

**FR. AGNEL**

# **ASHRAM NEWS**

**JANUARY 2025**



**ON THE PATH TOWARDS SILVER JUBILEE 2025**

JANUARY 2025

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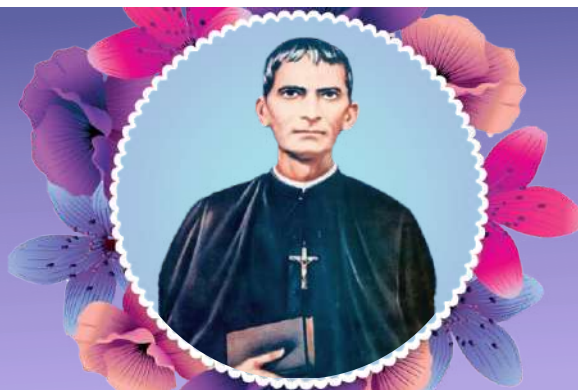
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## VEN. FR. AGNELO'S 156TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

Tuesday, 21st January 2025

## PROGRAMME

## SPECIAL NOVENA SERVICES | 12TH TO 20TH JANUARY 2025



## Every day

Morning : 7.00 a.m. &amp; 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, 12th and 19th January, all Masses and Novena Services will be held as on normal Sundays.

On Sunday, 12th and 19th January, Novena Services will be in Gujarati at 3.00 p.m.

## 21ST JANUARY (TUESDAY) : 156TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF VENERABLE FR. AGNELO

Morning : Mass followed by Novena Prayers at 7.00 a.m. &amp; 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. Rethna Swamy, Bishop of Ahmedabad,  
will be the main Celebrant on 21st January 2025.**



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**

P.B. No. 6656, Bandstand, Bandra (West), Mumbai - 400 050, Maharashtra, India.

Tel.: 022 - 67114000 | Mobile: 091 - 7738009137

Website : [www.agnelashram.org](http://www.agnelashram.org)

Bus No. 211 : Special Bus Service to Ply from Bandra Railway Station to Fr. Agnel Ashram Gate.

## MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL SUPERIOR



As we welcome the New Year, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the hard work and dedication you've shown in this past year. Thank you for consistently going above and beyond! Your passion, efforts and commitment have made a real difference. You are truly appreciated in the growth and expansion plans of the Agnel Region.

It's been amazing to see how each of you brings something unique to the table. Teamwork makes the dream work, and this past year has been proof of what we can achieve together. Let's keep the momentum going and make the New Year, a time for even bigger accomplishments!

As His Holiness Pope Francis has opened the Holy Doors at the Vatican in this Jubilee Year which also commemorates 2025 years of Christianity, let it be a Holy Year for us Pilgrims of Hope!

On 21st January, we celebrate the 156th Birth Anniversary of Ven. Fr. Agnelo D'Souza, a prominent member of the Society of Pilar and our inspiration for reaching out to the marginalised sections of society. We invite you to attend the 9-day Novenas and the Main Celebration.

Commemorating the International Day of Education on 24th January, I extend my heartiest greetings to the management, teaching and non-teaching faculty, and the talented students across the Agnel Region. We have prestigious educational institutions at Bandra in Mumbai, Verna and Assagao in Goa, Vashi in Navi Mumbai, Ambernath, Pune, Delhi, Noida, Greater Noida and Vaishali in Uttar Pradesh.

As we open a new chapter and continue our journey of growth, let us "Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow," as Albert Einstein put it.

**Wishing each one of you God's blessings in the New Year! May it be a year of peace, happiness and success.**

**- Fr. Bento Rodrigues**

## HOLY YEAR 2025!

-Fr. Fio Mascarenhas, SJ

The long-awaited Holy Year has begun! Pope Francis has opened the Holy Doors, praying that all Christians, as well as people of goodwill, will experience their common identity as PILGRIMS OF HOPE, and witness to it in daily life. The Pope repeated his wish:

*“That the Jubilee be a living experience of the closeness of the Father, whose tenderness is almost tangible, so that the faith of every believer may be strengthened and thus testimony to it be ever more effective.”*

The Jubilee is focused, of course, on Jesus Christ, and not just on the historical Jesus of Nazareth, but on the ever-living Risen Christ who is still **“the way, the truth, and the life”** (Jn 14:6). He is the **way** to each human being actually receiving an experience of the **“closeness and tenderness of the Father,”** he is the **truth** about the value and meaning of each human being's existence on earth and eternally, and he is the **life** that gives us vitality and good cheer in the face of every eventuality.

**The Jubilee also commemorates (imagine!!!) 2025 YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY!**

**“The Church believes that Christ, who died and was raised up for all, can through his Spirit offer all human beings the light and strength to measure up to their**

**supreme destiny... The Church likewise holds that in her most benign Lord and Master can be found *the key, the focal point, and the goal of all human history.* The Church also maintains that beneath all changes there are so many realities which *do not change* and which have *their ultimate foundation in Christ*, who is the same, yesterday, today, and forever”** (Vatican II, GS, 10).

Christians can be truly proud of their overall legacy! What would our world be like today without

the powerful and ongoing presence (throughout the last 21 centuries) of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ? His *Good News* has truly changed human history in most significant ways. The legacy of Jesus' missionary disciples, anointed and led by the Holy Spirit, is so huge that it far exceeds our

ability to calculate its full impact upon humanity. Billions of Christians in every part of the world have lived new lives of faith believing that Jesus' death and resurrection makes it possible for each person to be reconciled with God: forgiven, saved, healed and set free! Jesus' teachings and **his real presence** have made life on earth better for all Peoples.

In the name of Jesus Christ and in the power of his Holy Spirit, Christianity has led to a massive expansion of hospitals, humanitarian





organizations, educational institutions and charities. Education and healthcare in the West, and indeed all over the world, were often founded by Christians in the name of Jesus (through the initiatives of caring and dedicated missionaries).

The greatest missionaries and explorers in history went out in the name of Jesus Christ, to spread the message of Jesus; this helped end the slave trade, and *sati* (the ritual murder of women on their husband's funeral pyre, in India). Innumerable Christians opened children's homes in Jesus' name, to save children from the street. Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta and her Missionaries of Charity, as well as innumerable other disciples of Jesus, have taken Christian pastoral social action to inspiring heights!

In the USA, Martin Luther King Jr. was inspired by the message of Jesus to fight for equality of races. In South Africa, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela helped to end the evil of Apartheid. And by their very influential encyclicals, Popes Leo XIII, St. John XXIII, St. Paul VI, St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and now Pope Francis, have all contributed significantly to creating *a tidal wave of social action* for the betterment of society (and of the environment).

Our well-known universities were founded by disciples of Jesus, and it was they (*especially the Jesuits!*) who started schools and attempted to bring education to all. All over the world where sin abounds, misery abides and humanity is crushed, can be found Christian schools, hospitals and missionaries, all aiming to help those that the world forgot. They do so because the teaching of Jesus Christ inspires them. Christian music, art, architecture dominates the West: who can forget

Michaelangelo's paintings in the Sistine Chapel and his *Pieta* in St. Peter's Basilica, or Gounod's *Ave Maria*, Handel's *Halleluia* chorus, Mozart's *Requiem*, etc.

Christian values shaped our civilization. Christian values led to mass education, healthcare and development ... the list goes on and on. The story is ongoing because *today too*, in the 21st century, Jesus continues to bring “*good news to the poor*,” through his committed and courageous disciples who are fighting in our post-modern world for the dignity of the unborn and the elderly, for the sanctity of marriage and wholesome family life, for the encouragement of the world's youth, and for innumerable other worthy causes that can enhance the quality of human life (Pope Francis is outstanding in this mission).

No right-thinking person, therefore, can dispute that in Jesus, we have One who has virtually changed every aspect of human life. And the Church in the Modern World is right in claiming that “**in JESUS can be found the key, the focal point, and the goal of all human history...**”

SO LET US WISH EACH OTHER A VERY SPIRIT-FILLED HAPPY NEW YEAR! AND MAY THIS SPECIAL JUBILEE YEAR OF OUR REDEMPTION BE A VERY FRUITFUL YEAR OF HOPE FOR EACH OF US!



*Fr. Fio Mascarenhas, SJ, DMin recently celebrated his Diamond Jubilee in the Society of Jesus, and writes and teaches biblical spirituality. His 27th book, PILGRIMS OF HOPE, has just been published. His contact: [frfioomas@gmail.com](mailto:frfioomas@gmail.com)*

# THE SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

-Leon Bent

The solemnity of the Mother of God, which now coincides with the octave-day of Christmas and the beginning of the New Year, was probably assigned this day, because of the influence of the Byzantine Church\*, which celebrates the synopsis of the most holy Theotokos (Theotokos, (Greek: "God-Bearer"), in Eastern Orthodoxy, the designation of the Virgin Mary as mother of God, on December, 26th.

***\*The collective body of those Eastern Churches that were separated from the Western Church in the 11th Century and are in communion with the Greek patriarch of Constantinople.***

## **Mary, the Mother of God**

One of the most fundamental reasons why Mary is important to Catholics is her role as the Mother of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God. As the Mother of God, Mary has a unique relationship with Jesus, and her importance is inseparable from his. The Catholic Church teaches that, Mary was chosen by God to be the mother of Jesus, and that, she was conceived without sin to prepare her for this task. This doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which was formally declared in 1854 by Pope Pius IX, is based on the belief that, Mary's sinlessness made her a fitting vessel for the Son of God.

Mary's role as the Mother of Jesus is also significant because it demonstrates God's love and care for humanity. By choosing to become human and to be born of a woman, God showed that he values human life, and desires to be intimately involved in our world. Mary, as the Mother of Jesus, is thus seen as a symbol of God's love, and a reminder of the importance of human relationships and connections.

