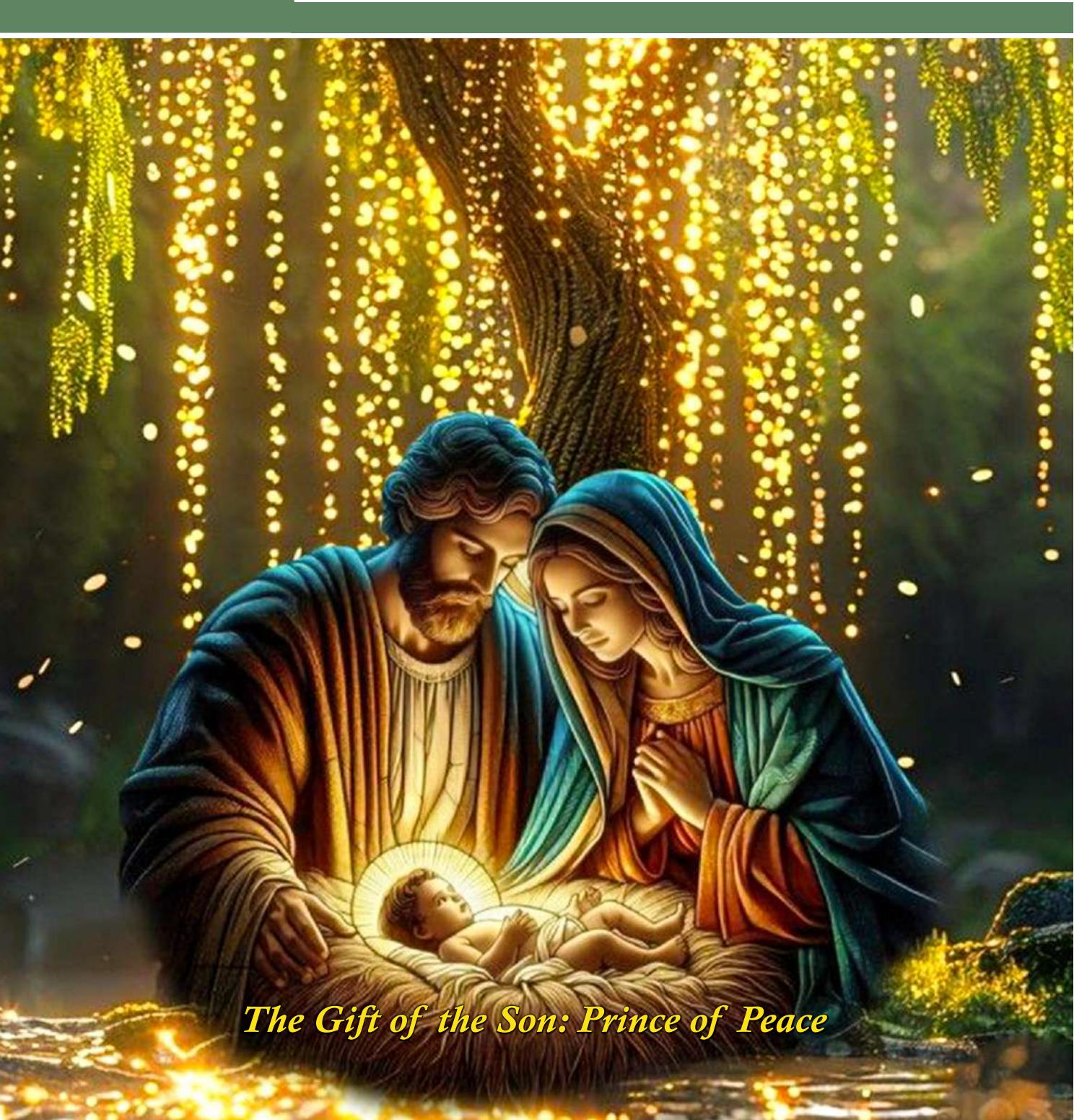




FR. AGNEL

ASHRAM NEWS

December 2025



The Gift of the Son: Prince of Peace

May the peace of Christ rule in our hearts!

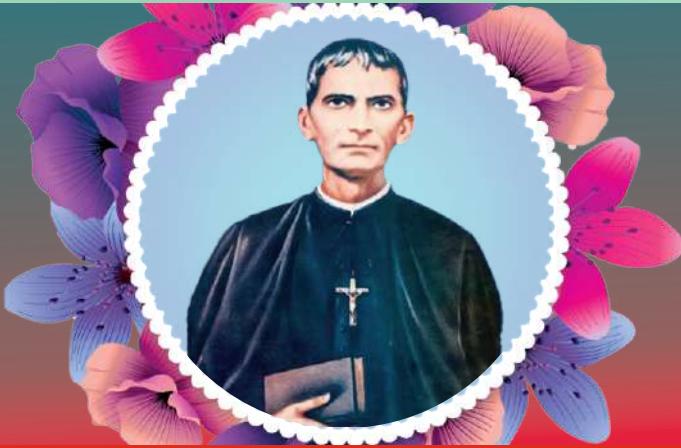
FR. AGNEL

ASHRAM NEWS

DECEMBER 2025

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VEN. FR. AGNELO'S 157TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

Wednesday, 21st January 2026

PROGRAMME

SPECIAL NOVENA SERVICES | 12TH TO 20TH JANUARY 2025



Every day

Morning : 7.00 a.m. & 9.30 a.m.: Holy Mass and Novena Prayer in English.

Evening : 6.00 p.m. : Holy Mass and Novena Prayer in English.

N.B.

On Sunday, 18th January, all Masses and Novena Services will be held as on normal Sundays.
On Sunday, 18th January, Novena Services will be in Gujarati at 3.00 p.m.

21ST JANUARY (WEDNESDAY) : 157TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF VEN. FR. AGNELO

Morning : Mass followed by Novena Prayers at 7.00 a.m. & 9.30 a.m. (English)

Evening : A Solemn Concelebrated Mass will be held at 6.00 p.m. (English) in the Ashram Compound, followed by Novena Prayers.



**Most Rev. Thomas D'Souza, Bishop of Vasai,
will be the main Celebrant on 21st January 2026.**



Thousands of devotees will participate in this Annual Novena and celebration.

Over one lakh of favours, some of them truly miraculous such as cure of cancer, T.B., Paralysis etc. have been received through the powerful intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnelo. Favours obtained and petitions to be placed at the Shrine of Ven. Fr. Agnelo may be sent to the following address:



**Rev. Fr. Superior
FR. AGNEL ASHRAM**

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MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL SUPERIOR



In this new liturgical year, as we light the Advent candles, one on every Sunday, we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and his second coming.

The traditional colours of Advent candles, lit in order, are purple, purple, pink, and then purple, with a white candle often lit in the centre on Christmas Day. The first two purple candles typically represent hope and peace, the pink candle signifies joy, and the third purple candle represents love. The central white candle, or "Christ candle," symbolizes the light of Christ and is lit on Christmas Day.

As Jesus Christ himself says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (Jn 8:12).

Christmas invites us to deepen our spirituality and to meditate on the meaning of this event that transformed human history: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14).

This sublime act of taking flesh in the womb of Mama Mary, the handmaid of the Lord, reveals the closeness of God to humanity.

While some of our near and dear ones have left us this year, we have to be thankful for the gift of life and for every breath we take.

On December 3, we celebrate the Feast of St. Francis Xavier, the patron saint of missionaries and the Pilar Fathers. Most of us must have had a spiritual experience, visiting the 18th Exposition of the Sacred Relics of "Goycho Saib" (Protector of Goa), which began on November 21, 2024, and concluded on January 5, 2025 in Se Cathedral, Goa.

Now as we come together for Christmas with our family and our community, this is the ideal time to celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family on 28th December.

On behalf of the Superior General, the General Council and the Pilar Fathers, I wish each one of you and your family **A HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A PEACE-FILLED 2026!**

- Fr. Jose Alarico Carvalho

Regional Superior

AN EYE FOR AN EYE

- Fr. Peter Fernandes, SFX

Humans by nature are bound to fall and fail. Accordingly, what principle would be a true guide for humans to establish a peaceful and prosperous society? Could it be "an eye for an eye," a guiding principle? "An eye for an eye" is an idiom that means to exact retribution in kind, or to punish someone with the same harm they inflicted.

The phrase originates from ancient legal codes, including those found in the Bible, and has been used throughout history to define appropriate punishment. It appears to be right and sound to restore justice, but does it only satisfy a psychological and emotional need for healing when those who mistreat us are punished?

Very often, one will hear these words: "When the criminals are finally punished, they say they can finally get on with their lives." They're comforted knowing that hurt has been met with hurt. Do such moral contours bring redemption?

Isn't it true that humanity is to rise above the ordinary moral quagmire into a more sublime and divine realm with love and forgiveness? The conflicts between India and Pakistan and Israel and Palestine are based on the principle of revenge and karma.

The two major world religions, namely, Judaism and Islam, hold the principle of "an eye for an eye" as a moral contour, as dictated by their sacred scripture. And Hinduism holds that there is no place for forgiveness, either in the realm of humans or in the divine, because Karma is the guiding principle. Revenge may taste sweet, but it embitters the soul and poisons society. Justice may be less pleasing to the palate, but it heals society and nourishes the soul. In the face of ongoing and never-ending wars, people are confused with more questions than answers. Is there a way out of this vicious cycle of "an eye for an eye"?

Great Britain, during the colonial era, in order to hold on to their hegemony, made people of different religions and races fight against each other, knowing that this fight was not going to ever end

for their benefit. Two good examples are the conflicts between India and Pakistan and Israel and Palestine.

The "Andhabhakts" are unwilling to perceive the diabolic plan of these vicious powers to subjugate the nations for their advantage. Politics is such a driving force that it seduces anybody and everybody and when mixed with religion, it becomes diabolic. In India, the Hindu-Muslim narrative keeps the BJP in power, and they are not willing to relinquish the power, even if it costs the lives of millions of people.

