



FR. AGNEL

ASHRAM NEWS

March 2025



Lent: A Time of Spiritual Renewal

MARCH 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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MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL SUPERIOR



As we begin the 40 days season of Lent, let us get closer to God. Let us go on a spiritual journey of fasting, praying, and giving to the underprivileged.

During Lent, we seek the Lord in prayer by reading the Sacred Scripture; we serve by giving alms; and we practice self-control through fasting. We are called not only to abstain from luxuries during Lent, but to a true inner conversion of heart as we seek to follow Christ's will more faithfully. Many people sacrifice going out to expensive restaurants and the movies and give alms to the poor.

Meanwhile, as our students prepare for their final examinations, we wish them all success. May the Holy Spirit guide their every effort. With their hard work and dedication, I'm confident they will achieve great results.

On 8th March 2025, we celebrate International Women's Day. Women have made an impact in all walks of life. Let us strive towards a world that is diverse, equitable and inclusive.

It's time to accelerate action that can unlock equal rights, power and opportunities for all and a feminist future where no one is left behind. Central to this vision is empowering the next generation - youth, particularly young women and adolescent girls - as catalysts for lasting change.

The theme of World Water Day 2025 on 22nd March is 'Glacier Preservation.' Glaciers are critical to life – their meltwater is essential for drinking water, agriculture, industry, clean energy production and healthy ecosystems. On our part, let us conserve water in the best possible way!

Have a blessed Lenten season! May peace and blessings be upon us all!

- Fr. Bento Rodrigues

WALKING IN JESUS' FOOTPRINTS IN DESERT SAND

-Leon Bent

Lent is a Christian observance that recalls the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert fasting and being tempted by Satan. It's a time of prayer, fasting, and repentance for sins, observed by many churches from Ash Wednesday to Easter and radical transformation into Christlike disciples.

The season of Lent has often been compared to the desert, both, the desert the Jewish people wandered in for forty years, before they could enter the Promised Land, and the desert where Jesus went for forty days of prayer and fasting.

The desert is a place of both, forgiveness and rebirth and temptation. Indeed, it is unlikely that one can achieve purification without the temptation, if only the temptation to forego the purification

The desert also has its demons. I never have a stronger desire for meat than during Fridays in Lent. And I am never hungrier than between those small meals on Ash Wednesday. Christ overcame his temptations in the desert, choosing the way of the Cross over the temptations of wealth, power, and pleasure, and so must we.

"The signs of the times" suggest that, Christians may be "in the desert" for a long while. How long? Only God knows. But we know it's never easy to leave behind "the fleshpots of Egypt." And yet one cannot be truly free any other way.

The desert is the world's most barren and arid place. It lacks the two necessary sources for life to thrive: Water and vegetation. It is sparsely populated and sparing of no one. It is a place void of hope and reminiscent of death. It is the perfect place to spend Lent.

Each year, in imitation of our Lord, we retreat into the desert for the forty days – the liturgical season consecrated for personal conversion and preparation to celebrate the great mysteries of our redemption. But why should our contemplation of

the ultimate hope be preceded by six weeks in a place without hope? How can such a place kindle faith?



The answer lies in the other mystery that prompted the Incarnation and was overcome at Easter: Sin. "The desert," Pope Benedict has written, "the opposite image of the garden, becomes the place of reconciliation and healing." Death – symbolized by the desert – is

the consequence of sin, the result of choosing ourselves over God.

For reconciliation with God to take place, death had to be vanquished, sin had to be expiated. To accomplish this, God himself "became sin" – He entered the desert – "so that, in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).

Redeemed as we are by Christ's sacrifice, we must still struggle to overcome sin present in our lives. This life-long challenge takes on new impetus in Lent, when we apply the special weapon of fasting, to "put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life...and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:22-23).

"Fasting," "is an abstinence, which man voluntarily imposes upon himself as an expiation for sin." Sin brings pain and death to body and soul, so, it is only when the soul marshals the body's strength against sin in the form of fasting that, sin can be vanquished.

The ultimate expiation of sin caused the innocent Son of God to suffer the cruelest pain in body and soul on the Cross. In imitation of Christ, our fasting is also to cause us pain in body and soul.

Herein lies the paradox of sin, and with it, the heart of our Lenten observance. Though we were created lovingly by God to enjoy the goods of the earth, these goods can consume us, and even become the object of sinful pride and greed, as our first parents in the garden demonstrated.

By temporarily renouncing these goods through fasting, we willingly suffer their absence in our flesh as a way to attack sin.

Fasting hurts us, but, like the pain brought about from physical exercise, it is supposed to hurt us. And like exercise, the more pain we endure for God, the more we gain in spiritual rewards.

The desert, then, is the place for Lent not only because it represents the pain and consequences of sin, but also because it is a place of abstinence from the fruits of the earth. When we spiritually withdraw to the desert, its emptiness reminds us that, the goods of the earth ultimately cannot satisfy us. Our true fulfilment is God, who in the resurrection leads us out of the desert and into eternal paradise.

“The wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23), and death is the ultimate punishment. Only by allowing ourselves to experience death through fasting can we combat and atone for the sins we have committed. In a divine irony, the barrenness of the desert provides fertile ground for our repentance from sin and rebirth in the Resurrection. We can walk the path to reconciliation and healing only if we first pass through the tribulations of the desert.

Meet Jesus in the Desert this Lent

Solitude is not necessarily the same as isolation, but time alone with God, without noise (turn off your phone!), trains us to find ourselves in him. Henri Nouwen, a Dutch priest and theologian of the 20th century, once wrote, “Solitude is the furnace of transformation ... solitude is not a private therapeutic place. Rather, it is the place of conversion, the place where the old self dies and the new self is born, the place where the emergence of the new man and new woman occurs.” I can think of no better description of Lent; striving to cast off the old self, so a new, purified and resurrected self can emerge.

The Living Desert of Lent

Far from being a place of sterility, the desert can be alive: Not just because it contains life in so many different forms, but it was somehow itself vibrant. Such an environment does not make many concessions to human needs and living, there must be as precarious as the shifting sand itself. Yet, somehow it has the power to call; to offer some sort of hard freedom, learning to live on the edge of

survival in vastness that, cannot be secured or controlled.

One cannot be a Christian without the desert entering into one's life in some way. It was integral to the Old Testament, and the very way in which Israel comes to know itself and its God. The desert is not only a physical presence, it becomes the locus of knowledge and encounter. Above all, it is experienced as a place of purification, when Israel not only repents of its idolatry, but experiences the desert pedagogy of God's loving mercy. In the symbolic 40 years in which it wanders in the desert, Israel comes to experience God's *hesed*, God's tender-loving-care that provides water and food.

It is in the desert that the gospels first introduce us to the profound struggle with evil that, lies at the heart of Jesus's mission. In the desert, we see evil unmasked and defeated, and so we are quietly taught that, in all our desert struggles we have nothing to fear if we remain truly in God's hands.

This memory of the desert comes to the fore during the season of Lent, a time of renewal in which we can come to unclutter our lives and learn to live simply in loving dependence upon the Father. It is a time when the Spirit can lead us, bringing us to a deeper freedom and generosity of service, showing us how to be sources of life in the great man-made deserts of our society.

The desert is also a moment of renewal of our covenant with creation itself. We can come to see how little we really need, how our culture inflates our desires to make us consumers, yet, must always keep us wanting more. The desert of Lent gives us the freedom to rest from the lure of the financial markets or the addictions to the internet, and the addition to the things of this world. In the desert of Lent, we can begin to experience the 'shalom,' which is not merely peace, but “nothing-broken-nothing-missing,” a wholesomeness or abundance of life, which Jesus offers us (Jn. 10:10).