## **Participate in Marian Devotions**

By participating in Marian devotions, Catholics are able to connect with Mary's love and faith in God and seek her intercession in their lives. The Catholic Church teaches that Mary, as the Mother of God, is uniquely close to Jesus, and that her prayers are especially powerful. Through devotion to Mary,

Catholics can deepen their faith, grow in holiness, and draw closer to God. Therefore, this piety and fidelity are an important part of the Catholic faith, and continue to be practised by millions of Catholics around the world.

Devotion to Mary is an essential part of the Catholic faith. Mary's unique role as the Mother of God, her powerful intercession, and her example of faith and discipleship, make her an important figure for Catholics. Through various forms of Marian devotion, such as the Rosary, the Angelus, and the Immaculate Heart, Catholics can deepen their

relationship with Mary and grow closer to God. These practices are not just cultural traditions, but are rooted in Catholic theology and spirituality, and are a means of expressing love and devotion to Mary. By turning to Mary and seeking her intercession, Catholics are able to experience the love and mercy of God in a deeper way. May we always strive to honour Mary and emulate her faith and love for God, as we journey together towards greater holiness and closer union with our Lord.

## **Parenthood makes us Co-Creators with God**

What should not cease to fill us with wonder about parenthood is that, as human beings, we are allowed to participate as co-

creators with God in a special way. Other animals procreate the species, but how many have been given the privilege of doing so freely, as an act not merely of instinct or primal urge, but of understanding and love?

It is not uncommon for our hearts to be softened when we see images of mothers and their offspring, even when they are members of another species, whether it is a dog suckling her pups or a mare nudging her newborn foal to take those first faltering steps. This is the miracle of new life.

But human children have the privilege of something more. They can look back into the face of their mothers with love. And in this way, they are prepared to look back into the face of their God with



love. We raise them up not only to sing like birds, but to sing those songs to God in love. Such is the beauty of watching a mother singing prayers gently and staring into her child's eyes at Mass.

There is pain in childbirth, as there are constant challenges raising children, in the midst of our chaotic world with evils, both, internal and external, lurking around every corner. But when all of that noise is quieted, what we catch a glimpse of, is the primordial love that created the universe and continues to hold it together through the ages.

### **The Mother and Child mark a New Creation**

The Mother, then, stands at the very heart of the mystery of time. This pleased God to turn history around through her, the woman. With that one word, "woman," the Scripture brings us back to the beginning, to Genesis, and makes us realize that, the Mother and Child mark a new creation, a new beginning. Thus, at the beginning of the time of salvation, there is the Holy Mother of God, our Holy Mother.

It is fitting, then, that the year should open by invoking her; it is fitting that God's faithful people should acclaim her with joy, as once those bold Christians did in Ephesus, as the Holy Mother of God. For those words, Mother of God, express the joyful certainty that the Lord, a tiny Child in his Mamma's arms, has united himself forever to our humanity, to the point that it is no longer only ours, but his as well. Mother of God: A simple phrase that confesses the Lord's eternal covenant with us. Mother of God: a dogma of faith, but also a "dogma of hope"; God in man, and man in God, forever. The Holy Mother of God (Pope Francis).

### **The Motherhood of Mary and the Paternal Tenderness of God**

The motherhood of Mary is the path leading us to the paternal tenderness of God, the closest, most direct and easiest of paths. This is God's "style": closeness, compassion and tenderness. Indeed, the Mother leads us to the beginning and heart of faith, which is not a theory or a task, but a boundless gift that, makes us beloved sons and daughters, tabernacles of the Father's love. It follows that welcoming the Mother into our lives is not a matter of devotion but a requirement of faith: "If we want to be Christians, we must be 'Marians'" (Saint Paul VI, Homily in Cagliari, 24 April 1970), that is "children of Mary."

### **Mary Intercedes on Behalf of Her Children**

Just as Mary, the woman, played a decisive role in the fullness of time, she is also decisive in the lives of each of us, for no one knows better than a Mother the stages of growth, and the urgent needs of her children. Mary shows us this in yet another "beginning": The first sign that Jesus performs, at

the Wedding Feast of Cana. There, she is the one who realizes that, the wine has run out, and who appeals to Jesus (cf. Jn. 2:3). The needs of her children move her, the Mother, to beg Jesus to intervene. At Cana, Jesus says: "Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim" (Jn. 2:7). Mary knows our needs; she intercedes to make grace overflow in our lives and to guide them to authentic fulfilment. Brothers and sisters, all of us have our shortcomings, our times of loneliness, our inner emptiness that cries out to be filled. Each of us knows this well. Who can fill our emptiness if not Mary, the Mother of fullness? Whenever we are tempted to retreat into ourselves, let us run to her; whenever we are no longer able to untie the knots in our lives, let us seek refuge in her.

Our times, bereft of peace, need a Mother who can reunite the human family. Let us look to Mary, to make us artisans of unity. Let us do so with her maternal creativity and concern for her children. For she unites them and consoles them; she listens to their troubles and she dries their tears. That is how our mother is with us: How tenderly she looks after us and draws close to us. She cares for us and remains close to us.

Let us Entrust this New Year 2025 to the Mother of God\*

"Let us entrust this coming year, 2025, to the Mother of God. Let us consecrate our lives to her. With tender love, she will open our eyes to their fullness. For she will lead us to Jesus, who is himself "the fullness of time", of every time, of our own time, of each one of us. Indeed, as was once written: "It was not the fullness of time that brought about the sending of the Son of God, but the sending of the Son that, brought about the fullness of time" (cf. Martin Luther, Vorlesung über den Galaterbrief 1516-1517, 18). Brothers and sisters, may this year be filled with the consolation of the Lord! May this year be filled with the tender maternal love of Mary, the Holy Mother of God.

***I now invite all of us together to proclaim three times: Holy Mother of God! Holy Mother of God!***

***\*His Holiness Pope Francis St. Peter's Basilica, Monday, 1st January 2024.***



***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.***



# VENERABLE FR. AGNELO DE SOUZA

- A FIREBRAND PREACHER - A SHEPHERD OF SOULS...

MISSIONARY OF THE SOCIETY OF PILAR

- Maria Imelda De Sousa

## We celebrate the 156th Birth Anniversary of Ven. Fr. Agnelo on 21st January, 2024

Village Anjuna in Bardez Taluka, North Goa, was the cradle of Agnelo. He was born in Gaumvaddo, Anjuna, on 21st January 1869, at seven o'clock in the evening on a Wednesday. It was the Feast of St. Agnes and that is the reason he was given the name "Agnelo" which means "lamb." He was baptized at home on the day he was born as there was in danger to his life.

His parents Miguel Arcanjo Mariano de Souza and Maria Sinforosa Perpetua Magalhaes were both from Anjuna. They were married in St. Michael's Church, Anjuna on 9th May, 1854. They were blessed with nine children, eight boys and one girl, Agnelo being the sixth child.

Agnelo's name perfectly matched his character. Among all his brothers, he was the most peaceful, docile, humble, obedient and a man of few words. His parents were middle class landed gentry with paddy fields, coconut and other fruit leasing groves of their own.

Agnelo's father was a strict disciplinarian. He cultivated his lands with the help of labourers whom he employed but whom he never fleeced or

harassed. An upright and honest man, his life was guided by justice and charity coupled with piety. Agnelo's mother was a paragon of virtues, devotion and zeal. She was an educated lady with an excellent upbringing. She was good at music. She could play the piano and the violin. She was equally accomplished in embroidery and in the art of cutting sewing garments.

Agnelo's parents were snatched from him when he was a young boy. His father passed away when he was 11 and his mother when he was 13.

After the death of his parents, Agnelo and his brothers and sister were looked after by his paternal uncle and when he died, his eldest brother Fr. Manuelinho took charge of them. Agnelo showed a special regard and affection to this brother of his and obeyed him to the last detail.

Agnelo was so good in catechism that his hobby was to teach Catechism to the boys of his village. Successive Parish Priests of Anjuna chose him to be monitor of Catechism classes. One of his relatives, Fr. Lazaro Fortunato de Souza, seeing him drawing around him the boys of the village and teaching



**Standing (left): Ven. Fr. Agnelo**



them Catechism, uttered these prophetic words: “Agnelo will one day be a virtuous priest and a renowned preacher. Those living at the time will have the pleasure of bearing testimony to and admiring what I say.”

Agnelo attended the primary school (Escola Rêgia) in his village in Anjuna and had a clever and an exemplary priest, Fr. Inacio Valeriano Rebelo, from Betalbatim as his teacher. Fr. Rebelo always appreciated the performance of Agnelo in the classroom and outside and lauded him to the skies. Agnelo completed his studies in Portuguese in flying colours, topping his class. It was Fr. Inacio Rebelo who first sowed the priestly vocation in the young soul of Agnelo.

After completing his “segundo grau” in Portuguese, his elder brother Fr. Manuelinho sent him for Latin classes which were conducted in a distant corner of the Parish of Anjuna by Fr. Luis Jose Paes. Here Agnelo redoubled his efforts to master the official language of the church whose ministry he ardently desired to undertake. After completing his two years of study in Latin, he was sent to “Aulas Filias” “Affiliated Classes” of the Seminary of Rachol at Corlim, Mapusa.

Here he finished his studies of Latin, French and English languages and simultaneously attended classes of Arithmetic History, Rhetoric and Philosophy, always securing the highest marks in every examination.

After finishing his studies at Mapusa, he was admitted in the Patriarchal Seminary of Rachol. Here in spite of his weak health, he never missed the daily Mass in the Seminary Church. By his studious habits, he secured the much coveted and singular distinction of “accessit” in his final fourth year of Theology.

On 19th December 1896, he was ordained sub deacon by the then Archbishop Dom Antonio Sebastiao Valente in the convent of Santa Monica, in Old Goa. On 17th July 1897, he joined the Society of Pilar as a Postulant. On 18th December 1897, he was ordained Deacon. On 22nd May 1898, he did his first profession for five years in the Society of Pilar.

