

**FR. AGNEL**

# **ASHRAM NEWS**

**JUNE 2024**



***World Environment Day: Preserving Our Planet***

JUNE 2024

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## THE WORLD IS ON A BRINK, BUT YOU CAN HELP!

-Fr. M.K.George, SJ

For those of us who knew Bangalore, now Bengaluru, the following news would have been horrific. "Less than two years after Bengaluru, home to \$245 billion IT industry, grappled with flash floods, the city is now suffering from an acute water shortage ... the worst in three to four decades." (Y. Sharma, March 2024).

Remember, just 30-40 years ago, Bangalore was a city where nobody needed a fan or air conditioner; you needed sweaters and jackets and mist welcomed you in the mornings. Where there were 262 lakes, now we have just 50 lakes, most of them dying. "98% of lakes are encroached upon and 90% of them are fed with untreated sewage or industrial effluents. Naturally, this has impacted the recharge of the groundwater table as well." (TV Ramachandra, April 2024).

Today, Bangaloreans are queuing up for drinking water.

### The world is on a brink

The Bangalore example is just a sample. Look at the whole world: Currently, nearly 703 million people lack access to water – approximately 1 in 10 people on the planet – and over 2 billion do not have safe drinking water.

Think of the Climate Change. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the global temperature is expected to rise by 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052, if it continues to increase at the current rate. This rise in temperature is driving more frequent and severe weather changes, contributing to an array of devastating effects: hotter temperature, more severe storms, increased droughts, a warming/rising ocean, loss of species, not enough food, more health risks, and poverty and displacement. In fact, we are witnessing all of these on a daily basis.

### Other human-made disasters

Now add to the climate change, the other disasters pushing the world to a nightmarish scenario. The wars are the biggest threats. Whether the war in Ukraine, now into its second year, or the attack on Gaza by Israel following the horrific Hamas attack on Israel, now into the seventh month, both have the potential to break the world into a Third World War. Attempts and cries for peace and ceasefire

have not been heard. There is desperation on all sides. The soldiers alone killed have crossed 31,000 in Ukraine. In Gaza over 31,000 have died, 70 per cent of them women and children. Besides, women and children are being starved in Gaza.

The number of migrants, due to either climate change or political reasons, continue to increase. In 2023 alone more than 2000 migrants died in the Mediterranean Sea trying to enter Europe.

The failure of the world leadership is so glaring. The sliding down of democracy and growth of dictators add to the crises and push the world more and more to the brink of a disaster. Countries like Mali, Myanmar, Chad, Guinea, Sudan, Burkina Faso, Niger and Gabon have been

listed as ruled by dictators. Then there is the case of China and Russia, who claim to be democratically elected leaders, but are in effect autocrats. Take Latin America, Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela, Javier Milei in Argentina, and Dian Boluarte in Peru are examples of leaders who are leading their nations in dictatorial terms. The latest in the list is our own country, India, where fears are expressed that our present regime is striving towards dictatorial ways.

### We can help

Christians are men and women of hope. But, we need to act. Small steps are effective. Plant a tree. Join a service group to protect nature. Participate in politics. Not the least, keep praying. Pope Francis reminds us, 'Catholics should not be indifferent to politics, but should offer their suggestions, as well as prayers that their leaders may serve the common good in humility and love.' Speaking up the truth is the least we can do to save the world from the brink.



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## WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY: CARE OF OUR COMMON HOME

- Ibonio D'Souza

Today, we are faced with an ecological crisis of rising sea levels, polluted air, toxic oceans, and a mass extinction of species. One response to this crisis is “greening the economy” which looks to technological innovation to ensure sustainable development without further degrading the environment. But in recent years there has been a deeper questioning that suggests that the ecological crisis requires a spiritual and moral response.

This has been forcefully articulated in Pope Francis's encyclical, 'Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home, which asks us to look at the spiritual and moral issues underlying the unprecedented destruction of ecosystems we are inflicting upon the Earth. There are other spiritual leaders too who speak of the need to search beyond a merely physical or technological response to the present crisis and ask the deeper spiritual questions, which they believe are at the root of our present imbalance.

There is an argument that the origin of our present ecological crisis can be traced back to the Age of Enlightenment, when the emerging Newtonian model saw the physical world as unfeeling matter, a clockwork mechanism that we should understand and control. This consciousness may have given us the fruits of science and technology, but its cost was to create a mindset of separation that cut off humanity from the awareness of our natural interrelatedness with our world.

How have we lost and entirely forgotten any spiritual relationship to life and the planet, a central reality to other cultures for millennia? For indigenous people, the world is a sacred, interconnected living whole that cares for us and, therefore, we need to revere and care for it. Instead, in our Western culture, it has become a “resource” to exploit. The question then is whether we can correct our present imbalance through returning to an awareness of the sacred nature of creation, the Earth, as a living being which needs our love and attention.

The earth is not a problem to be solved; it is a living being to which we all belong. The Earth is part of our own self and we are part of its suffering wholeness. Until we go to the root of our image of separateness, there can be no healing. And, the deepest part of our separateness from creation lies in our forgetfulness of its sacred nature, which is also our own sacred nature.

The last decades have seen the globalisation of our Western materialistic values. Driven by greed and endless desire, we have attacked and destroyed the fragile web of life that physically supports us. But we have also created a soulless wasteland that no longer nourishes us with any connection to the sacred nature of creation, a connection that has spiritually sustained humanity for millennia.

Thomas Berry, one of the earliest voices to articulate a spiritual ecology, writes, “We are not talking to the rivers, we are not listening to the



wind and Sears. We have broken the great conversation... all the disasters that are happening now are a consequence of that spiritual 'autism.'” If we are to cease this destruction and desecration, if we are to no longer pollute the soul as well as the soil, we need to regain a connection to the sacred nature of the Earth. How to re-establish this connection, rejoin this conversation, is a fundamental question we should be asking.

Are we prepared to embrace a new story of life and civilisation, one that is radically different to our present story of a consumer-driven culture, based upon exploitation and the myth of continual economic progress? Many people today long for such a new story, one that recognises the Earth as a single interconnected living whole to which we belong. This is a story that nourishes our deeper selves with a sense of connection to the sacred and to the wonder and joy of life that is our heritage.

But collectively, we are still caught in the dream, or nightmare, of materialism, which the Earth can no longer support. Indeed, it could be argued that the root of the present collective anger, or deep discontent we are witnessing, comes from a primal knowing that this dream has passed its sell-by date, that its promises of prosperity are empty. And yet because our culture does not ask the right questions, there is no possibility for a real answer.

Science and technology are born from the reasoning that we are separate from the Earth, a mindset that is at the foundation of a culture where the exploitation of the natural world is now global and catastrophic.

Our present scientific responses may offer valuable short-term fixes, but do not begin to address the deeper issues. What will it take to change our pathological behaviour towards our common home?

To quote James Gustavo Sheth, former U.S. Advisor on climate change: “I used to think that top environmental problems were biodiversity

loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change... I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy, and to deal with these, we need a cultural and spiritual transformation.”

The first step is to recognise our present predicament and to become aware that materialism is in fact just a story we have been sold, which has us in its grip even as it is destroying our own ecosystem. There is actually no rationale that more “stuff” will make us happy and fulfilled, but rather it appears to have the opposite effect of empty promises that leave us emotionally and spiritually starved. We now come to understand the need for a new story - a story that includes a sustainable relationship to the Earth.

Real sustainability does not mean the ability to continue our present energy-intensive consumer-driven culture, but sustainability for all creation, for the living Earth to which we belong. But before we can fully articulate or live such a new story, we need to reconnect with the sacred nature of creation, rejoin the great conversation that was central to the way of life of our ancestors.

This work that reconnects has many forms, but a central theme is empowering the individual, opening our eyes and ears to the mystery and wonder of creation in all of its diversity, and returning each of us to our real place of belonging within life.



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



# JESUS' BODY, BLOOD & HEART

-Dr. Fio Mascarenhas, SJ

JUNE invites us to celebrate so many Solemn Feasts, **The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ** (*Corpus Christi*), **The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus**, **The Nativity of John the Baptist**, the **Apostles Peter and Paul**, plus ordinary feasts of Sts. Aloysius Gonzaga SJ, St. Anthony of Padua, etc!!! We focus here on only the first two Feasts, linking them with the just celebrated but always ongoing Feast of **Pentecost!**

1. We must start by remembering that “The Body and Blood of Christ” is a DAILY feast, celebrated every time the **Eucharist** is offered millions of times throughout the year, in so many churches and chapels across the whole world. However, we must boldly ask, have we not domesticated the Eucharist (the **Mass**)? Have we not turned it into a weekly “social event” and paid only lip service to the spiritual power it offers us for a continuing “transformation of our lives?”