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.

JUBILEE YEAR LENTEN REFLECTION

-Fr. Fio Mascarenhas, SJ

God's special message for many of us in Lent is, I believe: 2Pt.3:11,12:

"What sort of persons ought you to be, in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for, and hastening, the coming of the Day of God!"

While pointing out an implication of the Jubilee Year motto "Pilgrims of Hope," this text also teaches that "true disciples" of Jesus (not mere "Sunday Christian-disciples") are involved in a "partnership" with God, wherein the disciples role is two-fold: to "wait for" and to "hasten"(!) the final victory of God over all evil.

To "**hasten**" implies that how we live our daily lives as "**disciples**" and "**co-heirs**" of Jesus has an **impact on the timing of God's final and definitive victory** over Evil! In other words, the quality of our discipleship ("**lives of holiness and godliness**") actually hastens the "**Day of God!**" The text is, therefore, a wonderful confirmation that God takes seriously our divine-human partnership, and gives full importance to it.

When two human partners start a business enterprise, **both partners**, in order to justify the name "partner," have proportionate responsibilities and privileges, regarding decision-making, profit-sharing, etc. Should only one partner be active, doing all the work, taking all the decisions, etc., the other "partner" cannot merit the title "co-partner." The same is true of the divine-human partnership. Were God to decide and do everything, so that the human "partner" did not really count, then it would not be a true *partnership*!

It is also true that if we are a part of a divine-human partnership, the human partner cannot make all the decisions one-sidedly, ignoring the divine partner. Hence the apostle St. Peter rightly says that Jesus' disciples must both "**wait for**" (God is the senior partner) and "**hasten**" (because we are real partners) the Second Coming of Christ!

The opposite effect is that of our *delaying* its arrival. Granted that our holy lives can "hasten" the Second Coming, then our *unholy* lives actually "delay" it! So St. Peter adds, "*The Lord is not slow about his*

promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance"(2Pt.3:9).

For this reason, Jesus is so severe with some people in the parables of the Ten Talents (Mt.25:14-30), the Ten Virgins (Mt.25:1-13), the Man without the Wedding Garment (Mt.22:1-14), etc. The man who received only one talent (a sum equivalent to approximately \$10,000) buried it, claiming to be *afraid* of the Master; but he received a severe condemnation from Jesus who judged him to be *wicked and slothful*. The lazy disciple had first accepted to be a partner with God (by baptism, etc), but he/she later opted out of it out of sheer laziness and indifference. (Read also about the Sower and the Seed, Mt 13:22).

However, in creating us and enrolling us (see Gen 1:27,28), the Creator is not playing a game of chance but, out of great love has got involved in a mysterious and terrible spiritual warfare (witness Jesus' sufferings and death on a cross)! Hence, in recruiting us human beings as partners, he is taking the risk of delaying his final victory over the "powers of darkness" if we betray the trust he has placed in us as "partners." To the extent that we do not cooperate with grace (and instead live lukewarm or worldly lives), we are actually delaying the final victory of good over evil, and thereby by default, are allowing the forces of darkness to go on afflicting so many more millions of people indefinitely!

Something similar is taught by St. Paul in Rom.8:19 when he writes about the whole of creation groaning in travail, waiting for "*the revelation of the sons and daughters of God.*" (This text follows immediately on the statement that we are "**heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ**"). This "*revelation*" consists in the daily living out of our sonship/daughterhood by "**lives of holiness and godliness.**" Disciples are tasked with hastening the liberation of creation itself (instead of sadly polluting and denuding "our common home").

So, there are two sides to the coin of divine-human partnership – on the one hand, God in the Person of

the Holy Spirit, is continually taking powerful initiatives in the spiritual battle; but on the other hand, we too must engage in much creative activity, in the power of the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the Kingdom. This human cooperation is so dear to God that even when the offer of divine-human partnership was spurned at first by humanity (through “the Fall”), *God did not change his plan* or withdraw his offer of a divine-human partnership because as St. Paul assures us, *“The gifts and the call of God are irrevocable”* (Rom.11:29). God the Father instead looked for, and found a way to make his original plan work – he sent his beloved Son Jesus Christ to us, for us to imitate him in a special partnership: *“God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son...”* (Jn.3:16).

The Second Vatican Council goes so far as to warn mere “Sunday-Christian disciples” that apart from “delaying” the Second Coming, they are even jeopardizing their own eternal happiness or “eternal life:”

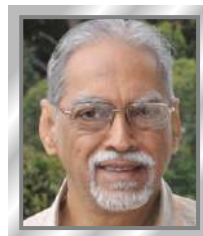
“Even though incorporated into the Church, one who does not however **persevere in charity** is not saved. Such a person remains indeed in the bosom of the Church, but ‘in body’, not ‘in heart’. All children of the Church should remember that their exalted condition results, not from their own merits, but from the grace of Christ. If they fail to respond in thought, word and deed to that

grace, not only shall they not be saved, but they shall be the more severely judged (see Lk.12:48)” (LG, n.14).

And Jesus himself had warned us:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’, shall enter the Kingdom of heaven but he/she who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day, many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers’.” (Mt.7:21-23).

Jesus willingly agreed to make us his brothers/sisters, and “friends” and “co-heirs.” In him, we have the best example of the divine-human partnership that we are called to. Every Saint also took this privilege and challenge seriously. So in this Jubilee Year 2025 let our Lenten exercises express, **by the quality of our holy lives**, the same cry as that of the early Christians, **“Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus!”**



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

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THE DISFIGURED FACE OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS

-Fr. Eusebio Gomes, SFX

Christians all over the world during the period of Lent renew their spiritual lives by prayer, fasting, abstinence and charitable works. The forty days of Lent is a special period of grace for spiritual renewal and reflection on the Paschal Mystery of Lord Jesus Christ: Passion, Death and Resurrection. It is also a time to introspect our spiritual deterioration.

Sin vertically disrupts man's relationship with God and horizontally with his fellow beings. During Lent, the vistas are opened for sacramental healing and grace through the channel of Sacrament of Reconciliation. This sacrament heals spiritual wounds and restores disrupted relationships with God and with sentient beings.

Fulton J. Sheen in his book *'Life of Christ'* describes the two trials of Christ in view of his condemnation to death - The Religious Trial and The Political Trial. The religious judges, Annas and Caiphas, found Christ guilty of being too divine and unworldly and the political judges, Pilate and Herod Antipas found him guilty of being too human and worldly.

The Religious Trial

Christ was arrested on the Mount of Olives while praying at the garden of Gethsemane. That evening he was first led away to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiphas, the high priest of that year. From Annas, Christ was led to Caiphas, who played the role of the official inquisitor of Christ. It was evident that the 71 members' Sanhedrin (high court of justice) had resolved upon the death of Christ

before the trial took place. A night trial of the Sanhedrin was illegal but in order to do away with Christ it was held nevertheless. The high priest and other religious leaders interrogated Christ concerning his doctrine, his disciples and his teachings. The accusation was that he proclaimed himself as the Son of God and thus blasphemed. In this religious trial, they could not proceed to a capital execution as the Jews were under the Roman

Empire and the political power was vested with the Roman Governor.

Nevertheless, Christ was found guiltless of this religious claim.

