



FR. AGNEL

ASHRAM NEWS

February 2025



LOVE WAS GOD'S PLAN

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

MY EASTER GIFT 2025

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MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL SUPERIOR



We began the year 2025 celebrating the 156th Birth Anniversary of Ven. Fr. Agnelo D'Souza with much gusto on 21st January. Let us be inspired by his values of simple living and high thinking. A member of the Society of Pilar, he devoted his entire life to the service of the marginalised.

This World Cancer Day on 4th February, let us be fully aware of the causes of cancer, take adequate precautions, lead an active lifestyle and go in for regular health check-ups.

On 11th February, on the World Day of the Sick, it's time to visit our sick brethren and bring a smile to their faces. It could be our own ailing parents or grandparents, a relative, friend, neighbour, colleague or those in hospitals, nursing care centres or old age homes. For as Lord Jesus said, "Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you did it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

While we celebrate the International Day of Women and Girls in Science on 11th February, we recognize the role of women and girls in science, as agents of change. Therefore, the day focuses on achieving gender equality and empowerment for an even brighter future.

Marie Curie, a renowned physicist and chemist who conducted pioneering research on radioactivity, was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize, the first person to win a Nobel Prize twice, and the only person to win a Nobel Prize in two scientific fields. Way back in 1906, she was the first woman to become a professor at the University of Paris. The Nobel laureate inspires women to this day.

It's February and we delight in God's divine nature of love. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). So this Valentine's Day, let us spend quality time with our loved one and precious moments together.

Moving on to our Agnel Centres, a host of engrossing events kick-started last month at our educational institutes across India and will continue during the year. It fosters teamwork, careful planning right down to the minutest detail and proper execution.

Let us continue to stay strong, focused and healthy during 2025!

- Fr. Bento Rodrigues

“THE SPIRIT BLOWS WHERE IT WILLS...”

-Fr. Fio Mascarenhas, SJ

Jesus declared, “*The spirit blows where it wills ...so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit*” (Jn.3:8). This truth is exemplified by many souls whom we perhaps often mistakenly label “non-Christian.” But with sovereign divine freedom, the Spirit blows where God wills, unfettered by our human limitations of creed, colour, or nation.

Such a masterpiece of the Spirit's workmanship was a Sikh girl called Gitanjali Ghei, who died of cancer at the age of sixteen in Mumbai in 1977. (Her life-story and the poems she penned during her fatal illness have been immortalized in *The Gitanjali Album*, edited by Fr. P. Divarkar, SJ and published in 1992 by the Gujarat Sahitya Prakash. Quotations from this book are indicated below by the page numbers.)

Gitanjali's prayer-poems are rich in wisdom and maturity, and one marvels that a mere girl, terminally ill with cancer, on the verge of death, suffering from pain, insomnia and failing eye-sight, should write so profoundly! She truly was a “Spirit-filled and Spirit-led Pilgrim of Hope.”

Her parents named her after Tagore's great work of poetry, *Gitanjali*, which means, “a song-offering.” And she understood, even at a tender age, that a person's name signified her vocation and mission, and she felt the burden of responsibility to live up to it. Hence she would pray: “*Oh! help me God/I so live that.../I live up to that name*”(p.5).

She did live up to her name, heroically, as she made her whole life, however short, a beautiful “sacrifice of praise,” an “offering of song” to God:

“Dear God/Please hear my prayer/Give me the strength/To accept your will.../If you think it fit/To take me/Then please give/Strength and courage/To those who love me/And help me/Not to rail in self-pity/Asking why?/But to have faith/And to know that.../Your will is best./Help me!/Oh,

please help me/To trust you/Not from fear but/Because of Love and Faith”(p.21).

Gitanjali's life was built on the firm rock of faith in God, and total surrender to his will. We can see here the action of the Holy Spirit-Paraclete, who formed her in obedience to God's “*inscrutable ways and unsearchable judgements.*” Not unlike Mary who was troubled by the angel's words, but with innocent courage opened herself completely to God's plan for her life – so too, Gitanjali felt troubled about her illness, but with

courage she too said a faithful “yes” to God:

“With past and present/in view,/I weigh the joys and/the sorrows .../in cue./And when I think of/His kindness to me,/in the years/gone by,/my head hangs/in shame indeed/for asking Him:/Why? God, why.../I have at length/accepted His will/and am resigned to/my fate/I have given Him/all my trust and faith”(p.23).

Even whilst she was undergoing radiation-treatment, daily blood-transfusions, tubes inserted into her small body already covered with bed-sores, and hands tied down because of the drips, she nevertheless continued to write about the rainbow that would appear after the rain:

“I trust you still/Oh my dear, dear God/Though the sorrows/Keep falling/Like the rain drops/... I trust Thee/Yet.../This mighty/Unknown/Sea of death/Does pass a shudder/ Through me I confess/I sway at the thought of it/But dear God/Your nearness holds me/In a grip/Isn't it amazing/For I trust you, Still”(p.37).

Her life, like that of Catholic teenager Carlo Acutis, and of millions of young Saints, was indeed a “pilgrimage of hope,” for in “*the dim light of faith*” she often had to “hope against hope” that God would not fail her. She learnt to say: “*If that's*



how you want/'**THY WILL BE DONE**'. She acknowledged God's presence in her poems: *"Your love picks me up/And gives me strength/To face each new day/And courage to overcome/Anguish and pain"*(p.51).

Gitanjali was not a stoic, she too experienced fear at the prospect of having to leave this world. Yet, she was also an extraordinary girl of faith, and she overcame temptations to fear death by entrusting herself to God: *"I am not going to say I am not afraid to die, because that would not be truthful. But I can truthfully say this much, that I am completely submitted. If it is His will that I die, I will"* (p.97). Gitanjali's acceptance of her imminent death was not an act of weakness but of strength of character:

"I have a life-threatening disease, but it's not going to interfere with my life, until ...it kills me. It is not easy, but, I am trying my best to accept His will... I hate to fall by the wayside and wait to be picked up by death. No, never! I'd never let death do that to me. I'm a great believer in attitude – your attitude can either make you or break you"(p.88).

Gitanjali explains later: *"I'm putting up a good fight. ...I do not encourage death to distort my thinking ...Having to be brave is not easy, nor is it an overnight effect, one has to work on it, it is a gradual process. For me, it did not come easy, but I made it happen, I had to ...not just for the love of life, but for all those whom I love"*(p.93).

Her mother recalls that "she was always writing. I never knew what, except that once she showed me some beautiful lines and I asked, 'Where did you copy it from?' That really put her out. 'Why should I copy from anywhere!' she asked; and thereafter stopped showing me what she wrote" (p.104).

Gitanjali loved to watch and enjoy the beauty of nature. She prayed often to God to make her well again so that she could go back to school and join her friends:

*"In vain I beg, in vain I implore/Oh! God please make me well soon/And let me go back to school/I miss my friends and all the fun./I shall wait and see/But will beg no more/Neither for my sake nor/For my mother's./If that's how you wish.../'**THY WILL BE DONE**'."*(p.9).

"This constant endless aggravating pain/Oh please God/Let me not be swept off/In torrents of self-pity.../I have exhausted/My store of endurance/Before my faith too fails

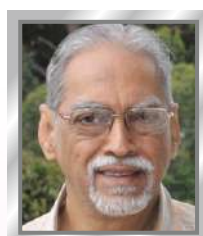
me/And I go insane/Please God have mercy upon me/And take me away"(p.23).

God did take her home when she was just "sweet sixteen," and is now using her poems and life-story to inspire and encourage many people. Although very young when she died, her spirituality was of a very high calibre, and no trials were able to quench the flame of faith enkindled in her by the Holy Spirit. She is a good example of those Karl Rahner (the famous Vat II theologian) called "Anonymous Christians."

The life of Gitanjali, a Sikh by religion, illustrates an important teaching of the Second Vatican Council: ***"All this holds true not for Christians only, but also for all men and women of goodwill in whose hearts grace is active invisibly. For since Christ died for all, and since all are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery."***

Christ died for her, and his Spirit worked in her. Her strength and peace in suffering were born out of her very intimate relationship with God, and her prayer life was the power-house which renewed and refreshed her spirit. She advised prayer for her readers also: *"Pray to God...Prayer is a great lighthouse of hope"*(p.96). Through her prayer, the Spirit comforted her with the conviction that she was precious to God: *"Regardless of my sorry state/I'm still happy the way I am/For in my mind I think/ perhaps I am important to HIM..."*(p.97).

In conclusion, let us remember how in the Acts of the Apostles (10:34) St Peter has already confirmed, "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who reveres him and does what is right is acceptable to him!" So may the Holy Spirit, who *"blows where it wills,"* blow more strongly still in this Jubilee Holy Year, and find willing and open hearts among both, the members of the Body of Christ, and in People of Other Faiths – thus God, who ***"desires all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth,"*** will be glorified even more! Amen!



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 is on 5th April, 2025. His contact: frfiomas@gmail.com

ST. VALENTINE – A MAN WHO CELEBRATED LOVE

-Fr. Eusebio Gomes, SFX

The Martyrology of Catholic saints features great saints who have lived ordinary lives with extraordinary feats. They laid their lives shedding blood to give witness to their Master Jesus Christ. One among them is a third century Roman martyr saint, an ebullient person whose life story is fascinating. He is St. Valentine who was born in 226 in Terni, Italy. He was a physician who distinguished himself during the persecution of Emperor Claudius II by helping numerous Christians to escape and by ministering to those in prison. He was at length apprehended, severely beaten with clubs and beheaded on 14th February 269 in Rome. He was buried in a catacomb about half a mile outside the city gate.