On the occasion of this Feast in June, we must reflect: Do Catholics (in general) exit the church (after receiving Holy Communion) as **more** holy, more unworldly, more Christ-like, more filled with “love, joy, peace, patience, self-control, etc” (Gal 5:22), more **forgiving**, more loving, more able to witness to neighbours and friends that “Jesus is Lord”? If not, our pious and routine devotion to the Body and Blood of Christ may sadly be a proof to St. Paul’s words, that in fact, many Christians have become “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, **holding to the outward form of religion but denying its power**” (2Tim3:5).

Instead, here are anointed words from the Second Vatican Council about what the Spirit of God wants to achieve in the lay faithful at every Mass:

“Their work, prayers and apostolic endeavours, their ordinary married and family life, their daily labour, their mental and physical relaxation if carried out in the Spirit, and the hardships of life if patiently borne – all of these

become spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **During the celebration of the Eucharist, these spiritual sacrifices are most lovingly offered to the Father, along with the body of the Lord. Thus, as worshippers whose every deed is holy, the lay faithful consecrate the world itself to God**” (LG, 34).

[In a previous article, I explained how the Mass is meant to involve each Catholic a powerful “*sacramental memory*” of Jesus’ Death and Resurrection, and not be just an empty “*historical memory*” which it has become for so many Catholics!]

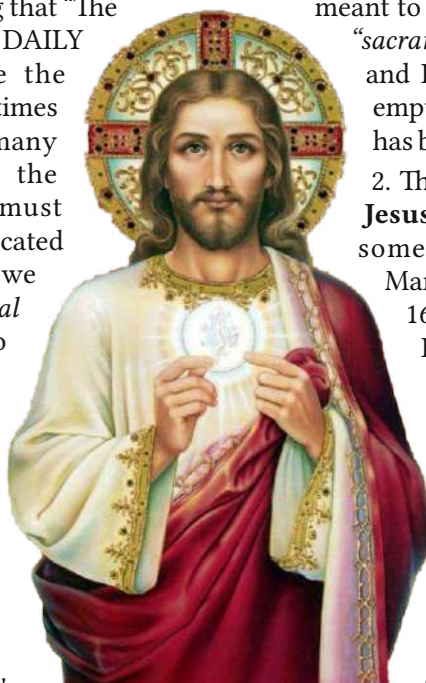
2. The **Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus** and its Devotion originated from some Apparitions of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in France, 1673-75. (Only last month, Pope Francis received in Special Audience, a Delegation from Paray-le-Monial which came to the Vatican on pilgrimage to celebrate the **350th Jubilee of the Devotion**, and he encouraged them **how important the Devotion still is for today**).

This is based on at least two fundamental scripture texts from John’s Gospel, and one from

Matthew’s Gospel:

**“Jesus proclaimed, “If anyone thirsts, let him/her come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water’.” Now this Jesus said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified...”** (John 7:37-39).

(Later, at the Cross) **“When they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness - his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth - that you also may believe** (Jn 19:33-35).



Jesus words, ***“Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water,”*** came true *on the Cross*, when the heart of Jesus was pierced by the soldier’s lance, and *blood and water* (the Johannine symbols of new life in the Spirit) started flowing copiously for the life of humanity! This is one basic event that explains the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. The third New Testament text is:

**“Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”**  
(Matt 12:28-30).

The 12 Promises of Jesus and the 9 First Fridays of the Sacred Heart Devotion use the language and social context of 350 years ago, and may sound odd to today’s post-modern Catholics, and so the **Divine Mercy Devotion**, started in the 20th century through Apparitions in Poland to St. Faustina and encouraged by the great Polish Pope, St. John Paul II, has become more popular today. But notice the very important difference: while keeping the symbol of the Heart of Jesus and its rays, this modern Devotion has changed the focus from the **Spirit’s action** on **disciples** inspiring them to take up “Jesus’ yoke/burden” and to thereby “receive divine refreshment,” to a new focus on God’s **Mercy** upon **“sinners!”** So though the two Devotions seem similar, they are in fact quite different!

In 2006, **Pope Benedict XVI** wrote to the

Superior General of the Society of Jesus (Pope St. John Paul II wrote similar words many times earlier) to encourage the Jesuits to strenuously foster even today the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and its apostolic outreach, the Apostleship of Prayer (now renamed “Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network”):

“It is still a fitting task for Christians to continue to deepen their relationship with the Heart of Jesus, in such a way as to revive their faith in the saving love of God, and to welcome him ever better into their lives. It is only possible to be Christian by fixing our gaze on the Cross of our Redeemer, *“on him whom they have pierced”* (Jn 19: 37; cf. Zc 12: 10). When we practise this devotion, not only do we recognize God’s love with gratitude, but we continue to open ourselves to this love so that our lives are ever more closely patterned upon it.”

So here is a call to renew our **Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus** based on the power of the Word (see the NT texts quoted above) and on a focus on the Love of God emanating from the crucified and broken Heart of Christ, calling us to become better disciples (*“take up my yoke, my burden”*). This focus is very necessary for today’s Church and for the New Evangelization.



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

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## ST. PETER THE APOSTLE, THE ROCK & HIS CHAIR

-Leon Bent

Saint Peter (died AD 64–68), also known as Peter the Apostle, Simon Peter, Simeon, Simon, or Cephas, was one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ, and one of the first leaders of the early Christian Church. He appears repeatedly and prominently in all four New Testament Gospels, as well as the Acts of the Apostles. Catholic tradition accredits Peter as the first bishop of Rome - pope - also as the first bishop of Antioch.

Based on contemporary historical data, Peter's papacy is estimated to have spanned from AD 30 to his death, which would make him the longest-reigning pope, at anywhere from 34 to 38 years; however, this has never been verified.

St. Peter was known to hold the keys to the kingdom of heaven, entrusted to him by Jesus himself. For this and many other reasons, St. Peter became a celebrated figure in Christianity.

But there could be many reasons why Jesus chose Peter.

- Peter had natural leadership skills (John 21:3)
- He was the first to act (John 20:6, John 21:7)
- He loved the Lord so much (John 21:17)

*...but any human person seems unlikely as a suitable foundation for the whole Church of Jesus on earth... why does the Catholic Church adhere to this point of view? What is the reason that the Catholic Church adheres to this idea that, Peter could be the foundation for the whole Church of Jesus?*

Probably because Jesus himself said that, he will build his Church on Peter, the Rock and even went on to change his name as a proof of it. In the Bible, the name of a person is changed by God when they are called to lead a significant role (like Abram-Abraham/Jacob-Israel). If Peter was just one of the twelve, this event is an anomaly.

Also, all through the New Testament, Peter's Primacy is shown in hidden symbols. Like for example:

### In Gospels

- Peter's name appears first in every list of the twelve. Matthew even says he was the first (Mt. 10:2)
- When evangelists mention the apostles, Peter is unusually singled out (Mark 1:36, Mark 16:7, Luke 9:32)
- Peter is approached by the temple authorities as a representative of the Group (Mt. 17:24-27; Note this is the only place in the NT where Jesus refers himself in equal level with another human being). Jesus says ('Pay the tax for me and for yourself.')
- Peter often spoke to Jesus on behalf of the twelve (Mk. 8:29; Lk. 12:41; Jn. 6:66-69)
- At the Last Supper, even though Satan has asked to sift all of them, Jesus says he prayed for Peter

specifically and asks him to strengthen others after regaining his own faith (Lk. 22:31-32)

- John waited for Peter to enter into the tomb (John 20:6)
- Among the Apostles, the resurrected Lord appeared first to Peter (Lk. 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5).
- Jesus made promises to Peter that he had not made to other Apostles (Mt. 16: 18-19; Rock/Keeper of Keys of Kingdom)
- Peter alone was given in charge to be the head shepherd (Jn. 21:15-17).

### In Acts

- Peter initiated and oversaw the replacement of Judas (Acts 1:15-26; Note that this happened before the descent of the Holy Spirit, that is, he is acting on his own authority, given to him by Jesus)
- Peter delivered the inaugural sermon of Church History (Acts 2:14-36; First to preach and administer Baptism to the chosen people after resurrection)
- Peter was the first to preach and administer Baptism to the Gentiles (Acts 10:1-48)





- Peter performed the first healing after the resurrection (Acts 3:1-10)
- Peter was the first to discipline (Acts 5: 1-11)
- Peter was the final authority in the first council of Jerusalem (Acts 15: 6-11)

### **In the New Testament**

- Of all the twelve apostles, Peter is mentioned more times than all other apostles put together. (Peter - 195 times; Other Apostles 130 times). No other apostle has this unique mission of leading the Apostles/early Church, as evident in the Bible.

“In the first days of the Church, Peter's denial became awfully important for Christians because of the persecutions, like the frightful persecution by Nero. A lot of people may very well have denied the faith, and they were in danger of despairing, so Peter's story of denial and then, reinstatement, would have been important for them,” Father Mullins said.