The Political Trial

After the religious trial was over, Christ was brought to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Procurator for the political trial. The charge of blasphemy was not mentioned as Jewish leaders thought that

Pilate would not accept it, so they conspired and brought three new charges against Christ before the Roman tribunal: a) Subverting their nation, the case of sedition; b) Opposing the payment of taxes to Caesar, the Roman Emperor, therefore anti-Caesar and anti-Rome and c) Claiming to be the Messiah, a king and therefore too worldly and too political.

Christ was accused of leading a rebellion against Rome with the intention of installing himself as a king. Pilate interrogated Christ regarding the charges. As the Sanhedrin has changed the charge of blasphemy to sedition, so Pilate would turn over the jurisdiction of the trial to one who had power in Galilee.



Herod happened to be in Jerusalem that time for the Passover feast. Pilate wanted to be with good books with him as there was enmity between them, so he sent Christ to Herod. Herod and his troops scoffed and mocked at Christ and sent him back to Pilate. Now Pilate let the people decide whether to release Christ or condemn him and washed his hands with water saying that his hands were clean of Christ's blood.

Accepting the people's verdict Pilate condemned innocent Christ to death as a guerrilla subversive. The political judiciary sealed Christ' fate i.e. condemnation to death on a cross. The charge sheet fixed to the cross read - "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." Christ proved guiltless of the political claim too as Pilate did not find any fault with him.

The Mystery of Crucifixion

Christ was a threat to the chief priests and religious leaders of his time. He confronted them and challenged their imposition of rules, hypocritical teachings and their gimmicks. He dismantled the unjust structures of the society and empowered the weak, the poor and women. He identified with the common people by visiting their homes, sharing their food and living with them. He spent most of his time in the villages with the poor than in the towns with the elites.

He extended mercy, compassion and forgiveness to the sinners and ministered to the sick and helped the needy. He was the face of his merciful and compassionate Father. He was gaining popularity among the poor and the underprivileged. The Jewish leaders conspired to exterminate him and thus terminate his ministry of establishing his

Father's Kingdom on this earth. The crucifixion of Christ was the culmination of their anger which was generated by envy, insecurity and hatred.

It was an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of the people. It turned out to be a shameful act because his integrity was destroyed on the cross and painful act because of the tortures and insults he received from the soldiers, religious leaders and chief priests. His death was regarded as the price demanded by God in ransom for all human beings. God the Father accepted the vicarious sufferings of Christ, his total obedience to Him unto death. That is the reason Christ was highly exalted by his Father after completing his mission on the earth.

The disfigured face of Christ on the cross reminds us of the immense pain and sufferings he endured for the sake of the sinful humanity. Each drop of his precious blood has washed away the sins committed by the people of God. St. Paul says: "Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God" (Rom: 5:9). Let this Lent be an occasion for us to identify with Christ's passion and death so that we may recognize the mystery of his resurrection.



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

"Watch your thoughts, they become your words; watch your words, they become your actions; watch your actions, they become your habits; watch your habits, they become your character; watch your character, it becomes your destiny."

— Lao Tzu

LENT IS A PERIOD OF PRAYER AND FASTING

-Jubel D'Cruz

Lent, the period of prayer and fasting for Christians all over the world in preparation for Easter is 40 days long. But there are 46 days between Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent in the Roman Catholic liturgical calendar and Easter Sunday. How can that be? The answer takes us back to the earliest days of the Church.

Jesus' original disciples, who were Jewish, grew up with the idea that the Sabbath – the day of worship and rest – was Saturday, the seventh day of the week, since the account of creation in the book of Genesis says that God rested on the seventh day. Jesus rose from the

dead, however on Sunday, the first day of the week, and the early Christians starting with the apostles (those original disciples) saw Jesus' resurrection as a new creation and so they transferred the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday.

Since all Sundays – and not simply Easter Sunday – were days to celebrate Jesus' resurrection, Christians were forbidden to fast and do other forms of penance on those days. Therefore, when the Church expanded the period of fasting and prayer in preparation for Easter from a few days to 40 days (to mirror Jesus' fasting in the desert before He began His public ministry), Sundays could not be included in the count. Thus, in order for Lent to include 40 days on which fasting could occur, it had to be expanded to six full weeks (with 6 days of fasting in each week), plus 4 extra days – Ash Wednesday and the Thursday, Friday and Saturday that followed it. Six times six is thirty-six, plus four equals forty. And that's how we arrive at the 40 days period of Lent.

The season of Lent is the time of preparation for the Holy Week, leading up to Easter. It is also considered a time for sacrifice, prayer and almsgiving. For many of us Christians, it is also a time to give up something we love the most, like eating non-vegetarian foods, chocolates, ice-cream,

smoking cigarettes and consuming alcohol.

'Good Friday' is a great festival of Christians. It usually falls between March 20 and April 23. This festival is observed to mark the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Good Friday is a religious holiday observed primarily by Christians all over the world

commemorating the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and His death at Calvary. Initially, it was called 'God's Friday'. In the Eastern Orthodox churches, it is known as 'Great Friday'. On this day, prayer and meditation takes place at all churches all over the world.

Good Friday is observed as a

day of fasting, mourning, sorrow and prayer.

However, just two days after this Holy Friday, Easter is celebrated to express happiness on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This day is of utmost importance, as the devotees believe that all who are united with Christ by faith will be resurrected in the future. Good Friday is called *Karfreitag*, or 'Sorrowful Friday' in Germany.

According to the four Gospels of Matthew, John, Luke and Mark, Jesus carried His cross to the site of execution, called the 'place of the skull', or 'Golgotha' in Hebrew and in Latin, 'Calvary'. There, He was crucified along with two criminals. Jesus agonised on the cross for six hours. During His last three hours on the cross, from 12.00 noon till 3.00 pm, darkness fell all over the earth. Jesus spoke from the cross, saying, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Then, with a loud cry, He gave up His spirit. There was an earthquake, tombs broke open, and the curtains in the temple were torn from top to bottom.

Easter is celebrated with great joy all over the world, as it celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Christians believe that on Easter Sunday Jesus Christ rose from the grave in which He was buried and entered into heaven along with the good thief who repented for his sins.



There are many customs and traditions associated with Easter. On Easter Sunday, people exchange Easter eggs. Easter eggs are sweetened eggs made out of chocolate or cashewnuts.

Easter is celebrated in various ways in different parts of the world. It is celebrated either in March or April. This year, Easter Sunday falls on April 20.

Easter is a time to reiterate God's promise to us — that we have a relationship of friendship and love with Him. As we celebrate this joyous occasion, let us pledge to experience the love of Jesus that He poured out for the entire world, and to partake of it and share it with the purpose of standing victorious with the risen Lord.

After Jesus was nailed to the cross, His body was taken down and buried in a cave tomb. The tomb was guarded by Roman soldiers and a very big stone which no one could lift, was put over the entrance so that no one could steal the body. On the following Sunday, which is called 'Easter Sunday', Mary Magdalene, followed later by some of Jesus' disciples, visited the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away, and that the body of Jesus had gone missing.

Jesus Himself was seen that day by Mary Magdalene and the other disciples and for forty days continuously by many other people. His followers realised that God had raised Him up from the dead. Christians call this the resurrection.

On 'Maundy Thursday' (the Thursday before 'Good Friday'), Jesus ate His last meal with His disciples. At this meal, Jesus told His disciples that they should love and serve one another. He demonstrated this by washing the feet of all of His twelve disciples. On Good Friday, Christians remember Jesus' suffering and death on the cross at Calvary.



