremendous devotion to the Cross and

the Passion. Tradition tells us she had a mystical encounter with Christ. Christ told her, "I am looking for a fitting place to plant my cross and I have found it in your heart."



From that day onwards her body ached with pain caused by the tokens of his cross, marked there by Christ himself.

There is a legend that Jesus appeared to St. Clare disguised as

a beggar whom she treated with love and compassion. He planted a wooden stick in the garden which later on became a unique tree. This tree still produces berries from which the nuns have made rosaries for centuries. As she lay dying, Clare was visited by sisters who made the sign of the Cross over her as a blessing.

Clare asked, "Why do you make this sign over me, sisters? I already have Christ crucified in my heart."

Indeed after she died, when the nuns removed her heart, they found on her heart, imprinted upon it was the cross and then the instruments of Christ's passion. Her heart is kept in a reliquary next to her incorrupt body at the main altar in the monastery chapel of Montefalco, Umbria in Italy.

She was canonized by Pope Leo XIII in 1881.

What do we learn from this great saint?

We remember that Christ told us in order to follow him we have to carry our cross. "Take up your Cross and follow me."

Life was never meant to be easy for we are called to walk in a narrow path that is never easy. Yet this path leads to eternal rest while the wide easy leads to sorrow and hell.

We are given choices, our lives reflect our choices. So we are called to choose wisely, not taking the easy way but choosing the right path however hard it may be. We are tempted by public opinion and peer pressure. But we are called to make wise choices that reflect Christ's teachings.

Brain Teasers



1. What has six faces and twenty-one eyes?

2. I am a word of six. My first three letters refers to an automobile, my last three letters to a household animal, my first four letters is a fish and my whole is found in

your room. What am I?

3. A pregnant lady named her children, Dominique, Regis, Michelle, Fawn, Sophie and Lara. Can you guess the name of her next child? Will it be Jessica, Tilly, Katie or Ava?

4. I am not clothes but I cover your body. The more I

am used the thinner I grow. I can smell very fragrant. What am I?

5. A and B are odd numbers. B is less than 10 but greater than A. B multiplied by A is 63. C multiplied by B gives you 0. What is the value of A, B and C?

What's the Good Word?

All about Automobiles

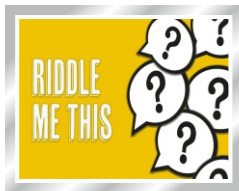


A car or an automobile is a motor vehicle with wheels.

1. The father of the automobile in India.
2. The world's first car.
3. The first car in India.
4. The king of cars.

5. The country that had the first car.

Riddles

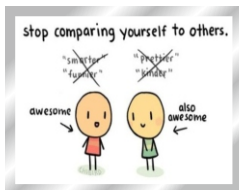


1. What can you put in a bucket to make it weigh less?
2. What kind of cup holds no water?
3. 10 fish are in a tank. 2 drown, 4 swim away and 3 die. How many are left in the tank?
4. What four letter word can be

written forward, backward or upside down and still be read from left to right?

5. What invention lets you look right through a wall?

Wisdom Message for the Month



Comparing ourselves to others is a common habit. It leads to jealousy and unhealthy competitiveness. Comparison can be positive for it can provide a sense of motivation and helps set goals yet it can have serious

negative consequences.

We feel we are inferior and feel envious. We think we are not good enough and feel discouraged. It is important to live in the present, do our best to achieve our goals and avoid unnecessary comparisons with others. If we must compare then do it positively by being more "goal oriented" and looking at others as positive reinforcements rather than getting jealous. This is easier said than done but we have to make serious attempts not to fall into the comparison trap. In life we have to remember that we are standing on a ladder where there are many above us and many below us. Often we find ourselves neither on the top most rung nor the bottommost rung. But this is not necessarily a bad thing. It means we are just like millions of others setting goals, improving ourselves and learning to accept we cannot be either the very best

or the very worst. Sometimes being in the middle has its advantages. It makes us more human, more humble and more achieving. When we focus on growth and progress rather than competitiveness we lead happier lives. Life becomes a beautiful journey of exploration.

St. Peter once said, "We see through a glass darkly."

We cannot see the tragedies in other people's lives that they might encounter. Focus on your own life and make it beautiful. The same people who are up today may be down tomorrow. So avoid envying others too much, just embark on life seeing it as a beautiful gift to better yourself and be grateful for this God given opportunity of life.

Curious Facts



The Magnetic Hill in Ladakh in India is an intriguing natural wonder that seemingly defies the law of gravity. Located on the Leh-Kargil-Baltic National Highway, this hill creates an optical illusion making it

appear as though vehicles are rolling uphill against gravity when they are actually moving downhill. Tourists from around the world flock to this site to witness this phenomenon.