Peter guides us through his story of faith in Jesus and Jesus' reciprocation with a boundless trust in his chosen instrument. Peter met Jesus through his brother Andrew. Moved by Peter's answer when he asks him who he is, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Mt. 16:16), Jesus calls him “blessed” and reveals to Peter his mission: “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church” (Mt. 16:18).

Peter's strong faith and frailty are contrasted when he sees Jesus walk on water. Jesus bids him to join him. Immediately Peter steps out of the boat in faith but takes fright when he starts to sink. “He discovers his own vulnerability,” says Father Mullins. Jesus catches him, holds him and says, “Why did you doubt?”

Jesus knows Peter as he is. He knows he will deny him. At the Last Supper, he tells Peter he has prayed “that your own faith may not fail,” (Lk. 22:32).

His trust in Peter plays out movingly in the Gospels. The hearts of the disciples of Emmaus burned as Jesus explained the Scriptures to them. After Pentecost, Peter constantly does the same, his heart is a flaming fire!

“Peter is looking at the history of the people of God and seeing the death, resurrection and glorification of Christ, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that, God has brought about as the fulfilment of the whole historical process.”

“He opens the Scriptures to people and is a spiritual guide.”

At the same time, Peter keeps before him, at all times, the image of Christ's infinite love. “Let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins,” he writes, putting into words the love and trust he himself experienced from Jesus.

Saint Peter is revered in the Christian community across the globe, and is an important figure, when it comes to the history of the Vatican. He is considered as the first Pope and the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter marks the long-standing Papacy in Rome since the 1st century. Standing as a jewel in the Papal Altar of St. Peter's Basilica is the ancient Throne of the Apostle. With a beautiful grand enclosure designed by Bernini, the Chair is one of the most treasured highlights of the Basilica. The Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter, celebrating the doctrine that, “Christ the Lord... made Peter and his successors His vicars, to exercise forever in the Church, the power which He exercised during His mortal life.”

Peter was one of the 12 Apostles of Jesus. Roman Catholic tradition holds that Jesus established St. Peter as the first Pope (Matthew 16:18). Jesus also gave him “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:19), which is why he is often depicted at the gates of heaven in art and popular culture.

Saint Peter's Basilica is said to have been built on the site of his grave in Rome. In Roman Catholicism, he is regarded as the first in the unbroken succession of Popes. Jesus' promise to give him the “keys of the kingdom,” led to the popular perception of Peter as the gatekeeper of heaven.

What did Jesus say to Peter before he died? Jesus then describes Peter's future to him, and says, “someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go” (John 21:18, NIV). The narrator interprets this as referring to Peter's martyrdom (John 21:19). According to a tradition found in the apocryphal Acts of Peter, Peter asked to be crucified upside-down.

### **The Feast of the Chair of St. Peter**

“Grant, we pray, almighty God,  
that no tempests may disturb us, for you have set us fast

on the rock of the Apostle Peter's confession of faith.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son

Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever."

#### – Roman Missal

On February 22, we observe the Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter, celebrating the doctrine that, "Christ the Lord... made Peter and his successors His vicars, to exercise forever in the Church, the power which He exercised during His mortal life." The doctrine of apostolic succession is based on the words of Jesus to Peter in the book of Matthew: "And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" – Matthew 16:18-19.

#### Fostering Unity

In following the tradition of apostolic succession, the Church seeks to foster unity amongst its members upon the foundation of primatial (here, Bishop, Pope) authority beginning with Saint Peter. Pope Leo XIII related in the Encyclical *Satis Cognitum*:

"It is clear that by the will and command of God, the Church rests upon St. Peter, just as a building rests on its foundation. Now the proper nature of a foundation is to be a principle of cohesion for the various parts of the building. It must be the necessary condition of stability and strength. Remove it and the whole building falls. It is consequently the office of St. Peter to support the Church, and to guard it in all its strength and indestructible unity. Just as Christ, the Good Shepherd, lived selflessly during his time on earth, the pope also is called to a vocation of self-sacrifice for the flock which he guides." As Pope John Paul II expressed:

"On the feast of the Chair of St. Peter, the liturgy once again offers us the famous oracle of the prophet Ezekiel, in which God reveals himself as the Shepherd of his people. Indeed, the Chair is inseparable from the pastoral staff, because Christ, Teacher and Lord, came to us as the Good Shepherd (cf. Jn. 10: 1-18)".

#### On this Rock I will Build my Church

In contemporary times, the Latin-rite liturgy celebrates the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter. This is a very ancient tradition, proven to have existed in Rome since the fourth century. On it we give

thanks to God for the mission he entrusted to the Apostle Peter and his Successors.



"Cathedra" literally means the established seat of the Bishop, placed in the mother church of a diocese which for this reason is known as a "cathedral"; it is the symbol of the Bishop's authority and in particular, of his "magisterium", that is,

the evangelical teaching which, as a successor of the Apostles, he is called to safeguard and to transmit to the Christian Community.

Ex-cathedra is a Latin phrase, meaning not "from the cathedral," but "from the Chair." The phrase does have religious origins though: it was originally applied to decisions made by Popes from their thrones. According to Roman Catholic doctrine, a Pope speaking ex cathedra on issues of faith or morals, is infallible.

When a Bishop takes possession of the particular Church that, has been entrusted to him, wearing his mitre and holding the pastoral staff, he sits on the "Cathedra - Bishop's throne." From this seat, as teacher and pastor, he will guide the journey of the faithful in faith, hope and charity.

So, why was the "Chair" of St. Peter? Chosen by Christ as the "rock," on which to build the Church (cf. Mt. 16: 18), he began his ministry in Jerusalem, after the Ascension of the Lord and Pentecost. The Church's first "seat" was the Upper Room, and it is likely that a special place was reserved for Simon Peter in that room where Mary, Mother of Jesus, also prayed with the 12 disciples, for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, at Pentecost.

Peter was eventually martyred. He was crucified on the Vatican Hill upside down, because he declared himself undeserving to die in the same manner as Christ.



**Leon Bent** writes because, with the rise of the web and its quick dispatches, people are hungry for profound thought, for depth, for insight, for sustained description and the touch of the Divine.



# FAITH - A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TRINITARIAN GOD

-Norma Kamath

As a Catholic, I was betrothed to Jesus at baptism, and had been growing in my espousal relationship through prayer, the word of God and through the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Adoration. I prayed to the Father and the Holy Spirit but did not enjoy a personal relationship with them. It was only in 1983, after a close encounter with the Trinity, at a Charismatic Retreat that I started to grow in a personal relationship with the three persons, the Father, the Son, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

## MY FAITH EXPERIENCE WITH THE TRIUNE GOD

At the retreat, we were asked to open the Bible at random and read. I opened to the Song of Songs, and whispered to the Lord that I could not understand anything. I heard in a low audible voice

from the depths of my being say, 'Just praise and thank me with all creation.' Awesome!! The voice of my Creator!! I obeyed. I was curious to know about this book, and the Holy Spirit revealed it to me later, through the writings of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila.

At the retreat, at night, I woke up with these words, "Repent! Repent!" Was it the end of the world? The next day, I learnt through the talks, that God was calling me out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of His Divine Son, Jesus. The words of the First Commandment, 'I am the Lord Thy God. Thou shalt not have strange Gods before me,' brought me to repentance.

Believing the lie of the devil that Nature Cure and Yoga would keep me healthy, through its practice, I opened the door to the evil one, and to false

worship. I began to doubt whether Jesus was the Son of God. The devil entered by the back door like a thief to steal and destroy (Jn1: 1,10). But God's mercy and grace saved me through the Sacrament of Confession.

During the Mass, I was blessed with a prophetic vision of the Good Shepherd. A gentle breeze and a deep peace came over me as I saw the Good Shepherd walk in the desert, leading his flock to green pastures and blue life giving streams. I rejoiced as he carried me in his arms and took me

home to the house of my Heavenly Father. What goodness to me! a poor sinner! 'My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.'

As the priest counselled and prayed over me, I received the anointing, the

Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues. My spirit cried out, 'Abba Father! Abba Father!' as I was engulfed with His Light and His Love. Sheer Joy! God is my Father, and I am His Beloved Daughter in Christ. Blessed, and become a Blessing!

## GROWTH IN A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TRINITARIAN GOD

An hour's personal prayer early morning, in the Presence of The Triune God became my lifeline. The Lord showed me that the key to growing in a personal relationship with the Three Persons is repentance, renunciation of sin, and growth in holiness.

## THE FIRST PERSON - THE FATHER, THE CREATOR

The Holy Spirit led me from the first day into a



new experience of prayer. He seemed to fill up a deep void in my life, the absence of a Father's Love. I was Abba Father's little child, sitting on his lap, whispering in his ears, and playing around him. I remember bursting into laughter as he held me up in his arms, and I gazed into his face, while he walked in the garden.