The Andhbhaks are willing to go hungry, remain uneducated and unemployed, and even lose their lives to keep their masters in the position of power as their sacred duty. Yes indeed, when a principle emanates from the sacred text, it is difficult for the followers to see differently.

The recent terror attacks, such as the one in the Delhi Red Fort bomb blast, are diabolic and

should be condemned in no uncertain terms, and those involved should be brought to justice. Without a doubt, such terror acts inflame the passion for "an eye for an eye," and the cycle of violence repeats. However, humans are not excused from recognizing the truth, for they are endowed with reason and a divine inner voice of conscience.

Knowing well the nature of rational beings and the ultimate purpose of existence, humans should rise above the ordinary quagmire for violence and revenge. The citizens of this nation should perceive that Islamic imperialism and Hindutva theocracy are incompatible with Indian democracy with secular principles.

Martin Luther King, Jr., had this to say: "I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant."

The whole world is on edge due to the guiding principle of "an eye for an eye," with no respite in sight after all these many centuries. It is said, the



idea of minds that seek revenge destroy states, while those that seek reconciliation build nations.

A concrete example is unfolding before us: after the terror attack and subsequently the operation Sindhoor, India has taken an ominous turn, which might trigger a nuclear war between India and Pakistan. In April 2025, India announced it had put the Indus Waters Treaty in "abeyance" following a terrorist attack and is exploring options to increase its water use and storage capacity on the western rivers.

Under the terms of the **Indus Waters Treaty**, India is legally obliged to let the waters of the western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab) flow into Pakistan and cannot unilaterally block the flow completely. Pakistan has repeatedly warned that any attempt by India to block or significantly divert its water supply would be considered an "act of war" and could lead to military escalation, a genuine existential concern for Pakistan's agrarian economy.

Blocking a lifeline, such as water, to millions of people, is truly an inhuman act, and it would be an immoral decision for a nation known for humanitarian values and non-violence. To a situation like this, Francis Bacon had this to say: "Revenge is a kind of wild justice, which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out."

The faulty principle, "An eye for an eye," which is upheld by most governments around the world and is also revered by some major religions because it emanates from their sacred texts, and the principle of Karma ought to be re-examined to avoid the existential crisis.

The existential empirical experience concurs with the fact that it is impossible to be perfect, whether we're talking about knowledge, action, or morality. To expect perfection in the human realm is to expect too much. Accordingly, to err is human. Hence, forgiveness is essential for humans, who are both social and political beings.

We have to remember, forgiveness emanates from love, and forgiveness is absent in these major beliefs, which is a matter of grave concern for the wellbeing of human society. The reason why human history in all spheres, such as religion, social, economic, and political, is mostly written in the blood of innocent people is because the wars are fought to avenge and not in pursuit of true justice or to uphold truth with love and forgiveness.

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, in his reflection, stated, "an eye for an eye makes the world blind." The ongoing wars are results of the hardness of heart, and the woes of humankind will continue to prolong as long as we continue to uphold the principle of revenge as a sacred guiding force.

Although all of us do, in fact, fail to know and act perfectly, we're not made for such failure. In our experience, to be human is to err, but to err is not what makes us human.

All should know that peace through strength and revenge has not worked thus far, and the trajectory is not promising at all. Retaliation and revenge create a never-ending cycle of violence, which ultimately leads to widespread destruction and suffering. Why continue this failed path? The only person who ever walked on the face of the earth was able to forgive his enemies while dying on the cross with courage, authority, and audacity: "Forgive them, for they know not what they are doing." While teaching the people He said, "You had heard that it was said, 'an eye for an eye,' but I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." This principle of a dying man, Jesus of Nazareth, is a true path for a peaceful and happy society.



Fr. Peter Fernandes is Incharge of the Bursar's Desk at Pilar, Goa. He is a regular contributor of articles to various publications. His contact: petfern85@gmail.com

READER'S FEEDBACK

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

This magazine is available online.

Visit us at www.agnelashram.org

IN THE BEGINNING...

Fr. Fio Mascarenhas, SJ

John's Gospel begins with these fantastic words, "***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God!***" Our Christmas sweet little Baby Jesus is the Word, who existed before time began! In his divine state, He is our Creator. Mind-boggling!

This religious truth has a mind-boggling parallel scientific truth. No matter where we focus our attention in the 13.7 billion year-unfolding of the universe, we find the promise of "more." We find it in the beginning and we find it in our present moment. "God is always more"!

In its original flaring forth (God's act of creation), the universe expressed itself as **plasma** of charged particles and energy. The temperature of the plasma was in the order of a thousand *million* degrees centigrade! The primordial furnace contained the promise of **atoms**. And so it happened, after about a million years, that the plasma cooled as it expanded and the particles were drawn together, forming atoms of hydrogen and then of helium. Very quickly, the universe took the form of galactic clouds of these gases. These **proto-galaxies**, hundreds of billions of them, foamed into existence.

The galaxies held the promise of **stars**. And so it happened, that due to the attracting force of gravity, the molecules of hydrogen and helium were drawn together where they ignited, and the primal stars burst into being. These stars, *hundreds of millions* of them in each galaxy, lit up the universe like a cosmic Christmas tree.

One of these stars contained the promise of our Solar System. And so it happened, some five billion years ago, that a primal star recently named "Tiamat" swelled and exploded with that brilliance of a billion stars, scattering its dust in space. It was a **supernova!** Again the uniting force of gravity was at work. Over time, that star was drawn together where it ignited and gave birth to our **Sun**. It was from the scraps of that birth that the planets, including our beautiful planet **Earth**, were born.

The early Earth contained the promise of life. And so it happened, some four billion years ago, that conditions were such that life was able to emerge within Earth's ocean in the form of tiny **one-celled creatures**. For millions of years they cleaned the

waters, added oxygen to the atmosphere, and prepared the way for every differentiated and complex form of life that was to follow. Among those who followed were we **humans**, that most creative and unpredictable of creatures.

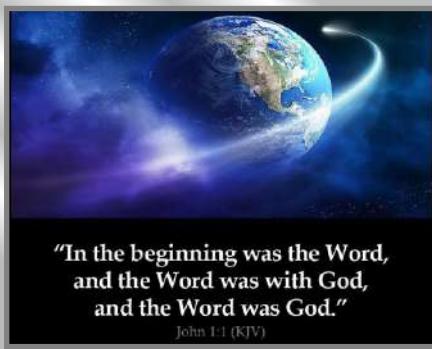
The promise of more was embedded in humankind. And so it happened, over the past 200,000 years, that we humans moved from being hunter-gatherers into being village and city dwellers. We dared to dream dreams and see visions. We created language and art, literature and poetry, philosophy and theology, science and technology, and in modern times, took into ourselves the very powers of the universe itself.

The evolving universe is essentially *promise*. Its Creative Energy carries this great promise of abundance of fulfillment, of "more." That "more" turns out to be galaxies, stars, planets, Earth, life and each one of us reading these words at this

moment with all that moves deeply within us. This "more" is often not predictable or even imaginable. A charged particle in the primordial plasma could not have foretold atoms of hydrogen and helium. Those atoms could not have imagined stars and galaxies. Tiamat could not have predicted our beautiful planet Earth, and Earth's early life forms could not have forecast the human adventure.

The "more" that the universe promises often turns out to be a total surprise. Such a **universe points to an Ultimate Mystery that is more than we can imagine, a Divinity who is full of surprises and who delights in adventure**. Such a universe provides the cosmic basis for the hope of fulfilment that resides at the core of great religions and in the hearts of all peoples. This hope invites us into our future and moves us into action in the present moment.

Many look at our 21st century world with its ever-growing problems and they perceive an historical process leading to even greater chaos. Others look at the same radical changes that are taking place in our world and they perceive the resulting chaos as being a necessary condition for the emergence of something "more" that is promised. These people become our "cultural creatives," and they are the ones who will lead us into our promised future.



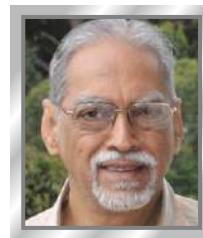
**"In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God."**

John 1:1 (KJV)

As children of the universe, we know that the dynamics of the cosmos play out in our individual human lives. If the promise of "more" is carried by the whole cosmos, we know that the promise is available to us in our present moment too. And so it does not surprise us that we are never satisfied and carry deep within ourselves, an endless aching need. Theologian Karl Rahner has said that we live in a world in which "all symphonies must remain unfinished."

Our hearts are restless, and when we experience this restlessness, we are participating in the promise of "more" that pulsates throughout the universe. The Cosmic yearning for more and our individual yearning for more are one yearning. An evolutionary universe encourages us to believe (in a

wonderfully great and good God) and to trust that there is always "more!" Each Christmas, the eternal Word-made-man encourages us to look forward to more: more grace, more union with him in his death and resurrection, more spiritual fullness. So let us "come all ye faithful..." to Jesus, our Creator and Saviour! Happy Christmas 2025!



Dr. Fr. Fiorello Mascarenhas, SJ
recently celebrated his Sacerdotal Golden Jubilee and has his 29th book *WOMAN, BEHOLD YOUR SON!* published. His contact: frfiomas@gmail.com

Come and See the Saviour

*Come and see the tiny babe sleeping on a bed of straw,
The angels came and sang His praises, and the shepherds watched in silent awe.*

*Come and see who's in the temple listening to the rabbis preach,
A twelve year old boy who asks them questions, His wisdom is beyond their reach.*

*"Come and see," said John the Baptist, "The Lamb of God sent from above,
On Him the Father sent His Spirit, it came down on Him like a dove."*

*"Come and see," insisted Andrew, when he found Simon by the sea,
"I believe we've found the Messiah, drop your nets and come with me."*

*"Come and see," cried out the woman, "The man who told me all I'd done,
He said, He'd give me living waters,
Could He be the Holy One?"*

*Come and see this man called Jesus,
He heals the sick, the blind and the lame. Even demons are subject to Him.
Those He touches are never the same.*

*Come and see this Jewish Rabbi, as He teaches on the hill.
The crowds are spellbound by His message,
As He teaches them about God's holy will.*

*Come and see the righteous anger of the man from Galilee,
See Him cleanse the crowded temple of the merchants and their greed.*

*Come and see the Lord at prayer in the garden on His knees,
Sweating drops of blood in anguish, God's will be done is what He pleads.*

*Come and see the man betrayed by His own disciple's kiss,
Sold for thirty silver coins by a traitor in His midst.*

*Come and see the suffering servant,
Hands and feet nailed to the cross,
Hear Him say, "Father, forgive them," as His friends weep for their loss.*

*Come and see, His tomb is empty,
See, the stone has been rolled away.*

The Son of God has conquered death, He has risen from the grave.