Answers

Quiz

1. The Indian Mutiny. 2. Mangal Pandey 3. Rani Lakshmi Bai. 4. Annie Beasant.

Brain Teasers

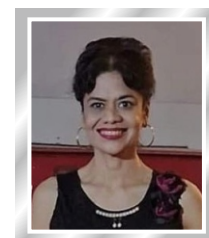
1. A dice. 2. Carpet. 3. Tilly because she is following the scale-Do, Re, Me, Fa, So, La ...
4. A bar of soap. 5. A=7, B=9 and C=0

What's the Good Word?

1. Jamsetji Tata. 2. Benz Patent Motor Car. 3. The Hindustan Ambassador. 4. The Rolls-Royce. 5. Germany.

Riddles

1. A hole. 2. A cupcake. 3. 10. 4. NOON. 5. A window.



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 VISA OBTAINED

GUJARAT: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have obtained my Visa for Canada. It is a dream come true.

-Nancy M. Christian

THANKSGIVING FOR COMPLETING MASTERS DEGREE

ANDHERI: My prayers have been answered. I am thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for helping me complete my Masters and being a post graduate.

-Allan Bradley Kishor

THANKSGIVING FOR GOOD HEALTH

VAKOLA: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have been blessed with good health. I have immense faith in the Venerable and visit the shrine at Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra.

-Monica Raposo

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

VILE PARLE: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, my family and I have been blessed in many ways.

-Rhea Coutinho

THANKSGIVING ON SILVER WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

MUMBAI: On the Silver Wedding Anniversary of Robinson and Rosita Gonsalves, we are very much thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for being there for our family at all times, through thick and thin.

-Reon Rhea Gonsalves

THANKSGIVING FOR ANSWERING PRAYERS

UTTAN: My prayers have been answered. I have received many favours, through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel.

-Renold Bandya

THANKSGIVING FOR SUCCESSFUL SURGERY

MUMBAI: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, my surgery went off successfully and I am back to good health.

-Christalina Cabral

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

THANE: Ven. Fr. Agnel has blessed us in many ways. We look up to the Venerable for interceding for us always.

-Annalaxmi Arunachalam

THANKSGIVING FOR GOOD HEALTH

VASAI: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, our family has been blessed with good health. We are staunch devotees of the Venerable and he helps us always. We pray for his canonisation as a Saint.

-Belina Lemos & Family

THANKSGIVING FOR SUCCESSFUL OPERATION

MUMBAI: As a devotee, I prayed to Ven. Fr. Agnel and through his kind intercession, my operation has been successful. The Venerable listens and intercedes for us with the Heavenly Father and Lord Jesus Christ.

-Branca Nunes

THANKSGIVING FOR BIRTHDAY BLESSINGS RECEIVED

USA: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have received several blessings on my birthday. It has made my special day memorable.

-Surekha Patole

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

KALYAN: Ven. Fr. Agnel has blessed us immensely. We are indeed grateful for all the favours received.

-Clavin D'Souza

THANKSGIVING FOR VISA RECEIVED

MUMBAI: I am thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for answering my prayers. Now I can work abroad. It has been my heart's desire.

-Deepak Smith

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

VASAI: I pray fervently to Ven. Fr. Agnel. The Venerable has helped me along life's journey and during troubled times.