I had faced rejection in early childhood, and grown up with fears. One day the fear of being alone and the fear of darkness gripped me, as my husband was to go out of station. At the same time, this tune came to my ears. I had been hearing it earlier in the day too. 'Father in my life I see. You are God who walks with me. You hold my life in your hands. Close beside you I will stand. I give all my life to you. Help me Father to be true.'

Surprisingly, I began to experience my Heavenly Father's Presence, and I, a little child holding his garment, and walking behind him, from room to room. After this my fears vanished. Today I can say with Jesus, 'I am not alone. My Father is with me' (Jn 8:32).

**THE SECOND PERSON, JESUS - THE SON OF GOD:** Growing in intimacy with Jesus did not seem easy, so I asked the Holy Spirit to enlighten me, why? The Spirit showed me that I had many blocks. I had to learn to deal with my anger and unforgiveness. At a retreat, the preacher announced that somebody was having circumcision of the heart (Deut 30:6). It was me. I felt like I was having a heart attack.

Through an inner healing retreat, the walls I had erected in childhood to safeguard myself from rejection were brought down. Daily Mass, the Eucharist, the weekly charismatic prayer meeting, working in ministry, helped me grow in my personal relationship with Jesus. I attended a course, 'Unbound,' which taught me to renounce sin. I would take the word of God into my heart, to strengthen and heal me, and my faith grew through the word. The 33 days Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary brought me closer to the Heart of Jesus through Mother's intercession.

Suffering was my greatest teacher. I was afraid of sickness and suffering, and practised yoga and

nature cure to avoid it. This took me into self and self dependence. It eroded my faith in God. As I united my suffering with Jesus' suffering for sinners, I was no longer afraid of suffering. I began to appreciate Jesus' Sacrifice on the Cross, and grew close to him. Suffering gave me endurance, greater compassion, patience and tolerance and taught me humility. I grew in faith.

### **THE THIRD PERSON, THE HOLY SPIRIT:**

The Holy Spirit is the best gift the Father has given me. He is the Love of the Father and the Son poured into my heart. He is like a new dawn each day! Like the freshness of the morning dew! He is my constant helper, finds all my lost articles. He brings to mind what I have to do. He gives me the wisdom to discern God's will. He teaches me how to pray, and takes me into the depths of my God, to know him, to love him, and to serve him. He is my comfort and my solace. I feel sad when I grieve him through my disobedience. He is always gracious to me, and has given me many gifts, to enable me to build up the Kingdom of God. I keep seeking his fruit, to help me grow in holiness, for it is only the pure of heart that will see God.

I conclude with the vision the Lord asked Habakkuk to write.

*So he may run who reads it;*

*For still the vision awaits its time,*

*it hastens to the end,*

*it will not lie.*

*If it seems slow, wait for it.*

*It will surely come, it will not delay.*

*'Behold he whose soul is not upright,*

*in him shall fail,*

*But the righteous shall live by his faith.'*



**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.



# AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Bandra

## Euphoria 2024 showcases a rich tapestry of talents of Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues College of Engineering

**Euphoria**, the pinnacle of Fr. CRCE's cultural calendar, was held on 14th and 15th March 2024 with the theme '**Mirage: Beyond the Facade.**'

Euphoria featured six domains, from captivating performances in Performing Arts to engaging activities in Personality Development, from thought-provoking Literary compositions to adrenaline-pumping Sports, from Fine Arts showcasing intricate creations to the Submission category, providing a platform for innovative posts.

After four years, the eagerly awaited flagship event, **Band of Wars**, was back at Euphoria. The inter-collegiate bands took the stage, transforming the atmosphere into that of a lively concert, much to the delight of the audience.

The grand finale of Euphoria unfolded on 18th March at **Prabodhankar Thackeray Natya Mandir, Borivali**. The Auditorium Day was marked by spectacular performances of the flagship event 'Impulse.' Segmented into themes, students showcased their creativity and prowess, from the 'Folklore Fiesta' of the first year students to the captivating 'Illusion Fusion' of the second year students, and the nostalgic 'Echoes Across Time' of the third year students, culminating in the theme-based extravaganza of the fourth year students, 'Dreamscape.'

Concluding the programme, the Student Council 2022-23 was felicitated by the esteemed dignitaries, **Director Rev. Fr. Valerian D'Souza** and **Asst. Director Rev. Fr. Trevor Pereira**. Members were given a memento as a token of appreciation for their contribution to the college.



**Exciting happenings at Euphoria 2024.**

# AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Vashi

## AGNELITES EXCEL IN SSC – 2024

There was great jubilation at Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School and Jr. College, Vashi, as the SSC results came in online on 27th May 2024. This year too Agnel posted 100% results.

**Manas Sameer Dumbre stood first in the English medium with 99.2%. Asmi Nilesh Sakhare with 98% stood 2nd and Navyata Rajeev Bhatt with 97.6% stood 3rd, respectively.**

**In the Marathi medium section, Vedanti Pravin Bhor with a score of 97.20% bagged the highest percentage. Bhargavi Suhas Kadam with 96.40% stood 2nd and Devang Suhas Rege with 95.00% stood 3rd.**

This year, out of 294 students from the English medium who enrolled for the SSC exams, 267 students passed with distinctions. Out of 40 students from the Marathi medium, 33 passed with distinctions.

From the English medium, 13 students with learning disabilities, two visually challenged students and one student with autism spectrum disorder passed with flying colours.

In the Marathi medium section, with Board concession, one student each with hearing impairment, learning disability and intellectual disability fared well in the SSC exam.



**Manas Dumbre**



**Asmi Sakhare**



**Navyata Bhatt**



**Vedanti Pravin Bhor**



**Bhargavi Kadam**



**Devang Suhas Rege**

## READER'S FEEDBACK

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

This magazine is available online.

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



# AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Vashi

## AGNELITES EXCEL IN HSC – 2024

As the HSC results were declared, there was a big reason to cheer at Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School and Jr. College, Vashi, with a pass percentage of 100%.

**Mabel Anthony Nadar** with 95.5% stood 1st in the Science stream, **Shriya Sandeep Rane** with 95.33% stood 2nd and **Akanksha Ashwin Pai** and **Aparajita Jitendra Singh** with 94.17% stood 3rd, respectively.

In the Commerce stream, **Tanishka Rajesh Khithani** with a score of 95% bagged the highest percentage. She is followed by **Hetvi Naresh Bhanushali** with 94.83% and **Riddhi Tulshidas Chandra** with 94.50%.

This year, 151 students from the Science stream and 127 students from the Commerce stream registered for the HSC exams and all passed with excellent scores. 102 students from the Science stream and 96 students from the Commerce stream passed with distinctions.

Five students with learning disability and two students with Orthopaedic Disability scored excellent results.

**Aparajita Singh** and **Rishi Chawla** from the Science stream scored 100 out of 100 in Mathematics.



**Mabel Nadar**



**Shriya Rane**



**Akanksha Pai**



**Aparajita Singh**



**Tanishka Khithani**



**Hetvi Bhanushali**



**Riddhi Chandra**

# AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Delhi, Noida, Greater Noida, Vaishali

## SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THE AGNEL REGION SCHOOLS IN DELHI, NOIDA, GREATER NOIDA AND VAISHALI

	SECONDARY							SENIOR SECONDARY						
	TOT	PASS	Highest	100 MKS	90% +	80%+	60-70%	TOT	PASS	Highest	100 MKS	90% +	80%+	60-70%
FR. AGNEL SCHOOL DELHI	208	207	97	1	41	67	80	170	165	97.6	3	21	50	87
FR. AGNEL SCHOOL NOIDA	246	246	99.2	34	96	74	19	190	190	99.4	26	43	57	31
FR. AGNEL SCHOOL GREATER NOIDA	113	112	97.8	NA	34	41	33	134	133	97.2	8	22	47	61
FR. AGNEL SCHOOL VAISHALI	110	110	97.2	4	39	39	31	65	66	98.2	5	13	27	25
HIGHLIGHTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Delhi Schools of the Agnel Region have always excelled in all sectors of School activities, such as sports, culture (music, dance, western/Indian), organizing cultural activities, etc.</li> <li>This table gives a glimpse of the academic calibre with 1236 students in Classes X and XII, with the highest percentage of 99.2 in Grade X, and 99.4 in Grade XII.</li> <li>39 students have secured 100/100 in Grade X, and 41 students have obtained 100/100 in Grade XII.</li> </ul>													



There is no Joy Greater  
than the Joy of  
GIVING

### Hugh & Colleen Gantzer, Uttarakhand

We have made a contribution of Rs.60,000 through NEFT, towards the various charitable activities of Fr. Agnel Ashram and maintenance of the Balbhavan boys.