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



There is no Joy Greater than the Joy of GIVING

Abner Enterprises, Thane

We have donated an amount of Rs. 5000 via cheque towards food, education, stationery and essentials for the children at Balbhavan.

Justina James Gomes, Kurla

I have made a small donation of Rs. 500 via EDC for all the services given to the Balbhavan boys at Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra.

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Kindly accept a donation of Rs. 2000 via NEFT for the well-being of the Balbhavan boys. The Ashram Fathers are providing the best education on the campus while imparting skills in music, singing, drawing, painting, elocution and sports.

Ved Bansod, Karnataka

I have sent a donation of Rs. 4000 via EDC for fulfilling all the needs of the Balbhavan boys. May

God's blessings continue to be upon the good work being done by Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra.

Richard D'Souza, Mumbai

I am pleased to donate an amount of Rs. 5000 through UPI for the upkeep of Fr. Agnel Ashram and the well-being of the Balbhavan boys.

Valsamma Nair, Bhayandar

I have made a contribution of Rs.10000 through cheque, towards the various charitable activities of the institution and maintenance of the Balbhavan boys.

Gaurang & Poonam Mehta, Kanjurmarg

We are happy to provide a donation of Rs. 30000 through EDC, as a yearly sponsorship for two children.

Alfred Lobo, Pune

I am delighted to donate an amount of Rs. 5000 through cheque for the care of the Balbhavan boys. May they grow into responsible citizens of tomorrow.

AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Bandra

Rotaract Club of Fr. CRCE hosts annual Heart and Sole Run 7: Running for a Cause

The annual Heart and Sole Run, now in its 7th edition, organised by the Rotaract Club of Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues College of Engineering (CRCE), Bandra, Mumbai, was more than just a marathon; it was a movement of compassion, supporting the children of Fr. Agnel Ashram through the *Joy of Giving* initiative. Over 900 runners participated, helping raise awareness and funds for the cause while creating meaningful experiences with the children.

The excitement for the event began with a lively **flash mob on February 13, 2025**, at the college festival **Euphoria**, where students and council members set the stage for the marathon. The energy carried through the **Expo Days (February 13-15)**, as runners collected their bibs and goodie bags, building anticipation for the big day.

On February 16, 2025, the Race Day, the marathon kicked off at 5:15 a.m., led by a warm-up session by **Chris Balwansingh Bagdi**, ensuring everyone was pumped and ready for their runs.

The Race Categories included **15 km (Grit Run)**, **10 km (Eco Run)**, **5 km (Dream Run)** and **1.5 km (Sole Run)**. The 15 km and 10 km races were timed, with winners recognized in both male and female categories. The 5 km was untimed, fostering participation and spirit over competition. The 1.5 km Sole Run saw young champions under the age of 10 lacing up their shoes, their enthusiasm and determination lighting up the track.

A **cool-down Zumba session** followed the race, helping runners de-stress and celebrate their accomplishment. The award ceremony was graced by **Principal Dr. S.S. Rathod**, **Mr. Abbas Shahiwala (Rotary Club)**, **Gloria Madam**, and **Teacher-in-Charge, Prof. Sangeeta Parshionikar**. Participants assembled at the quadrangle, where they received their certificates, medals, breakfast, and refreshments - a fitting end to a rewarding morning.



#MilesforSmiles.



The race underway.



The student organisers.



The winners.

AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Pune

Inter-School Singing Competition at Fr. Agnel's Vidyankur School, Pune

In commemoration of Patron's Day, an inter-school singing competition - **SYMPHONY** - was organized on the occasion of the 156th Birth Anniversary of Ven. Fr. Agnelo D'Souza. The event, held at **Fr. Agnel's Vidyankur School, Pune**, witnessed the participation of six schools, each showcasing the remarkable talent of their students.

The competition featured a variety of performances, based on the theme of patriotism and value education, ranging from classical to contemporary genres. A panel of esteemed judges evaluated the performances based on vocal quality, music synchronization and creativity. After an intense and soulful competition, **Ornellas High School** emerged victorious, with **HDFC School** securing the runners-up position and **St. Felix High School** securing the second runners-up position. The winners were awarded with a trophy, certificates and a cash prize of Rs. 5000, Rs. 3000 and Rs. 2000, respectively.

Adding to the significance of the event the "**Joy of Giving**" activity was also conducted, encouraging students and teachers to contribute essential items and monetary donations for a noble cause. The initiative received overwhelming support, with generous contributions benefiting underprivileged sections of society. The items were handed over to various NGOs of Pune who were also invited for the programme. The NGOs were Deep Griha Society, Missionaries of Charity - Mother Teresa Home, Louise Braille Blind & Disabled Welfare Institution, Chandra Prakash Dhoka Niwasi Karnabadhir Vidyalaya and Yutak Charitable Trust.

Speaking on the occasion, **Fr. Aleixo Luis sfx**, the Director of the school, expressed gratitude to all participants, schools and contributors for making the celebration a grand success. **The Principal Mrs. Minal Kasbey** also addressed the gathering stating that the event was not just about competition but about spreading joy, harmony and the spirit of giving.

The event concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks, leaving everyone inspired by the power of music and generosity.



Anjali High School performing a cultural song.

AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Greater Noida

25 Years of Love, Legacy and Transformation of Fr. Agnel Balbhawan, Greater Noida

Fr. Agnel Balbhawan, Greater Noida - a vision nurtured with compassion, a sanctuary built on selfless service. What began as a humble initiative by Fr. Alarico Carvalho and Fr. Bento Rodrigues has flourished into a beacon of hope, transforming the lives of countless children.



Rev. Fr. Roy D'Sa, principal, Fr. Agnel School, Delhi, presenting a Silver Jubilee souvenir to Rev. Fr. Bento Rodrigues, pioneer of Balbhawan and Regional Superior, Agnel Region.

The celebration began with a soulful rendition of *Follow Me*, followed by a symbolic candle procession, where 25 children carried flames of love and resilience, illuminating the enduring spirit of Balbhawan.

Fr. Jovito Vaz then presented a comprehensive report on the past 25 years, highlighting the remarkable educational and professional achievements of Balbhawan's alumni. The event was further enriched by inspiring words from Rev. Fr. Carvalho, Rev. Fr. Bento, esteemed benefactors, and a distinguished alumnus, each reflecting on the dedication that has made this vision a reality.

A special felicitation honoured employees who have dedicated 25 years to this noble cause, followed by the unveiling of a commemorative souvenir encapsulating Balbhawan's remarkable journey.



Rev. Fr. Jovito Vaz, Asst. Director, Balbhawan, presenting a Silver Jubilee souvenir to Rev. Fr. Alarico Carvalho, pioneer of Balbhawan and Editor of Fr. Agnel Ashram News.



A skit by the children of Balbhawan, celebrating 25 years.

AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Greater Noida

Fr. Agnel Balbhawan, Greater Noida, hosts successful Agnel Sports Carnival 2025

Fr. Agnel Balbhawan, Greater Noida, recently organized the Agnel Sports Carnival, an inter-school athletics and basketball tournament, on January 28-29, 2025. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from over 10 schools in athletics and 14 schools in basketball.

Athletics Championship:

The athletics championship was divided into two categories: classes 1-5 and classes 6-12. On January 28, students from classes 1-5 participated in 50m, hurdle, and relay events. The following day, students from classes 6-12 competed in 100m, 200m, 400m, and 4x100m relay events. **St. Joseph School emerged as the overall winner with an impressive 92 points.**

Basketball Tournament:

The basketball tournament featured two categories: under-17 boys and under-13 girls. Eight teams participated in the under-17 boys category, while six teams competed in the under-13 girls category.