Over the years, St. Valentine has come to be regarded as the patron of lovers, young and old alike. Two curious customs have been observed in the Middle Ages in connection with the feast of this saint. The 'Puis d'Amour', a kind of songfest and competition for troubadours and romantic minstrels was held on his feast day. Another custom that prevails universally is the practice of sending the 'Valentine's Day' greetings and gifts, probably stemming from the belief that it marked the commencement of the mating season for birds.

The 8th century Gelasian Sacramentary recorded the celebration of the Feast of Saint Valentine on February 14. The day became associated with romantic love in the 14th and 15th centuries, when notions of courtly love flourished, apparently by association with the 'lovebirds' of early spring. There are many origins to Valentine's Day. However, the most popular legend says that Valentine's Day originated from the Roman festival of Lupercalia, held in mid-February. It was celebrated during the onset of spring, wherein women were paired with men through a lottery. It was Pope Gelasius I who replaced this festival with St. Valentine's Day. It was celebrated as the day of romance for over a period of time from about the 14th century.

Another legend says that St. Valentine was executed on February 14 as a punishment for performing secret marriages to save the husbands from going to war, as they were banned by Roman Emperor Claudius II. While under house arrest of Judge

Asterius, and discussing his faith with him, Valentine was discussing the validity of Jesus. The judge put Valentine to the test and brought to him the judge's adopted blind daughter Julia. If Valentine succeeded in restoring the girl's sight, Asterius would do whatever he asked. Valentine, praying to God, laid his hands on her eyes and the child's vision was restored.

Valentine was later arrested again for continuing to evangelise. He was sent to the Prefect of Rome, Emperor Claudius II. Claudius took a liking to him until Valentine tried to convince Claudius to embrace Christianity. Claudius refused and condemned Valentine to death, commanding that Valentine either renounce his faith or he would be beaten with clubs and beheaded. Valentine refused and was executed. While in prison he had many lovely conversations with Julia whom he loved so much and who fed him with many delicious meals. She kept him company through the barred door. It was a natural love between both of them. An embellishment to this account states that before his execution, St. Valentine wrote a letter to Julia signed "From your Valentine", which is said to have inspired today's

romantic missives. She became very emotional by reading the letter.

Many of the couples wanted him to bless their marriages even while he was imprisoned and he had to do it secretly. He is the patron saint of lovers. The day is celebrated especially by the lovers who renew their love for each other on this auspicious day. Many couples marry on Valentine's Day which symbolises love, devotion, commitment and fidelity. This day serves as a reminder to cherish and celebrate the most beautiful feeling we experience - LOVE.

Let us celebrate this LOVE in honour of St. Valentine.



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THE 2025 JUBILEE YEAR OF HOPE

- Leon Bent

The 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope is a Catholic Holy Year that took place in Rome, Vatican City, and across Italy, the Universal Church, the Dioceses of India, and in our own Archdiocese of Bombay. The year began on Christmas Eve, 2024 and will end on January 6, 2026. The theme of the Jubilee is "Pilgrims of Hope," and is intended to promote peace-building in a world facing damage to the ecosystem, climate change, the rampant rise of oligarchies in many countries across the globe and incessant warring nations.



The Significance of the Holy Door

The Holy Door is deemed 'Holy' since it calls all those who enter through it to walk in holiness of life. In the footsteps of the Pope, during the singing of the Jubilee hymn, representatives of the entire People of God crossed its threshold, as a prelude to the countless pilgrims of hope from every country and language who will visit St. Peter's Basilica and celebrate the mysteries of salvation during the Holy Year.

"During the Holy Year," the Pope prayed, "may the light of Christian hope illumine every man and woman, as a message of God's love addressed to all! And may the Church bear faithful witness to this message in every part of the world!"

The Jubilee Year is a time for celebration and spiritual renewal, and millions of pilgrims are expected to visit Rome. The Pope granted plenary indulgence to pilgrims on December 24, 2024, when he opened the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica. The Holy Door will close on January 6, 2026, marking the end of the Jubilee.

The Vatican has said that the Jubilee is an opportunity to renew hope in the face of uncertainty about the future. The Vatican also says that hope is born of love, and that the Christian life is a journey that requires moments of intensity to sustain hope.

At the dawn of this New Year given to us by our heavenly Father, a year of Jubilee in the spirit of hope, I offer heartfelt good wishes of peace to every man and woman. I think especially of those who are

downtrodden, burdened by their past mistakes, oppressed by the judgement of others and incapable of perceiving even a glimmer of hope for their own lives. Upon everyone I invoke hope and peace, for this is a Year of Grace born of the Heart of the Redeemer! (Pope Francis).

The Jubilee Year 2025 Opens Doors to the Father

Throughout this year, the Catholic Church celebrates the Jubilee, an event that fills hearts with hope. The "jubilee" recalls an ancient Jewish practice, when, every forty-ninth year, the sound of a ram's horn (in Hebrew, *jobel*) would proclaim a year of forgiveness and freedom for the entire people (cf. Lev. 25:10). This solemn proclamation was meant to echo throughout the land (cf. Lev. 25:9) and to restore God's justice in every aspect of life: In the use of the land, in the possession of goods and in relationships with others, above all the poor and the dispossessed, the lonely and the disease-ridden. The blowing of the horn reminded the entire people, rich and poor alike, that no one comes into this world doomed to oppression: all of us are brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of the same Father, born to live in freedom, in accordance with the Lord's will (cf. Lev. 25:17, 25, 43, 46, 55).

Once we lose sight of our relationship to the Father, we begin to cherish the illusion that, our relationships with others can be governed by a logic of exploitation and oppression, where might makes right. Like the elites at the time of Jesus, who profited from the suffering of the poor, so today, in our interconnected global village, the international

system, unless it is inspired by a spirit of solidarity and interdependence, gives rise to injustices, aggravated by corruption, which leave the poorer countries trapped. A mentality that exploits the indebted can serve as a shorthand description of the present “debt crisis” that, weighs upon a number of countries, above all in the global South.

The Goal of Peace

Those who take up these proposals and set out on the journey of hope will surely glimpse the dawn of the greatly desired goal of peace. The Psalmist promises us that “steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss” (Ps. 85:10). When I divest myself of the weapon of credit and restore the path of hope to one of my brothers or sisters, I contribute to the restoration of God's justice on this earth and, with that person, I advance towards the goal of peace. As Saint John XXIII observed, true peace can be born only from a heart “disarmed” of anxiety and the fear of war.

May 2025 be a year in which peace flourishes! A true and lasting peace that goes beyond quibbling over the details of agreements and human compromises. May we seek the true peace that is granted by God to hearts disarmed: hearts not set on calculating what is mine and what is yours; hearts that turn selfishness into readiness to reach out to others; hearts that see themselves as indebted to God and thus prepared to forgive the debts that oppress others; hearts that replace anxiety about the future with the hope that, every individual can be a resource for the building of a better world.

Disarming hearts is a job for everyone, great and small, rich and poor alike. At times, something quite simple will do, such as “a smile, a small gesture of friendship, a kind look, a ready ear, a good deed.” With such gestures, we progress towards the goal of peace. We will arrive all the more quickly if, in the course of journeying alongside our brothers and sisters, we discover that we have changed from the time we first set out. Peace does not only come with the end of wars, but with the dawn of a new world, a world in which we realize that we are different, closer and more fraternal than we ever thought possible.

Lord, grant us your peace! This is my prayer to God as I now offer my cordial good wishes for the New Year to the Heads of State and Government, to the leaders of International Organizations, to the leaders of the various religions and to every person of goodwill (Pope Francis).

Hope is something our world lacks more and more with each passing year. Natural disasters and

catastrophes sweep in without a moment's warning and shake our normal life. Emptiness hides behind fake “façade” that, only emerge when desperation results in the irreversible. Even as believers, we inevitably face these things. Recently, a Christian friend of mine - a twenty-year-old young woman - lost her life in a devastating car accident. Mumbai and India, at large, have also been shaken by several teen and youth suicides, within months.

“In light of this, celebrating *anything* feels hollow. Brittle. But in Easter, there is hope” (Pope Francis). In like manner will a Christian find hope in the Jubilee Year, 2025.

Hope in the Catholic Church

In Catholicism, hope is a theological virtue that, is the desire for eternal life and the Kingdom of Heaven. It is a supernatural virtue that comes from God and is a disposition to do good. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Christian hope is “the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit” (CCC 1817).

Not in this life, which will doubtless continue to be infused with raw tragedies, but in a future one. When we live with hearts fixed on eternity, not denying present challenges, but denying the world's status quo - that the present is the sum of all parts - we find hope.

Such a hope enabled Dietrich Bonhoeffer to withstand insurmountable circumstances during a horrific time in history. A German pastor during WWII, Dietrich was determined to do his part to aid the downfall of Adolf Hitler. Working as a double agent on behalf of the resistance, his activities soon came under suspicion. Taken into custody and interrogated, he spent eighteen months in a Berlin military prison. In spite of his circumstances, he continued to hold out hope that, once the Nazi regime was overthrown, he'd be released. He encouraged fellow prisoners, worked on a book, and wrote letters to his family and fiancée.

Then came July 20, 1944. Claus von Stauffenberg's assassination attempt on Hitler ended in failure. After discovering the plots against him, Hitler ordered the extermination of all conspirators. When Dietrich heard this news, he knew he'd likely share their fate. Execution!

Instead of lapsing into despair, as many would be tempted to do, Dietrich lived out his final months fearless, faithful, and caring for others. On the

morning of April 9, 1945, Dietrich's life ended at Flossenbürg concentration camp. The day before, he passed on a final message to a fellow prisoner, "This is the end - for me, the beginning of life!"