### Buildquick Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd., Gujarat

We have given a cheque of Rs.51,000 to Fr. Agnel Ashram for fulfilling the daily requirements of the institution.

### Praveen Shrivastava, Mumbai

In continuance of my monthly contributions to Fr. Agnel Ashram, I have donated an amount of Rs. 44,000 through NEFT, towards the well-being of Balbhavan boys.

### Maria Robert, Pune

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

### Ancy Nadar, Mumbai

I have contributed an amount of Rs. 25,000 via EDC as a thanksgiving offering to Fr. Agnel for various intentions fulfilled.

### Zacharias Joseph Mannala, UAE

I am pleased to donate an amount of Rs.25,000 through NEFT for the well-being and maintenance expenses of the Balbhavan boys.

### Agnelo Lobo, Mumbai

My family and I are happy to offer a donation of Rs.15,000 through NEFT for the daily needs, maintenance, education and training of the Balbhavan boys in Fr. Agnel Ashram.

### Alex Cecil Raj, Thane

I remember Fr. Agnel Ashram being founded in 1957 by Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues. Ever since, it has been doing yeoman service to the marginalised sections of society, for over six decades. The Ashram Fathers are continuing the rich legacy of the founder. My family and I are delighted to make a small contribution of Rs.15,000, towards the welfare of the Balbhavan boys and all the charity works of the Ashram.

### Pranita Leon D'Souza, Vasai

We are pleased to send a cheque of Rs.15,000 towards the maintenance and care of the Balbhavan kids of Fr. Agnel Ashram.



## HE WHO READS ... LEADS

- Ninette D'Souza

While technology assisted stakeholders in education stay connected during the pandemic, the downside? A continued and unnecessary dependence even today. Boring PPTs have replaced blackboards and text books. Writing a 3-hour paper is akin to torture. This new academic year, may I invite children, educators, tutors and parents to inculcate in yourselves the habit of **READING** (if you are not into it already).

Teachers, when you read aloud to your students (no matter the subject), you transport them to a magical world, one in which they learn best. This activity pays rich dividends especially in achieving fluency in languages. Through your voice modulation with expressions, proper pronunciations and enunciation, they help to make connections with the matter being taught, while allowing the mind to retain chunks of the content, thus improving memory skills. This activity does not make you just well-read but well informed too, allowing your creativity to flourish in multiple ways.

Teachers, hearing you read is a learning in itself for your students. Get students to read aloud as well, first in small groups; then individually. When you stress on classroom behaviour that does not tolerate talking when another is reading or laughing at another's predicament due to inherent accents, you become responsible for building correct social behaviour. Children, in these SWIPE times, you find it difficult to focus your gaze and concentration on reading an article of length in the newspaper, let alone a novel. Your attention span has gone for a mighty toss making it a chore to peruse your texts, something very necessary in the upper echelons of education.

Begin reading children, even snippets and see how much you stand to gain. Read poems, lines from a play, your library book (with a synopsis). Importantly, read your text books of different subjects that stir even a wee bit of interest. This can be an indication for your career path.

Rather than wasting precious time on social media, talk to living persons, it will help you check your understanding of issues because Google does

not have all the answers and Quora gives you multiple choices. Be proactive when studying, i.e. go beyond the text and read about different topics even if on Kindle. Reading allows your imagination; God's gift, run riot.

Parents, for 30 years I taught High School Math and Science, not English and yet I have been writing for many publications; on varied topics for almost four decades. I have won laurels as a student of Canossa High School and continued to do so as a teacher at my Alma Mater till I retired, in Public Speaking, Elocution, Essay Writing besides scripting plays and orchestrating Annual Day Programmes.

I credit my passion for Reading for allowing me to achieve a long-awaited goal, that of becoming a published author. With the first book already out and the second one on its way, I spend my leisure Reading and Writing. My mind is racing with ideas for the third and fourth books. I owe my voracious appetite for reading, to my parents who enthused me from a very young age. The best gift for your child is a subscription to the nearest library.

Coleridge, the great poet wrote, "..... should children be permitted to read romances and relations of giants, magicians and genies? But of course! I know of no other way of giving the mind a love of the 'great' and the 'whole'. As long as this desire for the search remains with our young people which they will look to satiate with reading, they will find a perpetual source of enrichment, which will last a lifetime."

Often, I am flabbergasted, even cringe on hearing some of the news reporters and anchors as they address viewers on Indian national television. Whom / where should the finger of blame point to?



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

# CELEBRATING FATHER'S DAY

-Jubel D'Cruz

Father's Day is celebrated on the third Sunday in June. The day is celebrated to honour all fathers and celebrate the fatherhood, paternal bonds and the influence of fathers in the society. Father's Day complements Mother's Day, a celebration that honours mothers and motherhood, which is celebrated on the second Sunday in May, every year.

On Father's Day, people buy gifts for their dads or take them out to dinner or for a movie. Father's Day was first observed on July 5, 1908, by Dr. Robert Webb of West Virginia at the Central Methodist Church of Fairmont in the USA. Later, one Mrs. Sonora Smart Dodd thought of having a similar celebration for her dad in 1909 while listening to a Mother's Day sermon in church. Her dad, Henry Jackson Smart, had raised her up, after her mother's death when she was still a young girl.

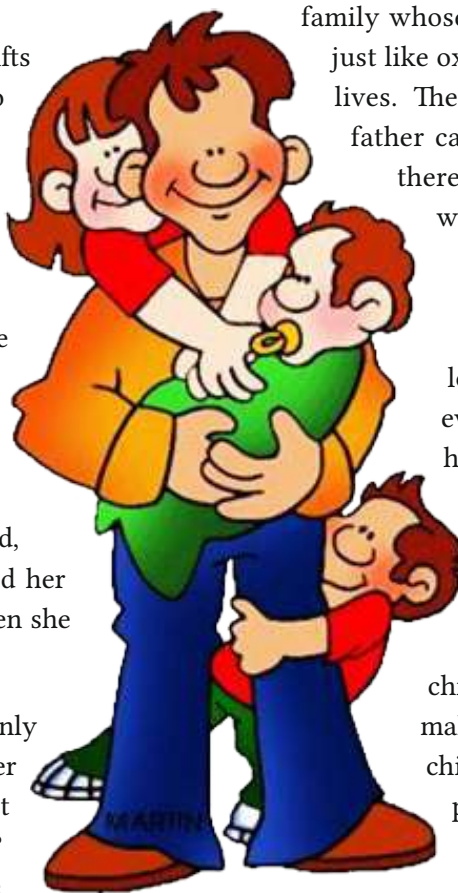
Father's Day is a celebration of only one day, but what about the other 364 days of the year? Do we just sit around and not love our dads? Father's Day should be celebrated every day of the year because fathers give and do a lot to help their kids.

Father's Day means a lot to me because I can spend the entire day with my dad. My dad and I might go out to the movies, might play cricket, go out for dinner, or might even go swimming or stay at home and watch TV. I am happy because I can spend as much time as possible with my dad on this special day.

On the other hand, my dad is the best dad in the world. A few days before Father's Day could arrive, I go shopping searching for the perfect gift to give him. I know my dad loves whatever I gift him. I have fun every Father's Day because I get to be with my dad the whole day long.

A father is the most important member of the family whose love for his son/daughter is just like oxygen for the survival of their lives. There is nothing as big that a father cannot do for his children and there is no such sacrifice that he will not do. Every little thing that he does makes him great. He has that unfathomable energy and the unconditional love in his heart that compels every child to keep following him in the hope of learning a new thing every time.

The patience and perseverance he has to make everything possible in his children's life is quite a thing that makes him a superhero in his children's eyes. It is sometimes perplexing to understand from where he draws such great energy to make his children look at the positive aspect of every situation he may be in.



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



## **JOSHUA: LEADING THE ISRAELITES INTO THE PROMISED LAND** *(The life of Joshua extends from Exodus 17:9 to Judges 2:8)*

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

**Introduction:** Joshua, a central figure in the Old Testament, emerges as a towering symbol of courage, faith, and obedience. His story spans from the exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt to their conquest of the Promised Land of Canaan. Through his unwavering devotion to God and exemplary leadership, Joshua played a key role in shaping the destiny of the Israelite nation.

**Moses' assistant:** Joshua's journey begins as Moses' assistant and a military leader during the Israelites' exodus from Egypt. Born as "Hoshea" (may Yahweh save) in Egypt and later renamed "Joshua" (Yahweh saves) by Moses (Numbers 13:16), Joshua accompanied Moses to Mount Sinai, where he witnessed the handing over of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 24:13). Throughout their wilderness journey, Joshua proved himself as a capable leader and warrior, leading the Israelites to victory against the Amalekites (Exodus 17:10-13).