In the under-13 girls final, Fr. Agnel School, Noida defeated the host team, Fr. Agnel School, Greater Noida, with a score of 12-10, securing the tournament title.

The under-17 boys final saw a thrilling match between Jesus and Mary Convent School and the host team, Fr. Agnel School, Greater Noida. The home team emerged victorious, defeating JMC with a narrow margin of 25-24.

The Agnel Sports Carnival 2025 was a resounding success, promoting sportsmanship, teamwork, and healthy competition among students.



Fr. Agnel School, Greater Noida, the winners of the under-17 boys final.

THOU ART DUST

-Jacqueline Kelly

Easter is the greatest of all feasts. We have two periods of preparation for it, called Pre-Lent and Lent. Pre-Lent begins nine weeks before Easter. It starts with Septuagesima Sunday and goes on till Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday. Prohibition around milk and eggs gave rise to the tradition of Shrove Tuesday or Mardi Gras [French for Fat Tuesday]. On this day, Christians would feast on the foods they were required to abstain from during Lent.

Lent is a season of sorrow and suffering for sin, a season of preparation for the Passion and Death of Christ.

The word “Lent” is derived from the Anglo-Saxon words, *lencten*, meaning “spring”, and *lenctentid*, which was the word for “March”, the month in which the major part of this season of sacrifice falls.

In early times those who were getting ready for baptism would receive special training during Lent; and any of the faithful who had committed serious sins would have to do their

public penance. Lent is in many ways like a retreat, taking us along the path of fasting, penance and prayer, in a special invitation to return to God.

On Ash Wednesday, we receive blessed ashes which the Priest puts on our foreheads in the form of a Cross; the Church reminds us by this that we will all have to die someday, and warns us to do penance.

Ash is the powdery residue left after the burning of a substance. Traditionally, the ashes were made by burning palm fronds which have been saved from the previous year's Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter. They are then blessed by a Priest. This practice began in the 12th century. It was Pope Urban II who called for the use of ashes and later it was called Ash Wednesday or “Day of Ashes.”

“Day of Ashes” is derived from “Dies Cinerum” in the Roman Missal and is found in the earliest existing copies of the Gregorian Sacramentary.

The ashes of palms are used because the palm is an emblem of peace, which comes after combat and victory. The palms were carried as Christ entered Jerusalem, to display his claim to leadership and victory. The burnt palms call upon us to gain victory over sin. Ashes also remind us of Christ whom we must keep in mind all during Lent. The ashes are the remains of burnt things – a picture of the emptiness and nothingness of temporal goods and pleasures.

The liturgical use of ashes originates in the Old Testament. In the Book of Esther, Mordecai put on sack cloth and ashes when he heard of the decree of King Ahasuerus [or Xerxes, 485-464 B.C.] of Persia to kill all the Jewish people in the Persian Empire [Est 4:1]. Prophesying the Babylonian captivity of

Jerusalem, Daniel wrote: “I turned to the Lord God, pleading in earnest prayer, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes” [Dan 9:3].

Ashes signified desolation and ruin, worthlessness and insignificance. It symbolized death and repentance.

“Ashes are equivalent to dust, and human flesh is

composed of dust [Genesis 2:7] and when a human corpse decomposes, it returns to dust or ash [Genesis 3:19 KJV]. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground, for out of it was thou taken, for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,” but nowadays, when someone dies, they are rushed from the deathbed to the funeral home to be embalmed and to be worked over by a make-up artist so that the “dusty reality” is hidden from us.

Their deaths are spoken of as almost an embarrassment; “he passed away,” they say, or “he is no longer with us.” These comforting but sterile luxuries were not an option in the past when plagues felled so many people that there were not many survivors to bury the dead, when bodies had to be stored all winter until the ground was soft enough to dig, when most of the children a woman



bore, died before they were able to grow up. In our culture, with medicines and “funeral sciences”, we are afraid to look at death.

No matter how long science can prolong life, no matter how much embalming fluid is pumped into a corpse, Nature will have her way. This is the hideous Truth. And when Nature has her way, we can either rest in the knowledge that the ultimate Victor is Christ, Our Lord, who walked out of His tomb 2,000 years ago and offers Resurrection to us, or we can believe that decay is all that is left. This is the meaning of Ash Wednesday.

Ashes are used to express the penitence necessary to come to Christ so that we can experience bodily resurrection at the End of Age [Job 42:6]. “Therefore, I reprehend myself, and, do penance in dust and ashes.”

1. Their colour is grey, the colour of penance. Ashes have a gritty, cleansing value; penance cleanses our hearts and removes the stain of sin. Ashes are a good fertilizer; penance helps us grow in virtue and bring forth fruits of justice.
2. In the Old Law ashes were a figure of penance:
 - a. When Jonas proclaimed to the Ninevites the destruction of their city, “they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth” [Jonas 3:5].
 - b. King David put ashes on his bread that even at meals he might remember his sins and the need of penance.

Among the Roman Catholics, the custom of marking the forehead with ashes is said to have originated during the Papacy of Gregory the Great [590-604]. As a sign of sorrow and repentance was a practice of the Anglo-Saxon Church in the 10th century. It was made universal throughout the Western Churches at the Council of Beneventum in 1091.

Putting a “Cross” mark on the forehead was in imitation of the spiritual mark or seal that is put on a Christian in Baptism. This is when the newly born Christian is delivered from slavery to sin and made a slave of righteousness and Christ [Romans 6:3-18]. Since Ash Wednesday is the start to Lent, it is also the beginning to focus on baptism - thereby helping us to renew our baptismal promises on the arrival of Easter.

The blessing of the ashes begins with an antiphon

and a verse of a psalm begging God's grace and mercy. Then come four prayers which express what the ashes symbolize:

1. To be a spiritual help for all who confess their sins.
2. To secure pardon of sins for those who receive the ashes.
3. To give us the spirit of contrition.
4. To give us the grace and strength to do penance.

After the Priest sprinkles the ashes with holy water and incenses them, he puts some on his own forehead, and then on the foreheads of those present, the head being the seat of pride. Mother Church thus points out that we have no reason to be proud, since we are nothing but dust and ashes.

In case of clerics it is upon the place of the tonsure.

He puts ash on our foreheads in the shape of a Cross to remind us that Jesus died on the Cross for us and that we must take up the Cross and follow Him and as he does so, he says the words of Genesis 3:19 “Repent, and believe in the Gospel.”

Alternative formula - *Memento, homo, quia pulvis es, et in pulverem revertéris* [Remember, man, that thou are dust, and unto dust thou shall return].

We do not respond to these words; we simply return to our pews.

Following the disposition of the ashes come two Antiphons and a Response. Then the Priest says another prayer for protection in the coming combat.

Note: another [informal] use of ashes in the Church is the saving of ashes from the fire built on the Eve of the Feast of the Birth of Saint John the Baptist [23 June] to mix with water to bless the sick.

The traditions and practices surrounding Lent are varied, but they do have a common focus: preparation for the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday.

Ash Wednesday is to remind us that we are mortal, subject to decay and - solely dependent on - Jesus Christ to overcome this fate.

Ashes, a sacramental, are a symbol of penance. The ashes may disappear from our foreheads, but their meaning and lesson must penetrate and grow in our hearts.

