



FR. AGNEL

ASHRAM NEWS

April 2025



EASTER - A SYMBOL OF HOPE, RENEWAL AND NEW LIFE!

APRIL 2025

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AN EASTER APPEAL 2025

Dear Friends and Well-Wishers,

We, the Agnel Ashram Community, together with the children of our Balbhavan, wish you all a Happy Easter. May your Easter be filled with the hope and joy of our risen Saviour.

On Easter Sunday, we celebrate Jesus' victory over death with his resurrection and the promise of eternal life. It's a time to celebrate the victory of light over darkness, life over death, and the triumph of God's love for humanity.

We are always grateful and thankful for your generous support over the years for our **Balbhavan** children and our various other community activities.

Easter is the time to spread the joy and happiness that Christ has brought about into our lives, to others. Once again we look forward to your generosity.

This joyful season, may God's blessings be upon you and your family.

With a grateful heart and best regards,

Yours Sincerely in the Lord,

Fr. Valerian D'Souza, sfx
(Superior)

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MY EASTER GIFT 2025

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MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL SUPERIOR



On the joyous occasion of Easter, I extend my warmest greetings to you and your family for a grace-filled celebration. May the spirit of Easter bring you renewed hope, peace and joy.

Reading maketh a full man and the woman too. Let us celebrate International Children's Book Day on 2nd April, the birthday of acclaimed author Hans Christian Anderson. The objective is to inculcate a reading habit in children. Let children read aloud their favourite children's story or if they are young, volunteer to read a story to them. Further, on 23rd March, we celebrate World Book and Copyright Day. Nothing matches reading a good book, since knowledge is power!

This World Health Day on 7th April, let us take care of our health by going for regular health check-ups. Health is a top priority and it is all that matters.

There are several concerns that affect Mother Earth. So, on 22nd April, Earth Day, let us raise awareness about environmental protection through tree planting, clean-ups and more. The theme for Earth Day 2025 is OUR POWER, OUR PLANET, inviting everyone around the globe to unite behind renewable energy.

During these school holidays, it's the right time for children to join a Summer Camp and develop themselves. Go ahead, pick up new skills, learn a new sport, play a musical instrument, while making new friends along the way. Happy holidays!

- Fr. Bento Rodrigues



HE IS RISEN! ALLELUIA!

-Leon Bent

Easter is considered a crucial Christian feast because it celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is the central tenet of the Christian faith, signifying the triumph of life over death and offering hope for eternal life to believers; essentially, it marks the moment Jesus conquered death and redeemed humanity from sin, making it a pivotal event in the Christian narrative.

The main lesson of Easter is the triumph of life over death, symbolized by Jesus Christ's Resurrection from the tomb after his Crucifixion, signifying hope and renewal even in the face of hardship, and signifying the promise of eternal life for believers; it's a time to reflect on forgiveness, love, and new beginnings.

Key points about Easter's lesson:

Resurrection:

The central event of Easter is Jesus' resurrection, which Christians believe signifies his victory over death.

Hope:

The Resurrection story provides hope for Christians, demonstrating that, even after darkness, there can be new life.

Forgiveness:

Easter also encourages reflection on Jesus' sacrifice and the concept of forgiveness for sins.

New Life:

The celebration of Easter signifies a fresh start and the opportunity to live a renewed life.

A blessed Easter Season! May the risen Christ empower you to be imitators of Him!

Easter is a Christian feast that celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a time of reflection and hope.

What is the Easter story? Jesus died on the cross, but rose again three days later, he promised to return and appeared to his disciples for 40 days.

The disciples believed that Christ would return and devoted their lives to building his church.

What does Easter mean? Easter is a celebration of the power of God's love. It is a fulfillment of God's promise of redemption.

Through Jesus' death and resurrection, sin and death were conquered. Humanity was given the gift of eternal life and salvation. Why is Easter a time of hope? Because of Jesus, we do not have to deal with

our frailties, sins, and fears alone. Because of Jesus, death is not the end.

Resurrection will come to all who have lived as Jesus did. The basis of Christianity, the power of God living in us, was the result of Jesus becoming flesh, dying on a Cross, and being Resurrected from the dead. This resurrection power has brought life to every believer. However, this is not life ordinarily; it is life in its fullness.

It could only come by God, made man through the Incarnation. No person of mortal characteristics could ever die, and then raise himself from the grave. Jesus' teachings were dependent on who He was and what He did, which proved His authority and supremacy to be "more than just a man." Paul

spoke of many who might teach with brilliant words yet lack correctness and truth (Colossians 2:20-23).

To historians and believers alike, it was the Resurrection that brought what some might call "true faith," to the living souls of the earth. To the skeptics, which at one time included Peter, it was the Resurrection that proved Jesus not only was a carpenter, teacher, and prophet, but He was the only begotten Son of the Father. It was by the resurrection power that, abundant life generously was offered to those who will believe on Him as the Scripture says.

Christ's Crucifixion Was Not the End

It was the resurrection of Christ that brought hope and life to all people.

To me it always felt as if that was where my father's religion ceased: at the death of Jesus. There should be much attention given to that part of the story and the washing away of sins that Jesus' death so graciously afforded, yet let us not forget the power of the next chapter — the Resurrection. For it was the Resurrection that showed God's power and existence is independent and everlasting. Without this Resurrection, our faith is worthless, and we are of all men most miserable and to be pitied (I Corinthians 15:17-19). It was the resurrection of Christ that brought hope and life to all people.

The new life given by this glorious act of God Himself offers us hope that, we cannot find in anything else or anyone else on this planet.

The new life given by this glorious act of God Himself offers us hope that we cannot find in anything else or anyone else on this planet.



Colossians 1:27 reveals that through the Resurrection and through God allowing His Spirit to dwell in us, He would “make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” We can be confident in our hope that, there is more to this life. What God is to us now as we experience His omnipotent presence could only have come through His resurrection power. No longer is abundant life a mystery; now it is a reality!

The profusion of life given by this hope brings a new vitality, or as some might call it, a superabundance of life. This is, in essence, a life that is actually worth living. I’m not necessarily speaking of prosperity or riches or a life without trial. However, this abundant life that is given by the resurrection of Jesus Christ offers those who believe a deeper, more meaningful walk — one that is fulfilling, rewarding, and comforting.

Key to Life of Abundance

The Resurrection was the key to living a life of abundance on this earth. “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:10–11). As the devil fights to fool, distract, and destroy Christian faith, the resurrection power of Jesus Christ counteracts by offering abundant life, led by the Shepherd.

Psalms 23 defines what life might look like when one is led by the wonderful Shepherd, we find our Saviour to be. We shall not want. We shall be led beside the still waters. Our souls shall be restored. He will lead us in paths of righteousness. He will comfort us in times of darkness. He will anoint us in the presence of our enemies. He will allow goodness and mercy to follow us as we dwell in the house of the Lord, not just now, but forever. This abundant life is a richer, fuller life. Life with Jesus is the certainty of a life lived at a higher level, in obedience to God’s will and reflecting His glory. There is no better life for you or for me.

It would be wise for believers to recognize that, living in the realm of abundant life through His resurrection should bring us to a realization that, the abundance will come only by submission. Our life in Him will be the direct result of our choice to die to self. The excellency of His glory and power will truly be known to each of us only when we empty ourselves of ourselves.

It’s humbling to me to read Philippians 3, written by Paul, who, though he suffered great physical pain for the cause of Christ, still yearned, “that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings,” knowing that in a few previous verses he revealed the only way to truly know the Lord and this power was to die out to self.

May His resurrection power fill your life in extraordinary ways this Easter. “But what things

were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: For whom I have suffered the loss of all things ... that I may win Christ.” To win Christ is to believe on Him by the power of His resurrection and salvation. The result is a life of abundance in Him, a leading through dark days by the great shepherd, a rest in the chaos, a salvation in the loss, and the blessing of His spirit in every moment. There is no greater joy than walking with the King. May His resurrection power fill your life in extraordinary ways this Easter.

Questions for Further Reflection:

Why do you feel it was so important that God used a resurrection experience to prove His power?

- Consider your life without the power of Christ. Can it be defined by I Corinthians 15:17–19? How so? In what ways would life truly be miserable?
- Why might a life of prosperity in worldly things not equate to a life of abundance in the essence of Scripture and Gospel spirituality?
- What are some examples that help define John 10:10? In what ways does the devil continually kill, steal, and destroy? In what ways does the Lord continually offer life?
- How has Psalm 23 been true in your life? How has God been a provider, life sustainer, restorer, and guide?

The Exsultet: Christ Our Light

The Exsultet is a hymn of praise sung in the Roman Catholic Church at the blessing of the paschal candle on Easter eve.

“Be glad, let earth be glad, as glory floods her, ablaze with light from her eternal King, let all corners of the earth be glad, knowing an end to gloom and darkness.”

Conclusion

For centuries the *Exsultet* has served as a liturgical jewel of unsurpassed beauty on this, the “mother of all holy vigils”, as St. Augustine aptly described the Easter Vigil. As the *Exsultet* exhorts us, “Be glad, let earth be glad, as glory floods her, ablaze with light from her eternal King, let all corners of the earth be glad, knowing an end to gloom and darkness.” May this venerable Easter Proclamation serve us and our assemblies as a genuine expression of Easter hope and joy.