**Moses' successor:** Following the death of Moses, Joshua was appointed by God as the leader of the Israelites (Joshua 1:1-2). His primary mission was to lead the Israelites across the Jordan River and into the Promised Land of Canaan. This monumental task required immense courage and faith, qualities that Joshua possessed in abundance. In Joshua 1:5, God reassures him, saying, "No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you."

**Tested and tried:** Joshua's leadership is first tested during the conquest of Jericho, a fortified city with seemingly impregnable walls. Following God's instructions, Joshua led the Israelites in a miraculous victory as the walls of Jericho collapsed after the Israelites marched around the city for seven days (Joshua 6:20). This victory served as a powerful demonstration of God's power and Joshua's unwavering faith.

**Military leader:** Throughout the conquest of Canaan, Joshua continued to lead the Israelites in battles against the Canaanite nations. Time and again, Joshua relied on God's guidance and intervention to secure victories. In Joshua 10:14, the Bible records, "Surely the Lord was fighting for Israel!" This acknowledgment highlights Joshua's recognition of God's sovereignty and the source of Israel's success.

**The promised land:** Joshua's leadership extended beyond military conquests; he also oversaw the division of the Promised Land among the twelve tribes of Israel (Joshua 13-21). He ensured that each tribe received its rightful inheritance, fulfilling God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

**Spiritual leader:** Joshua served as a spiritual leader, exhorting the Israelites to remain faithful to God and to obey His commandments. In Joshua 24:15, he famously declares, "But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." This declaration reflects his commitment to leading by example and inspiring others to follow God wholeheartedly.

**Joshua's significance:** His importance extends beyond his military and leadership achievements; he embodies the themes of courage, faith, and obedience that are central to the biblical narrative. His story serves as a testament to God's faithfulness and provision, demonstrating that with God's guidance, even the most daunting challenges can be overcome.

**Joshua's legacy:** In addition to his role in the Old Testament narrative, Joshua's legacy reverberates throughout the New Testament. He is referenced in Hebrews 4:8 as a symbol of rest and inheritance, foreshadowing the rest that believers find in Christ. Furthermore, Jesus' name is the Greek equivalent of Joshua, highlighting the parallel between Joshua's leadership in the Old Testament and Jesus' role as the ultimate Saviour and leader in the New Testament.

**Conclusion:** Joshua's leadership in the Old Testament represents a pivotal moment in Israelite history. His courage, faith, and obedience to God's commands enabled the Israelites to conquer the Promised Land and inherit the blessings God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Joshua's story continues to inspire believers today, serving as a reminder of God's faithfulness and the rewards of trusting in His guidance. Joshua boldly declared, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

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

## BIBLE QUIZ ON JOSHUA

**1. What was Joshua's original name?**

- a) Hoshea
- b) Moses
- c) Caleb

**2. Who appointed Joshua as the leader of the Israelites after Moses' death?**

- a) Aaron
- b) Miriam
- c) God

**3. What was the first city Joshua conquered as the leader of the Israelites?**

- a) Jericho
- b) Bethlehem
- c) Nazareth

**4. How many times did the Israelites march around the city of Jericho before its walls fell?**

- a) Five
- b) Seven
- c) Ten

**5. Who helped Joshua defeat the Amalekites in battle?**

- a) Moses
- b) Aaron
- c) Hur

**6. What did Joshua declare about himself and his household?**

- a) They would serve other gods
- b) They would serve the Lord
- c) They would not serve anyone

**7. How many tribes of Israel did Joshua divide the Promised Land among?**

- a) Ten
- b) Twelve
- c) Fifteen

**8. What river did Joshua lead the Israelites across to enter the Promised Land?**

- a) Nile River
- b) Jordan River
- c) Euphrates River

**9. What did God promise to Joshua as he led the Israelites into the Promised Land?**

- a) Success and prosperity
- b) No challenges or hardships
- c) Failure and defeat

**10. Who was Joshua's companion and aide during the battle against the Amalekites?**

- a) Caleb
- b) Aaron
- c) Hur

**11. How many spies did Joshua send to explore the land of Canaan?**

- a) Ten
- b) Twelve
- c) Fifteen

**12. Who led the Israelites after Joshua's death?**

- a) Moses
- b) Aaron
- c) Caleb

**13. What mountain did Joshua and the Israelites cross to enter the Promised Land?**

- a) Mount Sinai
- b) Mount Nebo
- c) Mount Hermon

**14. Who was Joshua's father?**

- a) Nun
- b) Moses
- c) Abraham

**15. What did Joshua instruct the Israelites to do after crossing the Jordan River?**

- a) Build a temple
- b) Offer sacrifices
- c) Take twelve stones from the riverbed

1. a) Hoshea (Numbers 14:38)
2. c) God (Joshua 1:1)
3. a) Jericho (Joshua 6:27)
4. b) Seven (Joshua 6:15)
5. a) Moses (Exodus 17:9)
6. b) They would serve the Lord (Joshua 24:15)
7. b) Twelve (Joshua 11:23)
8. b) Jordan River (Joshua 3:14)
9. a) Success and prosperity (Joshua 1:9)
10. c) Hur (Exodus 17:11)
11. b) Twelve (Numbers 13:3)
12. c) Caleb (Joshua 14:15)
13. a) Mount Sinai (Joshua 3:1)
14. a) Nun (Joshua 1:1)
15. c) Take twelve stones from the riverbed (Joshua 4:4)



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# JUST FOR FUN

-Christine D'Sylva

Summer has reached its inevitable end and June means we greet the rains happily, feeling the air cool down.

I hope you had a happy summer vacation and praying for rain in our country that is a godsend.

With that optimistic note, let's start ...

## True story - Pickup in the rain



One late night at around half past eleven, an African American lady stood on the side of a highway trying to endure a lashing rain storm. Her car had broken down and desperately she needed

a ride. She stood there trying to flag a ride from the passing cars.

She was soaking wet.

A young man stopped to assist her. He was a white man and in the 1960s, this was not a common occurrence since there were conflicts between the whites and the blacks.

The young man took her to safety and put her into a taxi cab. She seemed to be in a big hurry. She thanked him and wrote down his address and the cab drove away.

A week later, a knock came on the young man's door.

To his surprise, a giant colour television that was expensive in those days was delivered to his home. There was a note attached. It read, "Thank you so much for assisting me on the highway. The rain soaked not only my clothes but my spirits. Then you came along. Because of you, I was just able to make it to my dying husband's bedside, just before he passed away. God bless you for helping me and unselfishly serving others."

## What do we learn from this story?

We learn that we are all brothers and sisters and helping each other is only serving God. Offering to help those in need is a beautiful thing because it is like a chain reaction where people not just benefit from our help but see us as examples to help others too. The whole world can be a happier place when we help others and our help can extend to animals too that need our assistance for we are all living beings part of this big beautiful earth.

## Inspirational quotes by Sir Isaac Newton



1. "Gravity explains the motions of planets but it does not explain what sets the planets in motion."

2. "I do not know what I may appear to the world, to myself I seem to have been

only like a boy playing on the seashore and diverting myself now and then, finding a smoother pebble or prettier shell than ordinary while the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."

3. "Live your life as an Exclamation rather than an Explanation."

4. "Tact is an art of making a point without making an enemy."

## Quiz

### All about lightning



Lightning is a gigantic electrical spark. It would take around 80 million car batteries to equal the power of one thunderbolt.

So let's begin...

1. How many times hotter than the surface of the sun can a lightning bolt reach?

2. How many times faster than a bullet can lightning go?

3. What is special about thunderstorms and lightning?

4. Do all thunderstorms produce lightning?

5. How many people worldwide each year lose their lives by lightning?

## Riddle Me



1. What is the only 5 letter word that becomes larger when you add the letter r to it?

2. Dark or white, sweet or bitter, sometimes I can be Belgian and sometimes I can be Swiss. What am I?

3. People say that I put a doctor out of business. Sometimes I am crunchy and sweet. What am I?

4. A retreat island is full of people but not a single person in sight. How is this possible?
5. Carbon and hydrogen went on a date and they immediately wanted to go on a second date. Why?

---

### The story behind the hit Hello

Lionel Ritchie, born in June is a world famous musician and his song Hello is one of his most popular songs.



The classic hit 'Hello' started out as a simple joke before turning into a love ballad.

When Lionel was young, he often saw beautiful women pass by him but was too shy to talk to them. In his mind, he thought, "Hello, is it me you are looking for?"

Ritchie said, "It was a joke. My producer James Anthony Carmichael was coming to the house. I came walking around the corner and I asked, "Hello, is it me you are looking for?"

Carmichael said, "Finish that."

Lionel thought it might be too corny but Carmichael assured him it would be a hit which it eventually was.