*Come and see the risen Saviour,
See and touch His nail-pierced hands.
Hear Him say, "Go preach the gospel to every nation and to every land."*

*Come and see, men, women and children,
Jesus is the life, the truth, the way to peace and joy and life everlasting.
Believe in Him and be saved.*

- Jubel D'Cruz

INCARNATION OF CHRIST PORTRAYS THE COMPASSIONATE FACE OF GOD

- Fr. Eusebio Gomes, SFX

A story is told to show the difference between the teachings of two spiritual leaders and the teachings of the Gospels. A man fell into a dark, slimy pit and he tried to climb out, but he couldn't. One spiritual leader came along. He saw the man in the pit, and said, "Poor fellow, if you had listened to me, you never would have fallen into that pit." And the spiritual leader went on his way. The second spiritual leader came along. He saw the man in the pit, and said, "Poor fellow, if he'll just come up here, I'll help him." And the second spiritual leader went on his way. Then Jesus came along. He saw the man and said, "Poor fellow!" and jumped into the pit and lifted him out.

Soon we Christians are going to celebrate Christmas, birth of God made man in his incarnation. Incarnation means that God came to join us exactly where we are, as we are. God could love us from a distance, but he decided not to. Our God is in search of us, his people. He comes down to us. In other religions, people go to God. For some of them, He is high up in the skies. But our God, Jesus Christ who, though he was in the form of God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men (Phil 2:5-8).

He became like one of us, lived in our situation, and embraced the Jewish lifestyle. He had to endure the pains and agonies of life. He was totally integrated in the Jewish culture. He lived a fully human life experiencing its joys and intricacies. He lived with his feet on the ground. He traversed the muddy roads of Palestine, shared the meals of the Jews and stayed in their simple houses. George Bernard Shaw said: "Beware of the man whose God is in the skies." Our God Jesus pitched his tent among the people and although now, he is seated at the right hand of His Father, he is very much present in our life's struggles. He identifies himself with the world's wretched people who are placed at the margins of the society.

Jesus entering the nature of a human being by emptying his divine nature is like a man becoming an ant to save the ants. Can we imagine a man becoming an ant reducing himself to that insignificant and unnoticeable insect? It is beyond human comprehension and reasoning.

Likewise, can we imagine our God Jesus Christ surrendering his divinity and relegating himself to the form of a man? With our logical thinking and human wisdom, it is hard to understand. Ultimately we cannot grasp this mystery of incarnation.

In his incarnation, God decided to identify himself with the poor, the marginalised and the dispossessed. The very fact that he was born in a rocky cave in Bethlehem outside the city proves the point that his place is outside the realm of what is important and powerful in the eyes of the world. Pope Benedict XVI in his book 'Jesus of Nazareth' says: "He who was crucified outside the city (cf. Heb 13:12) also came into the world outside the city."

Bethlehem was the city of King David. Before David was anointed as a king, he was serving as a shepherd looking after the sheep in the fields. God called him and made him the Shepherd of Israel. The prophet Micah gazing far into the future, announces that from Bethlehem will come the one who is to pasture the people of Israel (Mic 5:1-3). Mathew in his infancy narratives quotes Micah stating, "And you, O Bethlehem for from you shall come a ruler who will govern my people Israel" (Mt 2: 6). Hence it becomes symbolic for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem in fulfilment of the prophecy of the prophet and to take the role of a great Shepherd.

Jesus' birth took place in a very poor and uncomfortable condition. He died, too, in a very poor condition in a bloody manner on a wooden cross meant for the worst criminals. In these events, he identified himself with the world's poor and the dispossessed. The Peruvian Dominican liberation theologian, Fr. Gustavo Gutierrez, said: "The greatest event of our times is the irruption of the poor, suffering but hopeful, into our world." The poor and the dispossessed are forcefully entering into our world and are at our mercy. According to Gustavo Gutierrez, "the basic problem of liberation theology is how to tell poor of this world that God loves them."

Nevertheless, Jesus through his incarnation came to tell the poor, the wretched and the oppressed that God still loves them. Incarnation is an event of feeling God's presence among us, of surety of our salvation since Jesus already came to earth to proclaim his Father's Kingdom of love, peace and truth and the message of salvation. He came to make us holy children of his Father. His birth brought holiness to the world, the society and the church and especially to the poor.

The poor shepherds in Israel were the first to visit him in the crib at Bethlehem. It was an indication that Jesus came to identify with the least, the last and those living at the peripheries. Pope Francis wished to establish the church of the poor and for the poor. "Holiness is the ultimate weapon of the church of the poor," said Spanish-Salvadoran Jesuit liberation theologian, Fr. Ignacio Ellacuria.

Pope Francis said: "The celebration of Christmas serves as a reminder that God did not reveal his greatness in a grand spectacle, but rather in the 'littleness' of a poor, vulnerable child born in a stable in Bethlehem." Let us make this year's feast of Christmas a significant celebration by sharing with the poor and needy.



Fr. Eusebio Gomes is an Assistant Parish Priest of Holy Rosary Church, Bathinda, Punjab. He writes for various publications, including Konkani journals. His contact: gomesgoa27@gmail.com

EMMANUEL

-Ninette D'Souza

God needed to intervene, in order to redeem.

Jesus did not come to be useful to us, He came to be PRECIOUS, so we can treasure Him! He did not come to give us bread, He came to be 'The Bread.' He says, "Come to Me." What an assurance! It literally translates into - 'I will not drive you away.' Jesus is constantly in our boat, especially when we're facing a storm. He is EMMANUEL - God With Us. When we look at the outstretched arms of the babe in the manger, how do we 'see' Jesus? As Messiah?, Saviour??, Redeemer??? Or simply as a friend and miracle worker? Our hearts must 'Seek God' as the lowly shepherds and wise men did, not 'search for God' as Herod and the Pharisees did.

During Advent, God breaks into our hurting world, reiterating that He seeks, finds, forgives and loves us. God does not wait for us to turn over a new leaf, overnight, in order that we receive His unconditional love and mercy. God does not offer mercy to certain people, at a certain time, but to all people, all the time.

Jesus walks up to every sinner, and issues an invitation to follow Him, the choice is ours to make. 'God's standards of mercy are so high, they're unfathomable and unattainable' is the chorus of the world, but we ought to know better. There is no perfect Christian. To be one is to follow Christ, not a set of perfect practices. Hence, all Christians are offered FORGIVENESS. Jesus was a friend of sinners and met them at their place of sinfulness, (think Zaccheus or the Samaritan woman at the well). He does the same with each one of us.

Advent is an indication that we are valued by our God, because we are of great worth to Him. God does not give up on us, even if we self-righteous humans do so, with one another. Advent therefore forces us to ask ourselves: Who do we break bread with? God wants us to sit with all types of people, and let the impossible become possible.

Today's culture of focussing on self, is creating a breed of isolationists, much like the Pharisees, who as the 'separated ones' dedicated themselves for religious study, to follow a high degree of ceremonial purity. Jesus' inclusive style was highly offensive to these judgemental people. Today do we judge others with mercy or disdain? are we kind or harsh? What was new in Jesus' teaching was that, sinners must be sought out, in order to be saved, and not just mourned over.

Seekers of the lost are much needed today. Pope Francis constantly emphasized that, 'The Church is called to be a field hospital of Mercy.' Each of us would love to be the sun that lightens up someone's life, why can we not try and be like the moon that brightens

even in the darkest hour? Fr. Gregory Boyle (S.J.) urged the students of, the Boston College School of Social Work, to embrace radical kinship in their work. He said, "You don't go to the margins to make a difference. Then it's about you. But you go to the margins so that the folks at the margins make you different. Then it's about us. And so, the goal is to create a community of kinship such that God might recognise it, where there is no us and them, there's just us."

Advent helps us bear in mind that we are a new community of, 'Love' - the measure of which is Jesus, and the benchmark is the Cross. A faith untested is just a theory but a faith tested and trusted, becomes a testimony. We may be a minuscule 28 – 31% of the world's population (as of 2020) but we have succeeded in leaving indelible heart prints everywhere. We need to leave more, that would make Jesus truly happy.

Often, we're ruled by fear and not by faith. Fear distorts our reality, and causes us to focus on our problems, making us forget, that we have a God, who is bigger than any problem. Our past may be imperfect, our present is tense, because we're worried about how we, Christians, have to deal with the world, but Christmas, assures us that our future is perfect with Jesus, who speaks to our personal experiences.

When we increase our faith, we realise Jesus will focus on us first, and then deal with our situation, according to His time. If this Advent season you are feeling persecuted, overlooked, forgotten and don't wish to celebrate the coming of the Saviour, draw strength from His Word in Luke 12: 1-7. It provides a powerful counter narrative to the world. God honours us in His heart, so lean into the faith, don't give in to fear.

The truth is that we are all just one accident, one diagnosis, one unexpected phone call away, that can cause our lives to turn upside down. What once felt certain, can vanish like a puff of smoke. Hence beginning this Advent, let us make 'Constant Gratitude' a part of our daily vocabulary, especially when talking to God = praying. Let's try to: stay humble, stay soft, speak kindness a little louder, forgive a little quicker, be a little less judgemental and show a whole lot of mercy. Then we will be a little more worthy, of receiving our Saviour, in our hearts, at Christmas.