On 24th September 1898, he was ordained priest by Dom Antonio Sebastiao Valente at the Se Cathedral, Old Goa. The next ten years marked the “Hidden Life” of Agnelo - time spent in the Monastery in prayer, penance, reading and reflection coming out occasionally at the call of obedience by his Superiors to exercise his priestly Ministry. **On 8th September 1908, Fr. Agnelo made his Final Profession in the Society of Pilar on the Feast of Nativity of Our Lady.**

Fr. Agnelo was born to preach and spread the Gospel. His sincerity and eloquence during his sermons left a deep impression on his listeners. God endowed him with a singular power to convince and convert from the pulpit. His sermons usually resulted in hardened sinners returning to the confessional. His reputation grew as an outstanding preacher. Although in every day life, he was quiet and soft spoken, in the pulpit his voice was vibrant, forceful, compelling and spell binding.

On 19th November 1927, after preaching his sermon in Rachol on the Vespers of the Feast of Sacred Heart of Jesus, he collapsed in the pulpit. It was a coronary thrombosis with paralysis of his left arm and leg. After receiving the Holy Viaticum with edifying devotion and profound emotion, he lapsed into a coma. On 20th November, at 5 o'clock he opened his eyes, looked aloft, smiled and after breathing three short but deep breaths, he expired.

On 10th November 1986, after the approval of the Apostolic Process on the life and heroic virtues of the servant of God, Fr. Agnelo, His Holiness Pope John Paul II declared him VENERABLE.

**May Venerable Fr. Agnelo's life inspire us to bear witness to God's Mercy.**



***Maria Imelda De Sousa** is based in Goa. A contributor of articles to different publications, she participates in sports competitions even at 90 years.*

# WE'RE BETTER TOGETHER

-Ninette D'Souza

## On 24th January, we celebrate the International Day of Education!

How best we learn has been a hot topic of discussion for decades and will continue to do so. When the students I tutor, asked what their Valedictory function would encompass, I reflected on a few essential and crucial aspects of Education.

"Education is not preparation for life; Education is life itself." These prophetic words of John Dewey resonate with me. 'Holistic Education' – a term bandied around frequently, necessitates a paradigm shift in understanding that, Education today is not meant to advise but to enlighten, not

meant to push problems aside because they are not related to our syllabi, but to work towards a solution, and to realise that every naughty child is a story untold. The field of Education is being swept by a new wave of

awakening in the teaching/learning process. The onus is now on the learner and the teacher is looked upon as a 'Facilitator.'

Our classrooms are increasingly becoming learning laboratories and Educators are called to move beyond traditional roles and become what I would term as social scientists, or maybe even researchers. "Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education," opined John F. Kennedy.

In this age of high-end technology and student-friendly Education, the most critical factor in any classroom continues to be, the teacher. In a world where young lives vacillate between conflicting values, this truth assumes greater proportions.

The Education imparted to generation Alpha, must reflect a power inherent in them - a power not gifted through nepotism, but one which arises from other centred, consistent ideologies, allowing them to grow up with a no-nonsense attitude, combined with a warm; affectionate heart.

"Educating the heart without educating the mind is no education at all." This claim of Aristotle made approximately 2407 years ago, is more relevant today than it ever was, wouldn't you agree?

"Children learn more from what you are than what you teach," claimed the author of *The Souls of Black Folk*, W. E. B. Bois. When I shared with my ex-students, my idea of actually wanting to write and publish, my first (and supposed to be the ONLY) book, it was their unabashed enthusiasm, that gave me the much-needed push when it came to shove. I requested all of them who were in my contact list along with some close friends, trusted colleagues

and family, to send in something they remembered about the person, Ninette. I was stirred by the sentiments that poured in, especially from my ex-students.

Most of the contributions have found their way into the two books I have authored, so far. The rest and those that still keep coming at the most unexpected moments, I hope to share in the third and final instalment of the '*Lamplighter*' series. The great psychologist and contemporary of Freud, Alfred Adler reiterated, that the teacher was the second chance for almost every student.

The critically important role of the teacher is being strongly underlined by new Neuro scientific research. Briefly, 'Mirror

Neurons' in our brains are not activated only

when we perform some action like singing but are also enabled when we watch someone else do something. Fancy that! Hence, when a child in a classroom sees the smiling face of the teacher, the child also responds with feeling of comfort.

Thus, it is the privilege of the teacher to smoothen and refine the rough; ragged edges of children and adolescents, correct insecure attachments, help to develop positive attitudes, maybe even overcome nearly all the mistakes in child rearing that parents make. A tough ask but highly attainable for motivated Educators who are willing to go way beyond the class environs. Truly the teaching vocation allows one to play a healing and lifesaving role!!!

As Educators of the citizens of a bright present and an even brighter future (by which I am not referring to six figure salaries and three BHK condos), we need to ensure that our children combine dignity with courage, are empowered to face the worst of crises in their personal lives, endure a lot from outside and come out stronger. Then and only then will we be able to align ourselves with these sublime words of Martin Luther King Jr. "Intelligence plus Character – That is the goal of true Education."



*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.*

# HAPPY NEW YEAR!

- Jubel D'Cruz

We all look forward to begin the New Year with great fun and enjoyment and wish that the year ahead brings us good luck.

Two days before the New Year could start, we begin our preparations. We clean our houses, get things in order, and buy crackers to burst them at the dot of 12.00.

On New Year's Eve, we enjoy the maximum. From morning till night, we are busy packing up gifts and planning pranks that could be played with our family members, neighbours and friends when the clock strikes 12.00.

Although different cultures have different calendars, the English calendar's New Year is what is celebrated all around the world. Different cultures also have their own New Year. For example, the Chinese celebrate their New Year in February, while many Hindus in India celebrate it towards the end of March or the beginning of April. The dates may vary across different cultures, but the theme of New Year remains the same, which is renewal.

## Healthy New Year Resolutions

As the year ends, many people make resolutions for the new year. However, my resolution is the same every year and is easy to follow. It has become a part of my routine lifestyle. By the grace of God, I have never had to go to a gym or follow a diet regime. I resolve to ensure my family's physical, mental, and emotional stability. However, I always remember to take care of myself, as my good health is essential for the well-being of my family. Instead of making resolutions meant to be broken, I choose a healthy and manageable lifestyle for myself and my family members.

Nowadays, people are much more aware that mental health is as important as physical health. Also, helping less fortunate people can give them immense happiness in life. Financial planning and time management can keep us away from worries and help us achieve mental stability. Listening to inspirational speakers can also be motivating.

My resolution every year is to do aerobic exercise for 30 to 40 minutes twice or thrice a week. For grocery shopping or visiting nearby relatives, I prefer walking to get fresh air and save money. So, I plan my eating habits in such a way that I can enjoy all the tastes and flavours while also keeping my weight almost stable. I take time for my hobbies, which gives me inner satisfaction and keeps me going.

New Year is a time to celebrate the start of something new. It is a time to make new promises, some to be broken, and some to be kept. It is also a time to look

ahead and try to change things for the better. It is also a time to look behind and see what we may have done wrong, and how to change it. It is also a time to start new friendships and a time to ask for forgiveness from someone you've hurt. New Year is a joyous time of the year because we feel like we get to start all over again. On New Year's Day, people are happy, laughing, giggling and sharing about the events of the past year and those before.

## Krazy New Year Jokes!

Goodbye 2024, Welcome 2025! Kick off the year with a laugh (or two) by telling these hilarious New Year's jokes to all the people you meet.

1. What is a corn's favourite day of the year?

**A. New Ear's Day.**

2. What do you say when you see someone after midnight on New Year's Day?

**A. I haven't seen you since last year.**

3. What does the Easter Bunny say on New Year's Day?

**A. Hoppy New Year!**

4. What does a ghost say on January 1?

**A. Happy Boo Year.**

5. What happened to the woman who stole a calendar on New Year's Eve?

**A. She got 12 months.**

6. What's a cow's favourite night of the year?

**A. Moo Year's Eve.**

7. What did the farmer give his wife on New Year's Eve?

**A. Hogs and kisses.**

8. What do snowmen do on New Year's Eve?

**A. Chill out.**

9. What should people never eat on New Year's Eve?

**A. Fire crackers.**

10. What did Dad say at 11:59 on New Year's Eve?

**A. I promise not to make any bad jokes for the rest of the year.**

11. Why did the man sprinkle sugar on his pillow on New Year's Eve?

**A. He wanted to start the year with sweet dreams.**

12. What does a jeweller do on December 31?

**A. Ring in the New Year.**

13. What was the caterpillar's New Year's resolution?

**A. To turn over a new leaf.**



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



# NEW BEGINNINGS

-Tony Menezes



*New Year isn't merely about turning the page,  
But the start of a new chapter - a time to engage,  
With hope, aspirations and honest resolutions,  
To reflect on the past and celebrate our evolution.*



*It is the beginning of universal renewal and hope,  
With transition and revival across the globe,  
With each culture adding its unique traditions,  
Partaking in this collective, optimistic celebration.*



*New Year is a time of reflection, and joy,  
To inspire fresh choices, sans us feeling coy,  
Embrace new opportunities, set up new goals,  
Unleash our potential, yet be in control.*



*This cherished celebration unites people in hope,  
For a better and brighter future to cope,  
Through positive changes as we move on in life,  
Firm in our footing throughout concord and strife.*



*New Year is much more than a calendar change,  
It's a celebration of love and mutual exchange,  
Of ideas, optimism, brotherhood and care,  
And in times of tribulations, always being there.*



*These universally diverse New Year celebrations,  
With varied cultures and unique traditions,  
Are a sign of unity, and joyous abilities,  
Setting meaningful goals for future inevitabilities.*



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

# AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Vashi

## Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School & Jr. College, Vashi, shines in swimming and athletics at National School Games

Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School & Jr. College, Vashi, a branch of Pilar Society, Goa, is once again in the news for winning dozens of medals at the Nationals in swimming and athletics. At the recently concluded National School Games, Agnel swimmers **won a total of 16 medals**. Leading the tally was **Rishabh Das**, an international medallist in swimming who won three Gold medals, a Silver and Bronze medals in the relays. His teammate **Shlok Khopade** also won a Gold medal, in addition to a Silver in the relay. **Adi Signapurkar**, resident of Goa and a junior college student of Agnel's Vashi, won a Silver and a Bronze each in the relays. **Aditi Hegde**, in spite of being the youngest swimmer on the team won three Gold and two Silver medals.