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

AN APPROACH TO FASTING

- Vinay Silva

Fasting is a New Testament principle and taught by both Catholics and Protestants. Fasting enables us to approach God as little children - without the distractions, vested interests, earthly desires, etc. which little children do not have. Jesus fasted for 40 days, and this had nothing to do with the Law of Moses or following any directives during Lent. In Mark 9:29, Jesus clearly indicates that fasting destroys the works of the devil on a spiritual basis; and *cannot* be replaced with anything else!

Fasting helps to curb our carnal appetites, to free ourselves of unnecessary attachments, and helps us to live in solidarity with the poor who are very close to the heart of God. This in turn increases our gratitude to Him, helping us to 'use our knees' more fruitfully. A deeper intimacy with Christ is a consequence!

Fasting is NOT a pre-requisite for asking the Father for something and fasting is NOT mandatory to approach the Father. Prayer is NOT merely about asking the Father for something and is NOT about approaching Him. Prayer is NOT just a two-way communication with God.

With fasting, we are now talking about a virtuous act of self-denial, which is *an aid to concentrate on the Lord in a deeper way*.

In prayer time, after the distractions are arrested or reduced with the help of fasting, it is possible to enter into a deeper level of prayer wherein the time with God is not ritualistic, dull or boring. The time of prayer becomes enjoyable and fruitful, and leaves us thirsting for more of His Presence in the next time of prayer. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.

"If prayer is to be genuine, it must be helped by these other things – the fasts, the disciplines and the silence. Prayer and comfortable living are incompatible." – St. Teresa of Avila.

Prayer is not just a two-way communication with

God. If it was only this, then even silence is not required. There is a deeper level of prayer we all are called to enjoy - the prayer of 'BEing' - the call to rest in God's presence without the 'burden' of words - words either through our mouths, or in our thoughts. Unfortunately, due to our human weaknesses, distractions and mind wandering nature as well as our busy lifestyles, etc, it is difficult to enter the 'Holy of Holies' very soon after starting our prayer time.

Fasting and disciplining ourselves is not ritualistic as it may appear to be. Yes, if done with the wrong mindset, these can turn out

to be ritualistic and meaningless. If done well, these truly help us overcome the distractions which perhaps may not stop the two-way communication with God, but surely stop the "BEing" aspect of deep prayer. Fasting for a period helps us to "decrease ourselves" (human distractions, worldly desires, sensual cravings, etc. get reduced); and this is an aid for Him to increase (Jn 3:30).

Fasting *has to be* accompanied by sincere prayer. If not, then it becomes a meaningless ritual. This is the mistake many Christians make today - doing one without the other.

The power of a sincere fast accompanied by sincere prayer (not just saying prayers, but truly praying from the heart in the 'Holy of Holies') involves a joyful struggle. Here then, we can get the gist and a fair idea of the power of sincere fasting! This power has to be experienced to be understood.

Seek it and you will find it.

"One of the meanings of penitential fasting is to help us recover an interior life. The effort of moderation in food also extends to other things that are not necessary, and this is a great help to the spiritual life. Moderation, recollection and prayer go hand in hand." – St. Pope John Paul II, Sunday Angelus address, March 10, 1996.



Fasting enables a sincere 'seeking' and is a way of a sincere 'knocking' (Matt 7:7). The journey towards God is NOT meant to be easy or comfortable. Be assured that the 'discomfort' will be joyful in the imitation of Christ!

Regarding the Reason:

Fasting should be for a particular reason or for general growth in the spiritual life. But then, there is *no shortage* of reasons as not one of us is free of worldliness and distractions!

Some reasons for fasting are:

Obtaining a favour from God, seeking God's provision and help, petitioning for grace and direction to grow in personal holiness, fighting spiritual battles, resisting temptations, strengthening of personal prayer or family prayer, prayer to overcome addiction, prayer for personal salvation and mercy (which we should not take for granted), prayer for healing (outer or inner), prayer for the salvation for the souls of others, intercession for non believers, fruitfulness in evangelisation, prayer for forgiveness, and so on. This list can get quite long. We Christians are called to address these issues in our prayer time.

Regarding Time:

Fasting can be for a time, but let us not restrict this to only the season of Lent! This would be a bit ritualistic. Lent is usually in the month of March. By the time the month of April ends and May begins, many of us would have backslidden into various areas of lukewarmness. Each individual can be led by God differently based on personal limitations in age, health and ability. Medical conditions should not be ignored. Whatever it is, may the topic of fasting and abstinence not be forgotten and discarded after the season of Lent.

Another example - There are people who fast for the first 9 days of every month. This may sound absurd, but the spiritual benefits by adopting such a discipline *are immense*. As mentioned, there is no shortage of reasons to fast. Growing in intimacy with the Lord has no end!

Fixing a discipline helps in preparation

Physical Preparation:

One can 'finish off' and complete his / her earthly to-do list and keep a day free for fasting and prayer. Any day is fine; it does not have to be a Friday or a Tuesday, etc. unless recommended in unison with the universal Church or agreed upon in advance by

a community of believers or a group of friends.

Spiritual Preparation:

The soul spiritually prepares in advance by 'looking forward' to the intimacy that would happen during the fast. One can pray in advance for a fruitful fast if he / she knows in advance that a day has been allotted for the purpose. Also, if the discipline is fixed in advance, one can set aside and list the biblical truths he /she is led to meditate on for that day. *What a blessing it is if one is led by the Spirit into this preparation!*

The growls and hunger pangs actually may be a distraction at the onset, but these pangs can effectively push a soul into deeper waters of prayer. Here is where the intercession for the poor, hungry and homeless of the world becomes deep and powerful.

Apart from the fasting days, a 'content' stomach is recommended. For many, a content stomach is a curse - taking away the intimacy with God and reducing spiritual focus, and being a distraction in itself.

Conclusion:

There is a difference between saying prayers and truly spending time in quality prayer. Fasting is a God-given aid for the latter. There is a need to 'fast' from negative attitudes. Fasting from food and partaking in abstinence is not a waste of time. Rather, these wonderfully create a path and a route for the fasting from negative attitudes to happen more smoothly. Do you want to grow in your prayer life? Do you want to change and come out of your sins? Do you want to experience inner transformation and be a better witness to Christ? The biblical theme of "FASTING" is a way and a means to achieve the supernatural in your life, and to help you to be the Spirit-filled person that God wants you to be.

The treasure is out there! Seek it and you will find it!



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.

MOTHERS OF HUMANITY!

- Severina Peres

Life is a gift from God. So is Motherhood! A woman's persona as a daughter and wife is fulfilled when she becomes a Mother. Whilst we salute the woman in India who brought to life 25 million children in 2024 (1/5th of the world's total births), the loss of life through abortion (6 million each year) is heartbreaking. Abortion is legal in India, permitted upto 20 weeks of pregnancy. The reasons: health issues, socio economic causes and personal circumstances. Other couples opt for voluntary childlessness or being child-free (increasing trend), choosing to shower their attention and affection on a pet animal instead! Denial of life and motherhood (fatherhood) is aggravated by same sex marriages and young people living unmarried.

Accepting Motherhood requires courage and love to welcome the unborn. There was a young woman, **Gianna Beretta Molla (1922-1962)** from Magenta (Milan). During her youth she willingly accepted the gift of faith and a Christian education that she received from her excellent parents. As a result, she experienced life as a marvellous gift from God, had a strong faith in Providence and was convinced of the necessity and effectiveness of prayer.