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

O COME LET US ADORE HIM

- Odette Gonsalves

This sounds like the popular Christmas hymn but it is a call to worship, humility and faith.

Every year, as Advent draws near, the lyrics of "Come All Ye Faithful" echo through churches, homes and gatherings, a familiar invitation fills the air: "O Come Let Us Adore Him, Christ the Lord." These lyrics are more than just a Christmas chorus, they are a profound call that has echoed through centuries of Christian faith, urging believers to bow before the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ born as a human being, who came and dwelt amongst us.

To Adore is not admiration or appreciation. In Catholic tradition, Adoration to God is Worship reserved for God alone. It is the deepest and highest form of Worship. An act of surrender, reverence, and love before his awesome presence. Jesus entered this world with humility not Majesty. Though he is King, he was born in a Manger, a feeding trough for the animals became his cradle. The perfect sign of humility and the breath of the cattle kept him warm. He was not given the Throne. Catholic theology differs from veneration offered to saints and the highest honour given to Mary as Mother of God. To adore Jesus, therefore, is to recognize Him as True God and yet true man, as the Word became flesh.

When the shepherds left their flock and the Magi followed the star, they responded to the same divine summons. Each King adored Jesus in their own way, the Shepherds with simplicity and awe, the Magi with expensive gifts and on bended knees. Their gesture a role model for the generations to come. The right posture of those who believe in Jesus. It is one of Humility, gratitude, and wonder. Bethlehem means "The House of Bread." It seems so apt as Jesus calls himself **The Bread of Life**. The Christmas mass, when the congregation sings "O come,

let us adore Him," they stand before this mystery.

Catholic tradition often describes the stable as a school of contemplation. The Holy Family did not speak much that night, their adoration was expressed in quiet presence being the Christ child. In the stillness of Bethlehem, the human heart learned that Worship is not words but awe. As we worship Jesus, we are renewed and transformed. When Catholics gather before the Blessed Sacrament, they echo the cry of Angels and Shepherds.

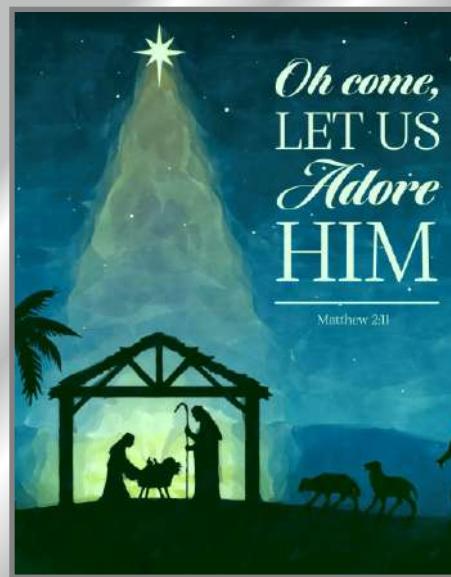
The same Jesus who once lay in Mary's arms now dwells in the consecrated Host. The Eucharist, humble, hidden and yet Holy forever.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes adoration as the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is the created before his Creator. It is this act that places everything in perfect order. God first, self, second. In an atmosphere craving for power and materialism, Adoration to Jesus returns our soul to simplicity and humility. It

teaches us that eternity begins when we fall to our knees and acknowledge God's presence among us. When you look at the Eucharist, you understand just how much Jesus loves us now. To adore him simply means to rest in his ongoing love. We don't always need to understand how he loves us and waits for us to repent and return to him. A love that goes beyond comprehension. Don't you think he needs to be worshipped and adored. He is the Living God and there is no other.

A love that began at Bethlehem, revealed on Calvary and yet endures in every tabernacle on earth.

The Mystery of Humility: At the heart of Adoration lies humility – it is two sided. Jesus humbled himself by becoming man. We who believe, humble ourselves by our dependence on God. Jesus though he was king was never proud, but



instead washed the feet of his disciples, healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead to life and was so compassionate that great crowds followed him. In the Manger, we see not just divine majesty but divine humility. The Creator of the Universe entered His creation as a child, needing warmth and care. This paradox defeats the proud and upholds the lowly. Mary and Joseph poor and unknown, became the first witnesses to the greatest miracle in history. Their faithful adoration reminds all of us that holiness is born out of Adoration and openness to God; it is not a status or achievement.

A Call to Every Nation: “O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant.” This invitation is universal. It does not specially belong to one nation or culture, but to everyone created in the image of God. The Magi's journey from distant lands symbolizes the Church's mission to bring all nations to Christ. The adoration at the crib symbolizes the global communion of believers united in worship.

At every Mass, no matter the language or location, the faithful are invited to adore Jesus truly present

in the Eucharist. The Gloria, Sanctus and Agnus Dei are hymns of Adoration that join heaven and earth in praise. The Christmas invitation, therefore, continues not just in words but in the very heartbeat of the Church.

Let us all remember that both Joy and Adoration walk hand in hand. When the shepherds adored the Christ child, they returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen (Luke 2:20). Adoration always leads to mission. One cannot truly encounter Christ without being moved to share him.



Odette Gonsalves is a Psychology graduate. She has been Counselling and Ministering to people of all faiths for over 35 years. She preaches and leads the Adoration all over Mumbai and overseas.



There is no Joy Greater than the Joy of GIVING

Edina Agnelo Cardoz, Mumbai

I have contributed an amount of Rs. 20,000 via cheque to meet the educational and various other expenses of the Balbhavan children.

Ima & Folomeno Clemente, Salcette, Goa

I have sent an amount of Rs 5000 via UPI as donation for the Balbhavan children under your care. Please pray for my family. God bless you.

Salvador D'Souza, Andheri, Mumbai

I have contributed an amount of Rs. 1,000 via EDC, in thanksgiving to Ven. Fr. Agnel for all the favours received.

Nargish Phiroze Dastoor, Mahim, Mumbai

I am happy to offer a donation of Rs. 250 to continue the good work done by the Pilar Fathers.

Jordan Noronha, Mumbai

I have made a thanksgiving offering of Rs.2000 for the welfare of the Balbhavan boys.

Goretti Fernandes, Bandra, Mumbai

Please accept my humble gift of Rs.1000 for the Balbhavan boys. Right from Ven. Fr. Agnel, the Pilar Fathers are known for their selfless service for the well-being of the community.

Elizabeth Abraham, Kottayam, Kerala

I have sent a donation of Rs. 3000 via NEFT. This is our humble gift for the Balbhavan children. We have received a lot of blessings through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel. I am 100% sure that Fr. Agnel is always praying for us.

Dipali Pandya, Borivali, Mumbai

I am pleased to make my monthly donation of Rs.500, as a thanksgiving to Ven. Fr. Agnel for his powerful intercessions.

AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Verna, Goa

Fr. Agnel Multipurpose Higher Secondary School, Verna, puts up tough fight in quarter-finals of 64th Subroto Cup International Football Tournament

They went in as rank outsiders, but walked away with their heads held high as a gallant Fr. Agnel Multipurpose Higher Secondary School, Verna, Goa, bowed out of the **64th Subroto Cup International Football Tournament**, going down 4-3 to Army Boys Coy in a penalty shoot-out, in the quarter-finals of the U-17 category at the Ambedkar Stadium in New Delhi, on 22nd September 2025.

Failing to qualify for the quarter-finals last year, the **Fr. Agnel Multipurpose Higher Secondary School** team showed quality and purpose this time. They won all four preliminary round matches to top Pool A. In the quarter-finals against a tougher and better-built opponent, the youngsters from Verna did well with the cross bar, denying them a sure goal during extra-time. In the tie-breaker, the Army Boys Coy proved to be better shooters while winning 4-3.

Earlier in the local competition, there was no doubt of the quality of this team as they were crowned **State-level champions** without conceding a single goal. Prior to beating St. Xavier's Mapusa 3-0 in the final, the Verna school had thrashed St. Alex HSS, Currorim 8-0, defeated Marina English School 4-0, before easing past Rosary High School, Navelim 1-0.

The squad to New Delhi was led by **Fr. Agnelo Gomes sfx**, Director of Agnel Technical Education Complex, Verna & Assagao, along with **Fr. Vicky Hilario sfx** and coaches **Luis Barreto, Alex Ambrose and Fraizer Fernandes**.

Established in 1960, the annual Subroto Cup is a prestigious inter-school football tournament that sees participation from all State champion school teams, along with specially invited international sides. The competition consists of three separate categories – under-15 sub-junior boys and under-17 junior girls and boys.



The gritty football team of Fr. Agnel Multipurpose Higher Secondary School, Verna, Goa.

AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Assagao, Goa

AITD Empowers Young Innovators at SIH 2025 Internal Hackathon Round



Students who participated in the Smart India Hackathon (SIH) 2025, at Agnel Institute of Technology and Design (AITD), Assagao, Goa.

Agnel Institute of Technology and Design (AITD), Assagao, Goa, conducted its Internal Hackathon Round for the Smart India Hackathon (SIH) 2025 on 24th and 25th September 2025, a national-level innovation initiative by the Government of India. The event brought together **108 students** to showcase creativity, coding skills, and hands-on engineering through real-world problem-solving.

Day one focused on software innovation, while the second day saw **60 students** developing functional hardware prototypes using sensors and embedded systems. Both editions encouraged teamwork, rapid prototyping, and industry-aligned innovation under time-bound challenges. Overall, the internal round strengthened AITD's culture of innovation and practical technical excellence.



Chief Guest Mr. Sanshil Mascarenhas (third from right) and Guest of Honour Mr. Sudesh Sangelkar (fourth from right) with Rev. Fr. Agnelo Gomes, Director, Agnel Technical Education Complex, Assagao and Verna (second from right), at AITD Ideas 2025.