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

THE BEST EASTER MOTTO FOR ALL CHRISTIANS!

- Fr. Fio Mascarenhas, SJ

In a Special Audience granted to 200 leaders of a worldwide Ecclesial Movement (I was present), Pope John Paul II advised: "Make these words of scripture your personal motto:

"It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

These words are a good summary of the whole of Christian spirituality! And it is with words like these that the Apostle Paul expressed the essentials of the Good News! Blessed with rich insight and bold zeal, he worked physically at first to preach Jesus Christ to the nations, and he continues to do so till today through his 13 Letters, preserved in the New Testament. St. Paul teaches us the whole truth about "who Jesus is" and "why Jesus' life and teachings are GOOD NEWS" for all of humanity.

"This, then, is what I pray, kneeling before the Father, from whom every family, whether spiritual or natural, takes its name. Out of his infinite glory, may God give you the power, through his Spirit, for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith... until, knowing the love of Christ which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God" (Eph. 3:14-21).

Saul was born in (approx.) 8 AD of Jewish parents, but later took the Roman name of Paul since he possessed the citizenship of both Tarsus and Rome. He spoke both Greek and Aramaic, and was a tentmaker by trade. He came to Jerusalem to be a student of Gamaliel, and in a short time became a rigid Pharisee.

However, as a result of his **encounter with the Risen Jesus** on the road to Damascus, he was completely converted. Paul stresses that he did not receive the Gospel from the other apostles, but from the Risen Lord himself! ***"I am the least of the***

apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me" (1Cor 15:9). His death took place a year before the death of the Emperor Nero (67 AD), and since he was a Roman citizen, the mode of execution was decapitation.

"The grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And I am the foremost

of sinners; but I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life." (1Tim 1:14-17).

Not all at once, but only gradually did Paul come to grasp **the full significance of Jesus Christ**. He never met Jesus in the flesh. After his very first encounter with the Risen Jesus (at about the age of 26), he led a retired life, learning about **the human Jesus of Nazareth**. A further step in coming to grasp the full significance of Jesus was when

he learnt to recognize **the hidden Jesus** in the prophecies of the Old Testament. And so he began his intrepid missionary work as an apostle of Jesus Christ, which he continued indefatigably until his martyrdom in Rome at about the age of 58. Notice, however, that it was only during the last five years of his life that **the whole truth** about Jesus Christ dawned on him, when he began to understand **the cosmic Christ** whose existence and activity is eternal – this insight appears only in his final Letters (to Philippians, Colossians, and Ephesians).

a) **The Risen Jesus:** "Paul asked, 'Who are you Lord?' The reply came, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'" (Acts 9:5). From this encounter came Paul's conviction that Jesus Christ was "**designated**



Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead (Rom.1:4). He then fell so greatly in love with Jesus that he could write: *"I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord... All I want is to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and to share in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead"* (Phil.3:8-11).

b) **The Human Jesus:** Paul learnt about the earthly life of Jesus from the apostles (see Acts 9 and Gal.1); to him was "handed down" the traditions about the Eucharist, etc. *"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body which is for you ...in remembrance of me'. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes"* (1Cor.11:23-27).

c) **The Hidden Jesus:** The Spirit taught Paul to re-read the OT, and see that Jesus is present in the whole history of Israel: *"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit"* (2Cor.3:12-18).

d) **The Cosmic Jesus:** By the time Paul wrote the letter to the Colossians (c.61 AD) he had attained a truly cosmic vision of Christ – seeing him not only

as the centre and meaning of history, but also of creation and of all existing reality: his divine origin (Phil 2:6: *"being in the form of God"* and Col.1:15: *"the image of the invisible God"*); his relationship with all of humanity (Phil.2:1011: *"that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father;"* and his relationship to creation itself (Col.1.16: *"all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together"*).

Notice however that all Paul's Letters keep us rooted in what is called **the Paschal Mystery of Christ**. It is the obedience of Christ in his sacrificial death and the Father's response in raising his Son from the dead that is the focal point:

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

Are not these verses a wonderful Easter motto for each of us too? **Happy Easter!**



Fr. Fio Mascarenhas, a Bombay Province Jesuit, is a prolific author of 27 books and innumerable articles on biblical, Ignatian spirituality. His Sacerdotal Golden Jubilee was on 5th April, 2025. His contact: frfiomas@gmail.com

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EASTER – THE COMMEMORATION OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

- Fr. Eusebio Gomes, SFX

The forty days' Lent is a time for spiritual renewal and reflection on the Paschal Mystery of Lord Jesus Christ: his Passion, Death and Resurrection. It is linked to Easter, a meaningful feast in Christianity. Sin disrupts man's relationship with God vertically and with his fellow beings horizontally. During Lent, the vistas are opened for sacramental healing and grace through the channel of Sacrament of Reconciliation. This Sacrament heals spiritual wounds and restores disrupted relationships with God and with sentient beings.

The word paschal is derived from Greek word 'pascha' and from Hebrew word 'pesach.' It relates to Jewish Passover. The Passover meal of Jews commemorates the liberation of the Jews from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the land of Israel. The Last Supper which Jesus had with his disciples was a Passover meal during which he established the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist and the Sacrament of Priesthood.

While at supper, he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to the disciples saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And likewise the cup after supper, saying, "This cup which is poured for you is the new covenant in my blood" (Lk.22:19-20). The Last Supper during which the Holy Mass is instituted signifies our passing over from sin to the glory of new life in Christ since He gave us his body to eat in the form of bread and his blood to drink in the form of wine. He said that those who eat his body and drink his blood will have eternal life.

Jesus was sentenced to death by the Roman governor Pilate. He was crucified on the cross, a shameful and a painful death. It turned out to be a shameful act because his dignity was destroyed on the cross as he was made to hang naked on the cross and the Jews made mockery of him and a painful act because his hands and legs were pierced with nails and he was tortured and insulted by the soldiers, religious leaders and the chief priests of his time. His death was regarded as the price demanded by God in ransom for all human beings. God the Father accepted the vicarious sufferings of Christ, his total obedience to Him unto death. It was an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of the people. On the cross Christ hanged our sins and washed them away with his precious flowing blood. Is it that the Son of God was swallowed by the tomb? No, never. In fact he was victorious over the tomb as he destroyed the death. The Prince of Peace came out from the tomb; the Good Shepherd was raised from death; the Lamb of God was highly exalted and glorified by his Father and made to sit at his right hand.

Beyond the cross, we see the light of resurrection. Resurrection is the vindication of the faith of Christians in Christ and of their campaign towards empowering the women, orphans, refugees, migrants, weak and the oppressed people in our society today.

Resurrection has taken away the brooding spirit of the Christians and made their faith strong in Christ. It guaranteed life after death and confirmed the belief in eternal life.

Some women went to the tomb of Jesus on Sunday early morning. The tomb was empty. The risen Lord Jesus appeared to the women and told them to tell his disciples to go to Galilee where they would see him. Pope Benedict XVI in his book, "Jesus of Nazareth" says, "Just there were only women standing by the Cross - apart from his beloved disciple John - so too the first encounter with the risen Lord was destined to be for them. In the day-to-day life of the Church it is the women who are constantly opening the door to the Lord and accompanying him to the Cross, and so it is they who come to experience the Risen Lord."

The women's encounter with the risen Lord is the culmination of the lifting of the womenfolk of Israel who were sidelined by the male dominated society of his times. Resurrection of Christ implies that his body was not subject to corruption. In the resurrected Christ we see the new man, having entered upon a mysterious manner of existence. Resurrection is the validation of his life after his death on the Cross. It is not resuscitation of Christ's body after death, but rather the affirmation by God of his mission and person. Moreover, it is

the sacrament of God's will for all of us. Death could not hold Christ in its jaws. By his resurrection he conquered it and assured us of the resurrection of the dead.

Easter is the most important feast for the Christians because Jesus after bearing the sorrowful death had risen back to life on the third day and confirmed our faith. Romans crucified Jesus in 30 AD and on Sunday he came back to life as a resurrected Lord. The body of Jesus that rose on Easter morning was totally different from the body of Jesus that was buried on Good Friday afternoon. It was not a resuscitated body, that is, a body restored to its original life - like Lazarus, or the son of the widow, or the daughter of Jairus in the Gospels. Jesuit Fr. Mark Link says, "It was a body that has taken a quantum leap forward into an infinitely higher life. It was a glorified body. It was totally living and totally life-giving." Pope St John Paul II told the Christians, "Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We are the Easter people and Halleluia is our song." Let us celebrate the mysterious feast of Easter by singing Halleluia!



Fr. Eusebio Gomes is the Director of Apostolic School and Assistant Parish Priest of St. Francis Xavier Church in Hisar, Haryana. He writes for various publications, including Konkani journals. His contact: gomesgoa27@gmail.com

THE EASTER STORY

-Jubel D'Cruz

The Easter story is a true story of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The story begins with Jesus being arrested by the Jewish leaders, who accused him of blasphemy and inciting rebellion against the Roman Empire. He was sentenced to death by crucifixion, and his body was placed in a tomb, wrapped in a linen cloth.