This is the hope we celebrate at Easter. Because Jesus Christ shed His blood on the Cross, suffering excruciating separation from His Father, we have an eternal future with Him in heaven. It means my friend is now with God Himself in a realm too glorious for the human mind to comprehend. It means, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer so poignantly stated, that the end of a Christian's earthly life, is really the beginning of a new, better, greater life.

Hope in Hopelessness

In the midst of losses and challenges, I'm celebrating Easter with joy in my heart. Christ is victor over the grave. He is triumphant over everything we face in this life, not because He fixes it all, but because He promises us something better - eternal bliss with Him.

"I believe that God, both, can and will bring good out of evil," Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Pastor, Spy, Eliminator," is swept into the epicentre of a deadly plot to assassinate Hitler, wrote from a Nazi prison in 1943.

Adjusting to life in his cell, which offered little

natural light, was extraordinarily difficult. Bonhoeffer, like the disciples in Acts, drew deeply from his faith:

"I believe God will give us all the power we need to resist in all time of distress. But he never gives it in advance, lest we should rely upon ourselves and not on him alone. A faith as strong as this should allay all our fears for the future."

What Hope really is!

Christian hope is the confident expectation of what God has promised, and is based on the strength of God's faithfulness. It is a theological virtue in the Christian tradition, and is a combination of the desire for something and the expectation of receiving it. Hope is the final frontier of a person's life. If hope is lost, all is lost!



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.



There is no Joy Greater than the Joy of GIVING

Veronica Antony Fernandes, Porvorim, Goa

Kindly accept a donation in cheque of Rs. 2000, as a token of love for the well-being of Balbhavan boys.

A.V. Francis, Chennai

I have offered a small donation by cheque of Rs. 500 for all the services given to Balbhavan boys in Fr. Agnel Ashram. They are being well-cared for.

Leo Menezes, Mangalore

I am happy to donate Rs. 2000 by cheque as a festive gift for the Balbhavan boys.

M.J. Sheth, Mumbai

I have donated an amount of Rs. 1001 via cheque towards food, education, stationery, and essentials for children at Balbhavan. They are also being imparted skills in music, sports, and other activities.

Hazel Perpetual D'Souza, Andheri

I have transferred an amount of Rs. 5000 via NEFT as sponsorship for two Balbhavan boys. It gives me immense joy to see them being brought up with the right values by the Fr. Agnel Ashram Fathers.

Raj C Pachickara / Neena, Kochi

I am trying to help the Balbhavan boys in a small way. Please accept my monthly support of Rs. 800 towards a child at Fr. Agnel Ashram.

Bhavna Barot, Andheri

I have remitted an amount of Rs. 25,000 via EDC for fulfilling all the required needs of Balbhavan boys. They are growing up well into empowered citizens of tomorrow.

Agnel (Cruz) Bardeskar, Thane

I am donating an amount of Rs. 5000 for Balbhavan as a thanksgiving offering for the favours received.

VALENTINE'S DAY: THE TRUE ESSENCE

-Tancia Pires

Love, chocolates, red roses, expensive gifts, date nights at fancy restaurants or staycations at luxurious resorts, and the list goes on and on... when we think of February or Valentine's Day celebrations. While the day has evolved into a global celebration of hollow/superficial love, its roots lie in a deeper and more meaningful legacy of sacrifice, compassion, and divine love.

St. Valentine: The man himself

Dating back to the 3rd century, St. Valentine was a Roman clergyman during the reign of Roman Emperor Claudius II, who persecuted and tortured Christians. At this juncture, St. Valentine strived zealously to uphold Christian values. His mission revolved around defending the sanctity of marriage, supporting persecuted Christians, and spreading the message of God's love. However, he was eventually arrested for his Christian activities. Refusing to renounce his faith or deny Christ, he was sentenced to death and martyred on February 14th, around 269 AD. Though long gone, his legacy still lingers on and is celebrated globally as Valentine's Day.

Love: the deeper meaning

If Valentine's Day commemorates the saint who was martyred for the love of God, his values, and his faith, are we really celebrating this day correctly? According to Christian theology, there are various forms of love. The highest being, **Agape** Love: God's unconditional love for humanity and His call to humans to emulate it. As seen in the scriptures, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"* (Jn 3:16).

Another type is **Philia**: The affectionate brotherly or friendly love shared between friends. Or **Storge**: the familial love shared between family members and siblings. It stands for loyalty, companionship, and kindness. **Eros** or romantic/passionate love is the kind that is most often celebrated during this month. It involves physical and emotional attraction, marital bond, and intimacy. Finally, the

most neglected form of love, **Theophillia**, is the reciprocal love between God and man. It is characterized by worship, devotion, and obedience to His will. As we find in Matthew 22:37: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."* Valentine's Day no longer should belong to only couples; it's meant to commemorate and nurture the relationships we have with God, family, neighbours, friends, and humanity at large.

The week-long trend with a twist

Valentine's Day currently, has become a week-long celebration starting on 7th February as Rose Day and ending on 14th Feb as the grand Valentine's Day. Let's try to give this week a makeover to celebrate it rightfully, according to St. Valentine's vision and legacy.

7th Feb – Rose Day

The rose symbolizes Christ's sacrificial love, as seen in the red rose, often associated with His blood shed for humanity.

This day can serve as a reminder to embrace the beauty of love rooted in sacrifice and selflessness, just as St. Valentine did in his ministry. While in prison for his faith, St. Valentine reportedly healed a jailer's blind daughter and wrote her a farewell note signed "Your Valentine," symbolizing love that is selfless and sacrificial. Let us, too, perform an act of kindness and sacrifice, perhaps by being selfless and charitable towards those in need and encouraging others to do the same.

8th Feb – Propose Day

In this era of situationships, breadcrumbing, benching, and so on.... True commitment and everlasting love seem like a dream. Propose Day, when considered in a deeper and more meaningful context, can be reimagined as a day to propose to your fiancé for marriage; propose to your spouse to renew marriage vows, and live by them wholeheartedly; propose to mend a broken relationship through heartfelt reconciliation; propose rejuvenating a long-lost friendship by forgiving past grievances. It is an opportunity to



celebrate all forms of proposals rooted in love, faith, and commitment.

9th Feb – Chocolate Day

Chocolate, a symbol of sweetness, can represent the joy and delight of living in God's love and the love of our near and dear ones. Share chocolate as a token of gratitude to your loved one who sweetens your life just by their cheerful presence. At the same time, share moments of laughter, warmth, and understanding with those you hold dear, especially your spouse/partner. One could also symbolically spread the sweetness of the Gospel to others, just as St. Valentine spread the message of love even in adversity. Maybe even distribute chocolates to children in an orphanage, on the streets, or neighbouring slums.

10th Feb – Teddy Day

Teddies or teddy bears are symbols of comfort and care. Be the teddy your spouse deserves: soft, cuddly, and reassuring. While doing so, let this day also remind us of Christ's comforting presence in our lives (Matthew 11:28). Offer someone the gift of your presence - be someone's safe space, be their rock in times of need - whether through prayers, kind words, or deeds - just as St. Valentine supported and comforted those who sought his help. One may gift toys to homeless kids or anything useful to an elderly individual in a home-for-the-aged as a symbol of care and compassion.

11th Feb – Promise Day

"The Lord is faithful to all His promises and loving toward all He has made" (Psalm 145:13). This could be a day to reflect on the eternal promises of God, such as His covenant of love and salvation, and promise to spend more time in prayer. Promises are not just words but the quiet, steady foundations of trust. The couples can work on the loopholes in their relationship and promise to be better for each other. Let's promise to listen, forgive, or love others unconditionally. Let us promise ourselves not to procrastinate, learn a new skill, improve our lifestyle, work on our vices, etc. Happiness lies in the fulfilment of the promises we make.

12th Feb – Hug Day

Embrace that 'someone special' with sincerity, letting them feel the warmth of your care and the unspoken assurance that they are never alone. On this day, one may also extend a "spiritual hug" by reconciling with someone, offering forgiveness, or simply showing warmth and affection, emulating Christ's inclusivity and unconditional love.

13th Feb – Kiss Day

A kiss is a way of saying "you are cherished." It's not

just about romance but the deep affection that words may fail to capture. A kiss can also signify peace and blessing (Romans 16:16). Use this day to focus on spreading love, peace, and blessings in your relationships. Your spouse deserves a passionate kiss of love; your children deserve a kiss of compassion; your parents deserve a kiss of reassurance; and your loved ones deserve a kiss of gratitude. Let your actions and words "kiss" the hearts of others with love, sincerity, and respect, as St. Valentine sought to heal divisions and unite people in holy love.

14th Feb – Valentine's Day

The week culminates in this day of love, not to celebrate grandeur but to honour simplicity. Celebrate love in its truest form: a love that mirrors God's unconditional love for humanity. By reflecting on the life and legacy of Saint Valentine, the day becomes a celebration of love that inspires unity, charity, and faithfulness. We may attend a Mass, whisper a prayer for loved ones, have a deep conversation, write a handwritten note for someone, or even perform acts of service as a testament to love's true meaning. The essence of Valentine's Day lies in showing love in its purest form.

Conclusion

As we dig into a new, more profound meaning of the entire Valentine's week celebration, we see a different perspective that shifts the focus from materialistic gestures to the spiritual and relational essence of love, inspiring a deeper connection with God and each other. It's a time to remind ourselves that love is not confined to a single relationship but is all-encompassing - a gift we give to our partners, friends, families, and ourselves. This perspective aligns with the virtues and legacy of St. Valentine. His life is a powerful reminder that love is not merely a fleeting emotion or romantic gesture. But it is a profound act of selflessness rooted in God's eternal love for humanity. By celebrating Valentine's Day in this light, we honour the true essence of his legacy. Let Valentine's Week inspire us to love deeply, live fully, and hold our loved ones close - not just for a week, but every single day of our lives. ♥



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

AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Bandra

EUPHORIA 2025: Annual Cultural Festival of Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues College of Engineering a great success

Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues College of Engineering, Bandra, Mumbai, celebrated its much-awaited annual cultural fest, Euphoria 2025, from January 24th to 27th under the theme 'Virasat: An Abode to Our Heritage.' The event was a grand celebration of culture, talent, and tradition, bringing together students from various disciplines to showcase their artistic and creative skills.