Gianna qualified to be a medical doctor and opened a medical clinic, specializing in Pediatrics at the University of Milan in 1952 and thereafter gave special attention to mothers, babies, the elderly and poor. After her marriage to Pietro Molla, Gianna enthusiastically and wholly dedicated herself to forming a truly Christian family, balancing her role as a mother to her three children, wife, doctor and her passion for life.

In September 1961 towards the end of the second month of her 4th pregnancy, Gianna discovered a fibroma in her uterus. Before her surgery, she pleaded with the surgeon to save the life of the child she was carrying. Her faith in God and prayer sustained her in the situation of suffering and pain. She was grateful to the Almighty for saving the child during her surgery and after. Gianna continued with her pregnancy until the birth of the child in incomparable strength of spirit and unrelenting dedication to her tasks as mother and doctor. Concerned for the growing baby in her womb, she prayed fervently to God for the safety of her unborn child.

As the days of birth were near, Gianna entrusting herself to God was ready to give her life in order to save that of her child: **"If you must decide between me and the child, do not hesitate: choose the child - I insist on it. Save the child."** On the morning of

April 21, 1962, Gianna Emanuela was born. Attending doctors put in all efforts and treatments to save both child and mother. Seven days later, on April 28, amidst unspeakable pain and after repeated exclamations of "Jesus, I love you. Jesus, I love you" Gianna died, 39 years old. Gianna was beatified by Pope John Paul II on April 24, 1994, during the international Year of the Family.

We are called to be conscious of our responsibility to shelter the defenseless. Every child conceived has a right to life. We take inspiration from Mary, the Mother of Mothers, who is the sum of all the affection, goodness, and mercy of all the mothers in the world cannot manage to equal (Chiara Lubich). Mary embraces life from her own girlhood, she surrenders and entrusts herself to the Almighty at the unusual call to Motherhood at the Annunciation, a life of magnifying God always, extending supportive hands to her cousin Elizabeth (carrying a baby at advanced age).

Mary and Joseph support each other in their dilemma and difficulties as a new couple looking forward to Parenthood. Both are open to the life conceived in Mary's womb, they diligently protect the babe during the pregnancy and after birth when Herod is looking to kill the babe Jesus. Mary and Joseph are prolife, a loving and giving couple. The challenges in child bearing and rearing, are well accepted with sweetness, with light and with silence as Mary pondered all things in her heart. Their stance is reflected in their Son Jesus who in His words and deeds always expressed the respect and honour due to women.

Accelerate Action is the theme for **International Women's Day which is on March 8th, 2025. Prolife Day is on March 25th.** The plight of women has changed significantly and there are new developments. More and more women are aware of their identity and are ready to give their unique and irreplaceable contribution in solidarity among themselves but also with men. Let us find our strength in God our Father, to understand ourselves as women, to link our arms in sisterhood with other women and to hope for new surprises which only the Holy Spirit can bring to foster life and unity in the Church and everywhere.



Severina Peres has considerable experience in the banking sector and enjoys writing short articles based on Encyclicals and Church Documents. She is also interested in assisting senior citizens.

JUST FOR FUN

-Christine D'Sylva

We are in the warm month of March, so it's goodbye to the cool weather. But on an optimistic note, summer is nearing and vacations are a happy thought. March 8th is celebrated as Woman's Day around the world and it is a day the role of women in society is remembered and honoured.

So let's begin....

Inspirational Story

Kiran Bedi



Kiran Bedi born on June 9, 1949 was the first woman to join the Indian Police Service (IPS).

She was a woman who broke gender barriers and overcame challenges to become a leader in public service.

She is known for handling the high profile protests between the Nirankari and Akali Sikhs in 1978. She handled it well enough to deserve recognition. She serves as a social activist although she is now retired. She established the Navjyoti India Foundation and the Indian Vision Foundation, two non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in India. She received an honorary doctorate in law for her efforts and the UN gave her NGOs the Serge Sotiroff Memorial Award. She received in the course of her lifetime many other awards. Her hard work and perseverance is always appreciated.

She reshaped the Tihar prison complex in Delhi by addressing corruption, human rights, abuses, sanitation and nutrition problems.

Her outstanding contributions serve as a reminder to us that women have indeed come a long way. Her two outstanding qualities are her fearless determination and her courage to stand up for what is right. She is indeed a trail blazer and is a woman of substance.

Quiz

All about woman space explorers



1. Who was the first woman to go to space?
2. Who was the first American woman to complete a spacewalk?
3. Who was the first Indian woman to go to space?
4. Have there been any women

space explorers who have gone to the moon?

5. How many women by 2024 had completed spaceflights?

Kalpana Chawla



Born in March 1962, Kalpana Chawla was an Indian born American astronaut and aerospace engineer. She was the first woman of Indian origin to fly into space. She first flew on Space Shuttle Columbia in 1997 as a mission specialist and a robotic arm operator aboard.

Her second flight was in 2003 on STS-107, the final flight of Colombia. She was one of the seven crew members who died in this space shuttle for the space shuttle disintegrated during its re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere on 1 February 2023.

However her efforts are not unappreciated. She was awarded after her death, the Congressional Space Medal of Honour, the NASA Space Flight Medal and the NASA Distinguished Service Medal. Several buildings, spacecraft, and extra-terrestrial landmarks are named after her.

She will always be remembered and her name will go down in history. When she had been a child she had expressed her interest in aerospace engineering but this was dismissed by her dad who said it was a male field and recommended that she become a doctor or a teacher. She was the first female student to take aerospace engineering classes at the college despite being discouraged by some of her professors. But she had a dream and persisted in fulfilling her dream despite these setbacks.

Her story is a lesson on hard-work, perseverance and determination.

Smile Please



1. Teacher - What is a line?

Student - A line is a dot that is going for a walk.

Teacher - (sarcastically) - Really? Then can you please tell me what are parallel lines?

Student - A dot going for a walk with his girlfriend.

2. The owner of a tuxedo store kept hovering over me as I was browsing so I asked him to leave me alone.

He said, "Fine! Suit yourself."

3. I was going to tell you a joke about boxing but I forgot the punch line.

4. A very serious fight was going on between a husband and a wife.

Husband - I resign from the post of your husband.

Wife - Okay but you will have to stay till I get another alternative and the new vacated post gets filled.

5. Girlfriend - How much do you love me?

Boyfriend - I am a mobile and you are my sim card.

Girlfriend - Oh my god! You really love me!
Boyfriend thinking to himself - Thank God she does not realise that this is a dual sim mobile.

Riddle Me



1. I am so simple that I can only point. Yet I can guide people all over the world.
2. I make a big sound when I am changed. But when I do change, I get bigger but weigh less, you will find me in movie theatres. What am I?

3. What goes away as soon as you talk about it?
4. There was a competition where each person had to hold something for a long time. At the end of the event the winner had no hands yet he won. How?
5. What has a ring but no fingers?

What is the Good Word?



All about women celebrities in Bollywood.

1. The first Bollywood actress ever.
2. Who won the most national awards in Bollywood?
3. The tallest actress in Bollywood so far.
4. The famous actress in

Bollywood who started her career at the age of 12 years in Telugu films. 5. The actress whose father was a badminton champ and who suffered from depression and spoke openly about her struggles with mental health.

True Stories on Kindness



Emma's mother was going through a divorce and she fretted over her new worries, no income and lots of bills to pay. Her husband had insisted on divorce for he wanted to marry another lady. Emma's mother spent days wallowing in worry and misery. The main problem was lack of food in the home.