-Jennifer D'Souza

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

OUT OF THEIR BOUNTY

Annie Decruze	Telangana	50000	Jacob D.	Kerala	2000	Gavin P.	Mumbai	1000
Paul Aloysius	Katnataka	50000	Wilson G.	Mumbai	2000	Vincent D.	Kerala	1000
Praveen M.	Mumbai	46500	Isabel H.	Tamil Nadu	2000	Canute D.	Chennai	1000
Brian N.	USA	25500	Rija A.	Kerala	2000	Sharon D.	Mumbai	1000
Walter F.	Mumbai	20000	Smith H.	Palghar	2000	K. S. Jayakumar	Kerala	1000
Manisha P.	Mumbai	15500	Herold G.	Palghar	2000	Charles A.	Tamil Nadu	1000
Gulnar Katakai	Mumbai	15000	Asha H.	Palghar	2000	Stuti S.	Rajasthan	1000
Swaroop Susan	UAE	15000	Maria R.	Mumbai	2000	Hiren Gala	Mumbai	1000
Kulathankal H.	Mumbai	15000	Arjasp R.	Mumbai	2000	Elton L.	Mumbai	1000
Swimmy D.	Mumbai	11500	Jennifer C.	Mumbai	2000	Domino K.	Thane	1000
Bhumit A.	Mumbai	11000	Zumbarbai L.	Mumbai	2000	Stanley D.	Mumbai	1000
Aquielia J.	Mumbai	11000	Neethu	Kerala	2000	Kamlesh H.	Mumbai	1000
Saniya D.	Thane	11000	Jayden T.	Mumbai	2000	Tukaram L.	Mumbai	1000
Gnanashekarana	Mumbai	10000	Sylvia D.	Mumbai	2000	Frank Q.	Mumbai	1000
Mamta Rao	Mumbai	10000	Angela M.	Mumbai	2000	T. M. David	Mumbai	1000
Veera Ghadially	Mumbai	10000	Vikrant F.	Mumbai	2000	Rajendra K.	Mumbai	1000
Mildred T.	Mumbai	10000	Satish P.	Gujarat	2000	Eben Neel	Karnataka	1000
Vihaan I.	Mumbai	8000	Sunita P.	Gujarat	2000	Irudayaraj M.	Tamil Nadu	1000
Warren F.	Mumbai	6000	Celina P.	Gujarat	2000	Shobhana S.	Mumbai	1000
Nikol Vilas	Vasai	6000	Napoleon	kerala	2000	Shantilal M.	Gujarat	1000
Subramaniam R.	Mumbai	5100	Carmelina M.	Kerala	2000	Yogita D.	Mumbai	1000
Lourdes J.	Mumbai	5000	Vincent M.	Mumbai	2000	Maxi D'Cruz	Kerala	1000
Jacob Puthur	Kerala	5000	Attely K.	Thane	1750	Anthony L.	Thane	1000
Andrea A.	Vasai	5000	Arun J.	Kerala	1500	Ramesh K.	Mumbai	1000
Shobha R.	Vasai	5000	Antony M.	Kerala	1500	Grenville S.	Mumbai	1000
Kavitha G.	Mumbai	5000	Melvyn J.	Thane	1250	Anthony T.	Kerala	1000
Stany M.	Mumbai	5000	Nikhil A.	Mumbai	1250	Harvesp	Mumbai	500
Maryamma A.	Kerala	5000	Cyril Rodrigues	Mumbai	1500	Niranjan M.	Ahmednagar	500
Kurian T.	Kerala	5000	Solphin M.	Vasai	1000	Nathuram S.	Pune	500
M. Varghese	Gujarat	5000	Gev Kelawalla	Mumbai	1000	Tulika K	Gujarat	500
Kakkoo F.	Kerala	5000	Lalita T.	Vasai	1000	Abey Thomas	Kerala	500
Mathew J.	Vasai	5000	K. P. Chandy	Kerala	1000	Benedict A.	Kerala	500
Veronica F.	Goa	4000	Jefferson A.	Mumbai	1000	Aruna F.	Tamil Nadu	500
Karen F.	Mumbai	3000	John Thomas	Kerala	1000	Shalini R.	Mumbai	500
Renu A.	Mumbai	3000	Bulbul Dutt	Bengal	1000	Sunil B.	Mumbai	500
Techno Products	Chennai	3000	George J.	Kerala	1000	Regina D.	Vasai	500
Mathew P.	Kerala	3000	Paresh T.	Thane	1000	Neha P.	Mumbai	500
Daisy Nadar	Mumbai	3000	Cynthia D.	Vasai	1000	Alastar S	Tamil Nadu	500
Flemy T.	Mumbai	3000	Jinal Patel	Mumbai	1000	Jenny D.	Mumbai	500
Reynold P.	Mumbai	2000	Sangita P.	Mumbai	1000	Mathew K.	Karnataka	500
Sharon P.	Mumbai	2000	Ghanshyan P.	Mumbai	1000	Malicia S.	Mumbai	500
Bevan P.	Mumbai	2000	Ankit P.	Mumbai	1000	Kantilal L.	Mumbai	500
Boris D.	Mumbai	2000	Dilip C.	Mumbai	1000	Marison W.	Mumbai	500
Leo Fernandes	Mumbai	2000	Hyacinth K.	Mumbai	1000	Calvin D.	Mumbai	500
Armaity Gev	Mumbai	2000	Mary A.	Kerala	1000	Saudra D.	Italy	500
Elizabeth A.	Kerala	2000						

BOB'S BANTER

by Robert Clements

He Wept...!