On the preparation day, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy disciple of Jesus, asked Pilate for permission to take Jesus' body down from the cross and bury him according to Jewish burial customs. Pilate granted Joseph's request, and he and Nicodemus, another follower of Jesus, prepared Jesus' body for burial. They wrapped Jesus' body in a linen cloth and placed him in a tomb hewn from the rock. The entrance to the tomb was sealed with a large stone, and guards were stationed there to prevent anyone from stealing the body.

However, something miraculous happened on the third day in the morning while it was still dark. The stone was rolled away, and the tomb was found empty. Mary Magdalene and another woman who had come to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body with spices saw that the body was not there (Luke 24:1). All of a sudden, two men in dazzling white robes appeared to the women and said, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen! Remember what He told you while He was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified, and on the third day be raised again'" (Luke 24:5-7).

The women were filled with awe and amazement and ran to tell the disciples what they had seen. Peter and John ran to the tomb to see for themselves, and found the linen cloth in which Jesus was wrapped lying there, but no body was to be found.

Later, Jesus appeared to His disciples, and they were overjoyed to see that He was still alive.

The biblical meaning of Easter is that it symbolizes the victory of life over death, good over evil, and love over hate. Easter is a time of hope, renewal, and

rebirth. The Easter story tells us that even in the darkest moments, there is always hope in God who can conquer any obstacle, however difficult it may be. However, the religious leaders of the time refused to believe that Jesus had been risen from the dead, and they continued persecuting His followers. Despite the overwhelming evidence of Jesus' resurrection,

they clung stubbornly to their disbelief.

The white robe that the angels wore when they appeared to the women symbolizes purity and innocence, while the scarlet robe that Jesus was forced to wear before his crucifixion represents the bloodshed and suffering that He endured for our sins.

The sick people who came to Jesus for healing during His ministry symbolize our need for spiritual healing and redemption. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is the ultimate act of love, and it shows us the true meaning of forgiveness and mercy.

The Easter story is a powerful reminder of the love that God has for us and the sacrifice that He made for our salvation. It teaches us that even in the darkest of times, we can still find hope and renewal through our faith in God.

As we celebrate this holy day, let us remember the true meaning of Easter and the message of love and hope that it brings to us all.

Easter is one of the principal holidays, or feasts, of Christianity. It marks the Resurrection of Jesus Christ three days after His death by crucifixion. For many Christians, Easter is the joyful end to the Lenten season of fasting and penitence.

A happy Easter to one and all. May God bless you and your family.



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

THE JOY OF THE RESURRECTION

- Fr. Peter Fernandes, SFX

The deepest aspiration of humankind can be summed up in these three questions, namely, "Why am I here? Where did I come from, and where am I going?" Why are humans confronted with these questions, and why do humans seek answers to these questions? Were these questions always present with humans? Certainly not! In the state of grace, men dwelled in peace and harmony as they understood their nature and destiny, but fallen human nature is confused. In his confusion, he is confronted with doubt and uncertainties. Who could help men clear their doubt and help overcome all uncertainties? The help is certainly not from humans, because all men are subject to this aspiration.

The only one who can help humankind find an answer is the one who is the Alpha and the Omega, the God Almighty. For Jesus said, "I am", the one who called Abraham to follow, the one whom Moses encountered at the burning bush, "I am who I am"; He died and rose again for our justification. Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the answer to all our queries and the fulfilment of our deepest quest.

The one who was crucified is risen... He is risen indeed. The divine plan of God to redeem humankind is finally unfolded in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Hence, the natural response to the divine plan of God is a song of jubilation, "Alleluia." Now the whole of humanity has the cause to rejoice and rejoice without ceasing, for Jesus is risen again. If not for the Risen Lord, who would take away our sins? Who would answer our queries?

Nobody, absolutely no one else! The crucified Lord rose again for our justification and glorification. From now on, there is no reason for humanity to be in a state of hopelessness. The only reason for humans to be in a state of sorrow is when they are in a state of mortal sin. Therefore, humankind should never cease to cry out with a shout of joy the song of triumph, "We are Easter people, and Alleluia is our song." The Lord has done marvellous things before our eyes, and we give thanks and praise to God.

The cry of Jesus on the cross "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" was on behalf of every person who has ever walked on the face of the earth and those who will come until the end of times. It is the anthropological cry. The answer to the united cry of Jesus on the cross was the resurrection. Hence, resurrection is the answer to the deepest cry of the rational soul, "Why am I here? Where did I come from? And where am I going?"

However, contemporary society seems to be going through this experience once again due to many factors, but mainly due to materialism and moral relativism. Nevertheless, humanity should not feel despondency but seek the comfort in the risen Lord. In fact, Jesus had made an audacious claim while he was still walking among humans: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." At the death of Lazarus, Jesus comforted Martha with a similar assertion: "I am the resurrection and the life." "Whoever believes in me shall never die." It all came to pass at his resurrection.

Great thinkers of the classical age had deciphered that immaterial substance does not corrupt. They also deciphered that humans are also endowed with an immaterial, rational soul. The thoughts of classic philosophers concur with the creation account in the book of Genesis: "God created man in his own image and likeness." Hence, humans were always destined to be with God forever.

Nothing else but violation of God's commandments clouded the human mind, which led them from darkness of misunderstanding into further darkness of error and sin. However, the merciful God did not desire that humans grope in the darkness of sin and damnation, but He reached out to humans with love, mercy, and forgiveness. And what a sacrifice God offered on our behalf! Therefore, the church affirms that all salvation comes from Christ, the Head, through the Church, which is His Body.

Why does the foolish humans continue to cry at the tomb? Look at modern society; it continues to build false tombs without an iota of hope for resurrected life. Humans are endlessly drifting away from his purpose and goal. Subsequently, a great darkness has befallen humankind ever since humans allowed abortion to be part of their ethos.

Every life is precious and destined for eternal existence. How did humans miss the meaning of life when God became one like us to provide the meaning of existence and to give us the fullness of life? There is no excuse for the irrationality of humans, especially in destroying innocent human lives. When philosophers interpreted the meaning of existence, God freely offered wisdom to all in His Son, Jesus, who died and rose again for our justification, it is unacceptable. Therefore, respect for life from conception to natural death is justified and dignified.

The Risen Lord offers peace: "Peace be with you." Humans cannot offer peace, for they do not possess it. Peace is purely the gift of God.

Having put everything in its proper place, Jesus offers peace to humankind. Through his suffering, passion, death, and resurrection, Jesus reconciled humankind with God, bringing peace to all men of goodwill. Those with goodwill and faith can perceive that God answered all our queries and fulfilled all our desires and aspirations. Only in God are we at peace; therefore, allow the Risen Lord to enter your life to live in peace and harmony with God and nature. He is risen... He is risen indeed! Therefore, the first greeting of Jesus to his troubled and fearful disciples was, "Peace be with you!"



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PREACH THE GOOD NEWS

-Fr. M.K.George, SJ

When I was young, it was very common to see men and women dressed in full white standing on the streets of Kerala, especially the crowded junctions, loudly preaching the Gospel. These days, it is not uncommon to see men and women standing around junctions in Rome, distributing materials on the Bible. Countless missionaries have left their homes and beloveds to preach the Gospel. These men and women have taken the command 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation' seriously (Mk 16, 15).

VUCA World does not welcome preaching

The VUCA world is not particularly fond of preaching. It is a thoroughly secularised world. In fact, preaching would not only be frowned upon, but in many countries, including our own India, it could lead to violence, not only from the public but even the state actors.

But look at the sad reality of the VUCA world filled with bad news. Wars, violence, natural calamities, personal disasters, increasing number of suicides, assisted deaths. You name a bad news, the VUCA world has it. While it needs the good news, VUCA world detests preaching.

That is where the message of Francis of Assisi comes in very apt. He said, "Preach the gospel at all times, and when necessary, use words."

Preaching from the fullness of heart

We live in a world of professionalism. Hence even preaching of the good news is becoming hi tech and very professional. While professionalism can help to be successful, when it comes to preaching the good news, it is your heart that matters. The crucial question is, 'have you met Jesus?' The conversion of St. Paul is a case in point. After he was struck down from his horse and the consequent conversion experience (Acts 9) he said, 'woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel' (1 Cor. 9,16).

Years ago, the great actor Richard Burton was asked by an old pastor at a reception in his parish if he could recite the Good Shepherd Psalm (23) which

the pastor had taught Burton in his Sunday School. The actor said, "I will, on one condition - that after I have recited it, my pastor and teacher will do the same."

"I", said the old, retired pastor, "am not an actor, but, if you wish it, I shall do so."

Impressively the actor began the psalm. His voice and intonation were perfect. He held his audience spellbound, and as he finished, a great burst of applause broke from the audience.

As it died away, the old pastor rose from his wheelchair and began to recite the same Psalm. His voice was feeble and shivering and his tone was not faultless. But, when he finished, there was not a dry eye in the room.

Richard Burton rose and with a quivering voice he said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I reached your eyes and ears, but my old pastor has reached your hearts. The difference is this: I know the Psalm, but he knows the Shepherd."