The superlative performance by the swimmers were also emulated by the Agnel athletes, mainly in sprint events, at the National School Games in Athletics held in Lucknow. **Anchal Patil** from the Agnel's junior college won a Gold in the High jump with an impressive feat of 165cm. Her teammate, **Aditya Pisal**, also won the 100m dash in 10.81 seconds to snatch the National gold, as well as a second place finish in the 200 metre race and the 4 x 100 metre relay.

Prior to this, Agnel swimmers had won 29 medals at the Junior Nationals and 19 medals at the Senior Nationals. Agnel, Vashi is known all over India as a top performer in a myriad of sports and is a Khelo India Accredited Academy in six sports disciplines. Having its own world-class infrastructure for almost all sports from shooting to swimming to badminton, gives its students an edge to winning medals at the national level as well as the international level.

### STAR AGNEL SWIMMERS



**Shlok Khopade**



**Rishabh Das**



**Aditi Hegde**



**Adi Signapurkar**

### TOP AGNEL ATHLETES



**Aditya Pisal**



**Anchal Patil with Agnel's athletics coach Shrinivas Gupta**

# AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Greater Noida

## Fr. Agnel School shines at IIT Techfest 2024

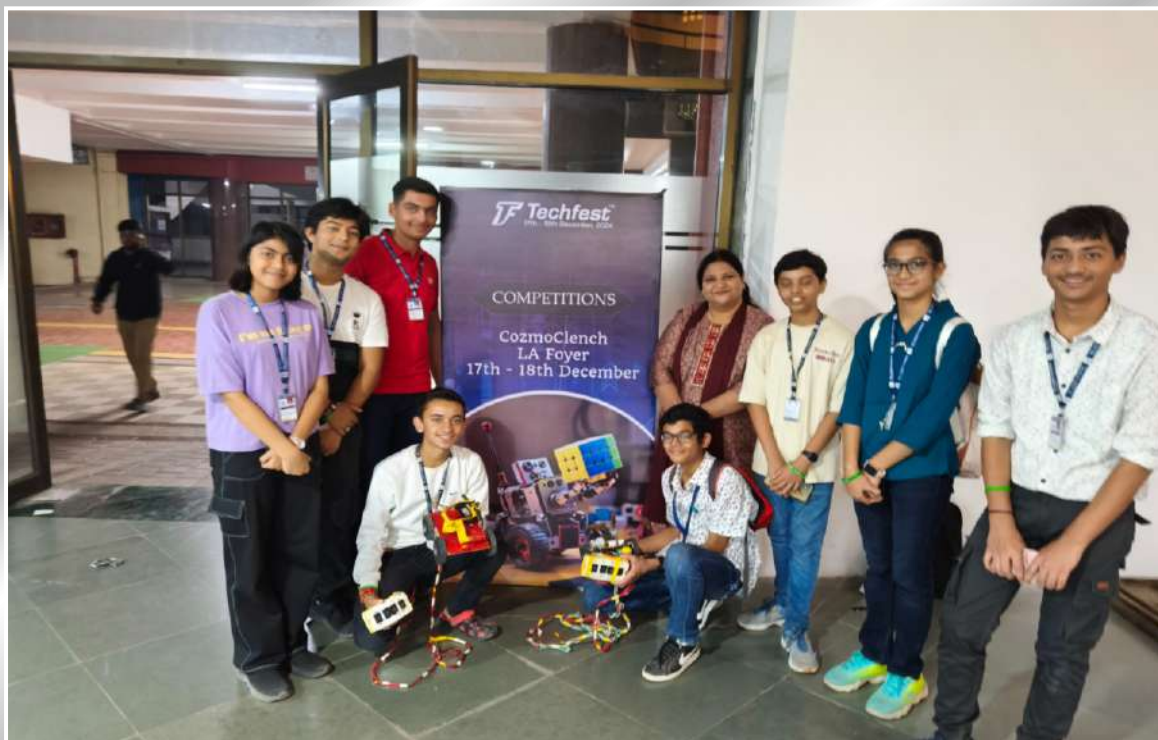
A team of talented students from Fr. Agnel School, Greater Noida, represented the institution at the prestigious IIT Techfest 2024, hosted by IIT Bombay from 17th to 19th December 2024.

This annual technical festival serves as a dynamic platform where innovation and creativity take centre stage. It celebrates innovation and ingenuity, and the selected students earned their places through their remarkable talent and hard work. Over the past weeks, these young innovators have worked tirelessly, exploring their technical expertise and developing problem-solving acumen. The students have demonstrated exceptional skills and resilience to secure their spot through a rigorous selection process.

The school thoughtfully arranged travel and accommodation, ensuring a seamless and comfortable experience for the team from Classes IX-XI - Abdullah Tariq, Aditya Bhatwan, Pragya Sharma, Divyansh Vashishtha, Nishka Kashyap, Divyaansh Bahukhandi, Aarush Sood and Shubh Teotia.

Aarush Sood and Ishaan Nath from Class XI A2 have been selected as the Organising Committee members for Mock United Nations event at IIT Bombay.

This achievement reflects the spirit of innovation and excellence nurtured at Fr. Agnel School, Greater Noida. **The team returned** not just as competitors but as trailblazers of a promising future.



**The team of talented students from Fr. Agnel School, Greater Noida, gained valuable insights at IIT Techfest 2024.**



# MIRACLES OF OLD GOA - I

- Jacqueline Kelly

**In this series, we see that the biggest miracle of Old Goa is the sacred relics of St. Francis Xavier which has remained intact since 1552.**

Goa - it is that distant land that more and more people seek to come to for a holiday. It is a land where life moves at its own pace. A land of smiling people, where you can stroll aimlessly letting the easy-does-it atmosphere envelope you, taking you into a world of your own.

"Goenkar" is what most Goans prefer calling themselves. Meaning "a true Goan" in the local language, these people are a very warm-hearted, friendly and hospitable lot. They are by nature hard-working and dedicated.

Goans have one of the highest per capita income and literacy rate in the country. The languages they speak are Konkani, English, Marathi and Hindi. A number of people also speak Portuguese. Goans are abundantly gifted as far as their talents for music, dance, drama and sports are concerned and the love for their passions knows no bounds. They are very modest, outgoing and sporting. Goans like to socialise and celebrate.

Goa is snugly ensconced between the Sahyadri range on the east and the Arabian Sea to the west. And along its 102 km palm fringed coastline, you will find some of the world's loveliest beaches. With an area of 3702 sq.kms, it is the smallest state in the country.

Once you are in Goa, you will notice something beautiful and different about the place as compared to the rest of the country. As you walk down the by-lanes of the town, you will see old, yet well-maintained traditional houses with a "balcao" and a "sopo" [a seat built on to the pillars of the verandas], where old folks would sit, gossip and watch the world go by.

Goa is colourful. Most houses are white and red tiled. And as you drive along the countryside, you will see verdant green paddy fields. At the beach, you will find the sands silvery white, and the water and skies, a clear blue. The evening adds gold to the skies as the sun sets into the sea.

Goa is also privileged to have been the starting point of all the missionary labours. **One of the missionaries being Saint Francis Xavier, the great Apostle of the East, Patron of the Missions and the place where his sacred remains are preserved.**

**Saint Francis Xavier - the patron saint of Goa**

Born in the Castle of Xavier in the Kingdom of Navarra [now a Province of Spain] on 7th April, 1506; died on the Island of Sancian near the coast of China, on 2nd December, 1552. In 1525, having completed a preliminary course of studies in his country, Francis Xavier went to Paris where he entered the college of Sainte Barbe. Here he met Saint Ignatius of Loyola.

On 24th June, 1537, Francis Xavier received the Holy Order of Priesthood along with Saint Ignatius. The following year, he went to Rome. On 7th April, 1541,

Francis Xavier left for India on a sailing ship. This was a dangerous voyage and he landed at Goa on 6th May, 1542. He spent his time preaching and ministering to the sick. Francis Xavier also visited Tamil Nadu and Ceylon. In the spring of 1545, Francis Xavier left for Malacca, China, Japan, and other places. In 1547, he had to return to Goa as his Society demanded his presence.

In April, 1552, he left Goa for China. After enduring many hardships, he landed at Santa Cruz, a small island of Sancian near the coast of China. Whilst planning to reach the mainland, he fell ill on November 21. His journey by ship aggravated his illness, so he was moved to land where a crude hut was built to shelter him. In these poor surroundings, he breathed his last on 2nd December, 1552. [He was then 46 years, 7 months and 26 days old of which 10 years, 7 months were spent in Asia].

He was canonized on 12th March, 1622 by Pope Gregory XV along with Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Saint Isidore of Madrid [1080-1130], Saint Philip Neri [1515-1595], and Saint Teresa of Avila [1515-1582]. However, Pope Gregory XV died before he could issue the customary Decree of Canonization. His successor, Pope Urban VIII hastened to do so on 6th August, 1623.