Yes, He did! Not when everything was falling apart. Not when things were going bust. Not when He was hanging on the cross, with wrenching pain from every bruised and injured part of His battered, exhausted body, but when He was just about to perform the greatest miracle of all time; making a dead man walk out of his grave.

Why would He weep before such a wondrous, supernatural occurrence?

Would any magician weep before impressing an audience? Wouldn't a Houdini have squared his shoulders, revealed half a smirk on his confident face, knowing in another magical moment, crowds would stand thrilled, spellbound, at some enchanting feat?

Why, even you and me, when about to enthrall an audience with a fascinating joke or story, knowing

But Jesus is in the very middle of the sorrow around. He feels the grief. He feels the pain. And the anguish around engulfs Him.

What a message for each one of us. Oh yes, we know that the worst tragedy in our lives cannot replace our divine tomorrow, and that even as we go through something terrible, there's a God beckoning us to an anointed, exalted and sanctified future, and so often in the grief of others, we mention such thoughts of comfort.

But, can we go to the same grief-stricken person and say, "He understands, He weeps with you!"?

Can we tell this to ourselves even as we walk through the valleys of shadows of death, that even as the solving of the problems will soon take place, that God deeply feels our present pain? That in living on earth Jesus felt the grief around. Felt the



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that soon they will be applauding us, do we weep before we begin?

But Jesus did.

And in those tears before he performed His miracle, we see the character of God.

Come with me, and look closer at the audience who are about to witness a dying man coming out of his grave, days after he has died. They weep, they cry, they are totally distraught. Two sisters of the dead man run to Him as soon as they hear Jesus has arrived, and in different ways express their disappointment that He's arrived too late.

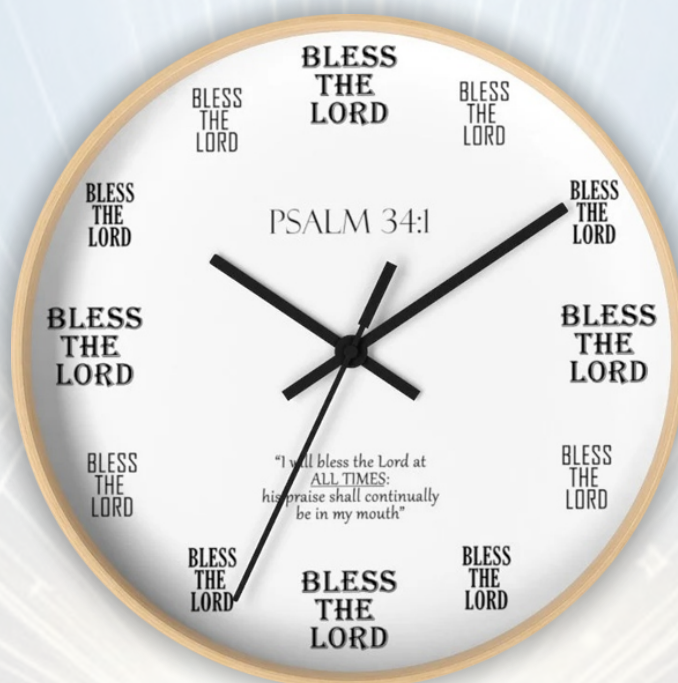
He could have grinned. Hugged them and at the same time winked at his disciples, drawing them into a conspiracy of what He was about to do.

hunger, which is why the five and four thousand were fed, even as He was feeding them spiritual food with His words. Felt also our misplaced reasons in not believing in Him, crying, 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do!'

In those tears He feels and knows the reasons for our pain and doubts, but hush look what's happening; Lazarus walks out, and in the raising of dead Lazarus, He showed He was a God who'd come down to solve those qualms of unbelief...!

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

***A Priest is not for himself.
He is for us, chosen by God.***



**Starting this Independence Day,
the **Diocesan Vocation Service Centre**, Mumbai,
is inviting all to pray for vocations
to the priesthood and religious life.**

Go to the link

<https://bit.ly/365PrayerDVSC>

**and choose a day to skip one meal
and pray for one hour.**

You can choose any day from

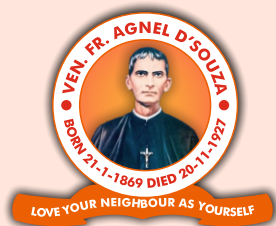
15th August, 2024 to 15th August, 2025.

***May Mary our Mother give us members who heed
the call of God and work in the vineyard of the Lord.***

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*On National Sports Day (29th August), let's celebrate
the winning glory of our athletes at the Paris Olympics 2024
and the T20 World Cup cricket team.
Let us be inspired by them and strive to emulate their achievements.*



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