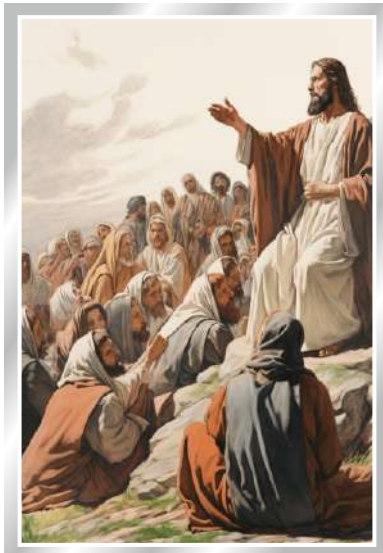
And the Good News is

'Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand' (Mt 3,2). "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the broken hearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD" (Lk. 4,18-19).

The Call to everyone

The call to preach the good news is for you and me. We preach best through our actions of mercy. And use words, if we need to!

And remember the caution of Austin Gentry, "preach the gospel always - and let the nature of your actions never deny the gravity of your words."



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

AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Bandra

Fr. Agnel Technical High School, Bandra, celebrates Marathi Diwas

Marathi Diwas was celebrated in honour of the great Marathi writer and poet Kusumagraj on 27th February 2025 at Fr. Agnel Technical High School, Bandra, Mumbai. The Chief Guest was Fr. Alok Minz and the Guest of Honour was Brother Edison. Students put a short programme about the importance of the Marathi language, its culture and literature. Students came dressed in traditional attire, each representing a character from the Marathi Literature.



Making Marathi Diwas meaningful
at Fr. Agnel Technical High School, Bandra.



Keeping rich traditions alive at Marathi Diwas.

Fr. Agnel Technical High School, Bandra, organises Science Exhibition

The primary section of Fr. Agnel Technical High School, Bandra, organised a Science Exhibition on 11th March 2025 in the school classroom. Several students participated and showcased their amazing science projects. The objective of the event was to help children have a new learning experience about science in a fun way.



The Chief Guest, Fr. Alok Minz, lighting the traditional lamp at the Science Exhibition.

The exhibition was inaugurated by Fr. Alok Minz and Ms. Lorraine D'Mello, academic in-charge of the secondary section. The judges were Teacher Meera and Teacher Ruksana. They encouraged all students to explore and enjoy science. Many students joined the exhibition, and displayed different projects related to nature, machines and the environment.

Some of the best projects were a simple water filter using sand and charcoal, a volcano that erupted using baking soda and vinegar and a model of the solar system showing how planets move

There were also fun experiments where visitors could take part and learn new things. Some projects used computers and special effects to make science more fun and exciting.



The judges, Teacher Meera (front left) and Teacher Ruksana (front right) inspecting the exhibits.

SIGNIFICANCE OF EASTER BLOOMS

- Jacqueline Kelly

Flowers have a charm of their own which pleases all irrespective of age, sex and nature. Flowers play an important role in influencing the mood and behaviour of a person. Even if a person is in a bad mood, a bunch of flowers or a single flower will make the person smile.

Flowers mean different things to different people. The pleasure we derive from flowers comes from the visual and olfactory aspects. Men and women experience flowers differently. Flowers succeed where words so often fail.

The word "flower" is derived from the old French word *flor* or *flour* which comes from the Latin word *flos* or *flor*. In modern French, the word for "flower" is "*fleur*."

The German word for "flower" is *Blume*, which is pronounced as the English word "*bloom*."

The old English word for "flower" was *blōstma*, which evolved into *blossom*. So, we can say "flower", "blossom" or "bloom."

In the Old Testament, flowers were used as Spiritual symbols. In Christianity, flowers and plants are perceived as God's creation. Adam was the first gardener as mentioned in the Bible [Genesis 2:15].

On the third day [Genesis 1:11], God created the plants and trees. God created the flowers to bring beauty to the earth and pleasure to mankind. Each flower is unique and has a meaning and significance of its own. The tradition of gifting flowers has a long history.

The Bible mentions flowers as symbols of beauty and life. [1Kings 6:18] describes how the First Temple was decorated with flowers. The Temple was considered the most Holy place on earth.

[Matthew 6:28-29] compares the care God shows in providing for the lilies with the care God shows in providing for His people. God also provides in abundance for those who have faith in Him [Luke 12:27].

Flowers are also known for their short life and delicate nature. The short life of a flower is compared to man's lifespan on earth in [Job 14:2; Psalm 103:15-16; Isaiah 40:6].

God created a woman from the rib of a man and

likens their sweet love for each other to that of the fragrance of flowers [Song of Songs 2:12; 4:16; 6:2].

When the Spanish explorer Ponce de Leon, reached Florida, it was in spring [1513], a few days before Easter. He claimed the land for Spain and

named it after the Easter holiday- Pascua de Florida. The meaning of Florida is "flowery" and was used to distinguish the springtime holiday from other holidays.

The Spanish word Pascua was used to refer to any major holiday but in modern Spanish the word Pascua is used only for Easter.

In Spain, the Poinsettia is known as "*Flor de Pascua*" meaning "*Easter Flower*".

Some of the symbolic Easter

Flowers are as follows:

Easter Lily

The Easter Lily is referred to as "the white-robed Apostle of Hope". Its white colour is said to represent Christ's purity.

Easter Lilies are popular in spring and symbolize new life. They have gorgeous fragrant white trumpet flowers and dark green leaves. The Trumpet shape of the Easter Lily represents a trumpet sounding the message that Christ has risen and the nature in which it grows from a single bulb is symbolic of Christ's resurrection from the tomb.

When Eve left the Garden of Eden she shed real tears of repentance and from those remorseful tears sprung up lilies. Traditionally, Easter Lilies are arranged in Churches, to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is said that beautiful white lilies sprang up in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus wept in the last hours before He was betrayed by Judas.

No flower symbolizes Easter as richly as the lily does. Jesus' favourite flower was the Lily.

Scarlet Passion Flower

It is the ultimate symbol of the crucifixion of Our Lord. The central column of this flower represents the pillar to which Christ was bound for the scourging. The tendrils of the plant represent the whips and cords, the ovary is shaped like the



hammer used to drive the nails, while the three styles and stigmas [female parts of the flower] resembles the three nails that were used to fasten Him to the Cross. The five stamens [male part of the flower] represent the five wounds made by the nails and spear that Jesus received in the hands, feet and side. The corona [structure at the base just above the petals] within the flower is symbolic of the crown of thorns, the rays of the fringe forming a nimbus which represents the Lord's divine glory. The ten red petals are thought to represent ten of the disciples who forsook the Lord and fled with the exclusion of Judas [who betrayed the Lord] and John who followed Jesus right to Golgotha and stood at the foot of the Cross. The leaf of the plant is shaped like the head of the spear which pierced the heart of Christ. The tendrils of the vine represent the hands and whips of the enemies who tormented Jesus.

The flower is said to bloom only three days, the length of time, our Lord's body lay in the tomb.

The Redbud [Judas Tree]

The Mediterranean species is associated with the hanging of Judas Iscariot. According to legend, before the crucifixion, the blossoms of the redbud were snow white. They turn red in spring as a result of the blushing from shame as Judas chose this tree from which to hang himself. The Judas tree is another name for Redbud. It is easy to recognize because of its heart shaped leaves.

Flowering Dogwood

According to legend, dogwoods once grew as very large trees and were used to make the Cross on which Jesus was crucified. One account is that Jesus recognized the dogwood suffering from being used for such a purpose and declared that the tree would henceforth have small, crooked branches so that it could not be used in that manner again.

Another symbolic feature is the white leaf-like part of the plant shaped like a Cross with a brownish red spot in the centre of each that represents Jesus' blood. The cluster of tiny flowers in the centre looks like a Crown of Thorns.

The Crucifix Orchid

It is derived from the shape of the labellum [lip of the flower] which resembles a small gold cross. This South American plant was given religious significance by the Christian Missionaries. The orchid has long, thin stems and leathery leaves with flowers that bloom in clusters of orange. They are given as gifts during Easter. They traditionally symbolize beauty, tolerance and strength.

Crown of Thorns [Euphorbia Milii]

It is also called Christ Thorn. It refers to the thorny crown Jesus was forced to wear during His

crucifixion, with the red leaf-like part of the flowers representing His Blood. It was thought to have been the thorny burnet in the Rose family. It is found throughout Jerusalem and in other regions of the Mediterranean. Its branches bend easily and it develops branching thorns at the end of the canopy.

Daffodils

They are bright yellow and a spring blooming flower that is commonly associated with Easter. Giving daffodils at Easter time is a tradition throughout Europe. Daffodils symbolize spring, rebirth and a new beginning.

Rose

From the Biblical viewpoint, "God designed the beauty of the rose and put the thorns for its protection." All roses symbolize God's love but different colours of roses also symbolize different spiritual concepts.

By the 12th century, the red rose had come to represent Christ's Passion and the Blood of the martyrs. The most common association of the rose is with the Virgin Mary.

The five petals of a rose are said to stand for the five wounds of Christ.

Lenten Rose blooms in late winter and early spring and symbolizes the season of Lent, the period of preparation and rebirth leading to Easter.

Dianthus [Carnations]

Dianthus flowers are also called "Pinks". The Carnation is scientifically known as *Dianthus Caryophyllus*, the "Flower of love" or "Flower of God". Pinks hold a deep Christian significance. They were associated with the nails used in the crucifixion. According to Christian tradition, the first Carnation bloomed on Earth when Mother Mary wept for Jesus as He carried His Cross. It has been revered for centuries.