The body of Saint Francis Xavier remained fresh for nearly 125 years after his death. Now, we no longer refer to the remains as "BODY" but only the sacred relics of the body. It is enclosed in a glass case and kept for veneration on the Florentine Mausoleum set up in 1698. The Church of Jesus [now referred to as "Bom Jesu" or Good Jesus] was built by the Jesuits [1594-1605]. The third home of the Jesuits in the City of Goa now called Old Goa. The Holy remains are in this Basilica of Bom Jesus. **Saint Francis Xavier is considered the greatest missionary since the time of the Apostles.**

**The Hand of Saint Francis Xavier**

After Francis Xavier's death in 1552, he was buried once off the coast of China and again in Malaysia, for a period of almost two years, before being transferred to the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Goa, India - one of his key missionary sites. Each time his body was exhumed, no natural decomposition had taken place, making Francis Xavier an incorrupt saint.

The Order of Jesuits in Rome requested to have Saint Francis Xavier's right arm brought to them, as he was one of the founding members of the Jesuit Church. The right forearm, which Francis Xavier used to bless and baptize his people, was detached by Superior General, Claudio Acquaviva, in 1614. It has been displayed since in a silver reliquary at the main Jesuit Church in Rome, called Church of Gesù.

**Crab with Crucifix**

Once, Saint Francis Xavier was travelling by ship to Japan. There was a fierce storm and his ship was tossed about. Saint Francis Xavier prayed for the storm to subside and he dipped the Crucifix, which he had with him, in the water. Whilst doing this, the

Crucifix slipped from his hand into the water. The storm subsided and the sea was calm. One day, while he was walking on the shores of Malacca, he noticed



a crab with a crucifix in its claws. He was astonished to see it was the same Crucifix that had fallen from his hands into the sea. He picked up the Crucifix and made the Sign of the Cross

on the crab. That is why sometimes, one comes across crabs with the Sign of the Cross and two candles on either side of the Cross.

### **Miraculous water from the well at Old Goa [Old Goa College of Saint Paul]**

The Church of Saint Paul once belonged to Saint Paul's College, whose Superior was Saint Francis Xavier, is now in ruins. At the side of this façade is a lane where one can see a Chapel. On the right side of this Chapel is the well.

In spite of the fact that Saint Paul's college and the Church were reduced to ruins, the Chapel remained along with the well.

The Portuguese Government repaired it in 1859 and rebuilt it in 1884. The water from the well on the Eastern side seems to be miraculous. Pilgrims go there to drink the water and to bathe. Some carry bottles of water home.

In 1974, the well was cleaned. In spite of the water being dirty, yet those who consumed that water

never suffered any ill effects. According to an old lady caretaker, many miracles were witnessed. Several times, people who attempted suicide by jumping into the well, were brought out alive even after three days. In the reflection of the water in the well, one could see a round silver coloured moon and a half pose looking upwards although the water was disturbed when drawing water from this well. This image was visible during the nine days of novenas in honour of Saint Francis Xavier and during the expositions. These testimonies are from people who reside in the surrounding areas.

In commemoration of the fifth Birth Centenary of the Saint, a Mass was started in that Chapel on the 6th of every month from May, 2006.

Public exposition began from 1782 when the Jesuits had to leave their house in 1759. A rumour had spread that the Jesuits had taken away the relics leaving the empty coffin behind. To reassure the public, the authorities decided on a short exposition of four days. So far, there has been a series of expositions. In 1955, the relics were enclosed in a crystal urn and one could touch only the glass. During the 1952 exposition, one could touch his feet.

Previous expositions were held in 1782, 1859, 1878, 1890, 1900, 1910, 1922, 1931, 1942, 1952, 1961, 1964, 1974, 1984, 1994, 2004 and 2014.

**The XVIII Solemn Exposition of the Relics of Saint Francis Xavier, popularly known as "Goencho Saib" which commenced on November 21, 2024, ended on January 5, 2025.**

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



## **There is no Joy Greater than the Joy of GIVING**

### **Lancy Bessy Rebello, Mangalore**

Kindly accept a cheque of Rs. 6000 towards your charities, as our annual contribution. May God's blessings be upon Fr. Agnel Ashram, for serving a noble cause.

### **Flossy Saldanha, Bandra**

As a Christmas gift, I have made a small donation of Rs. 2000 by cheque, towards the welfare of the Balbhavan boys. It's good to know that they are progressing well in their studies and are developing their skillset in drawing, painting, music and sports.

### **Shashikant Babulal, Gamdevi**

In this season of sharing, I am happy to offer a token of Rs.4000 by cheque as a Christmas gift for the Balbhavan boys.

### **Carol Mathias, Mangalore**

I have donated an amount of Rs.100000 via NEFT towards food, education, stationery and essentials for the children at Balbhavan.

### **Lionel Remedios, UAE**

I have transferred an amount of Rs.5000 as a Christmas gift for the talented Balbhavan boys. They are a close-knit group who are happy for each other's success.

### **Swapnil Deshpande, Thane**

As a token of thanksgiving for the favours received, I have contributed Rs.15000 as sponsorship of a child's education. It gives me a deep sense of satisfaction to help the needy.

### **Dorothy Ann Philomena Singh, Mysuru**

I have remitted an amount of Rs.1200 via NEFT as a Christmas gift for the children at Balbhavan.

### **Joyal Sunny, Kottayam**

I have donated an amount of Rs.1000 towards the needs of the Balbhavan boys, in thanksgiving for the favours received.

## DAVID - A MULTI-COLOURS PERSONALITY, A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART!

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

David, whose name in Hebrew means "beloved," stands as one of the most prominent figures in the Bible. His life is a vibrant mosaic of roles: shepherd, warrior, musician, outlaw, loyal friend, king, poet, sinner, and saint. Mentioned more than one thousand times in both the Old and New Testaments, David's journey is a compelling narrative of human frailty interwoven with divine purpose.

### David's Early Life and Anointing

David's remarkable ascent began as King Saul's favour with God waned. God directed the prophet Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint one of Jesse's sons as the next king of Israel. Surprisingly, it was David, the youngest son, described as a handsome youth with ruddy complexion and bright eyes - whom God chose. This anointing, performed in the presence of his family, marked the beginning of David's extraordinary destiny (1 Samuel 16:1-13).

### Defeating Goliath: A Pivotal Victory

David's defining moment came when he confronted Goliath, a Philistine giant who had terrorized Israel. Armed only with a sling and five stones, David's confidence lay not in his own might but in God's power. Declaring, "The battle is the Lord's," he defeated Goliath, securing a monumental victory for Israel (1 Samuel 17). This act of faith and bravery catapulted David into national prominence and set him on the path to kingship.

### Service to Saul and Friendship with Jonathan

Following his triumph over Goliath, David joined King Saul's court as a musician and warrior. His growing success and popularity, however, fuelled Saul's jealousy. Despite Saul's multiple attempts to kill him, David remained steadfast in his loyalty, refusing to harm Saul, whom he regarded as God's anointed (1 Samuel 24:6). During this turbulent time, David formed a profound and enduring friendship with Saul's son, Jonathan. Their covenant of mutual loyalty and love remains a timeless example of true friendship (1 Samuel 18:1-4).

### Rise to Kingship

After Saul's death in battle, Israel faced a power struggle. David was anointed king over Judah, while Saul's son, Ish-bosheth, ruled over Israel. Eventually,

David prevailed, uniting the kingdom and being crowned king over all Israel (2 Samuel 5:3). He established Jerusalem as his capital, known as the City of David (2 Samuel 5:9). Under his reign, Israel flourished, and David secured significant military victories, expanding the nation's borders and establishing it as a regional power.

### Spiritual Leadership and the Ark of the Covenant

David's reign was characterized not only by political and military achievements but also by spiritual leadership. He brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, symbolizing the centrality of God's presence in the life of Israel (2 Samuel 6:12-15). David's deep spirituality is also evident in his psalms, earning him the title "the sweet psalmist of Israel"

(2 Samuel 23:1). Although David aspired to build a temple for God, the prophet Nathan revealed that this task would be fulfilled by David's son, Solomon. Instead, God established a covenant with David, promising that his throne would endure forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

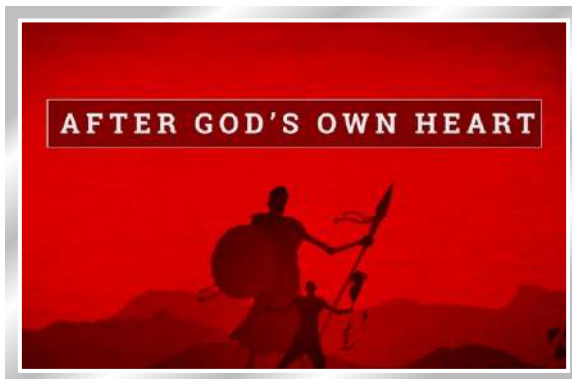
### David's Sin, Repentance, and Family Struggles

Despite his close relationship with God, David was not immune to moral failure. His most grievous sin was his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba and the subsequent orchestration of her husband Uriah's death (2 Samuel 11). Confronted by Nathan, David expressed deep remorse, as captured in Psalm 51, where he pleads for a clean heart and a renewed spirit. However, his sins had far-reaching consequences, leading to turmoil within his family. His son Absalom rebelled, causing a painful conflict (2 Samuel 15). Later, another son, Adonijah, attempted to claim the throne, but through the intervention of Nathan and Bathsheba, Solomon was anointed as David's successor (1 Kings 1:28-35).

### David's Legacy and Lessons for Today

David's legacy is enduring and profound. The Davidic Covenant laid the foundation for the hope of a Messiah, a promise fulfilled in Jesus Christ, often referred to as the "Son of David" (Matthew 1:1).

David's life offers valuable lessons for today. His unwavering faith in God during trials inspires trust in God's providence. His psalms provide a rich resource for worship, capturing the full spectrum of





human emotions. Moreover, David's humility in seeking forgiveness demonstrates that no one is beyond God's mercy.

**His story underscores a vital truth:** God uses imperfect people to fulfil His perfect purposes. David's life challenges believers to cultivate a heart after God, live with integrity, and rely on His grace for strength and restoration.