AITD Ideas 2025 focuses on Sustainable Development Goals

AITD Ideas 2025, a two-day innovation and prototype exhibition held at Agnel Institute of Technology and Design (AITD), Assagao, on 14th and 15th November 2025, focused on **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and **practical solutions to real-world problems**. After an initial screening in August 2025, 14 student teams were shortlisted and supported with mentoring and funding.

The exhibition featured projects in healthcare, renewable energy, automation, smart agriculture, and social innovation. The event was inaugurated by **Chief Guest Mr Sanshil Mascarenhas (MD & Founder, Sprout Strategies)** and **Guest of Honour Mr. Sudesh Sangelkar (Founder, Sparkplus Technologies)**. An expert jury assessed the projects based on innovation, feasibility, and overall presentation. AITD Ideas 2025 encouraged creativity, collaboration, and industry interaction among students.



PRAYoG Phase-1: Research Methodology & Literature Search Session at AITD.

Agnel Institute of Technology and Design (AITD), hosted PRAYoG Phase-1 on 10th October 2025, an initiative of the **Directorate of Higher Education, Goa**, to build research skills among undergraduates. Dr. Niyan Marchon led an engaging session on research problem formulation, literature search strategies, and ethical academic practices. Students learned how to use digital databases, apply keywords and Boolean operators, and critically evaluate scholarly sources.

The session also introduced key components of strong research proposals, including novelty, feasibility, and relevance. With **56 students** participating, the program successfully strengthened research readiness and inspired students to pursue meaningful academic inquiry.

AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Vaishali, Ghaziabad

NISCORT Fr. Agnel School, Vaishali, celebrates its 10th Anniversary with a host of activities



On the joyous occasion of the **10th year of establishment** of NISCORT Fr. Agnel School, Vaishali, **Uttar Pradesh**, students portrayed the power of knowledge, resilience and the courage to express themselves with confidence, through the classic tale *Matilda*.

The school, run in collaboration with the National Institute for Social Communication and Research (NISCORT), is managed by the director Rev. Fr. Jose Alarico Carvalho, Regional Superior and Editor of *Fr. Agnel Ashram News* and the School Principal Sr. Navya Jacob.



Hosting FAS Vaishali **Inter-School event 2025 'Expressions Unlimited'**, students performed a classical dance which exemplified grace, discipline and the enduring beauty of cultural expression.



FAS students displayed the power of teamwork, strategy, agility and the true spirit of healthy competition through participation in the **Inter-School Basketball Tournament**, hosted by Fr. Agnel School, Vaishali.



Students participated in the FAS Inter-School Sports Meet, displaying their sporting talent and spirit through the march past, showcasing strength in tug-of-war, competing in races and building fitness through coordinated drills.



Young delegates step into global roles, representing nations and debating real-world issues with confidence and clarity, as they address matters that shape our world. On the occasion of the opening ceremony of FASVMUN 'Nec Terrent Astra,' the students inspired the delegates with a dance performance, to the lilting tune of *IMAGINE* by John Lennon.



By bringing to life the timeless tale of *The Wizard of Oz*, primary students step into a world of imagination, discover self-belief and express the courage that lies within.



Tiny tots explore a world of colours, as they learn, sort and discover with joy. A vibrant journey of early learning in action.

CALLED TO BE PROPHETS OF HOPE

- Fr. M.K. George, SJ

We live in a world increasingly devoid of hope. The evidence is all around us.

Although we produce enough food to feed the global population of 8.2 billion, one in every eleven people still goes to bed hungry each day.

More than 110 armed conflicts are currently underway worldwide. In 2024 alone, armed violence claimed 233,000 lives - an average of 638 deaths per day, or roughly one every two minutes. Yet major powers such as the United States, Russia, France, Germany, and China continue to profit immensely from the arms industry, thereby fuelling these wars. The global arms sector was valued at \$475 billion in 2023.

As of June 2025, approximately 117.3 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes, including nearly 42.5 million refugees. Modern slavery - whether through trafficking or other forms of exploitation - affected 50 million people in 2023, with 28 million in forced labour and 22 million in forced marriage.

Global inequality is reaching unprecedented levels. The richest 10 percent capture more than half of all income, the top one percent hold roughly one-third of global wealth, and nearly 700 million people continue to live in extreme poverty. In India, the top one percent owns 40.1 percent of the country's wealth, and the wealth of the richest groups increased by 62 percent between 2000 and 2023.

The world is facing a rapidly escalating climate crisis, with rising temperatures and extreme weather that threaten the very future of life on Earth.

Perhaps most troubling is the global rise of authoritarianism. Dictatorships are increasing while democratic systems weaken. Sixty countries are now classified as full dictatorships, and thirty-six - including India - are categorized as hybrid regimes, combining certain democratic institutions with pronounced authoritarian tendencies.

How is it possible to remain truly hopeful in such a scenario?

The Christian Call to Hope

Pope Francis reminds us, "A Christian is never a pessimist. We are people of hope because God is with us." Christian theology is very articulate on this. Our God is a faithful one. He sent his own son to save us. He has promised to be with us all through history, 'Emmanuel'. Hebrews 10:23 says, 'let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.' And the promise is, "He will

wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21: 4).

But as Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminded us '*Christian hope begins in responsibility.*' Hope demands faithful action even under oppression.

How can we be prophets of hope:

Begin with your personal life: It all begins with our personal lives. Can we remain hopeful amidst our own struggles? A striking example of this is Jemimah Rodrigues, who changed the course of the 2025 Women's World Cup semi-final. Her personal story is one of profound faith and hope. She faced hate and harassment from right-wing forces, struggled with inconsistent form, was dropped from the playing XI, and even battled depression. Yet, through unwavering faith and hope, she made a remarkable comeback. In her own words: *"Firstly, I want to thank Jesus because I couldn't do this on my own... I kept telling myself to 'stand still' - and that God will fight for me. I just stood there, and He fought for me."*

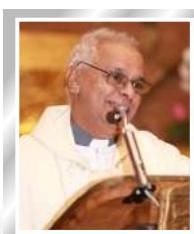
When Christians demonstrate resilience and hope in their personal lives, they embody the truest form of being a prophet of hope.

Speak truth with courage: In a world full of fake news, post-truth and downright lies, a Christian can be a prophet of hope by speaking truth with courage.

Work for justice and the common good: Many of the signs of hopelessness we mentioned at the beginning, can only be faced by working collaboratively for justice and common good.

Prayer life, with joy and gratitude: Finally, it is only through a solid prayer life, intimacy with Jesus, regular participation in the sacraments, and active engagement in the life of the Church that a Christian can truly be a prophet of hope. With joy and gratitude, a Christian envisions the promised new creation and strives to bring it closer to reality.

To live as a true Christian in a VUCA world, one must remain a prophet of hope!



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

THE LITANY OF LORETO

- Norma Kamath

A Litany is a prayer form in the religious context, which has a long list of invocations, which have responses, often repetitive, like, Lord have mercy on us, or Pray for us.

The Litany of Loreto, commonly known as the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, recited in many homes after the Rosary, was approved in 1567 by Pope Sixtus. It gets its name from the Shrine of Our Lady of Loreto in Italy, where it originated. This revered shrine houses the 'House of Nazareth,' where the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to the Blessed Virgin took place. The religious relics found their way to Italy. **Pope Francis instituted December 10th as the feast of Our Lady of Loretto.**

The Litany of the Blessed Virgin is set in a liturgical structure like most prayers in the Catholic Church. In the beginning it gives honour and glory to the Holy Trinity, and at the end to the Son, as the Lamb of God. God's power and authority is acknowledged as a merciful judge, and we sinners plead for mercy.

Mary is addressed as Mother, as she is the Mother of God, our mother, and Mother of the Mystical Body, the Church; as Queen because she was honoured and crowned by God the Father as Queen of Angels and Saints, after she was assumed into Heaven; and as Virgin, as she held on to her Virginity, accepting God's call to be the Mother of Jesus, through the Holy Spirit. She is addressed as the Virgin of Virgins, as she is the patron of the clergy and religious who take the vow of chastity.

These invocations were not chosen at random, but have a history behind them. Successive Popes, have been adding to their number, according to the times and needs of the people of God. In the year 2020, Pope Francis added Mother of Hope, Mother of Mercy and Solace of Migrants to the list. An explanation of some of these attributes will help us understand and appreciate Mother Mary's salvific role in our lives and the church.

MOTHER OF HOPE - This title is especially

significant as the world was going through devastation through unending wars, natural disasters, and pestilences, like the covid and people were getting depressed and falling into despair. Pope Francis chose 'Hope' as the theme of this Jubilee Year 2025.

The devotion to Mary, Mother of Hope, originated in France in 1871 during the Franco-Prussian War, when she appeared to two boys and asked them to pray for protection, as the troops were approaching their village. The parish priest joined them, and Mother Mary gave them the message of hope through Prayer and the Cross. The troops left them and the war ended.

Hope is a theological virtue based on the trust in the promises of God (ccc1817). It keeps us centred on our Heavenly Home and God's Kingdom. Mary is called the Mother of Hope because she held on to God's promises announced by the Angel Gabriel, that she would give birth to the Son of God, that he would receive the throne of David, and reign over the house of Jacob forever (Lk1:28-35). She saw the fulfilment of the prophecy of Is

7:14, and believed in the angel's words that with God nothing is impossible.

In the face of uncertainty, and Simeon's prophecy, that a sword would pierce her heart, she pressed on with unwavering faith and hope in God's word. It was only at the foot of the Cross that she experienced the fulfilment of God's promises, the Kingship of Christ, her call to Spiritual Motherhood of the Church, as the Blood and Water poured out of the heart of Jesus, the power of the Eucharist and the Holy Spirit, after three days the Resurrection and Lordship of Jesus, and finally the Holy Spirit and birth of the church at Pentecost. Mary teaches us that we need to claim God's promises through his Word, and be blessed in their fulfilment.