Tulips

They are a favourite in spring. In decorating they are prized for their beauty and long lasting flowers. They symbolize love and forgiveness. The Purple colour represents royalty, so a bouquet of purple tulips would celebrate the royalty of Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Daffodils, Lilies and Tulips have become a symbol of the Resurrection throughout the Christian world. They symbolize renewal of life and a festival of new hope.

Daisies

Daisy is a rosette perennial herb with white to purple flowers. Daisies have a special significance for Easter celebrations. Gerbera Daisies are bold and bright, a decorating delight. It blooms in Spring. Sweet-smelling daisies symbolize purity and

happiness. Two qualities highlighted by the Spirit of Easter.

Pine Trees

They begin growing in the spring and the new growth can appear in the form of a Crucifix or Cross. It blooms in late March to early April. The species of Pine trees reported in producing shoots in the form of Crosses include the Loblolly and Ponderosa Pines.

The Larkspur

According to legend, once there was a beautiful garden where Jesus loved to walk. There lovely flowers bloomed and little animals lived. There came a time, when Jesus did not come to the garden. All His little friends missed Him, and in particular the little rabbit was very lonely. He waited day and night for the return of the Master.

Early on the third day Christ came and as He walked into the sunshine, he gave the little bunny a loving smile. Later, when Jesus' friends came to the garden to pray, they found a path of lovely flowers. These flowers were larkspurs and to this day one may see in the centre of each blossom an image of the little bunny who waited three days and three nights to greet the Risen Lord!

The Violet

According to a Christian legend, on that fine Easter morning, the world was bathed in sunlight as the

Master strolled in the countryside. As He walked past, every flower strove to show itself to best advantage. But one little violet tried in vain to see the Lord.

As He came closer, the violet thought, "If only I could be as tall and bright as the other flowers, He might notice me."

When our Saviour reached the violet, He paused and smiled. Overwhelmed, the violet blushed and bowed its head. And to this day all violets bow their faces towards the earth remembering that meeting with the Son of God.

The Easter Cactus [Whitsun Cactus]

It is also called Holiday Cactus or Spring Cactus and has flowers in red, orange, pink and white. This plant blooms in the spring.

Some of the other springtime flowers associated with Easter are the Lotus, Azalea, Iris, Hyacinth, Crocus and the Palm Fronds. The Palm has significance at Easter time. Palm fronds were placed in front of Jesus' donkey when He entered Jerusalem. Palm fronds were also used for many victorious rulers in Biblical days.

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



There is no Joy Greater than the Joy of GIVING

Melini Joseph D'Souza, Dadar

I have donated an amount of Rs.10,000 via NEFT towards education, food, stationery and essentials for the Balbhavan children at Fr. Agnel Ashram.

Solly Thomas, Kerala

I am happy to donate an amount of Rs. 2000, for the welfare of Balbhavan boys. Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra, is doing yeoman services of not only providing education to the underprivileged but also imparting skills in music, singing, elocution and sports.

Hetul Subhash Patel, Vasai

Kindly accept a donation of Rs.15,000 via NEFT as a full sponsorship for a Balbhavan child. It is good to know that Balbhavan children are doing well in life.

Bhupendra Popat, Ghatkopar

I have sent a donation of Rs. 2500 via EDC for fulfilling all the requirements of Balbhavan. May God bless each of you at Fr. Agnel Ashram for the noble work being done to build the society.

Blaise Peter Vaz, Vasai

I am pleased to donate an amount of Rs. 5000 through UPI as a mini sponsorship for a Balbhavan child. May Fr. Agnel Ashram continue to grow from strength to strength.

Gibbson D'Mello, Bhayandar

I have made a contribution of Rs. 501 through UPI towards the various charitable activities of Fr. Agnel Ashram and maintenance of the Balbhavan boys.

Shobhana Suresh, Mumbai

We are happy to provide a donation of Rs. 1001 through cheque to fulfil the requirements of the Balbhavan boys.

Moses & Family, Karnataka

Kindly accept a small donation of Rs. 200 sent through Money Order for the upkeep of Balbhavan. Whenever I am in Mumbai, I make it a point to visit Fr. Agnel Ashram, as a pilgrim of hope.

YOUR REPENTANCE IS THE KEY! - A FEW TIPS FOR CONFESSION

- Vinay Silva

“Unless you repent, you will all perish.” – The words of Jesus in Luke 13:5.

When we approach the Sacrament of Confession, we have to realise that the 'Absolution' that the ordained priest ministers to us will NOT be effective unless the individual person is truly sincere and repentant. This is because, unseen by us and understood only through faith, Jesus Himself is behind the priest in the confessional; and as indicated above, Jesus desires true repentance.

As a person going for Confession, ask yourself the following 5 questions:

1. Am I in a state of repentance and sincere remorse for my sins and do I really feel sorry for having offended God?

When you realise your guilt, you shall confess the sin that you have committed.

– Lev 5:5.

2. Have I made a firm decision not to commit the same sins again?

For if we wilfully persist in sin after having received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgement ...

– Heb 10:26.

3. Have I decided that I will avoid the situations that caused me to sin?

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

– Jam 4:7.

4. Do I strongly desire not just to come out of my sin, but also to make up for the damage caused by it?

When a man or a woman wrongs another, breaking faith with the Lord, that person incurs guilt and shall confess the sin that has been committed. The person shall make full restitution for the wrong ...

– Num 5:5-7.

5. Do I desire to work towards a deeper personal prayer life, holiness and to work towards increasing my faith after confessing my sins?

Without faith, it is impossible to please God. – Heb 11:6.

If your answer is 'no' to any of the above 5 questions, then you need to understand that Confession as a Sacrament will NOT be effective in your life. It remains NULL & VOID. The transfer of grace through the priest's Absolution depends on your co-operation as well. This is because you are not a mere puppet in God's hands, but He looks at you as His child and seeks to develop a friendship with you. He expects a response of sincerity in you which you are free to adopt without being forced to do so.

The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. – Ps 51:17.

A: Desire for HOLINESS is a MUST for Sacramental graces to flow

Pursue peace with everyone and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. – Heb 12:14.

Holiness is neither sinlessness nor being overtly religious. It is an attitude of sincere readiness to surrender to God. We need to acknowledge our weakness and

abandon ourselves to Him so that He can put His holiness into us. We have to humbly admit that without Him, coming out of sin is impossible. He helps us in our weakness and is constantly inviting us into developing an authentic and personal relationship with Him through Jesus. Only through this relationship, the Sacrament of Confession can be effective and thereby can make the way for further graces to be instilled in our lives.

B: RETURNING TO GOD is a MUST for Sacramental graces to flow

Another question: “Am I truly longing to return to God?”

This is what the Sacrament of Confession is all about!



This will involve a decision to spend time with Him every day in prayer and thereby, one can experience being in the Father's arms like the Prodigal Son did (Luke 15).

Since Christianity is more of a relationship of freewill and surrender than a religion of following rules, returning to God is a pre-requisite and a mandatory condition for us to experience God's embrace.

Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord. - Mal 3:7b.

C: Sincere desire to FORGIVE OTHERS is a MUST for Sacramental graces to flow

Let's not forget that forgiveness from God involves our sincere desire to forgive others, which God is always willing to help us achieve. Without this happening, you cannot expect God to forgive you. Hence, approaching the Sacrament without this attitude becomes meaningless. We pray in the "Our Father" -

Forgive us our sins AS we forgive those who sin against us. - Matt 6:12.

The 3 points above: Without desire for holiness, returning to God and your sincere desire to forgive others, it is unrealistic and illogical to expect God's forgiveness to you. Coming back to the title of this article - ***Your repentance is the Key!***

Be aware of DECEPTION

Not all who go in for Confession come out forgiven, even after doing the penance. It is the interior disposition of heart and the grace that follows in prayer that shows that the forgiveness is complete. The sacramental grace of a Confession done with true repentance may not be explosive or tangible, but it will surely lead the soul into a more Christ centred life. This outward sign needs to be realised. Since deception happens subtly under the disguise of goodness, many of us are in danger of getting trapped into something which the Catholic Church does not uphold as truth.

Many of us, perhaps as children, have been taught and encouraged to go for the Sacrament of Confession. Unfortunately, 'why and how' this Sacrament should be approached may not have been taught effectively. Parents, teachers and others in authority have fallen short of this responsibility in many ways. The damaging consequence is that people lose out on a spiritual blessing due to their ignorance of how the Sacramental graces could

flow into their lives.

Conclusion:

Sincere repentance is the KEY to forgiveness. The Sacrament of Confession has to be approached with this in mind. If not, it will amount to a misuse of God's gift of Reconciliation which the Catholic Church offers. It amounts to taking God lightly, being a bad witness in society, and it also indirectly and silently discourages other Catholics from reaping the benefits of this spiritual treasure. This is because we are all a part of the Body of Christ and not isolated or separate beings. What we do and what we do not do, in addition to how we do it, affects the wider community, whether we realise it or not. To be partakers in causing this damage to God's kingdom is contrary to our call to be partakers of divine nature (2Pet 1:4).

Repent, and believe in the good news - Mk 1:15b.

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near - Matt 4:17b.

Let's always remember these words of Jesus which he spoke after he came out of the 40 days in the wilderness. These words need to be imprinted on our hearts and seen in our behaviour, allowing for a truly grace filled and empowering relationship with the Lord, as Jesus desires for one and all!