### Conclusion

David's journey from shepherd to king reflects a life profoundly shaped by God's will. His narrative, marked by both triumphs and failures, showcases God's faithfulness and the transformative power of grace. Through his life and legacy, David continues to inspire believers, offering timeless insights into faith, leadership, and repentance.

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

### BIBLE QUIZ ON KING DAVID

1. Who was David's father?  
A) Jesse  
B) Saul  
C) Samuel
2. What was David's occupation before he became king?  
A) Farmer  
B) Shepherd  
C) Carpenter
3. Who anointed David as king?  
A) Nathan  
B) Samuel  
C) Eli
4. Who did David defeat with a sling and a stone?  
A) Goliath  
B) Abner  
C) Pharaoh
5. What musical instrument did David play to soothe King Saul?  
A) Harp  
B) Flute  
C) Lyre
6. What was the name of David's best friend, Saul's son?  
A) Jonathan  
B) Abner  
C) Eliab
7. What was the name of David's first wife, Saul's daughter?  
A) Abigail  
B) Michal  
C) Bathsheba
8. Where was David anointed king over all Israel?  
A) Bethlehem  
B) Hebron  
C) Jerusalem

9. What city did David capture and make the capital of Israel?

- A) Jericho
- B) Samaria
- C) Jerusalem

10. Who confronted David about his sin with Bathsheba?

- A) Samuel
- B) Nathan
- C) Gad

11. What psalm did David write after his sin with Bathsheba?

- A) Psalm 23
- B) Psalm 51
- C) Psalm 150

12. Which of David's sons rebelled against him and declared himself king?

- A) Solomon
- B) Absalom
- C) Adonijah

13. How long did David reign as king over Israel?

- A) 30 years
- B) 40 years
- C) 50 years

14. Which gospel begins with Jesus' genealogy as the "Son of David?"

- A) Luke
- B) Matthew
- C) John

15. What did David desire to build for the Lord?

- A) A palace
- B) A temple
- C) A city wall

### ANSWERS TO THE BIBLE QUIZ ON KING DAVID

- 1-A) Jesse (1 Samuel 16:1)
- 2-B) Shepherd (1 Samuel 16:11)
- 3-B) Samuel (1 Samuel 16:13)
- 4-A) Goliath (1 Samuel 17:49)
- 5-C) Lyre (1 Samuel 16:23)
- 6-A) Jonathan (1 Samuel 18:1-3)
- 7-B) Michal (1 Samuel 18:27)
- 8-B) Hebron (2 Samuel 5:3)
- 9-C) Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:7)
- 10-B) Nathan (2 Samuel 12:7)
- 11-B) Psalm 51 (Psalm 51:1-2)
- 12-B) Absalom (2 Samuel 15:10)
- 13-B) 40 years (1 Kings 2:11)
- 14-B) Matthew (Matthew 1:1)
- 15-B) A temple (2 Samuel 7:12-13)



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## AROMA OF CHRIST – ARE YOU THE “FRAGRANCE” OF THE SAVIOUR?

-Vinay Silva

The call to be a witness to Jesus is given to us by Jesus Himself at the time of His Ascension (Acts 1:8). This call applies to all the baptised; and can be lived out in different ways in the world and in varying circumstances. These days, there is a decline in spirituality amidst numerous distractions. Worldliness has entered into minds and hearts of many Christians. The sad reality is that the call to follow Jesus and be His disciple is taking a back-seat. If this continues, what will be the state of the spiritual lives of the next generation? Where is the church heading in the future? It comes down to a realisation that while we may not be able to change the world, there yet exists a serious responsibility on each individual to be a positive influence in the smaller setting of his/her life.

In the Vatican document titled 'The Door of Faith', Pope Benedict states that – “All Christians are called to radiate the Word of Truth that the Lord Jesus left us.” This raises up the question of whether or not we are willing to take up the call from the Lord and be His witness in a suffering world. The Holy Spirit is given to us to help us and direct us in what seems to be a difficult task. When divine aid is received humbly and put into action, we see the work of God in and through us, in spite of weaknesses and failings. What is needed is a sincere inner desire to answer the call and walk in obedience to Jesus.

There is a famous line in a song – “They will know we are Christians by our love.”

**Questions 1 & 2: *Is it really by your love that others know that you are a Christian? Or is it just because you are from a Christian family and because you go to church?***

**For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.** – 2Cor 2:15

The word “aroma” refers to a fragrance or a smell.

### **Question 3: *Do you smell of Christ?***

In spite of all your sinfulness, weaknesses and failings, Jesus wants to draw you, and all of us, into an empowering and transforming relationship with Him, so that we can be instruments of His saving grace to others! This is how the Kingdom of God grows. If we allow for the love of God (think of the nature of water) to flow into us through a sincere prayer life, we become instruments for this same love to flow out and reach the people around us! Through the Holy Spirit given to us (Rom 5:5), we can receive the same love that Jesus enjoyed from the Heavenly Father! This is available for you and me today!

### **Question 4 to ask ourselves: *Attitudes are contagious! Is yours worth catching?***

There is a song many of us sing often at church. One of the lines is – “Make me a channel of your peace.” For Jesus to answer this prayer, an open heart is needed along with open hands. It's very simple - To get this peace, you need to hang around with the Giver of the peace – Jesus, the Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6). To hang around with Him means to spend quality time with Him in prayer for some part of the day, and also in fellowship of the Holy Spirit for the remaining part of the day. Yes, Jesus longs to spend the day with you! Every day!

Say this from your heart - “Every day, every hour, Lord I need your cleansing Power!”

Your intimacy with the Saviour inside you should overflow outwards to others. This is so important

for the Christian life! If you are connected to Jesus, the “sweet smelling” aura of a sincere Christian disciple can have a wonderful and transforming influence on the people who cross paths with you! Desire for this to happen!

**“Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.” – John 15:4**

Jesus tells us this because He desires for us to share Him with others. His indwelling presence is a foundational element and an absolute necessity for this to happen.

There is a tendency to neglect the role of the Holy Spirit. Let's keep in mind the strong exhortation of Pope Francis, “Don't forget the Holy Spirit!” (Jan. 2015), because without the Holy Spirit, being an authentic witness to Jesus will NOT be possible! Jesus confirms this at the time of His Ascension.

**“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” – Acts 1:8**

Pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit! Only through Him can you abide in Jesus! Only through Him can you spend quality time in prayer, imbibe His attitudes and be the “Aroma of Christ”!

The urgent message of Jesus – take note of these words in the Bible:

**On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive. – John 7:37-39**

**Let's close with Question 5: Are the Living Waters flowing out of you and reaching to others?**

This does not mean that you need to be a perfect sinless being! This call can be lived out in any circumstance in life, and holds good even for very busy people! Take on your call as a disciple of Christ! Desire to inspire others to love Jesus! Seek Him, spend time with Him, follow Him, love Him, serve Him! Here then, you will be the “Fragrance” of the Saviour!

***Prayer:***

*Just a closer walk with Thee.  
Grant it, Jesus, is my plea.  
Daily walking close to Thee.  
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be.*



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

## 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**

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# JUST FOR FUN

-Christine D'Sylva

## Happy New Year!

*It feels great to be lucky enough to see and experience another year. It is not something everyone experiences and we have to thank God for yet another year that hopefully is filled with joys and nice surprises!*

*With that optimistic thought, let's begin...*

## New Year Story



A popular speaker started off the seminar by holding up a 1000 rupee note. A crowd of around 200 had gathered to hear him speak.

He asked, "Who would like this rupee note?"

All hands went up.

He then crumpled the bill and posed the same question, "What if I do this? Do you still want it?"

All hands went up.

He then dropped the rupee note on the floor and stomped on it with his big shoe. It became crumpled and dirty. "Now do you still want it?"

All hands went up.

He then picked it up, smoothed it gently and said, "My friends what I have just showed you is a very important lesson. This 1000 rupee note is valuable and has a lot of value. I crumpled it, stomped on it yet it did not decree its value. It is still valuable, can buy you quite a lot. Its worth never changed. Yet many times in our lives, we feel trampled on, feel as if we are ground to the dirt and nothing seems to work out. We feel useless and unworthy at these times. Our self-esteem takes a battering. But remember this very important fact that you must not lose sight of. No matter what has happened or is happening or will happen, you are a person, a child of God who will never lose your value. You are special - Never forget it."

## Quiz

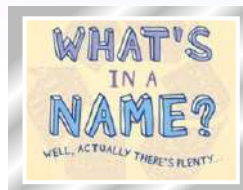
### New Year Traditions



1. What food do the French eat to usher in the New Year?
2. What do the people of Netherlands eat to usher in the New Year?
3. In which country is it considered lucky to wear do polkas dots to ensure a happy new year?
4. Which country has a New Year tradition of throwing a bucket of water out of the front door?
5. Which country hangs pomegranates and smashes them against the door?

## What's in a Name?

### Women in the Bible



**Deborah** - A Hebrew name that means bee. She was a prophetess and influential judge of ancient Israel. This is a remarkable achievement in the traditional era where women were confined to their homes. Deborah certainly

lived up to her name of being like a busy bee who gives us honey. Like a bee she contributed greatly to society.

**Ruth** - A Hebrew name that means compassionate friend. She definitely lives up to her name for she proved to not just be a daughter-in-law to her mother-in-law Naomi but was her compassionate friend refusing to ever leave her although she could after losing her husband.

**Esther** - A Hebrew name that means star. Esther rose to become queen and she lives up to her name of a special star who because of her beauty is chosen by the reigning King. Like a shining star, she risks her life to save the Jewish people from destruction when the court official, a bad man named Haman persuades the king, her husband to issue a decree that all Jews in the Persian empire should be killed. It was Esther who pleaded with her husband to save her people. Till today she is remembered by the Jewish people.

## Smile Please



1. The past, the present and the future walk into a bar ... it was tense.

2. A guy walks into a store and asks the clerk if they had any Polish sausages.

The clerk asks him, "Are you Polish?" The guy says, "I take

offence at that. If I came here and ordered German sausages would you think that I was German?"