MYSTICAL ROSE - Mother Mary is likened to a Mystical Rose because her hidden spiritual beauty spreads fragrance all around. She is prefigured as a Bride of the Bride, the Church. "I am a rose of



Sharon, a lily of the valley. As a lily among brambles, so is my love among maidens" (Song 2:1).

As a rose blooms among thorns, so Mary tested through suffering grew in virtues, a fragrant rose. Her virginity is described by St. Bernard of Clairvaux as a white rose and her charity like a red rose. The word Rosary comes from the Latin word 'Rosarium,' meaning a garland of roses.

TOWER OF DAVID - In ancient times, towers were used to keep watch over an approaching enemy. Mother Mary is likened to a tower, as in her apparitions she warns the church of impending wars, hell, the attack on the Pope etc. She is prefigured as the Tower of David in Song 4:4. "Your neck is like the Tower of David built for an arsenal, wheron hangs a thousand bucklers, all of them shields of warriors." The Tower of David was a sign of victory. Through her intercession we gain victory over temptation, afflictions, and spiritual attacks of the evil one, and she shields from our political enemies. A tower stands high amid the surrounding buildings, so does our Blessed Mother, a strong tower, higher in sanctity than all other human beings.

Mother Mary is prefigured as the **TOWER OF IVORY**, a watchtower guarding us from our enemies in Song 7:4. "Your neck is like an ivory tower, your eyes are pools in Heshbon; by the Gate of Bath-rab'bim." She is pure, precious like ivory, a

precious gift of the Bridegroom of his 'Bride' to his church, the bride.

As Mary, Help of Christians, she comes to the help of all believers in our needs, both spiritual and temporal. As The Morning Star, she brings us out of the darkness of the night, into the light and glory of her son to arise and shine out. She is the Gate of Heaven through whom Jesus entered the world, the Health of the Sick, to whose shrines, pilgrims flock for solace, comfort and healing.

As we get to know our Mother, we are filled with admiration of her spiritual beauty and greatness and desire to honour and venerate her. She is the Queen of the Holy Rosary, and exhorts us in her apparitions to recite the rosary, a powerful weapon and shield to ward off evil in our lives and at the hour of our death. Let us heed her gentle voice, showing the 'way', as she did at Calvary, and at the Wedding Feast of Cana,

"Do whatever He tells you."



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 CO-OPERATORS

You can join the Ashram Family by becoming a member of Agnel Co-operators and enjoy the fruits of a Special Sunday Mass offered at Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra, for all the members. You will also enjoy the fruits of all the prayers and good works of the Agnel Ashram Fathers and entire Agnel Ashram Family.

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JUST FOR FUN

- Christine D'Sylva

We have reached the last month of the year. It's a month that is festive, for we celebrate on the 25th of December, the birth of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

It's a month of gaiety, prayer and a month to share our happiness with others.

On that joyous note, let's begin ...

Inspirational Story

A Christmas Miracle



In the year 1910, there was a diphtheria outbreak in Czechoslovakia.

There was a couple not very wealthy who had suffered the loss of two of their kids to this disease. They were devastated and then, Jano, the husband also had diphtheria. His wife, Suzanne, was very worried that he would die. Feeling totally devastated, she spent a few days hoping he would get better but he seemed to be making no improvement, despite some medical treatment.

Then one late evening when she felt despaired, she heard a tap on her door. It was her elderly neighbour. She told Suzanne, "Please take this kerosene oil, it is a folk remedy that might heal your husband."

Suzanne thanked her but had no real faith it would heal Jano.

However, miraculously Jano seemed to be getting better each day and soon, he fully recovered.

Suzanne and Jano were very grateful for this unexpected miracle at Christmas. Later, they had more kids, eight of them, and they immigrated to America where they built a new happy life.

What do we learn?

The power of faith and miracles is as relevant today as it had always been during the life of Christ. Unexpected blessings and miracles take place if we place our trust in God and like children we truly believe miracles can happen. At Christmas, we are motivated to believe in miracles and in God's love. Even Jesus instructed us to have faith as little children and trust wholly in his mercy and infinite goodness.

Quiz

Christmas Songs



1. Which carol is credited with inspiring a temporary truce between British and German soldiers in World War I?

2. Which is the best-selling Christmas song of all time?
3. Which is the first Christmas song to be played in space?
4. Name three Christmas carols written by Jewish composers?

White Christmas



While we in India, have never witnessed a White Christmas except in places like Kashmir, Simla, etc in the north, yet snow is invariably linked in many cold countries abroad at Christmas.

A white Christmas is defined officially as a place having at least one inch of snow on the ground at 7 a.m. local time Christmas Day.

The Christmas song, White Christmas was written by Irving Berlin in 1940 for the movie *Holiday Inn*. It was performed by Bing Crosby.

It was a symbol of hope during World War II.

This song echoes nostalgic remembrances of past Christmases by composer Irving Berlin when he lost his three-week-old son at Christmas, a few years earlier. He believed it was his best work and Bing Crosby sang this song on his radio show on Christmas Day, 1941, a few weeks after the bombing of Pearl Harbour. It was a massive hit. This song, White Christmas remains the most requested song by soldiers abroad during the War.

Inspirational Quotes

Christmas



1. "Christmas is like candy; it slowly melts in your mouth sweetening every taste bud making you wish it could last forever." - Richelle E. Goodrich.

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

3. "Blessed is the whole season which engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love." - Hamilton Wright Mabie.

4. "Christmas is not as much opening our presents as opening our hearts." - Janice Maeditere.

5. "Every time we love, every time we give, it's Christmas." - Dale Evans.

Christmas Humour

Smile Please



1. As a little girl climbed onto Santa's lap, Santa asked the usual question, "And what would you like for Christmas, little girl?" The little girl stared at him horrified, "Didn't you get my email?"

2. At Sunday school, the kids were drawing pictures, illustrating Biblical stories.

The teacher walked by and noticed one little boy was drawing an airplane. "Oh what story are you drawing?"

"This is the Flight into Egypt. See here is Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus." The little boy then said pointing to the front of the plane. "This is Pontius. He is the Pilot."

3. Two little boys were saying their prayers on Christmas Eve at their grandparent's house. The smaller boy shouted at the top of his lungs, "I pray for a new bicycle, I pray for a new tennis racket."

The bigger boy admonished him, "Why are you shouting? God can hear you, he is not deaf."

The little boy replied, "No, but Grandma is."

Riddle Me



1. Which wrapper for a gift can go pop?
2. What has 42 eyes and 12 faces?
3. What has three feet but cannot walk?
4. I have nails but no fingers.

5. I have no life but you can bring me to life by electricity.

The History of Marzipan



For most people, Christmas without marzipan does not feel like Christmas at all. This very popular sweet is generally a must in the preparation of Christmas sweets.

Marzipan is a confection of sugar and almond meal but often enough made with cashew-nuts which is more popular especially in our country.

Marzipan in Spain is a traditional Christmas dessert. The invention of marzipan is usually attributed to Lubeck, Germany. Legend has it that during the 15th century famine, when flour for making bread became scarce, the senate of Lubeck ordered bakers to create a replacement.

Using eggs, sugar and almonds, the clever bakers came up with marzipan.

However, cities like Venice, Florence, etc also lay claim to inventing marzipan. Some people believe marzipan is of Persian origin. There is a reference to an almond paste used as an aphrodisiac in the book,

Arabian Nights which is a collection of Middle-Eastern folk stories, whose origins range from the 8th to the 14th centuries. *Ali Baba and the Forty thieves* is one of those folk stories in the collection most people have heard of.

While the dispute of its origin might never be settled satisfactorily, marzipan remains a much loved sweet all over the world.

The Little Match Girl



The Little Match Girl by Hans Christian Andersen is a popular story. This story in my childhood never failed to touch my heart.

Once there lived a little girl who was poor and barefoot. She tried to sell matches to earn money. However, despite her attempts, she failed to sell matches on a cold New Year's Eve.

To find warmth and comfort from the bitter cold, she sits huddled in an alley and lit her matches one by one. This helps her to feel a bit warmer but the cold is too harsh for her to withstand it for long.

As she lights each match she sees a beautiful comforting vision. She sees a warm stove, a lavish Christmas feast and a magnificent Christmas tree adorned with lights. Her final vision is of her grandmother, the only one person who showed her love.

The little girl strikes all the matches to keep her grandmother with her and at last when she dies, both of them ascend into Heaven, a place of eternal peace and joy. A place free from harsh cold and hunger.

The next morning people find the Little Match Girl frozen to death, but there is a beautiful smile on her face. The people feel sympathetic but fail to realise that her last moments on earth were beautiful, happy moments that brought her joy.

This story highlights the poverty that people suffer from and also societal neglect. The little girl finally finds peace in death after a short life of poverty and suffering. Hans Christian Andersen's story reminds us for the humble and suffering, there is hope and eternal life where every tear will be washed away.

What do we learn?

So many of us enjoy such wonderful Christmases with loads of presents, sweets, tasty meals and new clothes. Yet there are so many people worldwide who have barely nothing and each Christmas, only highlights their poverty. Yet despite poverty, even the poorest people make attempts to celebrate this festive season in the best way they can. The uplifting Christmas spirit is always present despite poverty.

Let us never take our happy Christmas for granted but look at this festive season with gratitude and thanksgiving. This is also a time to help the poor and unfortunate in whatever way we can.

Naturopathy The Science of Nature for Healing



1. Although we like to indulge during Christmas in good food and sweets, yet try to do so in moderation. Christmas is a festive season yet moderation in our diet should always be exercised not just because of weight gain but excessive overeating leads to sickness. There are more diseases and sickness leading to death because of overindulgence in our dietary habits than even death by accidents or foul means.

2. Start your day with a smile to induce positive thoughts. Another tip is to tell a joke at breakfast time to your family members and cultivate this habit. This helps people to smile and face the day more cheerfully. There are plenty of joke books and jokes on the internet you can memorise or read out from.