Prayer from Psalm 51:

Have mercy on me, O Lord. Cleanse me from my sin. I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation and renew a right spirit within me!



Vinay Silva is based in Bangalore. Apart from writing for various magazines over the past 10 years, he has written 4 books on Catholic discipleship.

SOLOMON: WISE AND JUST KING

- Fr Trevor D'Souza, OFM (Franciscan)

King Solomon, a pivotal figure in the Bible, is renowned for his unparalleled wisdom, monumental achievements, and notable failings. His journey from a young prince to one of the most influential monarchs in Israel's history offers profound lessons and continues to resonate with our times.



Israel's regional position (1 Kings 3:1). Trade agreements with Hiram, king of Tyre, and a fleet of ships brought wealth and resources into the kingdom (1 Kings 10:22-23).

Solomon's wisdom was renowned throughout the ancient world. His judgements, such as the

famous case of the two women claiming to be the mother of a baby, demonstrated his ability to discern truth and administer justice (1 Kings 3:16-28). He also composed many proverbs and songs, contributing to the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon in the Bible.

Failures and Decline: Despite his wisdom, Solomon's reign was not without failures. His numerous marriages to foreign women led him to build altars for their gods, violating God's commandments and leading to idol worship in Israel (1 Kings 11:1-8). This disobedience angered God, who foretold the division of the kingdom after Solomon's death (1 Kings 11:9-13).

Solomon's heavy taxation and forced labour policies also caused discontent among his subjects. After his death, the kingdom was divided into Israel and Judah, weakening its strength and unity (1 Kings 12:16-20).

Importance and Lessons: Solomon's life underscores the complexities of human nature and leadership. Despite his God-given wisdom leading to great achievements, his personal failings had significant consequences for his kingdom. This contrast highlights the need for obedience to God's commandments and the risks of deviating from divine guidance. Solomon's lavish lifestyle and tolerance of foreign religions ultimately contributed to his downfall.

Relevance in the Biblical Narrative: Solomon's story is a cornerstone of the Biblical narrative, illustrating wisdom, prosperity, and the consequences of disobedience. His contributions to wisdom literature offer enduring spiritual insights. The construction of the First Temple marked a pivotal moment in Jewish history, symbolizing God's covenant with His people.

Early Life and Rise to Kingship: Solomon, whose name means "peace" or "prosperity," was also called Jedidiah, meaning "beloved of the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:25). He was the second son of King David and Bathsheba. His ascent to the throne was marked by political intrigue and divine intervention. After a power struggle Solomon was anointed king, solidifying his position as David's chosen heir (1 Kings 1:11-17, 39). His reign was initially seen as a "golden age," although it later proved to be disastrous.

Vision and Mission: His vision was rooted in establishing a prosperous and powerful kingdom, guided by divine wisdom. His mission was to create a nation that honoured God through justice, prosperity, and spiritual devotion. When God appeared to Solomon in a dream and offered him anything he wished, Solomon asked for wisdom to govern his people. Pleased with this selfless request, God granted him unparalleled wisdom, along with wealth and honour (1 Kings 3:5-14).

Achievements and Successes: Solomon's reign is marked by significant achievements that profoundly impacted Israel's history. His most notable accomplishment was the construction of the First Temple in Jerusalem, completed in seven years, which became the centre of Jewish worship and symbolized God's presence among His people (1 Kings 6:1-38).

He reorganized his kingdom for effective governance and built impressive structures, including his personal quarters, and shrines for his many foreign wives. Economically, his reign brought prosperity and extensive trade networks. Alliances with neighbouring kingdoms, including his marriage to Pharaoh's daughter, strengthened

Conclusion: Solomon's life, marked by both triumphs and failures, offers invaluable lessons for believers. His extraordinary wisdom and monumental achievements are balanced by the cautionary tales of idolatry and unfaithfulness to God. Solomon's narrative highlights the enduring importance of seeking divine wisdom and remaining true to God's commands. His legacy has significantly enriched both Judaism and Christianity.

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

BIBLE QUIZ ON KING SOLOMON

1. Who was Solomon's father?
 - a) Saul
 - b) David
 - c) Samuel
2. What was Solomon's other name given by God?
 - a) Jedidiah
 - b) Isaac
 - c) Joshua
3. Solomon was the king of which nation?
 - a) Egypt
 - b) Judah
 - c) Israel
4. What did Solomon ask for in his dream?
 - a) Wealth
 - b) Wisdom
 - c) Power
5. What was the most notable structure Solomon built in Jerusalem?
 - a) A palace
 - b) A temple
 - c) A fortress
6. How many years did it take to build the First Temple?
 - a) 5
 - b) 7
 - c) 10
7. How many wives did Solomon have?
 - a) 100
 - b) 500
 - c) 700
8. What foreign queen visited Solomon to test his wisdom?
 - a) Queen of Sheba
 - b) Queen of Egypt
 - c) Queen of Persia
9. What books of the Bible are traditionally attributed to Solomon?

- a) Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah
- b) Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
- c) Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus
10. What was Solomon's judgement that involved two women?
 - a) A land dispute
 - b) Claiming the same baby
 - c) Stealing silver
11. Who was Solomon's mother?
 - a) Hannah
 - b) Sarah
 - c) Bathsheba
12. Which king was an ally and provided materials for building the temple?
 - a) Hiram of Tyre
 - b) Pharaoh of Egypt
 - c) King of Persia
13. How did Solomon's foreign wives lead him astray?
 - a) Build schools
 - b) Worship other gods
 - c) Conquer new lands
14. After Solomon's death, how was the kingdom divided?
 - a) North and South
 - b) East and West
 - c) Israel and Judah
15. Solomon's reign was marked by peace and prosperity, but also by:
 - a) War and famine
 - b) Idolatry and oppression
 - c) Rebellion and exile

ANSWERS TO THE BIBLE QUIZ ON KING SOLOMON

- 1b) David - 1 Kings 2:12
- 2a) Jedidiah - 2 Samuel 12:25
- 3c) Israel (1 Kings 4:1)
- 4b) Wisdom - 1 Kings 3:9
- 5b) A temple - 1 Kings 6:1
- 6b) 7 - 1 Kings 6:38
- 7c) 700 - 1 Kings 11:3
- 8a) Queen of Sheba - 1 Kings 10:1
- 9b) Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
- 10b) Claiming the same baby - 1 Kings 3:16-28
- 11c) Bathsheba - 1 Kings 1:11
- 12a) Hiram of Tyre - 1 Kings 5:1-10
- 13b) Worship other gods - 1 Kings 11:4
- 14c) Israel and Judah - 1 Kings 12:16-20
- 15b) Idolatry and oppression - 1 Kings 11:1-13



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

JUST FOR FUN

-Christine D'Sylva

April is a month that is dedicated to the Holy Spirit and the Holy Eucharist. This year, the beloved feast of Easter falls on 20th of this month.

It's a month to remember new beginnings and new life. On this positive note, let's begin...

A Story of Hope

The Old Sailor and the Storm



The salty wind whipped against the weathered face of Captain Elias and his eyes were fixed on the relentless storm that raged around his small fishing boat.

His crew, young and eager at first, now looked despaired for their supplies were running out and the storm worried them.

One of the young deckhands murmured, "We are done for, Captain. This storm will swallow us whole."

Captain Elias gripped the wheel of his vessel tight and staunchly refused to permit despair to seep into his soul. In his long life, he had weathered many storms, "No lad, we will not give up. Not while there is breath in our lungs."

However, the waves grew monstrous and lightning flashed, illuminating the terrified faces of the crew. One by one the crew members succumbed to the fear and collapsed below deck.

Alone on the deck, Captain Elias looked at the stormy sky and recalled stories his grandfather used to tell him about the "Star of Hope."

It was a rare celestial phenomenon that occurred. He refused to give up hope. His eyes relentless searched the sky. Fifteen minutes later, he spotted the rare celestial star that glittered in the dark velvety sky like a beacon of hope.

He felt hope bubble in him and he suddenly knew he would weather this storm. He continued at the wheel of the boat doing his best to steer the boat. Not one of his crew members came on the deck. They were too frightened.

But suddenly the storm miraculously began to cease slowly but surely. The raging waters became calm and the weather grew clearer. Captain Elias knew then that the Star of Hope had been like a special sign from God and it had lead him to safety. His crew members were astonished that they had

weathered the storm and most were embarrassed at their cowardice.

But all learnt an important lesson. *Storms may come and go, but with hope and resilience to face them, they can be conquered.*

Interesting Facts about Easter



In the Middle Ages, priests used to play a sort of, "Hot Potato" game. They would toss a hard-boiled egg at a choir boy. The boy would throw it to another boy and so on. This would continue

till the clock struck midnight. Whoever was holding the egg at that point got to eat the egg.

The world's tallest Easter egg was made in Italy in 2011. It stood at a jaw dropping 34 feet and 1.05 inches and weighed 15,873 pounds.

The egg dance is an Easter tradition in Germany. People put eggs on the floor and dance around them, trying not to break any.

Quiz



1. When was the first ever Easter egg invented?
2. How many Easter eggs are sold in the U.K. each year?
3. What colour Easter eggs are traditional in Greece?
4. In which year was the first

crème filled Easter egg made?