Then after the song lyrics were completed with music, it became a love ballad for generations to come. The video of the song was noteworthy. It featured the story of Lionel as a teacher who had unrequited love for a blind student until he discovers she too shares his feelings which is demonstrated for he sees her sculpting a clay likeness of himself. Sadly, the iconic video although good was voted the worst music video of all time by music fans.

---

### What is the Good Word?



#### All about rainbows

1. This type of rainbow always has a smaller arc.
2. He discovered and explained the phenomenon of rainbow.
3. The rainbow word originates from this word.
4. This goddess of Greek mythology personifies the rainbow.
5. The time duration of an average rainbow.

### St. Anthony of Padua. The finder of lost articles.



"Where is it? I know I have put in somewhere but where?" Does this sound familiar? It happens to most of us at least once in our lives.

St. Anthony is a great saint to ask for help in finding whatever you are looking for. Books in those days were rare and highly treasured. Anthony had a book that he often used for reference when teaching. One day it was stolen. St Anthony prayed that the thief would return it. His prayer was answered. The thief eventually became a member of the religious order. This is one of the chief reasons why people always call upon St. Anthony to help them to find lost articles.

Another story about the power of St. Anthony is about a noble man who was jealous of his wife and believed their infant son was not his. His wife did her best to convince him but he refused to listen. In desperation, the wife came to St. Anthony for help. He talked to the nobleman for hours and helped him to see the absurdity of his jealousy. Just then the nurse brought the infant and immediately, the nobleman again began to suspect his wife as being unfaithful to him. St Anthony looked at the infant and requested, "In the name of Jesus Christ, speak and tell who your father is."

The infant pointed out to the nobleman and in a voice older than his said, "This my father!"

The nobleman broke down in tears and took the child he had rejected in his arms.

Thus St. Anthony helped restore a failing marriage and the love lost between husband and wife was restored back again.

So the next time you lose an article or even lose something intangible that is dear to you, implore St. Anthony to restore it back to you.

---

### Brain Teasers



1. Arnold Schwarzenegger has a long one, Michael J. Fox has a short one, Madonna does not use hers nor does the Pope. What is it?

2. A person who makes it has no need for it. The person who purchases it does not use it. The person who uses it does not know it. What is it?



3. I have a large money box, 10 inches wide and 5 inches tall. Roughly, how many coins can I place until my money box is no longer empty?
4. What does an island and letter t have in common?
5.  $X - Z = 25$  and  $X + Y = 14$ . X is greater than 8 but less than 10. Then what is the value of X multiplied by Y?

### Smile Please



1. Why were they called the Dark Ages?

Because there were more knights.

2. What is the best thing about Switzerland?

The flag is a big plus.

3. I found a book called, How to solve 50% of your Problems. I bought two.
4. You know why the hairdresser won the race? Because he knew a short cut.
5. A man and a woman were travelling on a train.  
Woman: "Every time you smile, I feel like inviting you to my place."  
Man feeling pleased: "Oh, great. Are you single?"  
Woman: "No, but I am a Dentist."

### What's in a name?



Our names are special to us. Here are some popular names with their origin and meaning.

1. Sofia - Greek origin and it means wisdom.
2. Peter - Greek origin and

it means rock.

3. Richard - German origin and means powerful, brave, hardy or strong ruler.
4. Amelia - Latin origin and means work or industriousness.
5. Stephen - Greek origin and it means crown or garland.

### Wisdom message for the month



A scar means the hurt is over and the wound is closed. It means that you conquered the pain, learned a lesson, grew stronger and moved forwards. A scar is a tattoo to be proud of. You cannot

make the scars in your life disappear but you can change the way you see them.

Scars can be physical or invisible. Physical scars are wounds we got from accidents, illness or fights. We learn from them. Invisible scars are imprinted in our hearts and minds for they are from experiences. You can start seeing the scars as a sign of strength not pain and a reminder that life teaches us many lessons. All our experiences whether joyful or painful have contributed to us growing in maturity and becoming the people we are today. So embrace your scars of the past and be proud they made you a better person you are today. As human beings, we keep on growing not physically after a certain age but definitely in maturity. Nobody is too old to learn from life's experiences.

**That is all for this month. Take care. See you next month.**

### Answers

#### Quiz

1. Five times hotter. 2. 30,000 times faster. 3. Without lightning and thunderstorms our earth's atmosphere electrical balance would disappear in 5 minutes. Lightning also creates ozone. 4. Yes. 5. Around 2,000 people.

### Riddle Me

1. Large-Larger. 2. Chocolate. 3. An apple. 4. They are all couples. 5. Because they bonded so well.

### What is the Good Word?

1. Salt water rainbow. 2. Sir Isaac Newton. 3. Renboga, ren means rain and boga means bowl.
4. Goddess Iris. 5. Less than an hour.

### Brain Teasers

1. Their surname. 2. A coffin. 3. Just one after that it is no longer empty. 4. They are both in the middle of water. 5. 45.



*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 RECEIVING A SPIRIT OF REPENTANCE

**VASAI:** I have experienced Ven. Fr. Agnel's fatherly love and consolation throughout my life. Once, I lost a file containing my original certificates. I acknowledge the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel in obtaining it. His grace and mediation also helped me to overcome the numerous difficulties I faced in my career since 1994 and to find a suitable life partner.

When I went to Fr Agnel's Ashram in Bandra, I received the Sacrament of Penance, was able to forgive two senior priests in my heart and truly experienced the peace and love of Christ.

*-Rubina T. D'Souza*

### THANKSGIVING FOR A GOOD JOB

**VIRAR:** I thank Ven. Fr. Agnel for blessing me with a good job and good health. Fr. Agnel has also listened and interceded for me in my bad times.

*-Jennifer Mascarenhas*

### THANKSGIVING FOR DISTINCTION IN SSC BOARD EXAM

**DADAR (W):** My wish was fulfilled on 27th May 2024, when I secured 90.20% in the SSC Board exam. Thank you Ven. Fr. Agnel for your kind intercession, in securing excellent results.

*-Krisha Manish Naik*

### THANKSGIVING FOR MY SON SECURING A GOOD JOB

**VASAI:** Thank you Ven. Fr. Agnel, for your kind intercession in my son getting a good break in his career. He is happy that his prayers have been answered.

*-Nirmala Agnelo Colaco*

### THANKSGIVING FOR THE GIFT OF A CHILD

**AHMEDNAGAR:** I am happy that my desire of having my own baby has been fulfilled. Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, my prayers have been answered and I have been blessed with a child.

*-Reena Rajendra Pandit*

### THANKSGIVING FOR SUCCESS IN LIFE

**GUJARAT:** We are indeed grateful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for answering our prayers. Whenever we are in Mumbai, we make it a point to visit Fr. Agnel Ashram in Bandra.

*-Nilesh & Nish*

### THANKSGIVING FOR SUCCESS IN STUDIES

**BHAYANDAR:** We were happy when the exam results were out and we fared well. Thank you Ven. Fr. Agnel for your kind intercession in answering our prayers.

*-Anil & Alysa Lobo*

### THANKSGIVING FOR TIMELY RENOVATION OF OUR HOUSE

**VIRAR:** I am thankful to Fr. Agnel for standing by us during the renovation of our home and helping us complete it successfully.

*-Josephine D'Souza*

### THANKSGIVING FOR SUCCESS IN I.I.T. EXAMS

**TAMIL NADU:** I always wanted to taste success at the I.I.T. Exams and prayed fervently to Ven. Fr. Agnel. My prayers have been answered with good results in my exams.

*-Melkibson*

### THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL FOR A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE

**MUMBAI:** Ven. Fr. Agnel continues to bless our marriage with peace and happiness. We continue to pray to him.

*-Udaya Nadar*

### THANKSGIVING FOR COLLEGE ADMISSION

**VILE PARLE:** Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have secured good marks in the Board exam and have secured admission in the college of my choice.

*-Chris Lewis*

### THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

**DAHISAR (W):** We have been blessed in several ways through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel. I am indeed grateful for all the favours received.

*-Seema & Andy Pereira*

### THANKSGIVING FOR ABUNDANT BLESSINGS

**GUJARAT:** Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, our family has been blessed in many ways. We visit the shrine whenever we are in Mumbai.

*-Kirit & Sonal*

### THANKSGIVING FOR SUCCESSFUL SURGERY

**MUMBAI:** My surgery went off well, thanks to the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel. Day after day, the Venerable is interceding for all our intentions with God.

*-Derotte*

### THANKSGIVING FOR GOOD RESULTS

**BANDRA:** Ven. Fr. Agnel has helped me secure good results in my exams, as I journey forward in my career.

*-Marina D'Cruz*

### THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

**ANDHERI:** Ven. Fr. Agnel has blessed me with several favours. My prayers have been answered through his kind intercession.