3. For a cough or sore throat, take honey in a glass of warm water with a dash of lemon and ginger. Also suck on cough lozenges to help to ease symptoms. Salt water gargling has always proven quite effective.

4. Coconut oil or any oil you like is very effective for cleansing one's face. This is especially so if you wear make-up. First smooth coconut oil over your face, wait a minute then wash with your usual facewash or soap. This method called double cleansing is very effective for a clearer and brighter complexion. It is said the Koreans and Japanese were the first to practice this method.

Brain Teasers



1. I can be short and sometimes hot. When I am displayed I rarely impress. What am I?

2. I am something you do not want yet when you do have it, you do not want to lose it. What am I?

3. I have no eyes, no ears and no legs, yet I manage to wriggle around deftly on earth. Farmers like me. What am I?

4. Two big wrestlers are wrestling in a match with hundreds of spectators. One wrestler wrestled the other and the second wrestler fell on the floor and broke a leg. Yet no man got hurt. How is this possible?

5. If $a=36$, $b=45$, $c=54$, then what will be the values of d and f ?

A Christmas Lesson



The holiday season is a popular time for couples to get engaged or even married. Sara had been in three long-term relationships and

reached the age of 29. Yet none of the guys had ever proposed marriage so far.

She considered herself loyal, kind and compassionate, yet not one of her boyfriends wanted to marry her. In her relationships, she always took care of her partner and forgot her own needs. So finally, she decided to take her own needs into consideration and not mollycoddle all these men too much.

She decided to be single for a while. She built her own life, focussing on her achievements rather than chasing men. Then at the age of 31 she met Paul, a wonderful man who did not expect her to take care of him. He respected her and wanted to be with her.

She got a marriage proposal from him in a year and for the first time in her life, she felt they had a partnership, a relationship based on equality, give and take, rather than she doing all the caring and forgetting her own needs. This helped her to understand never to try to buy love by excessive attention to one's partner but to expect love and affection equally in return. A relationship should have equal give and take to be a positive and happy one.

Silent Night



In 1818, a roving band of actors were performing in towns throughout the Austrian Alps. On December 23, they arrived at Oberndorf, a village near Salzburg, where they would enact the story of

Christ's birth in the small church of St. Nicholas. Unfortunately the organ of the church was not working and would not be repaired before Christmas. Since it was not being able to be played, the actors presented the Christmas drama in a private home.

The assistant pastor, Josef Mohr, was in a meditative mood. Instead of going home straight, he took a longer path to his home. The longer path took him to a hill overlooking the village.

From the hill-top, he looked down at the peaceful snow covered village. He then recalled a poem he had written a couple of years ago about the night the angles announced the birth of the Messiah to the shepherds. He decided the words might make a good carol for the Christmas Eve service.

But there was no music. Therefore, Mohr, went to the church organist Franz Gruber and asked him to help. Gruber had only few hours to compose a melody to the words. He could play it on his guitar and the church organ was no longer needed for this carol.

That evening, the congregation heard Gruber and Mohr sing the carol with the accompaniment of a guitar and liked it.

Weeks later, the organ was repaired and Gruber

began playing the melody on the organ. The organ builder, Karl Mauracher, took copies of the music back to his own alpine village. There two well-known families of singers The Rainers and the Strassers heard it. Captivated they added the new song into their Christmas repertoire. The Strasser sisters spread the carol across northern Europe.

Today, Silent Night, is sung worldwide in more than 300 languages. Bing Crosby, Mariah Carey, Elvis Presley and other famous singers have recorded it. Bing Crosby's version is one of the best-selling singles of all time.

World News



1. The towering Christmas tree that will light up Rockefeller Centre this Christmas season arrived in Manhattan, U.S.A.
2. Three postal workers clad like elves have set off on a nearly 3000 kilometre journey from St. Nikolaus, Germany, to a small town in Finland in August of this year. They are ready to visit Santa Claus in Lapland, Northern Finland, to hand over the wish lists from kids they have collected to give him.
3. Pope Francis, who died, had given a Christmas message last year that is everlasting. It says, "On this Christmas, the beginning of the Jubilee year, I invite every person, every people and every nation to have the courage to cross the Holy Door, to become pilgrims of hope, to silence the weapons and overcome divisions. May the Jubilee be an opportunity to forgive debts, especially those that affect the poorer countries."

Wisdom Message of the Month A Time for Everything



We are often impatient. We want things quickly. We are often too impatient. Thus when our prayers are not answered quickly enough or exactly the way we want them, we feel discouraged and disheartened. Somehow, we feel cheated.

We think God does not understand.

Yet God understands only two well about waiting. In the Garden of Gethsemane, located at the foot of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, Jesus' sweat was like drops of blood, for he knew he had to suffer and die a painful death. He still had human emotions and a human body that could feel everything. So just like us, he was troubled and scared. Yet he did say those memorable words, "Father if you are willing, take

this cup from me, yet not my will but yours be done." The cup he referred to was the cup of suffering. The birth of Jesus in a humble manger because there was no room in the inn also displays that even as a babe, he had a humble beginning. He had significant visitors, namely the shepherds and the three kings from the Orient. That quiet Christmas night was so memorable that it is celebrated as Christmas Day, the most beloved feast celebrated worldwide.

Today, we are summoned this Christmas to realise, we too have to be brave enough often in our lives despite darkness and trouble that seems unending. Let our Christmas refrain be - *Father let thy will be done.*

It is hard and very difficult especially when we want answers, solutions and quick fixes. Yet only when we trust in God, we can feel peace and our anxiety can ebb slowly and give way to a peaceful heart. Christmas is not so much opening presents with glee but opening our hearts to the will of God too. Then Christmas becomes a peaceful, joyous feast where we feel united with Jesus.

That's all for this festive month. Merry Christmas! Till next month or rather next year!

Answers

Quiz

1. Silent Night.
2. Bing Crosby's White Christmas.
3. Jingle Bells.
4. White Christmas.
5. Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, The Christmas Song.

Riddle Me. 1. Bubble wrap. 2. A pair of dice. 3. Tripod or yardstick. 4. An elephant. 5. A battery.

Brain Teasers. 1. Temper. 2. A secret. 3. An earthworm. 4. Both wrestlers are women. 5. Using nine times table, d=63 and f=72



Christine DSylva has just published her 40th book, available on Kindle and in paperback on Amazon. She is currently writing another book. She enjoys playing the piano and has a YouTube channel, Christine DSylva Fusion Kitchen.



FR. AGNEL'S BLESSINGS

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL ON WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

BANDRA, MUMBAI: We always seek the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel for our intentions. We are thankful to the Venerable on our Wedding Anniversary, for all the blessings received.

- *Alton Dias*

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

VIRAR: I find solutions to my problems when I seek the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel. I find that my prayers have been answered.

- *Prince Venus Pereira*

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

GUJARAT: I am a devotee of Ven. Fr. Agnel. Whenever I pray to him, I can feel his power and presence.

- *Dadin Ben*

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

POWAI, MUMBAI: Ven. Fr. Agnel continues to be in our midst through his powerful intercession. He always keeps his devotees close to his heart and many favours are granted.

- *Dominic D'Souza*

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL FOR PETITIONS GRANTED

MIRA ROAD: I always seek the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel. I am thankful to the Venerable for answering my prayers and petitions that I have put in the box at Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra.

- *Lily D'Souza*

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS GRANTED

GUJARAT: I am thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for answering my prayers and blessing me and my family always.

- *Saroj Ben Yashwantlal*

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

NASHIK: I am one among thousands of devotees who have benefitted through the powerful intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel. Everything is possible with our Lord's help.

- *Usha Ahire*

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

VASAI: Devotees flock to Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra, in faith. Having taken the Holy Water, I have found an improvement in my ailments. I would like to give thanks to Ven. Fr. Agnel for his kind intercession and for all the blessings received.

- *Sherley Monteiro*

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

NALLASOPARA: On visiting Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra, I took a small packet of mud packed from Ven. Fr. Agnelo's grave in Goa. My body aches and pains have disappeared after applying the holy mud on the affected areas.

- *Victor Almeida*

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

MUMBAI: I would like to thank Ven. Fr. Agnel for his intercession and for the favours received.

- *Abee Simoes*

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

VILE PARLE, MUMBAI: I am keeping good health through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel. My faith in the Venerable has increased greatly. I pray that he is canonised as a saint soon.

- *Valerian Fernandes*

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

MAHIM, MUMBAI: I am blessed to be able to visit Fr. Agnel Ashram whenever I can. I find it to be a deep spiritual experience and can feel God's power there.

- *Philomena D'Souza*

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

BORIVALI, MUMBAI: We always seek the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel to be successful in whatever we do.