One of the key highlights of Euphoria 2025 was the flagship inter-college competitions:

Antara – an electrifying inter-college band competition that witnessed remarkable performances, showcasing musical prowess and creativity.

Cinecrce – an inter-college short film-making competition held on January 23rd, where budding filmmakers demonstrated their storytelling and cinematic skills through compelling short films.

In addition to these flagship events, several intra-college competitions were held across diverse domains, including Fine Arts, Literary Arts, Performing Arts, Sports, besides Personality and Submission-based Events.



Standing (from left to right) are: Rev. Fr. Trevor Pereira, Asst. Director, Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues College of Engineering, Rev. Fr. Valerian D'Souza, Director, Guest of Honour Alam Khan - Actor, Chief Guest Dr. Gopa Chakrabarti - Classical Singer, Principal Dr. Surendra Singh Rathod, Dr. Bhushan Patil, Dean of Student Affairs and Chris Gracias, President of the Student's Council.

The grand culmination of Euphoria 2025 took place on January 27th at Yashwantrao Natya Mandir, Matunga, with the **Auditorium Day**. The finale featured outstanding performances, prize distributions, and a celebration of the collective efforts of the participants and organizers.

Among the various classes that competed throughout the fest, **BE AIDS** emerged as the **Best Class**, demonstrating exceptional participation and excellence across multiple categories.



An enthralling cultural performance by the students of Fr. CRCE, Bandra, Mumbai.



Rev. Fr. Valerian D'Souza, Director, Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues College of Engineering with students at Euphoria 2025.

AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Verna, Goa

IDEAS 3.0 – Unleashing Innovation

Students of Padre Conceicao College of Engineering, Verna, Goa, showcased their innovative solutions to real-world challenges in the annual project competition, IDEAS 3.0. Honorable Minister for IT and Tourism, Mr. Rohan Khaunte was the Chief Guest at the Inaugural Ceremony held on 24th January 2025.

In his address, Mr. Khaunte commended the impressive projects and appreciated the college for this inspiring initiative. Director of Agnel Technical Complex, Rev. Fr. Agnelo Gomes, emphasized the objective of the event – To provide a supportive ecosystem that nurtures innovation for sustainable development. Convenors for the event, Dean-Academics Prof. Shailendra Aswale and Head of Research and Development Dr. Shailesh Khanolkar expressed immense satisfaction at the huge participation. In the first round, over 100 teams designed and developed prototypes. They were finally shortlisted to 30 teams that presented at IDEAS 3.0.

The two-day event also hosted exciting contests for school and higher secondary students. These included a Science Expo, BGMI gaming, AR/VR Cricket and Quiz. All the competitions received overwhelming participation, attracting students from over 70 institutes across the state.

IDEAS 3.0 was an inspiring showcase of creativity and talent. Its success highlights the potential of students, the next generation of innovators, to drive positive change.



Honorable Minister for IT and Tourism, Mr. Rohan Khaunte interacting with students at IDEAS 3.0. Students from over 70 institutes across Goa, participated in the event.



Director of Agnel Technical Complex, Rev. Fr. Agnelo Gomes (sitting, centre), along with the Convenors, make a happy picture with the winners from schools and higher secondary institutes of Goa.



THE WINNERS: PCCE students who clinched the IDEAS 3.0 Innovation Challenge.

AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Pune

Annual Day 2024-25 of Fr. Agnel's Vidyankur School, Pune

The Annual Day of **Fr. Agnel's Vidyankur School** was celebrated on 18th and 19th December 2024.

The event was a grand success, showcasing the talents and achievements of our students and fostering a sense of responsibility and pride among the participants. They had put in months of practice and their dedication was evident in the seamless and captivating presentations.

The program commenced with the lighting of the lamp, followed by a beautiful welcome dance and presentation of the school report for the academic year 2023-24.

The students of Std. VI beautifully presented their skit depicting the journey of the river Ganga from the Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal, as well as the history and heritage of the cities situated on its banks.

The students of Std. VII, through their skit '**Dream Weavers**,' presented the problems faced by today's children. The children learnt that there are no short cuts to any success in life.

The students of Std. VIII presented their skit '**The Voyage of Discovery**' emphasizing the importance of living in the present moment and how yearning for more and not being satisfied spoils your life.

The students of Std. IX showcased the skit '**Echo of Equality**' based on women empowerment in India from the period of Mahabharata up to the present time. The skit portrayed the problem and insecurities of women, and how as centuries have passed, progress has happened and the situation of women is changing for the better.

The program culminated with the words of wisdom by **Rev. Fr. Aleixo Luis** who also appreciated the efforts of the participants and the teachers, followed by the vote of thanks.



Rev. Fr. Aleixo Luis (right), Director of Fr. Agnel's Vidyankur School, Pune, along with the Principal, Mrs. Minal Kasbey, lighting the traditional lamp.



An entralling skit by the students of Fr. Agnel's Vidyankur School.

CANDLEMAS, A FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

- Jubel D'Cruz

The feast of Candlemas is celebrated on February 2 and it marks the return of light, a symbol of protection and prosperity. This festival commemorates the presentation of Our Lord Jesus Christ at the temple of Jerusalem, referring to Him as the light of the people of Israel. On this day, Christians take candles to be blessed in church, while for those with a sweet tooth, this day is also a chance to eat pancakes. Elsewhere in the world, people eat corn-based dishes or watch out for a groundhog emerging from hibernation.

The word 'Candlemas' is derived from the word 'candela', meaning candle. Hence, Candlemas is also known as the festival of lights. It is celebrated on February 2 to honour light, warding off evil and death and assuring prosperity. This festival as mentioned above, commemorates the presentation of Jesus at the temple of Jerusalem and His role as a light to enlighten pagan nations.

The first written records of this celebration dates back to the 5th century. It narrates the journey Mary and Joseph made to the temple with their son Jesus. The church created this celebration to replace pagan cults that placed light at the heart of their rituals. The Romans, in fact, held torchlight processions in February to purify the earth at the end of winter. It was also the month of the Lupercalia, a festival of purification held in Rome on February 15 to revive fertility by releasing vital forces.

As part of this festival, young men sacrificed goats, then ran through the streets dressed in animal skins, striking women's palms with goatskin whips. These lashes were meant to guarantee easy child birth for pregnant women and fertility for those without children. However, over time, the Lupercalia became conducive to scandalous excess and the Christian community looked upon these practices with a disapproving eye. In the year 494, Pope Gelasius I decided to ban this festival, replacing it with Candlemas processions and the blessing of candles in churches.

As to the origin of pancakes, Pope Gelasius I is said to have given wafers or flatbread to pilgrims arriving in Rome. However, there are also other stories and superstitions. Round golden pancakes served in February are evocative of the sun and may have been a symbol of fertility and prosperity. In order to obtain an abundant harvest, a farmer would traditionally flip the first pancake with his right hand while holding a gold coin in his left hand. The gold coin would then be wrapped inside the pancake and kept at the top of a wardrobe until the following year, to then be given to the first poor person encountered.

Other parts of the world observe different culinary and cultural traditions. *El Día de la Candelaria* is a public holiday in Mexico when processions and dance groups invade the streets. Families get together and eat *tamales*, a Mesoamerican dish first eaten more than 5000 years ago. The dough for these 'parcels' is generally made from maize flour and steamed in the leaf of a cob of corn or in a banana leaf. The filling may



be savoury (meat, ragout, black beans, chillies) or sweet (fruit, cream). Mexicans serve *tamales* with hot chocolate or *atole*, a sweet hot drink made from maize flour diluted with water or sometimes milk, and often flavoured with orange blossom, cinnamon, vanilla

or cocoa. According to tradition, whoever finds the figurine during the feast of the Epiphany celebrations is responsible for preparing the *tamales*.

In Luxembourg, Candlemas is called *Liichtmëssdag*. Children carry lanterns as they go from house to house to wish the inhabitants good health and happiness. They sing traditional songs and receive sweets in return.

The United States of America and Canada celebrate Groundhog Day on February 2. On this day, the custom is to try to predict the end of winter by observing a groundhog burrow. If the weather is cloudy and the emerging rodent does not see its shadow, spring will soon arrive. However, if it is sunny and the mammal sees its shadow, it will be frightened and retreat to its den to continue hibernating. It is then said that winter will last for another six weeks.

Blessing of Throats

The blessing of throats is celebrated on February 3, the feast day of St. Blaise and is a way to invoke his help for those with throat ailments. The blessing often includes the use of candles, which are said to symbolize the incarnate Lord.

The wax represents the body, the wick represents the soul, and the flame represents the divinity.

The blessing (of throats) originated from the story of St. Blaise, a fourth-century bishop of Sebaste in Armenia who is said to have miraculously cured a boy choking on a fishbone.

According to a legend, St. Blaise was a physician before becoming a bishop and was persecuted by the Roman emperor Licinius.

While in prison, he performed a miracle to save the life of a boy who was choking on a fishbone.

Catholics often participate in the tradition of having their throats blessed on this day. To do this, the priest consecrates two candles, generally by a prayer, and then holds each in a crossed position on the throat of the person being blessed.

St. Blaise was born in Sebastea (modern day, Turkey). He preached about Christianity in his hometown and was well-known as a healer.



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

OUT OF SORTS? CHEESED OFF?? - COME TO GOD !