*-Natty D'Souza*



## OUT OF THEIR BOUNTY

Hemilton V.	Gujarat	20000	Honey M.	Mumbai	2000	Tushar R.	Mumbai	1000
Thomson R.	Vasai	10000	Sujata S.	Mumbai	2000	K. Kelawall	Mumbai	1000
Flavia D.	Mumbai	10000	Armaity G.	Mumbai	2000	Mary M.	Kerala	1000
Margaret D.	Mumbai	10000	Isabel H.	Tamil Nadu	2000	Vijaya K.	Mumbai	1000
Zubin J.	Vasai	7000	Rosy K.	Mumbai	2000	John J.	Kerala	1000
Subramaniam R.	Mumbai	5100	William	Mumbai	2000	A. Santhappan	Tamil Nadu	1000
Agnes L.	Mumbai	5000	Royal D'Britto	Mumbai	2000	Abhilasha G.	Mumbai	1000
Jacob P.	Kerala	5000	Villi	Mumbai	2000	A. Rose	Tamil Nadu	1000
Ashley F.	Mumbai	5000	Philip G.	Mumbai	2000	Maria S.	Tamil Nadu	1000
Sunil R.	Mumbai	5000	Nelcy Pereira	Mumbai	2000	Michelle M.	Mumbai	1000
Lorna P.	Mumbai	5000	Padma B.	Mumbai	2000	Vishwanath A.	Mumbai	1000
Alice J.	Kerala	5000	Gita M.	UK	2000	Josephine D.	Mumbai	1000
Satyakam J.	Mumbai	5000	Suhas S.	Vasai	2000	Valantia F.	Mumbai	1000
Flory B.	Mumbai	5000	Arun J.	Kerala	1250	Varsha R.	Mumbai	1000
Geeta N.	Mumbai	5000	Alice D.	Mumbai	1250	S. Jestine	Tamil Nadu	1000
Toralben G.	Gujarat	5000	Sharon D.	Mumbai	1250	Anthony J.	Mumbai	1000
Mira S.	Mumbai	5000	Suzanne D.	Mumbai	1250	Louise B. Clancy	Karnataka	1000
Karin S.	Mumbai	5000	Melvyn J.	Thane	1200	Chetan Christ	Gujarat	1000
Christopher	Gujarat	5000	Louis D.	Mumbai	1000	J. Rajan	Kerala	500
Bibiyana N.	Vasai	5000	Maria D.	Mumbai	1000	Pratik M.	Mumbai	500
Rajendra K.	Mumbai	5000	Rohan Vaz	Ahmedabad	1000	Anthony N.	Mumbai	500
Lawrence L.	Karnataka	5000	Akshay K.	Mumbai	1000	Mathew Kurian	Bangalore	500
Shiney D.	Kerala	5000	Shanaya B.	Mumbai	1000	Minnie L.	Kerala	500
Dhruvkumar M.	Gujarat	4500	Jefferson A.	Mumbai	1000	Zarina R.	Vasai	500
Falguni S.	Vasai	4000	Hastings M.	Mumbai	1000	Abey E.	Kerala	500
Albert C.	Mumbai	4500	Mary H.	Vasai	1000	Roque D.	Kerala	500
Arun D.	Mumbai	3000	Victor C.	Thane	1000	Rani S.	Mumbai	500
Tina M.	Mumbai	3000	David M.	Mumbai	1000	Samarth D.	Gujarat	500
Techno Products	Chennai	3000	Agnel D.	Mumbai	1000	Raju V.	Kerala	500
Sunita S.	Mumbai	2300	Nagesh S.	Mumbai	1000	Jensa A.	Kerala	500
Cynthia M.	Mumbai	2300	Meera N.	Kerala	1000	Sunita P.	Kerala	500
John D.	Mumbai	2000	Paresh M.	Thane	1000	Kochala K. I.	Kerala	500
Gracy D.	Mumbai	2000	Preet P.	Thane	1000	Remzil N.	Mumbai	500
Geet P.	Mumbai	2000	Manisha C.	Mumbai	1000	Atul K.	Mumbai	500
Jinal Patel	Mumbai	2000	Eben N.	Mumbai	1000	Brizal S.	Vasai	500
Sangita G.	Mumbai	2000	Hyacinth K.	Mumbai	1000	K. V. Rappai	Kerala	500
Ghanshyam P.	Mumbai	2000	Vasudev	Mumbai	1000	Machado	Kerala	500
Ankit P.	Mumbai	2000	Niranjan	Ahmedabad	1000	Rajendra S.	Gujarat	500
Fittech Industries	Mumbai	2000	Christopher P.	Pune	1000	Dattaram N.	Mumbai	500
Mary A.	Kerala	2000	M. D. Mathai	Kerala	1000	Ann T.	Kerala	500
Antony D.	Tamil Nadu	2000	Kochala K.I.	Kerala	1000	Maria S.	Kerala	500
Raphael P.	Vasai	2000	Monica D.	Pune	1000	S. Settu	Kerala	500
Rija A.	Kerala	2000	Canute D.	Tamil Nadu	1000	Sachin B.	Kerala	500
Kiran D.	Mumbai	2000	Gavin P.	Mumbai	1000	Gina S.	Mumbai	500
John D.	Thane	2000	Ceaser G.	Vasai	1000	Umesh S.	Mumbai	500
Arjasp R.	Mumbai	2000	Avani D.	Mumbai	1000	Joyce P.	Gujarat	500
Parth M.	Mumbai	2000	Karidad R.	Mumbai	1000	Joyal P.	Gujarat	500

# BOB'S BANTER

by Robert Clements

## Mr. Nobody..!

It's one of the most impressive old structures among the heritage buildings along the sea front, looked after with total dedication by a tall Anglo-Indian gentleman with a booming voice. The building would have gone to the dogs if not for this one man. And yet I remember him thirty-five years ago, a watchman for an orphanage. He was an alcoholic and lived more in the gutters where he fell asleep after his last drink than in the room the trustees of the orphanage had given him.

He was Mr. Nobody.

One day, he decided to change. It was a long haul, from his little room to the hospital rehab centre. I was there, often dragging him back to those centres from the local bar he strayed into. Finally, he made it and then came this job as a caretaker

English. He then came to the city. It is a different Prabhakar than the man who worked in the rice fields: A man, who speaks with authority, cool and confident, no more a 'nobody', but 'God's Somebody'!

It was last week that I was invited to the inauguration of a new TV channel. Speaker after speaker got up and spoke of the dynamic man and owner of the TV company. Finally, it was the man's turn. "Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I was a nobody and I still am!"

The audience gasped. I did too. I'd heard of nobody's becoming somebody's but this millionaire was telling a different tale: "God takes ordinary people like me," he said, "and gives us extraordinary powers. It's there for everybody. I




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and then manager. It had been tough days. Today, when people visit the building, they know who is behind its restoration and maintenance.

Now he's Mr. Somebody.

The same with another friend from Orissa. He was a poor farmer's son, who lived in a small thatched hut. His job was to work from morn to dusk with his father in the rice fields. He was a nobody if ever there was one. One day he fell sick. The doctors told him his disease was fatal. He lay in bed waiting for death when a man of God entered his room, prayed for him, and he was healed. Suddenly, he was a changed man, his one mission was to tell people about God.

He taught himself to read, write and speak

am still a Mr. Nobody but with His power in me, I achieve the impossible!"

I walked out of that meeting, a smile on my face and am sure my driver must have thought I'd had one too many, but it was an elation born from a joyous thought, that the same God given power was available for me. All I had to do was to ask and trust, and the One above would do the rest! I am a Mr. Nobody, but I can do great things through God who can make me a Mr. Somebody..!

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



Remembering with love and gratitude  
**The Founder of Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra**  
On his 40th Death Anniversary



**FR. CONCEICAO RODRIGUES**

(27th March, 1912 - 22nd June, 1984)

**"My Land and My People! It is all that matters."**

Encompassing this motto, **Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues** served the cause of freedom, national integration, social justice, protection of orphans and technical education. He sowed the seed for man's prosperity and the tree blossomed.

Today, we have centres of learning, not just in **Bandra**, but also at **Vashi (Navi Mumbai)**, **Verna** and **Assagao** in **Goa**, **Pune**, **Ambernath**, **Delhi**, **Noida**, **Greater Noida** and **Vaishali**.

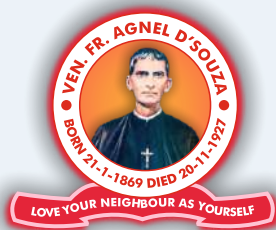
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## Pope Francis at World Children's Day



His Holiness Pope Francis celebrates peace with around 50,000 children from all over the world, gathered in Rome for the first World Children's Day (WCD), held on 25th May, 2024 at the Olympic Stadium in Rome, followed by the Eucharistic celebration on 26th May at St. Peter's Square. The second WCD will be held at the same venue on 25th and 26th September, 2026.



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