5. In which country did the legend of the Easter Bunny originate?

Traditions of Easter



The tradition of dyeing Easter eggs is said to date back to ancient Mesopotamia. In modern times eggs in some countries like Greece are dyed red, then blessed and passed out to the supplicants in Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches.

Brain Teasers

1. Paul's father had four kids. The first was Samuel, the second Jared, the third Lisa. What was the name of the fourth kid?
2. Find a word that associates with the following set of words - cottage, cake, swiss.
- 3.



Why are ghosts bad at lying? 4. A word I know, six letters it contains.. Remove one letter and 12 remain. What is it? 5. If $x = 25$, $y = 10$ and the total of $x + y - z = ?$ if z multiplied by $x = 200$

What's the Good Word?

All About Eggs



1. What determines the colour of the egg shell?
2. Name the important vitamin, the egg yolk contains?
3. Do the younger or older hens lay larger eggs?
4. Do eggs contain carbs and sugar?
5. How many eggs do the American farmers produce each year?

Riddle Me



1. I am a country, a bird and also at times called cold. What am I?
2. Every night you tell me what to do, I do as I am told each morning, yet you silence me. What am I?
3. I drape the hills white but if you come close I will bite. What am I?
4. A man enters a cabin in New Delhi but exits it in Mumbai? How is it possible?
5. Which English word sounds the same even when you remove four letters from it?

Easter Miracle - A True Story



Grandma Lily was a lady with a fierce streak of independence. At the age of 16, she eloped with a 28-year-old man. Her family placed bets that this union would never last but to everyone's surprise she was a loving wife and gave birth to eight kids.

However, her world turned upside down when her husband, John passed away before the Great Depression. She had to raise eight young kids. It was a tremendous struggle and the family was very poor. Some of their clothes were made with flour sacks and they had to share beds. Second hand clothes were the only choice for them. When they could not afford boots, Grandma Lily would line

their shoes with newspapers and canvas to keep the kids feet dry and warm. Meat was served only once or twice a month and meals very meagre.

She missed her husband very much and longed for him. She used to spend hours in the cemetery planting flowers at his graveside and remembering their good times together. Some fifty odd years after her husband had passed away, she noticed her wedding band was missing. She was frantic! It was the only tangible thing she had to remember her husband. She went to the cemetery and found the ring was not there. Her children now grown up searched too but the ring had vanished into thin air. The next Mother's Day, her children presented her with a brand new wedding ring. She was touched but sad her original ring was gone.

The following Easter, Grandma Lily went with her daughter to the cemetery. They said their prayers for Grandpa John. The Easter Lilies stood proud and lovely and they admired the flowers. Out of the corner of her eye, her daughter pointed out to something shiny. Grandma Lily walked close to the plant and bent down. She examined the leaves of the plant. It seemed unbelievable! Her original wedding band was nestled amongst the leaves of the lily plant.

It was like a miracle that Easter. The miracle was a resurrection, her wedding band resurrected on the lily plant. That her name was Lily makes this doubly incredible. When she passed away a few years later, she was buried with her original wedding band and her second wedding band was kept as the family keepsake.

What do we learn?

We learn Easter is the resurrection of Christ but also a time to await miracles in our life with more faith than we started the New Year with. It is a time for believing and resurrecting our lives into a better future with hope and determination, most of all with a prayerful attitude.

Easter Inspirational Quotes



1. "I really believe that God is love, one of deep affection and grace and forgiveness and inspiration." - **William Young**
2. "Unless there is a Good Friday in your life, there can be no Easter Sunday." - **Fulton Sheen**
3. "Sometimes when we just stand still, God's grace finds us." - **Lory Davis**
4. "The great gift of Easter is hope." - **Basil Hume**

Smile Please



1. A dumb blonde was playing Trivial Pursuit one night. It was her turn. She rolled the dice and landed on "Science and Nature."

Her question was, "If you are in a vacuum and someone calls your name, can you

hear?"

The dumb blonde thought for a long time then finally asked, "Is it turned on or off?"

2. Some people are like clouds. Once they disappear, it is a beautiful day.

3. A man boasted to his pal about taking his wife to a lovely place where the food was prepared in front of them. Thinking it was some expensive and unique restaurant, the pal asked, "Wow! Unique place. Which restaurant is this?"

The man replied, "Subway."

4. Doctor: "Your liver is enlarged."

Patient: "Does it mean it has more space for whisky?"

5. Lady to her dietician: "What I am really worried about is my height and not my weight."

Dietician: "How come?"

Lady: "According to the weight and height charts, my height should be seven feet two inches tall."

Wisdom Message of the Month

Self-righteousness



This story was told to me by a relative. She was working as a teacher in a good institution that catered to many students from poor backgrounds. However, there was a supervisor, and an account manager, Mr. X

who was a rather dour man. For more than ten years, he was in charge of the accounts and of giving the teachers their due salary.

The salary of the teacher's remained constant for years and no one dared protest about it. He was a very cranky chap and most were nervous of him. Then the school Inspectors arrived on the scene as per normal procedure. They went through the accounts and found that years of increments and higher pay due to the teachers were not being paid. He had slyly not given the teachers their due salary. The authorities took him to task and sacked him promptly. The teachers felt happy receiving their due salary at last. Till today this rankles the teachers for the unfairness of it all.

But in reality injustice is everywhere. There is no place where injustice does not rear its head at some point or the other. But the question is - What made

this man so mean?

He must have secretly been envious of the teachers or he was of the bigoted opinion that all teachers must do selfless service with no thought of reward. They were servants of the community. He was very self-righteous who believed he was always in the right and he was doing God's duty by being good to the poor by making the teachers do selfless service.

Poor people are to be helped but we must not forget that many poor people have a long history of laziness, dishonesty and rarely take opportunities that are given with a grateful heart. At times if they do not seem blessed with money, it is because of the foolish choices they make. Even when given opportunities to better themselves they often resort to the easy way out. So Mr. X who sympathised too much with them failed to see the hardwork and trouble the so called rich teachers took and deserved every monetary benefit due to them.

The moral is that when we have convictions however moral we assume they are, they might not be totally justifiable convictions. Prayer is important in these matters. Prayer guides us to being fair and kind and not self-righteous. Examine your own life today. If people can bad mouth you for good reason or spoil your name, are you ready to accept that it might just be true? Do you just want to wallow in self-righteousness that you and only you are right?

Jesus himself said, "Blessed be the meek for they shall inherit the earth."

So this Easter being a positive feast, let's all make changes big or small in our lives, and the weeds growing in the midst of a beautiful flower bed, throttling the growth, lets weed out the ugly and keep our soul (the flower bed) beautiful and untainted by the ugly throttling weeds.

That all for this month. God bless and take care. Happy Easter!

Answers

Quiz

1. In the U.K. 2. Around 80 million people. 3. Red. 4. In 1923 by Cadbury's. 5. Germany.

Brain Teasers

1. Paul. 2. Cheese. 3. Because you can see right through them. 4. Dozens, remove last letter you get dozen. 5. 43. The value of $z=8$ and $x+y-z=27$.

What's the Good Word?

1. The breed of the hen. 2. Vitamin D. 3. The older hens. 4. No, they are mostly protein rich foods. 5. 100 billion eggs.

Riddle Me

1. Turkey. 2. Alarm clock. 3. Frost. 4. The man is a pilot. 5. Queue.



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 FAVOURS RECEIVED

MUMBAI: Ven. Fr. Agnel has granted me innumerable favours. I am thankful for the intercession of the Venerable.

- *Joaquim Dias*

THANKSGIVING FOR PRAYERS ANSWERED

UDUPI: I often pray to Ven. Fr. Agnel for his intercessions. Thank you Venerable for answering my prayers.

- *Jacinta Aranha*

THANKSGIVING FOR INTERCESSIONS

BANDRA: We often pray to Ven. Fr. Agnel and have been blessed immensely. We will continue to pray to the Venerable for his blessings. We also visit Fr. Agnel Ashram in Bandra and pray at the shrine.

- *Venessa Fulgado*

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

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

- *Jacinta Dabre*

THANKSGIVING FOR A NEW HOUSE

VIRAR: I thank Ven. Fr. Agnel for blessing us with a new house. We are happy that our prayers have been answered.

- *Agnel Khawri*

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

MANGALORE: As a devotee of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have have been blessed immensely, through his intercession. Whenever I am in Mumbai, I make it a point to visit Fr. Agnel Ashram in Bandra.

- *Richard Almeida*

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL FOR BEING WITH ME ALWAYS

KURLA: Through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I am blessed with good health and my prayers have been answered.

- *Veronica Fernandes*

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

VASAI: We have been blessed immensely by Ven. Fr. Agnel. I am indeed grateful for all the blessings received.

- *Morison Gonsalves*

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL FOR BIRTHDAY BLESSINGS

VASAI: We would like to thank Ven. Fr. Agnel for blessing Astle Francis. May Almighty God continue to shower His blessings.

- *Jacintha Francis*

IN GRATITUDE TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

CHEMBUR: I am grateful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for blessing me in many ways. The Ashram Fathers are doing good work and reach out to the underprivileged sections of society.

- *Rhea Fernandes*

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

MUMBAI: We always pray to Ven. Fr. Agnelo and seek his intercession. He answers our prayers and blesses us immensely.

- *Jesi Fernandes*

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

BANDRA: Through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have received many favours. Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra, is a great source of peace for me.