- Ninette D'Souza

World Day of the Sick, February 11 – an annual observation started by Pope (now Saint) John Paul II, is a way for followers of Catholicism to offer special prayers and good wishes to those currently suffering from illness. The day coincides with the Church's celebration of the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. Here is an unspoken wonder of the world that all people with faith smaller than a mustard seed visit, with the hope of getting healed – body, mind and heart.

The Jubilee Year 2025 is a call to embrace Hope and Renewal through service and fraternity particularly to the least, which I would read as INFIRMED in this context. When we hear the word sick, we call to mind the homebound, the mentally and physically challenged, those lying comatose on a hospital bed surrounded by more machines than humans, persons battling crippling diseases such as Parkinson's, Dementia, Cancer ... but there are others mostly unseen, DEPRESSION being the most debilitating of all because it's a different kind of pain when your heart cries but your eyes don't.

When a flashlight grows dim or quits working, you don't throw it away, you change the batteries. When people are ill or have messed up in life and find themselves in a dark place, would you cast them aside? I think not. You would help them change their batteries! The physically ill need AA batteries – Attention and Affection. Those mentally, emotionally, psychologically affected would probably need AAA batteries – Attention, Affection, Acceptance. Some of those who are ill may need a single C cell – Compassion. Still others may need a D – Direction for their lives. In spite of all the changed batteries, if they don't seem to shine as you would want them to, simply sit with them quietly and share your light with them. Don't offer a lecture to a person who needs a hug in their current situation. Just being there for someone can sometimes bring HOPE when all seems hopeless.



Hope as Pope Francis shared is not merely a habit or character trait but a strength to be asked for, a gift of God that spurs Christians (people) to start again on the journey of life. Hope provides a recognition of our human smallness in the face of God's greatness. Regular care givers and other family members can travel with the sick in their homes in the true essence of the Jubilee which is a commitment to love and service. This is especially relevant to the children, youth and young adults within the family. I can empathize with the trauma that prevails in a home when someone is chronically ill and times are tough and draining in every way. Take a step back and, remember God is in control of the situation. All that's left for us to do is to make each day of the journey happy by sharing a

bit of our heart rather than a piece of our mind. I believe the best thing you can do for someone is PRAY for them and let God do for them what you cannot.

By the time you read this we will be well into the second month of a New Year that seemed to have popped up just yesterday. If you did and forgot or just didn't get around to making those 'New Year Resolutions,' no worries. You don't have to make them or any huge decisions or big proclamations. Just set some sweet intentions towards the afflicted in your own home, and in your immediate circle of influence. And you will be on your way as a Pilgrim of Hope. 15 – 20 minutes away from distracting social media, spent at the side of an ailing person will not only cheer up that person but will allow you to experience soul stirring fulfilment. What can I do you ask? It's all within you. REFLECT and RENEW.

As far as I can see this Jubilee Year presents myriad opportunities for our Basic Christian Communities to become principal Pilgrims of Hope, thereby leading their communities to follow suit. A few suggestions ... For those who are willing, have a G - meet on a Friday to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet. Set aside one day to pray The Liberation Rosary with them.

Encourage those attending Eucharistic Celebrations online to pray the Jubilee Prayer so they will feel united with Mother Church.

Families should emphasize that the sick can join their sufferings with those of Christ for the redemption of souls in purgatory and ask them to pray a decade of the Rosary for this intention along with one for Priests, Religious, Missionaries, Deacons and for Vocations, so that the Church does not fall short of labourers to serve in the Lord's vineyard. Make them aware that this is how they too can be sharers of the Gospel by their prayerful partnership. Needless to say visits to hospitals (if permitted), Old Age homes, The Clergy Home, Remand Homes could be the norm. God gave each one of us a unique fingerprint that no one else has, so that you and I can each leave an imprint that no one else can. When the sick internalise this idea, the difference will be palpable. You can come up with many more.

To all my fellow brethren prevented from living a full life as promised by the Lord, take heart, hang in there. He is close to you, trust Him and journey with Him as a Pilgrim of Hope. If you are feeling unloved; unwanted, cherish these words of the lay theologian C.S. Lewis "God always allows us to feel the frailty of human love so we'll appreciate the strength of His." Here's a little gem to dwell upon.

Imagine going on a late-night drive with Jesus. The

windows are down. You sigh deeply, as the wind whips your hair across your face.

"Say what's on your mind," Jesus encourages.

For a moment all you can hear are the cars racing down the highway. Ashamed, you admit, "It's hard handling this illness right now. I feel like giving up."

"I know," He says softly, "But tell me more."

"I don't know how and when this is all going to work out," you sigh again.

"And?" He questions delicately.

You stutter, "Well my – my faith is all shaken up right now and it feels so weak."

From the corner of your eye, you see Jesus smile. "At the end of the day, it's not about how big your faith is. It's about how big your God IS." He continues, "I part seas, I fashion streams out of wastelands. I cast out demons. I knit babies in their mothers' wombs. I heal the sick. I make darkness flee. I crush the enemy under my feet."

Whispering you ask, "Will You do that for me?"

Jesus replies, "I would die for you."



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.

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MIRACLES OF OLD GOA - II

- Jacqueline Kelly

In this concluding part, we see the three apparitions that happened in Old Goa.

Old Goa, the former capital of Goa was conquered by Afonso de Albuquerque for the Portuguese in 1510. Since then until 1734, it became the principal seat of the Portuguese Empire in the East. It was also the radiating centre of the Christian Missionary Movement. The decline of the Portuguese power, plague and epidemic fever forced the Portuguese administration to abandon their fabulous capital at Old Goa, and transfer the seat of the Government to Panjim, 12 kms away.

There are many religious and architectural monuments in Old Goa around which tradition has woven a number of stories. However, after Saint Francis Xavier, whose remains are enshrined at the Basilica of Bom Jesus, **the Cross of Miracles of Old Goa stands as a historic monument to the apparition of Christ Himself in this Rome of the East**, of which, very little is known even by Catholics inside and outside of Goa.

THREE APPARITIONS

It is said to have happened three times.

The first time it was when the image of the Crucified Christ is said to have spoken to the first Archbishop of Goa, Don Gaspar de Leao Pereira [1560-1567] in the Monastery of the Mother of God at Daugim in Old Goa.

The second time it was, when, on February 23, 1619, Christ appeared facing the city of Old Goa on the Cross erected on the "BOA VISTA" hill and then suddenly turned His back to the city and disappeared.

The third time it was on February 8, 1636, the First Friday of Lent. As Christ had cried over Jerusalem on the eve of His Passion, predicting its destruction, the image of the Crucified Christ eyes were opened, shed tears and blood at the Convent of Saint Monica in Old Goa. This happened several times and for several days up to September 22, 1636, even in the presence of the Bishop of Cochin, then in charge of

the Goa Archdiocese, Friar Minguel Rangel and the Portuguese Viceroy, Pedro da Silva and other Government officials.

Tradition says that thenceforth, the destruction of the city started. The Golden City of Goa slowly began to wane. The extinction of the Jesuits by the Decrees of Marques de Pombal dated September 3, 1759 and of the other religious orders by the Royal Decrees of May 28, 1834, gave a final blow to the crumbling city. It was in ruins with only the few Churches and Monasteries standing.

THE CROSS OF MIRACLES

[Growing Cross] The BOA VISTA HILL

There are many monuments in Old Goa and on them many stories and tales. One such historical monument is the Cross of Miracles [Growing Cross] from a four metre Cross, it has turned into a huge Cross.

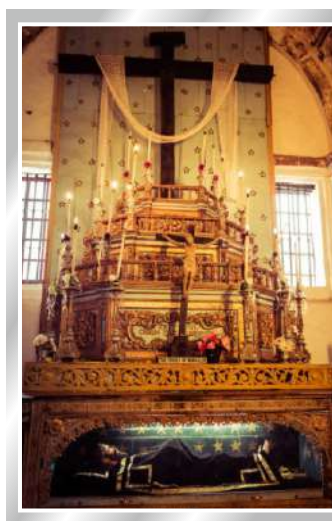
The Old City of Goa was situated in the middle of small hills. To the South of the city there is a hill which in Portuguese is known as "Monte de Boa Vista" [Mount of Beautiful Scenery] because from there nature's beautiful scenery unfolded itself into the famous city known as the "Pearl

of the Orient."

This is the reason why a wise and good natured Priest, Fr. Manuel Rodrigues, had installed a 3 ½ yards [around four metres] high Cross into a 2 feet high rock, existing at the peak of the hill. This Cross, tradition says, was first made by some shepherds out of a piece of the coconut palm trunk. The Cross could be seen not only from the city but also from the island of Divar that lies on the other side of the river.

THE APPARITION - Strange Signs around the Cross

This Cross could be seen at the top of the hill for a few years and had by now become a common sight every day to the passers-by. But from February 22, 1619, strange signs began to happen around the Cross. They found the Cross was big. This was a Friday. All of a sudden some passers-by saw red flags flying at the mercy of the winds on that hill.



People thought that those flags might be the sails of ships kept to dry.

At the dawn of the next day, February 23, 1619, some people from the island of Divar were returning home after the night Adoration service of the Blessed Sacrament in their village Church of Saint Mathias, saw a strange light around the Cross. Some days before this, a huge comet had appeared in the skies in Goa. These people thought that the strange light they were witnessing around the Cross might also be of that comet. However, these lights were beautiful and radiant.