The clerk says, "No."

"If I came here and ordered Italian sausages would you think that I was Italian?"

"No sir."

"Then what makes you think that I am Polish?"

The clerk says, "Sir, this is a hardware store."

3. A wife got so mad with her husband that she packed his bags and ordered him to get out. As he walked towards the door, she yelled, "I hope you die a long, slow and painful death."

The husband turned around and drawled, "So you really want me to stay here?"

4. What should be written on a dentist's grave?

Answer - *This is the last cavity he filled.*

5. Harry: "My wife and I got the recipe for a perfect marriage."

Mark: "What?"

Harry: "Twice a week we go to a good restaurant for beverages, companionship and good food."

Mark: "That is nice."

Harry: "Yeah only thing is we go on separate days. I go on Fridays, she goes on Tuesdays."

### Riddles



1. What fruit can you never cheer up?
2. What is the richest nut?
3. First you throw away my outside and cook my inside. Then you eat my outside and throw away my inside. What am I?
4. I am a bird, a fruit and I am a

person. What am I?

### Inspirational Quotes on New Year



1. "Cheers to a new year and another chance for us to get it right." - Oprah Winfrey
2. "Don't live the same year 75 times and call it a life." - **Robin Sharma**
3. "I like the dreams of the future better than the history

of the past." - **Thomas Jefferson**

4. "It is never too late to be what you might have been." - **George Eliot**

5. "Your success and happiness lies in you. Resolve to keep happy and your joy and you shall form an invincible host against difficulties." - **Helen Keller**

### New Year traditions and superstitions for good luck



All over the world people do many things both strange and funny to welcome the New Year and to hope for good luck. Here are some of them:

1. In Spain, people eat 12 grapes at midnight, one for each clock chime and this is also believed to ward off evil spirits.
2. In Denmark, people stand on a chair and leap into January at midnight. The effort is rewarded as it is supposed to be bad luck if you forget.
3. In Ireland, the Irish bang Christmas bread on the walls of their homes. It is supposed to chase any bad spirits out of the home and to start the New Year off with a clean slate.
4. In Colombia, people take empty suitcases and run around the block as fast as they can. It is supposed to guarantee a year filled with travel.

*So what tradition do you find most strange? Would you ever do any one of them for good luck and happiness in the New Year?*

### New Year's Inspirational Story



A young girl was a very pessimistic and unhappy person. She complained to her dad in a whining tone that she was miserable and that she did not think she was going to ever be happy and successful in life.

Now her dad was a chef and a very wise man. He knew his daughter very well and had often felt saddened by her attitude.

His daughter told him how tired she was of fighting and struggling through life all the time. It seemed just as if when one problem got resolved, another followed.

He dad being a chef took her to his favourite place - the kitchen. He told her to watch him carefully.

The young girl stood by his side and felt bewildered but did as he had instructed which was to watch carefully.

He filled three pots with water and placed each pot on a high fire. Once the three pots began to boil, he placed potatoes in one pot, eggs in the second pot and ground coffee beans in the third pot.

He then let them sit there and boil. The daughter impatiently groaned and wondered what he was doing.

After twenty minutes, her dad turned off the burners. He took out the potatoes from the pot and placed them in a bowl and he did the same to the eggs. He placed the coffee beans in a cup.

He turned to her and asked, "Daughter, what do you see?"

"Potatoes, eggs and coffee." She replied.

"Look and touch the potatoes." She did and noticed they were soft. He then asked her to take one of the eggs and break it. She peeled off its shell for it was a hard-boiled egg. Finally, he asked her to sip the coffee. Its rich aroma brought a smile to her face.

"What does this mean? She asked, feeling puzzled.

Her dad then said, "All three - the potatoes, eggs and coffee beans face the same adversity - the boiling water. But each reacted differently. The potatoes went in hard, unrelenting and strong but in boiling water they became soft and weak. The eggs fragile with their thin outer corner and liquid inside became hard in its interior in boiling water. However the ground coffee beans were unique. After they were exposed to boiling water, they changed the water and created something new. They gave us a delicious cup of coffee."

He then asked, "Which one of these is you? When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a potato, an egg or a coffee bean?"

The daughter said in a small voice, "I guess the potato or egg."

"So now you know that all of us face adversities but it is our attitude that determines and shapes our lives." said her dad with a smile and he hugged her.

From that day on, his daughter slowly changed into a more cheerful girl able to face adversities and minor problems with a better attitude and not a defeatist one. She became a girl who made her dad very proud of her.



## A Woman of Substance



On 21st May, 2013, Sinha reached the summit of Mount Everest as part of the Tata Group who sponsored the Eco Everest Expedition. She reached the summit after 17 hours of climbing and 52 days of total effort.

Her story is one of determination and overcoming obstacles. In 2011, she was thrown from a moving train by thieves and run over by another train. Her leg was paralysed and amputated below the knee. While recovering at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, she was inspired by Yuvraj Singh and decided to climb Mount Everest. She trained at the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering in Uttarkashi and completed 18 months of rigorous training.

Her journey did not stop there. After Mount Everest, she climbed the Kilimanjaro in Africa, Elbrus in Europe, Kosciuszko in Australia and the Aconcagua in South America. She currently runs a non-profit school for underprivileged and handicapped kids.

Her life is a fitting tribute to a woman who did not let adversity stop her from achieving her dreams and also to become a kinder person ready to help others. It did not harden her up or make her bitter as it could but instead hardened her resolve to face life with courage and determination.

## What's the Good Word?



1. The superstition for New Year's love.
2. The colour of love for New Year.
3. The foods that are supposed to cause bad luck in New Year.
4. This day is considered to be the unluckiest day of the year.

5. The Pope who decided January 1st as a New Year.

## Fun Facts



New Year's Day birthdays are particularly rare. Very few people are actually born on 1st January. According to superstition, if you are born on New Year's Day, you will automatically be lucky

throughout your life and even more so if you are born at midnight. It is said that 25th December is one of the least common birthdays and 1st January follows second. But the rarest birthday date is 29th February. There is roughly only a one in 1,460 chance of being born on this day.

It is considered good luck to make seven wishes while jumping seven waves in Rio de Janeiro's New Year party.

In Florida, in Kew West, a drag queen named Sushi is lowered from a bar rooftop in a giant, red high heeled shoe. This has been happening since 1996.

## Brain Teasers



1. A mother and daughter decided to go shopping. They buy one skirt each, yet the total skirts are three. How is this possible?

2. A man is discovered murdered on a Sunday morning. His wife summons

the police and the police question the inhabitants of the home.

The wife says that she was sleeping. The cook said he was cooking the breakfast. The gardener said he was planting seeds. The maid said she was getting the mail and the butler said he was polishing the silverware. The police immediately arrest the culprit? Who was it?

3. Two men say that they have the same parents and are born in the same year, same month and same time. Yet they claim that they are not twins? Why?

4. What is the only word in the dictionary that is spelt incorrectly?

## Wisdom Message of the Month

Most people get married believing that marriage is like a beautiful gift that when unwrapped will give them love, companionship, friendship etc. The truth is that marriage is just the beginning not the end of getting these gifts. A person has to put in work and effort in order to get all these gifts from marriage. After all it takes two hands to clap. There is no love in marriage. Love is in each partner waiting to be expressed. The couple has to put love into the gift box, not hope it will just magically spring out. There is no romance in marriage. Romance has to be infused by learning to plan outings together, going for vacations together and generally enjoying each other's company. There is no praise in the gift box of marriage either. To earn praise, one has to be worthy of it yet at the same time tolerant, understanding and more quick to praise than to criticize.

*That's all for this month. I hope the New Year brings plenty of nice surprises and joy for you. Take care and God Bless.*

## Answers

### Quiz

1. Pancakes. 2. Doughnuts and ring shaped foods. 3. Philippines. 4. Cuba. 5. Greece.

### Riddles

1. A blueberry. 2. A cash-ew nut. 3. Corn. 4. Kiwi.

### What's the Good Word?

1. Kiss someone at midnight. 2. Red. 3. Lobster, crab or chicken. 4. Friday the 13th. 5. Pope Gregory XIII

### Brain Teasers

1. They are grand-mother, daughter and grand-daughter. 2. The maid is the culprit as there is no mail on Sunday. 3. They are two of a set of triplets. 4. Incorrectly is the only word.



*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 TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

**MANGALORE:** I am a staunch devotee of Ven. Fr. Agnel and have been praying regularly to him for his intercession. I have been blessed in many ways, and most importantly, enjoy the gift of life.

- *Allwyn D'Souza*

### THANKSGIVING FOR A SUCCESSFUL YEAR GONE BY

**MUMBAI:** As we begin the New Year 2025, we look back with a sense of gratitude for all the blessings received during 2024, through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnelo.

- *Maria Pontis*

### THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

**VIRAR:** My family always prays to Ven. Fr. Agnel to intercede for us. Our prayers are always answered.

- *Simon D'Mello*

### THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

**CHEMBUR:** Ven. Fr. Agnelo has answered my prayers and blessed me immensely. My family has immense faith in the Venerable and thank the Fr. Agnel Ashram Fathers too for keeping us in their prayers.

- *Telma Fernandes*

### THANKSGIVING FOR HAVING OWN HOUSE

**BORIVALI:** I have always longed for a house of my own. Ven. Fr. Agnel has answered my prayers and blessed me with my own home. Whenever I visit Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra, I am amazed at the faith of the devotees.

- *Yogita Creado*

### THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

**VILE PARLE:** I thank Ven. Fr. Agnel for his intercession and blessing me always. Given the innumerable miracles the Venerable continues to perform, we pray for his early canonisation as a saint.