- *Shiny John Fernandes*

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

MIRA ROAD: I always look up to Ven. Fr. Agnel for his kind intercession. He has been my guiding light and I am thankful for all blessings received.

- *Victor Correa*

THANKSGIVING ON 1ST ANNIVERSARY

MUMBAI: We offer thanksgiving to Ven. Fr. Agnel, on the 1st anniversary of Trinity Trans Logistics. May we continue to be blessed.

- *Xavier George*

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

BARODA: Through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have been blessed in many ways. I thank the Venerable and pray that I will continue to succeed in life,

- *Chandrakant Mehta*

THANKSGIVING FOR NEW VEHICLE

DHARAVI: Through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have been blessed with a new vehicle. With a grateful heart, I thank the Venerable.

- *Xavier John*

OUT OF THEIR BOUNTY

Jennifer Peterson	Tamil Nadu	50000	Darren Pereira	Mumbai	2000	Mary Antony	Kerala	1000
Praveen Srivastava	Mumbai	47500	Preeti Rebello	Mumbai	2000	Aziel Pereira	Mumbai	1000
Sosamma Saji	U.A.E.	40000	Ashok Dhingreja	Mumbai	2000	Monica D'Souza	Pune	1000
Steffie Mielrose	Goa	30000	Morris D'Mello	Vasai	2000	Rockhenry Chettiar	Mumbai	1000
Savari John Robert	Mumbai	25000	Jacinta Hatkar	Palghar	2000	Harsh Shukla	Mumbai	1000
Hiten Bajaj	Mumbai	24000	Francisca Carvalho	Mumbai	2000	Aruna Fernando	Tamil Nadu	1000
Anant S. Iyer	Karnataka	21500	Jayeshbhai M. Patel	Mumbai	2000	A. Santhappan	Tamil Nadu	1000
Bharat Dudeja	Mumbai	15000	Dineshbhai Shah	Gujarat	2000	Santha Thomas	Mumbai	1000
Hetul Patel	Vasai	15000	Solly Thomas	Kerala	2000	Vasudev Tayaole	Mumbai	1000
Sajan Varghese	Kerala	12000	Darshana Patel	U.K.	2000	Arav Parmar	U.K.	1000
Suman Panjikaran	Kerala	12000	Adolphus Olivera	Thane	2000	Vilia Allen	Kerala	1000
Rosario Gomes	Mumbai	10000	Mulraj Sheth	Mumbai	2000	Flemy Thekketh	Kerala	1000
Olefson D'Costa	Mumbai	10000	Marian D'Souza	Mumbai	2000	Gilbret Pereira	Kerala	1000
Lionel Remedios	U.A.E.	10000	Samaira Noronha	Mumbai	2000	Baby Manuel	Kerala	1000
Hugh & Colleen Gantzer	Uttarakhand	10000	Attely A. Kuttikadan	Thane	1750	Denzil Naidu	Mumbai	1000
Godson Gonsalves	Vasai	10000	Arun Jadhav	Kerala	1500	Agnes Naidu	Mumbai	1000
Olefson D'Costa	Mumbai	10000	Sharon D'Souza	Mumbai	1250	Geet Pujara	Thane	500
Veera Ludhani	Mumbai	10000	Suzanne D'Souza	Mumbai	1250	Prashant Patel	Mumbai	500
Kiran Tuscano	Palghar	10000	Alice D'Souza	Mumbai	1250	Maria Crasto	Mumbai	500
Subramaniam R.	Mumbai	5100	Rabia J. Khan	Mumbai	1250	Agnelo Lobo	Mumbai	500
Maryamma Alexander	Kerala	5000	Fransquinha Fernandes	Mumbai	1250	Anilkumar Rathod	Gujarat	500
Rukshana Natalwall	Mumbai	5000	Nikhil Atram	Mumbai	1250	Jayesh Kumar	Gujarat	500
Blaise Peter Vaz	Palghar	5000	Agnes Naidu	Mumbai	1000	Ramesh Naram	Mumbai	500
Cicilia Correia	Palghar	5000	Denzil Naidu	Mumbai	1000	Hardik Shah	Mumbai	500
S. Umarani	Tamil Nadu	5000	Gilbret Pereira	Mumbai	1000	Camroy Goji	Mumbai	500
Hemavati Lakhani	U.K.	5000	Martha Lopes	Mumbai	1000	Aryam Attara	Mumbai	500
Saya Minal Patel	U.K.	5000	Sangeeta Lopes	Palghar	1000	John Lopes	Vasai	500
Jacob Puthur	Kerala	5000	Hemant Gandhi	Gujarat	1000	Stalin Lopes	Mumbai	500
Isabel Hendricks	Tamil Nadu	4000	Devassia	Kerala	1000	Marian D'Souza	Mumbai	500
Jessie Alex	Mumbai	3000	Kakkoo Francis	Kerala	1000	Amira D'Souza	Mumbai	500
Jennifer Patrick	Mumbai	3000	Falgun Dharia	U.S.A.	1000	Joaquim Cardoz	Mumbai	500
Techno Products	Tamil Nadu	3000	Kirit Sutaria	Vasai	1000	R. Victor	Tamil Nadu	500
Aloo Daruwalla	Mumbai	3000	Martha Lopes	Mumbai	1000	Ramesh Gandhi	U.S.A.	500
S. Venkataramanan	Mumbai	3000	Vijay Arahna	Mumbai	1000	Edwin Mendonca	Mumbai	500
Melvyn J. D'Mello	Thane	2500	John Thomas	Kerala	1000	Santa Arago	Tamil Nadu	500
Gaurang Popat	Mumbai	2500	Lynette Dcruz	Mumbai	1000	Gibbson D'Mello	Vasai	500
Roxy Macwan	Gujarat	2000	Deepak Pattani	U.K.	1000	Sanjana Lopes	Vasai	500
Vijay Parmar	Gujarat	2000	S. Jestine Sales	Tamil Nadu	1000	Dedhia	Mumbai	500
Rija Anna Francis	Kerala	2000	Virginia Fernandes	Gujarat	1000	Ashok Jani	Vasai	500
Jaison Chackochen	Kerala	2000	Vanessa Lewis	Mumbai	1000	Parsottam Lalji	Gujarat	500
Urvashi Patel	U.K.	2000	Simon Fernandes	Mumbai	1000	Lavy Pinto	Mumbai	500
Palvinder Singh	U.K.	2000	Nikhil Pinto	Mumbai	1000	Sunil Makwana	Gujarat	500
Jennifer Parmar	U.K.	2000	Princeton	Mumbai	1000	Gracy Sequeira	Mumbai	500

BOB'S BANTER

by Robert Clements

If Jesus Hadn't Risen...!

Imagine the scene: A dusty Jerusalem morning, the day after the crucifixion. The city, still buzzing from the spectacle of the execution, moves on. The Roman soldiers, having played their part, head back to their barracks with a few extra coins in their pockets. The Pharisees, smug in their victory, sip their morning tea, nodding at one another, satisfied that the troublemaker is no more.

And the disciples? They sit huddled in a dingy back room, staring at each other, confused, frightened, and utterly lost.

"What now?" asks Peter.

"We go back to fishing," mutters John.

And that's how it would have ended.

Jesus, had He not risen, would have been a footnote in history, a well-meaning teacher with a flair for storytelling and a habit of making uncomfortable people even more uncomfortable. A wise man? Sure. A great prophet? Maybe. But the Son of God? Ah well, that claim would have gone down as a

His resurrection was the single most defining event that split history in two!

Suddenly, His words weren't just wise teachings; they were the very words of God.

His death wasn't just an unfortunate ending; it was a sacrifice that opened the gates of eternity.

And His disciples, suddenly became fearless preachers, willing to face lions, swords, and burning stakes because they had seen something that made them unshakable.

Other religions may worship martyrs. Christianity, uniquely, doesn't; it celebrates a living God.

Easter is not a memorial service — it is a victory parade.

It is the triumph of life over death, of hope over despair, of certainty over doubt.

The empty tomb is not a poetic metaphor; it is an earth-shattering reality that has echoed through time.



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tragic delusion, the tragic downfall of an otherwise remarkable man.

Perhaps His mother Mary would have sighed and said, "I told Him not to get a swollen head."

The world would have moved on. Rome would have conquered and fallen. The Pharisees would have continued their debates, splitting theological hairs. And somewhere, on the shelves of an old Jewish library, a small scroll might have gathered dust—The Teachings of Jesus, placed next to other wise men who once stirred a few minds but whose voices ultimately faded.

But—

And this is where history takes an incredible turn — He did rise from the dead!

And in rising, He shattered every expectation, every comfortable theory, and every attempt to box Him into the category of "just another good teacher."

Christianity does not merely offer good advice or moral improvement, but salvation, purchased not by effort but by grace.

It does not give us a path to follow; it gives us a Risen Saviour who walks with us.

It does not end in death — it begins in resurrection.

That's why Easter matters. That's why the world has never been the same again.

Two thousand years later, we don't just remember Jesus, but because He lives, we worship Him...!

***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*

***Annual Picnic of Balbhavan Boys, Bandra,
hosted at Paradise Funland water park,
on 26th February, 2025.***



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Benefactors and Well-Wishers
Easter blessings and a season of hope,
renewal and new life!***



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