VISION OF THE CRUCIFIED

The same morning, at 9 o'clock, a military surgeon, Pedro da Silva was climbing the hill nearest to the "Boa Vista" hill with his servant, Anthony. They noticed that the Cross on "Boa Vista" hill had become big and a man was seen on this Cross. At that moment, Simon Borges was passing that side. Pedro called him and asked him if he noticed anything strange on the Cross. Simon Borges confirmed that he had seen exactly what Pedro da Silva had seen. [Simon Borges was from the Piedade parish of the island of Divar. He died later on August 9, 1628]. Pedro and Anthony climbed the "Boa Vista" hill to witness the vision from a closer angle.

But to their surprise when they reached the top of the hill, they could not see the man on the Cross. The Cross was fixed and erect as before, but had become big. Pedro embraced the Cross, kissed it and prayed. Instantly, his hands began to give out a strange but sweet fragrance. Pedro narrated the incident, all that he and the other travellers had witnessed, to his family members and friends.

He opened his hands and let them inhale the sweet odour that was emanating from his hands. The news spread like wild fire and many gathered at the foot of the Cross. They saw nothing of the strange things that they had heard but the Cross was big.

The people were beginning to return home. At that moment, Pedro da Silva came there with his friends and now everybody saw the vision as he was narrating. Young and old, Christians and members of other faiths, began to visit the "Boa Vista" hill from that day onwards.

Everyone, who climbed the hill wanted to take a piece as a relic from the Cross. Rev. Dr. Cristóvão de Sáe Lisboa, Archbishop of Goa, summoned Pedro da Silva and obtained from him a first-hand report of the vision. He was afraid that, the manner in which the people were scrambling for pieces of the Cross, to keep a relic for themselves, might reduce

the whole Cross to pieces. He saw for himself the scramble going on to get a piece of the Cross.

He ordered the Cross to be shifted to the Parish Church which was "Our Lady of Light." The Cross was high and heavy. It took three hours [6 p.m.- 9 p.m.] to complete the operation. There was a torch light procession and they took the Cross to the Church of Our Lady of Light. The Cross was placed inside thin timber planks with golden nails. Open space was kept near the foot of the Cross for veneration. Many miraculous cures and events took place according to a written tradition by the ancestors.

People prayed for some sign to prove that the image seen on the miraculous Cross was of Christ. On 15th March, 1619, at 3 o'clock whilst people were digging to collect relic pieces of the rock where the Cross stood, the soil became wet and as they struck the rock, a water fountain sprouted out with clean water. The news spread all over and people came to this place and collected this spring water, which had healing powers.

A new Church was built on the same place where the Cross stood, and this Cross of Miracles was placed inside this Church. By 1659, the Church began to crumble. On May 3, 1843, the Cross of Miracles was removed from the crumbling Church on the "Boa Vista" hill and brought in a solemn procession to the Sé Cathedral Church and kept in the Chapel of the Saviour's Holy Sepulchre, opposite the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament.

The Cross of Miracles as it is seen today is kept in the Sé Cathedral Church at Old Goa in the Chapel of the Crucified Saviour, opposite the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament. It is enclosed inside thin timber planks with an opening at the base to allow devotees to venerate it.

Since the year of the Exposition of the remains of Saint Francis Xavier in 1931, the Feast of the Cross of Miracles began to be celebrated in the Cathedral Church on November 30, because it was at this time of the year that many people flocked to the place in comparison to other seasons of the year. Likewise, on November 27, in the Church of Saint Monica, the Feast of the Cross on which the image of Christ cried from February 8 to September 22, 1636 is celebrated. This feast is an optional memorial on the Calendar of the Archdiocese of Goa.

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

CALLED TO SERVE

- M.K. George, S.J.

The VUCA world we live in craves for domination, for crude power.

The United States of America wants to be 'Great Again' (Trump's MAGA). China builds ports, roads and markets all around the world competing to be the first. India wants to be the 'World Guru.' Russia wants to regain the glory of the USSR. The list is endless. And, in the process humans are used and lorded over. Slavery is a prevalent reality in the contemporary world. According to the latest Global Estimates of Modern

Slavery (2022), 49.6 million people live in modern slavery and roughly a quarter of them are children.

Jesus says, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet" (John 13, 14). 'But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant' (Mathew 20, 26).

Christian Values are counter witnessing

Jesus lived and witnessed to a set of values absolutely counter to the prevalent ones. Instead of power, weakness; instead of domination, service; instead of hungering after money, giving away in charity and so on. The most dramatic and crucial of his overturning values is the Sermon on the Mount: He said, 'Blessed are the poor, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, merciful, pure of heart, peacemakers and those who are persecuted because of righteousness' (Mathew, 5.3-12).

Modes and locations of Christian Service

The question 'who is my neighbour' and the good Samaritan story in the Bible (Luke 10,25-37) specify which the modes and locations of service are. You are called to serve where you are placed. Hence, it could be in the family, in the workplace, on the road, in the church, in the restaurant....wherever you find a human being in need.

To serve means to be available for the neediest, sharing your time, attention and resources. We should always begin with the family. The neighbourhood, the village or town we live in, the workplace, the larger civil society, the political world and the world of poor anywhere await the call for genuine service.

In India, where hate speeches abound, especially

against the minorities, the biggest service we Christians can do is to create a narrative of love and service. As Ram Puniyani said, 'there is a need to inculcate among the people the alternative

narrative, which was the base of India's freedom movement, the narrative which talks of the syncretic traditions of India, the narrative which led to the unity of people of all religions to participate in freedom movement, the values of which are enshrined in our Constitution.' For us Christians, a narrative of

love and tolerance after the model of Jesus.

The call for servant leaders

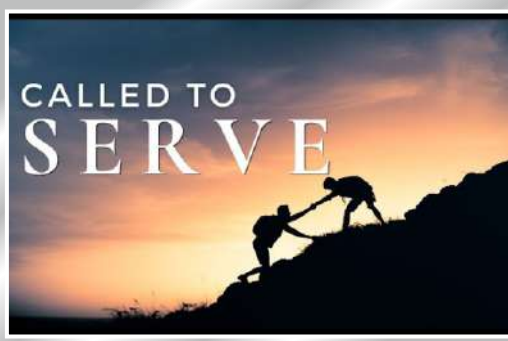
In recent times, servant leadership has received much attention. While servant leadership is a timeless concept, the phrase "servant leadership" was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in 'The Servant as Leader', an essay that he first published in 1970. He said: "The servant-leader is servant first ... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions..."

'They also serve who stand and wait'

In his sonnet 'On his blindness', Milton says, 'they also serve who only stand and wait'. This poem was written late in his life, when he was getting blind. Milton had fears whether his talents would become useless. But in a sublime act of faith, Milton submits to God's will for him, aligning himself with the submission of the angels to the will of God.

To everyone of us who are called to serve, here is a fitting question:

Do I submit myself to the will of God and serve in the most appropriate way?



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

JUST FOR FUN

-Christine D'Sylva

We are now in the month of February and this month is undoubtedly considered to be a very romantic month. This is because of the celebration of Valentine's Day all over the world.

So let's begin...

Fun Facts



In the Middle Ages, it was believed that February 14 was the start of the bird's mating season. We all know that Cupid is an image of a cute little boy with a bow and arrow as if he is shooting love

darts. He became linked to Valentine's Day by the turn of the 19th century.

The oldest Valentine on record is in 1415 when Charles, the Duke of Orleans wrote a poem to his wife when he was a political prisoner in the Tower of London.

One of the lines was - I am already sick of love, my very gentle Valentine.

All about chocolates



The first heart-shaped box of chocolates was introduced in 1861 created by Richard Cadbury, the son of John Cadbury who was Cadbury's founder. He introduced this heart-shaped box of

chocolates for Valentine's Day and today more than 36 million heart-shaped boxes of chocolates are sold each year. That is around 458 million pounds of chocolate!

True Story



A Russian couple, Anna and Boris, were married for only three days but Boris had to say goodbye to join the red Army Unit. Anna and her family were sent to exile and the two lost contact with

each other. Both tried to find each other but had no luck. Anna was so depressed that she even

contemplated suicide but being a positive kind of person remained hopeful that someday she would meet her true love Boris.

One fine day, many years later, Anna caught sight of an old man moving out of his car in Siberia. She was breathless and could not believe her eyes. She knew this old man clambering out of the car was her beloved Boris. Then Boris walked towards her and they looked at each other, instantly recognising each other. Anna cried for joy.

The couple wasted no time. They reunited and romance blossomed again after 60 years of separation.

This story is very touching because it demonstrates aptly that one should remain positive and hopeful for true love never really dies. It can be blossomed again and never can be fully extinguished. Also it is never too late for anyone to find true love, age should never be a bar to Cupid's arrow!

Quiz



1. Cupid has its roots in which mythology?
2. How many people worldwide get engaged on Valentine's Day?
3. In which century was the first Valentine sent?
4. Do men or women spend more on Valentine's Day?
5. How many Valentine Day cards are given each year?

Smile



1. My boyfriend and I met on the internet. My mother asked him what line he used on me and my boyfriend just smiled and said, "I just used a modem."
2. Wife - Let's commit a perfect crime together Husband - Ok, I will steal your heart and you can steal mine.
3. Girl - I love Google.
Boy - I love Facebook.
Girl - I love Instagram.

Boy - I love Twitter.

Girl - I love you....

Boy - (very happy) Oh thanks.

Girl - I meant YouTube.

4. As a child, my family's menu consisted of two choices - Take it or leave it.

5. If you want your kids to really listen to you, try talking very softly to someone else.

6. Waitress - Ma'am, do you want your pizza cut into eight slices or four?

Lady on a diet - Well, I think four because eight slices may be a bit too much.

Good one liners in dating



1. Are you a bank loan?
Because you have my interest.

2. If I were a cat, I would spend all my nine lives with you.

3. Are you a magician?
Because every time I am

with you, everyone else disappears.