- *Dr. Richard & Smita Rodrigues*

OUT OF THEIR BOUNTY

Praveen Srivastava	Mumbai	47000	Fransquinha Fernandes	Mumbai	2500	Ghanshyan Patel	Mumbai	1000
Neha Naik	Palghar	25000	Rabia Khan	Mumbai	2500	Sangita Patel	Mumbai	1000
Nita Pereira	Mumbai	22000	Mahesh Sawant	Mumbai	2100	Jinal Patel	Mumbai	1000
Franco Rodrigues	Mumbai	20000	Isabel Hendricks	Tamil Nadu	2002	Flemy Thekketh	Kerala	1000
Dinaz Harinarain Singh	Telangana	16000	Heather Hyrapiet	Kolkata	2000	Mary Antony	Kerala	1000
Zubin Bharucha	Palghar	15000	A.R. Elavia	Mumbai	2000	Selvaraj Mudliar	Mumbai	1000
Mourice Fargose	Palghar	15000	Armaity Kelawalla	Mumbai	2000	Suzana Fernandes	Mumbai	1000
Manoj Porathur	Mumbai	14600	Dicky Alphonso	Mumbai	2000	Edwin Pereira	Mumbai	1000
Carl Sequeira	Mumbai	14000	Rija Francis	Kerala	2000	Salvador D'Souza	Mumbai	1000
Cherie Saldanha	Mumbai	12000	Jaison Chackochen	Kerala	2000	Royston Pereira	Gujarat	1000
Franklin J. Nadar	Mumbai	12000	Lynette D'Cruz	Mumbai	2000	Aditi Doshi	Mumbai	1000
Blaise Fernandes	Mumbai	12000	Veena Pachchigar	Gujarat	2000	Ankit Patel	Mumbai	1000
Agnelo D'Souza	Palghar	10000	Donald Aranha	Mumbai	2000	Ghanshyan Patel	Mumbai	1000
Simon Colaco	India	10000	Savia Gonsalves	Mumbai	2000	Sangita Patel	Mumbai	1000
Hemshree Parmar	Gujarat	10000	Agnel Selvan	Mumbai	2000	Jinal Patel	Mumbai	1000
George Chelliampurath	Mumbai	10000	Shaun Fernandes	Mumbai	2000	Trupti Gandhi	Mumbai	1000
Namrata Biyawat	Mumbai	10000	Anacleto Pereira	Gujarat	2000	Lourdes Fernandes	Mumbai	1000
Gnanashekaran Pandian	Mumbai	10000	Deuglas Guedes	Gujarat	2000	Rajesri Sarode	Mumbai	1000
Sebastian Gonsalves	Mumbai	10000	Rupa Chirayath	Palghar	2000	Siddarth Noronha	Mumbai	1000
Benoy Varghese	Thane	10000	Nikitha Anthony	Mumbai	2000	Sairus Rangoonwala	Mumbai	900
Faustina Fernandes	Mumbai	10000	Rapheal Anthony	Mumbai	2000	Marian D'Souza	Mumbai	701
Raju Hatkar	Mumbai	10000	Attely Kuttikadan	Mumbai	2000	Canute D'Souza	Chennai	600
Vinod Shah	Mumbai	10000	Joseph Sequeira	Mumbai	2000	Neeta Kulkarni	Pune	551
Melini D'Souza	Mumbai	10000	Donald Aranha	Mumbai	2000	Mathew Kurian	Bangalore	501
Royster D'Souza	Mumbai	6000	Niharika Mekwan	Gujarat	2000	Dolrina Ferreira	Palghar	500
Warren Fernandes/Philo	Mumbai	6000	Jordan Noronha	Mumbai	2000	Rani/Priya Sebastian	Kerala	500
Shilpa Gonsalves	Mumbai	5600	Joshua & Shalom Mendes	Mumbai	2000	R.S. Raju/Amrith Raj	Chennai	500
Subramaniam R.	Mumbai	5250	Stefan Desouza	Mumbai	2000	Dinesh Parmar	Gujarat	500
Akshay Sonawane	Thane	5000	John Fernandes	Mumbai	2000	Agnella Abraham	Mumbai	500
Kalpana Sonawane	Thane	5000	Arun Dantes	Mumbai	2000	Anthony Thomas	Mumbai	500
Catherine Fobler	Canada	5000	Chris Dantes	Mumbai	2000	Dorety Gonsalves	Palghar	500
Joy Cusher	Palghar	5000	Rachel Dantes	Mumbai	2000	Neela Macwan	Gujarat	500
Jayant Ashar	Mumbai	5000	Anita Dantes	Mumbai	2000	Niranjan Amolik	Maharashtra	500
Cynthia Miranda	Mumbai	5000	Shah Joseph/Bindu Shah	Kerala	2000	Sicily Thomas	Gujarat	500
Ami Jambusaria	Mumbai	5000	Samaira Noronha	Mumbai	2000	Hilda Fernandes	Mumbai	500
Anthony Rodrigues	Mumbai	5000	Rohit Noronha	Mumbai	2000	Conrad Soares	Mumbai	500
Saurav Mukherjee	Haryana	5000	Nicholas Khristi	Australia	1500	Philip Varghese	Mumbai	500
Blessy/Theo Parmar	Mumbai	5000	Geeta Pillai	Gujarat	1500	Joseph Chacko	Mumbai	500
Neha Suryawanshi	Pune	5000	Arun Jadhav	Kolhapur	1500	Dipali Pandya	Mumbai	500
Sunil Rane	Palghar	5000	Nikhil Atram	Mumbai	1500	Edward Mathew	Mumbai	500
Shreya Rane	Palghar	5000	Laxmi Sawant	Mumbai	1100	Priya Vora	Mumbai	500
Susan Condillac	Mumbai	4000	Parvati Shingre	Mumbai	1100	John Thomas	Kerala	500
Punam Bajaj	Mumbai	4000	Kimaya Subramaniam	Mumbai	1001	Pratima Patwardhan	Pune	400
Falguni Solanki	Mumbai	4000	Paresh Thakkar	Thane	1000	K. Alphonsa Nirmala	Kerala	300
Marian D'Souza	Mumbai	3778	Preet Thakkar	Thane	1000	William Pereira	Chikmagalur	300
Techno Products	Chennai	3000	Yaksh Thakkar	Thane	1000	Hiren Gala	Thane	300
Joseph Correia	Mumbai	3000	Gev Kelawalla	Mumbai	1000	Mehernoz Kavina	Mumbai	202
Louis D'Souza	Mumbai	3000	Fittech Industries	Mumbai	1000	P. Fernandes	Gujarat	200
Theresa Porathur	Mumbai	2600	Ankit Patel	Mumbai	1000	Mahendra Shah	Mumbai	100

BOB'S BANTER

by Robert Clements

A Broken Voice for Christmas..!

"Now that you've retired ma what do you plan to do?" asked her children as she came back from work, the last day at the office.

"Join the church choir!" exclaimed the mother.

"But you don't know how to sing ma!" they all said in dismay.

"Ah my children but I have much to sing about! When your father passed on, the Lord took over and I have a song to sing for the comfort He gave. When I was jobless and penniless, He gave me the will to succeed and I want to praise Him! Oh children now that I have the time, I want to sing for Him and what better time than Christmas!"

The choir conductor looked at her doubtfully, "I like your enthusiasm," he said, "but here we need voices!"

"Ah that I have my son, that I have! A voice that will glorify the Lord's name; that will shout and bring the rafters down! That will rise above all others! And..."

looked at her and saw her sadness, "Ma," they asked, "What happened?"

"I don't have a voice to sing!"

"Of course you do!"

"I failed the voice test!"

Her children, no more little, all settled in good professions because of her looked at each other and smiled, "Ma," they said and strangely in unison, "We'll arrange a concert for you! Just family! You write your carols of praise to the God who stood by you, we'll come with our families and hear you sing!"

That Christmas as the choir conducted by their conductor sang in the old church, the people felt there was something missing, and at night as the conductor prayed his prayers, he asked, "What was missing today, Heavenly Father?"

"Ah!" said the Heavenly Father, "We were all down the road listening to the woman with the broken



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"And what?" asked the choir conductor worriedly.

"And it's Christmas time! What better time than now to sing praises to the little babe in the manger about that first Christmas after my Ben died, no money for sweets, I cried to Him above, the bell rang and the neighbours walked in with the most delicious cakes. I remember..."

"Yes, yes," said the choir conductor irritably, "But do you have a voice?"

"A voice that will bring the roof down with praise and thanksgiving!"

The choir conductor looked fearfully at the roof of the old church. "We will have to do a voice test!" he said and walked to the piano. "Now sing the scales with me, will you!"

She went home forlorn, her children no more little,

voice, I and all my angels!"

"But she has no voice!"

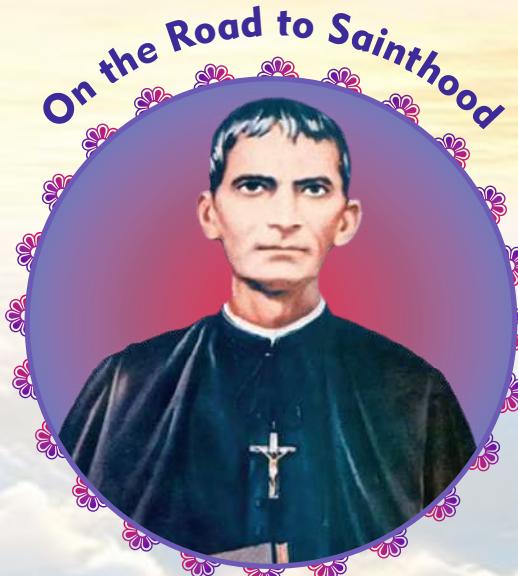
"A voice rising from a thankful heart my son is worth a million that come from the throats of professional singers! Words rushing out in praise, my son, are like pearls to those composed by poets and lyricists!"

Her children were surprised to see the conductor at their home the next morning,

"Join the choir," he whispered to her, "It's voices like yours, that gladdens God's heart at Christmas..."

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

98TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF VEN. FR. AGNELO D'SOUZA, AT FR. AGNEL ASHRAM, BANDRA ON 20TH NOVEMBER, 2025.



Ven. Fr. Agnelo D'Souza

**Most Rev. Theodore Mascarenhas, Bishop of Daltonganj,
Jharkhand, was the Main Celebrant.**



Rhythm of Dance: The children of Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School & Jr. College, Ambernath, strike a pose of prayer and worship.



Symphony of Music: The trained Balbhavan boys of Bandra displaying their musical prowess.



At the Altar: Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas (centre), Rev. Fr. Saturnino Almeida, General Councillor (left) and Fr. Valerian D'Souza, Vice Chairman, Agnel Region (right).



All Smiles: Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas with the Balbhavan boys.

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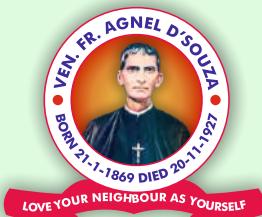
**May Joy be your gift at Christmas and may Faith,
Hope and Love be your treasures in the New Year 2026!**



MERRY
CHRISTMAS



**Season's Greetings from Fr. Agnel Ashram Community
and Balbhavan Children**



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