- *Mary Misquita*

### THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS ON FAMILY

**GUJARAT:** As a devotee of Ven. Fr. Agnel, we pray for his kind intercession. Our family has been blessed in many ways. The Venerable listens and intercedes for us with the Heavenly Father and Lord Jesus Christ.

- *Rishi R. Bhatia*

### THANKSGIVING FOR ALL BLESSINGS RECEIVED

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

- *Francis Shah & Family*

### THANKSGIVING FOR PRAYERS ANSWERED

**VIRAR:** I prayed to Ven. Fr. Agnel for his kind intercession in helping me out in difficult situations. My prayers have been answered.

- *John D'Cunha*

### THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

**VASAI:** I always look up to Ven. Fr. Agnel for his intercession. I am indeed grateful for all the blessings received. The New Year will be a year of hope for me.

- *Ferina & Kevin Tuscano*

### THANKSGIVING FOR INTERCESSIONS

**NALASOPARA:** I always seek the intercession and blessings of Ven. Fr. Agnel. He supports me in every way.

- *Andrea Pereira*

### THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

**AHMEDABAD:** 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.

- *Jayanand Marwan*

### THANKSGIVING FOR HEALING OF SON'S EYE PROBLEM

**NAVI MUMBAI:** My son had a problem with his sight. We prayed to Ven. Fr. Agnel and sought his intercession. He is now enjoying good eyesight. We have immense faith in the Venerable who intercedes on our behalf.

- *Kalinashekar Prabhakaranshekar*

### THANKSGIVING ON 50TH BIRTHDAY

**MUMBAI:** Thank you Ven. Fr. Agnel for showering your blessings of good health upon me all these years. I am full of gratitude for your intercession.

- *Dolcy Menezes*

## OUT OF THEIR BOUNTY

Jayan D'Souza	Mumbai	75000	Omana John	Kerala	3000	Jancy Mohan	Kerala	1000
Praveen Srivastava	Mumbai	46000	Elizabeth Pious	Kerala	3000	Lancy Furtado	Kerala	1000
Vilas Wilanker	Mumbai	40000	Annie Lobo	Mumbai	3000	Vinayak Gaikwad	Nashik	1000
Felix D'Souza	Mumbai	30000	Dicky Alphonso	Mumbai	3000	Avani Sheth	Mumbai	1000
Sahaya Nadar	Mumbai	20000	Nutan Karadekar	Mumbai	2500	Hiren Gala	Mumbai	1000
R.F. Machado	Tamil Nadu	15000	Jacob Kalathil	Kerala	2500	Kushal Manek	Mumbai	1000
Gauri Deshpande	Thane	15000	Soly Freejo	Kerala	2500	Priyanka R.	Mumbai	1000
Allen Fernandes	Mumbai	15000	E. J. Jose	Kerala	2000	Jatin M. Desai	Mumbai	1000
Anitha Eapen	Kerala	15000	Hyacinth Kenny	Mumbai	2000	G. Maria	Mumbai	1000
Kavita Malani	Mumbai	12000	Mildred Fernandes	Mumbai	2000	P.B. Blaise	Kerala	1000
Liberata Pereira	Goa	10000	Cozihom & Friends	Mumbai	2000	Mercy Paulose	Kerala	1000
Mariaraj	Bangalore	10000	Dexter	Vasai	2000	Shingade Damu	Ahmednagar	1000
Srija Unnikrishnan	Mumbai	10000	Celine George	Kerala	2000	Monica D'Souza	Pune	1000
Wayne Fernandes	Mumbai	10000	Neethu	Kerala	2000	Daxa Gandhi	USA	1000
Shane Fernandes	Mumbai	10000	Sangeeta Lopes	Vasai	2000	Bridget Selvaraj	Vasai	1000
Pia Lopes	Vasai	10000	Agnelo Joseph	Mumbai	2000	Bryan Fernandes	Mumbai	1000
Hugh & Colleen Gantzer	Uttarakhand	10000	Arvindbhai Parmar	Gujarat	2000	Harsh Shukla	Mumbai	1000
Faustina Fernandes	Mumbai	10000	Ranjan Macwan	Gujarat	2000	Leelamma George	Kerala	1000
Valerian D'Silva	Vasai	10000	Jeesan Jose	Kerala	2000	K.V. Rappai	Kerala	1000
Victor D'Souza	Mumbai	10000	Sonia Cardoz	Mumbai	2000	Darragh S. & Co.	Kerala	1000
Agnel Lopes	Vasai	10000	Agnel Sequeira	Mumbai	2000	Skariah Ponnachan	Virar	1000
Joshua Vessoakar	Mumbai	10000	Sheela Cherian	Kerala	2000	Jessy Mathew	Gujarat	1000
Melini J. D'Souza	Dubai	10000	Carolina P.	Mumbai	2000	C.K. Jacob	Thane	1000
Anne D'Souza	Mumbai	10000	Cyril Crasta	Karnataka	2000	Rishi Wadekar	Mumbai	1000
Subramaniam R.	Mumbai	5100	Eugene Christian	Gujarat	2000	Mahrukh Mistry	Nashik	501
Jacob Puthur	Kerala	5000	Mital Kakkad	Jalgaon	2000	Rashna K.	Nashik	501
Margaret Cardoz	Mumbai	5000	Primrose Collins	Mumbai	2000	Dineshbhai Parmar	Gujarat	500
Darshan Panchal	Mumbai	5000	P. J. George Babt	Kerala	2000	Devak Dutt	Mumbai	500
Geeta Naik	Mumbai	5000	Mary Paul	Kerala	2000	Geeta Rathod	Mumbai	500
Camilo Fernandes	Mumbai	5000	Arun Jadhav	Kerala	1500	Anju Dias	Mumbai	500
Maryamma A.	Kerala	5000	Shanu Fernandes	Pune	1000	Baby V. T.	Kerala	500
Godwin Pegado	Vasai	5000	Josephine D'Souza	Mumbai	1000	Ganesh Mehta	Mumbai	500
Vivian D'Cunha	Virar	5000	Paresh Thakker	Mumbai	1000	Roque D'Souza	Mumbai	500
Danny Fernandes	Vasai	5000	Sujata Dabre	Mumbai	1000	R. Victor	Tamil Nadu	500
Alfred Lobo	Pune	5000	Aditi Doshi	Mumbai	1000	Melvin Joseph	Karnataka	500
Swimmy David	Mumbai	5000	Amrin Bhilakhia	Mumbai	1000	Maharukh B.	Mumbai	500
David Thengil	Mumbai	5000	Apoline Sequeira	Mumbai	1000	Agnel Macwan	Gujarat	500
Honorine Nachia	Karnataka	5000	Kalpana Theodore	Mumbai	1000	Gabriel D'Souza	Gujarat	500
Floyd Fernandes	Mumbai	5000	Philomena D'Lima	Goa	1000	N.C. Babu	Kerala	500
Shashikant Babulal	Mumbai	4000	Joan Shilpa	Kerala	1000	Roger Pereira	Vasai	500
Falguni Solanki	Mumbai	3800	Celine George	Kerala	1000	Jyoti Khote	Mumbai	500
Susan A Condillac	Mumbai	3000	Linto George	Kerala	1000	Benedict D'Cruz	Kerala	500
John Fernandes	Mumbai	3000	Rajesh Parmar	Mumbai	1000	Antonio Dias	Mumbai	500

# BOB'S BANTER

by Robert Clements

## Mowgli and the New Year..!

This is another adventure of Mowgli from Jungle Book, not written by Rudyard Kipling, but springing from my own vivid imagination.

So, Mowgli suddenly comes across a great divide, "What's this?" he asks.

"It's a Divide," the animals tell him, "We all have to cross over!"

"Cross over to what?" asks Mowgli, puzzled.

"Cross over to Two Thousand Twenty-Five!" shout the animals.

"How?" asks an apprehensive Mowgli.

"Just leap over it!" shouts the kangaroo, "That's how you land into the New Year, just give a huge jump, and hey presto, you are on the other side! Do what you've been doing throughout the old year, just jumping from one excitement to the next!"

him forward, some winked, the elephant trumpeted, and the serpent hissed.

A bird flying above whispered, "Fly across dear Mowgli, that's what we do. Pretend there's no divide and keep flying with your heads in the clouds, maybe, use liquor or drugs till you fall and die!"

Mowgli shook his head. Somehow, he found all the advice, only made him more wary and afraid of stepping across.

He looked fearfully at the divide and pondered on how to get across!

"Burrow under," said a rabbit, "Get under the divide and nobody will notice you in the new year. Just become another invisible person like you've been throughout the old year! Don't become noticeable, don't lead, don't show yourself, just burrow, and hide!"




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"Run across!" said the leopard, "Don't slow down, just increase your speed and rush headlong into all the activities that the New Year brings. Don't spend time to relish and enjoy, just rush through!"

"Stomp your way across!" cried the elephant, "Walk roughshod over people and things and don't stop to think who you have trampled underfoot!"

The serpent who was listening with a smirk came close to Mowgli and whispered, "Just slither through my boy. Be cunning and clever and move into the New Year using craftiness and slyness. Be a chess player and make moves that will fool others this new year!"

Mowgli walked to the edge of the great divide and looked fearfully across at the new year. He looked at the animals as they looked back at him. Some urged

It was then that Mowgli felt a presence, looked up, and saw what no animal could see; two huge hands open, and a Voice saying, "I'll take you across dear Mowgli. I created you and all mankind, and unlike those animals who have to use their skills, you have been created to use me. Now walk into my hands, and let me take you across, and do you know something? if you want, I need never put you down as you go through the whole of 2025!"

And as the astonished animals watched, Mowgli, nestled in God's hands and was carried across..!

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



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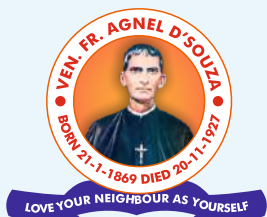


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A HAPPY NEW YEAR 2025!*



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