4. Is your name Google? Because someone stole the stars from the sky and put them in your eyes.

5. Good thing I just bought life insurance. Because as soon as I saw you, my heart stopped.

Brain Teasers



1. When Marie was 15, her mother was 37. Now her mother is twice her age. How old is Marie?

2. Imagine you are in a forest surrounded by ravenous man-eating wolves. How do

you put an end to this terrible situation?

3. Why did the woman push her car to a hotel and then tell its owner that she was bankrupt?

4. What room has the most stories?

Riddles

What am I?



1. You can catch me but you cannot throw me.

2. I am hard as a rock but I melt with heat.

3. When things go wrong, you can always count on me.

4. I have lots of money but I

need someone to carry me around to spend it.

What's the Good Word?

All about love



1. The type of relationships that exist not just with humans but with animals too.

2. The sex that falls in love faster.

3. The phobia of never getting married.

4. Falling in love has similar effects to this drug.

True Facts about Love and Romance



1. We find people with a different kind of immune system more attractive to us.

2. People choose partners whose chemical make-up compliments their own. So someone with high

oestrogen levels will most likely fall in love with someone with high testosterone levels.

3. According to doctors spending time with people your love reduces the risk of early death by 50 percent.

4. When two lovers gaze into each other's eyes, their heart rates synchronize.

Inspirational Quotes

Love and Romance



1. "True love does not come by finding the perfect person, true love comes by learning to see an imperfect person perfectly." - **Jason Jordan**

2. "Good byes are only for those who love with their eyes. Because those who love with heart and soul there is no such thing as separation." - **Rumi**

3. "A person who truly loves you will never stop believing in you and never let you go, no matter how hard the situation is." - **Anonymous**

4. "I saw that you were perfect and so I loved you. Then I saw that you were not perfect and I loved you even more." - **Angelita Lim**

Fairy Tale Romance



Rags to riches princesses do exist. For example, Queen Sonja of Norway. She was a commoner and lived in Oslo. She met Crown Prince Harald in 1959. However, it was not until nine years

later, she and the Crown Prince were granted permission to wed because his father King Olav gave his consent to the marriage. Crown Prince Harald was so madly in love with her that he had threatened never to marry, if they both could not be wed. Crown Prince Harald was a fine athlete and excelled in yachting.

However, the people of Norway accepted her quickly and the wedding was held in Oslo Cathedral on 29th August 1968. She became the Crown Princess of Norway. Crown Prince Harald became King of Norway after the death of his father on 17th January, 1991. Crown Princess Sonja became the Queen consort when her husband became King.

So fairy tales sometimes do exist in real life too.

Dr. Abdul Kalam (1931-2015)

Kindness and thoughtfulness - A true incident



Dr. Abdul Kalam was the 11th President of India.

When Dr. Abdul Kalam was working on a construction project, he asked the team what they would do to ensure security around a

certain building. The team leader suggested, "Broken glass on the walls."

However, Dr. Abdul Kalam turned down the suggestion. He said, "The birds cannot perch on the wall. Think of something else."

He was a kind man who always thought of others also even if they were just birds!

Wisdom Message of the Month

True Love Story



Reena was in the 11th standard and there was a guy who loved her madly. He used to follow her home but never tried to create a scene or upset her.

Both lived in Allahabad in India. When Reena completed her school, the guy named Rajiv came over to her house to ask for her hand in marriage. But her wise father refused telling him that he had no degree and was jobless. He would permit the marriage only after Rajiv was well settled in life.

This did not deter the young man. He prepared for his Chartered Accountancy and cleared all the exams in one go. He became a Chartered

Accountant at 22. He was intelligent and his strong desire to marry her gave him the required motivation to complete his studies.

He contacted Reena and came to her home again with his marriage proposal. But he learnt to his shock, Reena was suffering from blood cancer and she was in the last stage.

He still wanted to marry her and make her his wife. They wed in a big grand wedding.

However, Reena had the last two years of her life filled with happiness. She travelled to Europe and America with him. Rajiv made her believe that fairy tales do exist. He gave her all she desired and showed how much she meant to him.

When she died, he was numb and did not speak for days and weeks. It took Rajiv a long time to move on with his life. But he never stopped loving Reena. She was in his heart always, like an indelible stamp that could never be erased.

What do we learn?

True love is really facing not just the good times together but the bad too. Goodbyes are not necessary in true love. The person even when dead remains forever in one's heart and mind, the bond never really dies away, after all our physical bodies perish but our souls live on till eternity.

That is all for this month. Spread peace and love this month to all you meet. Take care and we will meet again next month...

Answers

Quiz

1. Greek. 2. Around 6 million people. 3. 15th century. 4. Men spend twice as much as women. 5. 145 million cards.

Brain Teasers

1. Marie is 22 for her mother is 22 years older. 2. You have to stop imagining it. 3. She was playing monopoly. 4. In terms of time. 6 a.m plus 12 hours is 6 p.m. 5. Library.

Riddles

1. A cold. 2. An ice-cube. 3. Your fingers. 4. A wallet or purse.

What's the Good Word?

1. Monogamous. 2. Men. 3. A nuptophobia - the fear of never finding love. 4. Cocaine.



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

DUBAI: Through the kind intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have received several blessings. I am a staunch devotee of Fr. Agnel and visit the shrine at Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra, whenever I am down in India.

- Deepak Kedia

THANKSGIVING FOR BEING BLESSED

BANDRA: Ven. Fr. Agnel has blessed me immensely. I am indeed grateful for all the favours received and have faith in the Venerable.

- Rosita Gonsalves

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS

ON FAMILY

MALAD (WEST): We pray to Ven. Fr. Agnel and he intercedes for us always. With a grateful heart, we thank the Venerable.

- Mackwin Patel & Fly

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS

ON FAMILY

NADIAD: We often pray to Ven. Fr. Agnel and have been blessed immensely. We will continue to pray to him for his kind intercession.

- Marwan Vincent Philip

THANKSGIVING FOR GOOD HEALTH

VASAI: I thank Ven. Fr. Agnel for answering my prayers and blessing me with good health.

- Derin Gonsalves

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

BHAYANDAR: Ven. Fr. Agnel 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.

- Sheela Chettiar

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

UTTAN: I thank Ven. Fr. Agnel for his intercession and keeping me in good health all these years.

- Manisha Mandijhar

THANKSGIVING FOR GOOD JOB

VASAI: Through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have been blessed with a good job. Faith can remove mountains of obstacles, in finally securing a good job.

- Malika Anthony D'Silva

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

MAHIM: Through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, we have received many favours and blessings. This has increased our faith and devotion.

- Martina D'Souza

THANKSGIVING FOR ALL

BLESSINGS RECEIVED

NAVI MUMBAI: I am thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for answering my prayers. I have immense faith in the Venerable and Lord Jesus Christ.

- R. Thomas

THANKSGIVING FOR PRAYERS ANSWERED

KHAR: I prayed to Ven. Fr. Agnel for his kind intercession in helping me in life. My prayers have been answered.

- Mrs. Anand

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

GOA: I always look up to Ven. Fr. Agnel for his intercession. I am indeed grateful for all the blessings received.

- Catharina Mascarenhas

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL FOR GOOD HEALTH

BANDRA: We always seek the intercession and blessings of Ven. Fr. Agnel. He has blessed us with good health.

- Clayton & Cindy Miranda

IN GRATITUDE TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

VASAI: We are indeed grateful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for blessing us always. The Ashram Fathers are continuing his legacy of service to the marginalised sections of society.

- Sujata Vijay Dabre

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

AUSTRALIA: Ven. Fr. Agnel has answered our prayers and blessed us immensely. We have immense faith in the Venerable who intercedes on our behalf.

- Dickson & Fly

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

MUMBAI: I always look up to Ven. Fr. Agnel for his kind intercession to guide me in my work and give me strength in difficult situations.

- Dr. Smita Rodrigues

OUT OF THEIR BOUNTY

Shah Kundan B.	Mumbai	50000	Rajeshkumar Bariya	Daman	5000	Uma Sandis	Thane	1000
Jaipaul Berchmans	Tamil Nadu	50000	Zubin Bharucha	Vasai	5000	Krishna Raiyani	Mumbai	1000
Praveen Srivastava	Mumbai	46000	Fatima Fernando	Vasai	5000	Mary Philomina	Kerala	1000
Priti Marian Colaco	Vasai	42000	Anna D'Souza	Mumbai	5000	Wini Edin Leon	Tamil Nadu	1000
Sosamma Saji	UAE	40000	Manaz Zainabadi	Mumbai	5000	Beena Khot	Mumbai	1000
Sijo John	Kerala	30000	Aloo Daruwalla	Mumbai	4000	S. Prakash Kavita	Mumbai	1000
Lavina Mascarenhas	Vasai	30000	Sandra Lorena	Karnataka	4000	Kalpana Jose	Vasai	1000
L. Mary Jacintha	Tamil Nadu	20000	Cicily Thomas	Kerala	3000	Sashida Bellarmin	Mumbai	1000
Dora D'Cruz	Mumbai	15000	Roshan Mathias	Mumbai	3000	Joel & John Varghese	Mumbai	1000
Rosella Soares	Mumbai	15000	Trathvi D'almeida	Karnataka	3000	Agnelo Varghese	Delhi	1000
Prasad Gawde	Mumbai	15000	Techno Products	Tamil Nadu	3000	Anil Ronald Corda	Mumbai	1000
Kunal Kadam	Mumbai	15000	Lavina Correa	Mumbai	3000	Liji Joseph	Kerala	1000
Walter Crasta	Mumbai	15000	Bhushan Pawar	Mumbai	3000	M. P. Joseph	Kerala	1000
Michelle Fernandes	Mumbai	15000	Suzanne D'Souza	Mumbai	2500	Antony M.O.	Kerala	1000
Santan Fernandes	Mumbai	12000	Alice D'Souza	Mumbai	2500	A. Santhappan	Tamil Nadu	1000
Parfulla Raiyani	Mumbai	11000	Sharon D'Souza	Mumbai	2500	A. Rose Mary	Tamil Nadu	1000
Aparna Vinay	Mumbai	10000	Manoj Balani	Mumbai	2500	M. D. Mathai	Kerala	1000
Hugh & C. G.	Uttarakhand	10000	Armaity Gev	Mumbai	2000	Susan George	Kerala	1000
Archilius D'Cruz	Mumbai	10000	D'Souza & Assoc.	Mumbai	2000	Monica D'Souza	Pune	1000
Margaret Cardoz	Mumbai	10000	Aqin D'Souza	Mumbai	2000	Priyanka R. Foss	Thane	1000
Suvarna D'Costa	Vasai	10000	Hufriz Karkaria	Mumbai	2000	Ramesh Parmar	Mumbai	1000
Vienza Fernandes	Mumbai	9000	Anthony D'Souza	Mumbai	2000	Nageshwar Shukla	Mumbai	1000
Dinaz Singh	Telangana	8000	Cherag Bardolwala	Mumbai	2000	Sherly Rajeev	Mumbai	1000
Mecwan Prabhudas	Gujarat	7500	Rajesh Daniel	Mumbai	2000	Shivansh Kulkarni	Mumbai	1000
Ayesha Pereira	Mumbai	7000	Rosy Corda	Mumbai	2000	Manini Kulkarni	Mumbai	1000
Antoniammal	Tamil Nadu	7000	Harriet Luke	Mumbai	2000	Antony Raj	Goa	1000
Lancy Rebello	Mumbai	6000	Rebecca D'Souza	Mumbai	2000	Agnel Selvan	Mumbai	1000
Joe Jacob & Fly	Thane	6000	Calistus Roche	Tamil Nadu	2000	Rashna K.	Mumbai	1000
Warren Fernandes	Mumbai	6000	Gavin Fonseca	Mumbai	2000	Shashikala C.	Mumbai	1000
Joaquim Fernandes	Mumbai	5400	Lancy Bessy	Tamil Nadu	2000	Aparna P. M.	Kerala	1000
Subramaniam R.	Mumbai	5100	T. John Rose	Mumbai	2000	Anu Koshy	Kerala	1000
Karin Saldanha	Mumbai	5000	Agnello Coutinho	Vasai	2000	Jeewan Kamra	Mumbai	1000
John Valan	Tamil Nadu	5000	Vanita Parkar	Mumbai	2000	Abey Thomas	Kerala	500
Mathew P. Mathew	Mumbai	5000	Norman Dharmai	Mumbai	2000	Rani Sebastian	Mumbai	500
Rahul Ribeiro	Mumbai	5000	Snehal Gaunder	Vasai	2000	Nimeshkumar C.	Gujarat	500
Clyde Barrow	Mumbai	5000	Leo Menezes	Mangalore	2000	Simon Pinto	Vasai	500
Jacob Puthur	Kerala	5000	Veronica Fernandes	Goa	2000	James Colaco	Vasai	500
George Tom	Kerala	5000	Emmanuel Nadar	Mumbai	2000	Santosh Gaikwad	Thane	500
Jean D'Cunha	Mumbai	5000	Rosemary Nadar	Mumbai	2000	Mary Asir	Tamil Nadu	500
Hazel D'Souza	Mumbai	5000	Aaron Mendonsa	Mumbai	1000	Ganesh H. Mehta	Mumbai	500
Abhilash Das	Mumbai	5000	Conrad Soares	Mumbai	1000	Smita Talcherkar	Mumbai	500
Daniel Benaka	Mumbai	5000	Bijal Shelriyan	Mumbai	1000	Aqin Pereira	Vasai	500
Christine Jones	Bengal	5000	Jester Alex	Mumbai	1000	Deepak Momya	Mumbai	500
Jeeja Rose	Mumbai	5000	Aparna Das	Thane	1000	Varda Jhunjhunwala	Mumbai	500
Mira Saldanha	Mumbai	5000	Wilma D'Souza	Mumbai	1000	C.P. Joseph	Kerala	500
Philomena Pinto	Karnataka	5000	Irani Family	Mumbai	1000	Maria Crasto	Mumbai	500
Lidiya Sequeira	Vasai	5000						

BOB'S BANTER

by Robert Clements

Silence Ain't Golden Anymore..!

How often we are told that silence is golden. No, it isn't always so; sometimes it's plain yellow!

Yes, the yellow of cowardice. The yellow of running away from a confrontation. The yellow of keeping your mouth shut when it should have protested.

The phrase "silence is not always golden" takes on a profound meaning when we consider that silence can very often be the yellow worn by a coward. This poignant thought highlights the complexities of silence, revealing that it can be a double-edged sword – both a refuge and a refuge from responsibility.

When silence is the yellow of cowardice, it can manifest itself in various ways: Fear of confrontation: Avoiding difficult conversations or conflicts, even when necessary, can be a sign of cowardice.

Lack of empathy: Failing to speak up or show compassion for others, especially in times of need,

Internal conflict: Cowardly silence can lead to internal conflict, guilt, and shame.

How do we break the Silence of Cowardice? I believe we must first recognize and confront our fears, rather than letting them dictate our silence.

Practice empathy and cultivate compassion for others, and be willing to speak up on their behalf.

Start by taking small baby steps, and with these small acts of courage, such as speaking up in a meeting or expressing our opinions in a respectful manner our courage will grow.

And there's nothing wrong in seeking support and surrounding ourselves with people who encourage and support us in speaking up and being courageous.

Don't get fooled by hundreds of words and sayings on the Internet and WhatsApp about keeping quiet in a conflict, walking away from an argument and




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can be a cowardly act.

Refusal to take a stand: Remaining silent in the face of injustice, inequality, or wrongdoing can be a manifestation of cowardice.

Hiding behind silence: Using silence as a shield to avoid accountability, responsibility, or vulnerability can be a sign of cowardice.

And there are some dastardly consequences of cowardly silence: Yes, when we choose silence over courage, we risk:

Enabling harm: By remaining silent, we may inadvertently enable harm or injustice to continue.

Damaging relationships: Cowardly silence can erode trust, respect, and intimacy in relationships.

Missed opportunities: Silence can prevent us from seizing opportunities to make a positive impact, learn, or grow.

being a silent and mysterious person.

I believe that though silence can be a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, most often we wear the yellow of silence as a protective armour.

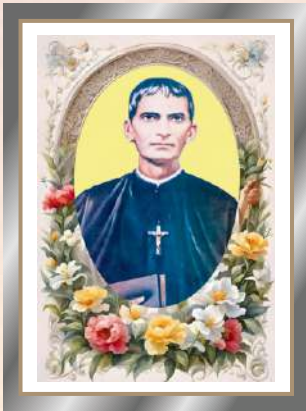
By acknowledging the shadows of silence within us, and the reasons for our keeping quiet we can begin to break free from the chains of cowardice and cultivate the courage to speak up, take a stand, and make a positive impact.

Yes, silence isn't as golden as portrayed, most often it's a dirty, disgusting yellow..!

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

DEVOTEES THROG FR. AGNEL ASHRAM, BANDRA, MUMBAI TO CELEBRATE FR. AGNEL JAYANTI

- Sunil D'Cruz



Ven. Fr. Agnelo D'Souza

On 21st January 2025, over 800 devotees of Ven. Fr. Agnelo D'Souza came from all over Mumbai to Fr. Agnel Ashram in Bandra, Mumbai, to celebrate his 156th Birth Anniversary. The celebration was preceded by nine days of Novena.

The theme of the celebration was *'Inspired by Ven. Fr. Agnelo, let us be Messengers of the Good News.'* Extolling the virtues of Ven. Fr. Agnelo, the main celebrant of the Eucharistic Celebration, Most Rev. Rethna Swamy, Bishop of Ahmedabad, said, "The man of prayer preached the gospel through his personal life. Ven. Fr. Agnelo was ready to help the poor and the needy at all times. He was kind like Jesus. He was true to his name 'Agnelo' which means lamb. He was meek and humble, yet he roared like a lion when he preached the Good News." His rich legacy is continued by the Pilar Fathers today, known for their service to the

marginalised sections of society.

Co-celebrants of the Eucharistic celebration were Rev. Fr. Saturnino Almeida, General Councillor of the Society of Pilar, Rev. Fr. Savio Coutinho, Provincial Superior of the Mumbai Province, Rev. Fr. Tomy Thomas, Provincial Superior of SVD Mumbai Province, Rev. Fr. Valerian D'Souza, Superior, Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra, among others.

Preceding the Eucharistic celebrations, there was a delightful cultural program by the students of Fr. Agnel School, Vashi and Ambernath, as well as a soul-stirring musical performance by the Balbhavan boys of Bandra.

Born in Anjuna, Goa in 1869, Ven. Fr. Agnelo was a key member of the Society of the Missionaries of St. Francis Xavier (SFX) or commonly known as the Society of Pilar. Known for his intercession for the intentions of devotees, prayers were offered for the early canonisation of Ven. Fr. Agnelo.



**A soul-stirring performance by the
Balbhavan boys, Bandra.**



**Folklore dance performance by the students
of Fr. Agnel School, Vashi.**



**A fabulous show by the students of
Fr. Agnel School, Ambernath.**

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**156th Birth Anniversary Celebrations of Ven. Fr. Agnelo D'Souza,
at Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra.
Most Rev. Rethna Swamy, Bishop of Ahmedabad, was the Main Celebrant.**



May Ven. Fr. Agnelo D'Souza bless us all!



If not delivered please return to

FR. AGNEL ASHRAM

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