But suddenly a miracle happened. Every day, when she awoke in the morning and opened the front door she would find boxes of food outside. This went on for around four months. This resulted in a happier situation for now Emma and her mother would not starve.

Her mother fortunately secured a decent job and then suddenly the groceries stopped.

Till today they never found out just who had left the groceries outside for them. But they know this saved their lives and the strange kindness of the unknown person helped them both to realise despite set-backs, there is a way out.

Every cloud can have a silver lining.

Driving home in a blizzard, a young lady noticed a vehicle trailing close behind her. Then suddenly her tire blew! She was stranded in the bitter cold and was afraid. She pulled off at the side of the road and so did the other car.

She wondered if the man was dangerous and cowered

inside her car in fear.

But to her surprise, the man got out and just changed the wheel of her car. He then went to her and explained, "I was going to get off two miles back. But I saw your tire and knew it might burst. So I followed you to help you change it."

The lady was very surprised and thanked him profusely before heading for home.

Definitely there are lots of good people in the world ready to give a helping hand.

Brain Teasers



1. If there are seven girls and seven peaches in a basket, how do you give each girl a peach, but keep the peach in the basket?
2. What are two things you can never eat for lunch?

3. I am not psychic yet I can always predict the score of any baseball game before it starts. How do I do this?

4. I have a big box to store my letters which is twelve inches wide and eight inches tall. Roughly how many letters can I put in until it is no longer empty?

5. If $5+4=13$, $6+5=16$ then what is $7+6=?$

Naturopathy



It is a field that deals with curing illness and disease with the aid of nature.

If you have caught a cold or cough here is a natural remedy that yields good results. In a glass of warm or hot water add one teaspoon of ginger, one

teaspoon of honey or jaggery and consume it three times a day. If you like a squeeze of lemon juice in it for vitamin c is also beneficial

If you cut your finger and it is bleeding, to stem the flow of blood just dab on some kitchen spice, turmeric on it. The blood flow will cease immediately.

Inspirational Quotes By Maya Angelou



Maya Angelou was Hollywood's first female black director and had a broad career as a singer, dancer, actress and composer. She was also a poet and writer. She was a civil rights activist and worked for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Here are some of her wise quotes.

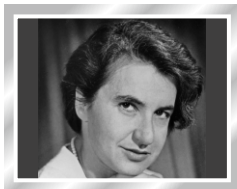
1. We may encounter many defeats but we must not be defeated.
2. If you are always trying to be normal, you will never know how amazing you can be.
3. I've learnt that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

4. We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter their colour.

5. We delight in the beauty of the butterfly but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.

6. You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them.

Rosalind Franklin



Born in 1920, this lady scientist was a British chemist and an X ray crystallographer whose work was central to the understanding of the molecular structures of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid), RNA (ribonucleic acid), viruses, coal and graphite.

Although her work on coal and viruses were appreciated in her lifetime, sadly her contributions to the discovery of the structure of DNA were largely unrecognized during her life. As a result of this, she has been referred to as the 'wronged heroine' or the 'dark lady of the DNA.'

She died in 1958 aged 37.

Ideally she should have been awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry, however according to the pre 1974 rule no award could be given posthumously unless the nomination had been made for a then alive candidate before February 1st of the award year.

On the day before she was to unveil the structure of the tobacco mosaic virus at an International fair in Brussels, she died of ovarian cancer in 1958 at the young age of 37. Her team member Aaron Klug continued her research and he won the Nobel prize for Chemistry in 1982. However, history has never forgotten her. Various awards and institutions are named in her memory. For example Newnham College, Cambridge opened a graduate residence named Rosalind Franklin Building and put a bust of her in its garden. In 1997 a newly discovered asteroid was named 9241 Rosfranklin.

Various awards and institutions continue to commemorate her greatness till today.

Wisdom Message of the Month

Do not hold grudges



In a small coastal town of Brussels was a fisherman named Elias who had a stubborn streak and held many grudges, always unable to forgive. He held a grudge against his neighbour Thomas and a silent feud stemmed because of fishermen rights.

Once they were friends but now Elias refused to look at him except to glare at him.

One stormy night as the waves lashed with a relentless fury, Elias caught in the tempest watched with panic as his small fishing vessel drifted towards the treacherous rocks. He knew he was no match for the

storm's fury. But he saw a familiar figure battling the waves in his own boat. It was Thomas who despite his their feud had come to save him. With a strength that surprised both, Thomas managed to secure Elias's boat and brought it back to safety.

Elias found himself staring at Thomas with a mixture of gratitude and shame.

He held out his hand and said a bit shakily, "Thank you, Thomas. It was wrong to hold on to that grudge for so long."

Thomas forgave him instantly. From that day on both men became firm friends, their shared experience in the storm acted as a bridge over the waters of resentment.

This story is a quiet reminder to let go of past grudges and move forwards, free from the chains of a grudge. It might be hard to forget but at least we can forgive. We can look at the other person less harshly if not becoming good friends which is not always possible.

The harbour once a symbol of discord now served as a bridge of reconciliation and both the men realised the importance of letting go and building bridges of forgiveness.

Is there anyone in your life you need to really forgive to get peace? If so, make every attempt to do so and you will find the year ahead will give you a lighter heart not burdened by unnecessary hate and resentment.

That is all for this month. Take care and God bless. Till next month.

Answers

Quiz

1. Valentina Tereshkova. 2. Kathryn Sullivan. 3. Kalpana Chawla. 4. No, not yet. 5. 100

Riddle Me

1. Compass. 2 Popcorn. 3. Silence. 4. They only had to hold their breaths. 5. A telephone or a doorbell.

What is the Good Word?

1. Durgabai Kamat. 2. Shabhana Azmi won five awards. 3. Yukta Mookhey- 5 feet 11 inches tall. 4. Rekha. 5. Deepika Padukone.

Brain Teasers

1. Give the last girl a peach inside the basket. 2. Breakfast and dinner. 3. The score is always 0 to 0 before the game begins. 4. Just one after that the box is not empty 5.19



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 GIFT OF A CHILD

MUMBAI: Ven. Fr. Agnel has blessed me immensely with a child of my own. I am a happy mother today, through the intercession of the Venerable.

- Justina D'Mello

THANKSGIVING FOR CLEAR MEDICAL REPORT

MUMBAI: I was operated for the removal of a Thyroid tumour. I prayed hard to Ven. Fr. Agnel and Mother Teresa that the tumour should be non-cancerous. My prayers were answered. My thyroid tumour is a benign tumour, said the all-clear report. Thank you Ven. Fr. Agnel and Mother Teresa.

- A Devotee

THANKSGIVING ON 28TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

DHARAVI: We often pray to Ven. Fr. Agnel and have been blessed immensely during our 28 years of wedded life. We will continue to pray to the Venerable for his blessings.

-Xavier & Prema

THANKSGIVING FOR GOOD JOB

GHATKOPAR (W): After 27 years, my brother started working. I thank Ven. Fr. Agnel for answering my prayers and blessing my sibling with a good job.

- Joylina Fernandes

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

VASAI: 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.

- Nash Colaco

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

BHANDUP: I thank Ven. Fr. Agnel for his intercession and all the blessings bestowed on me and my family.

-P.T. Abhyankar & Family

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

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

- Jacinta Aranha

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL FOR PASSING EXAM

MUMBAI: Through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have passed my exams. I am indeed thankful to the Venerable.

- Rebecca Soares

THANKSGIVING FOR SUCCESSFUL

EYE OPERATION OF DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

MUMBAI: I am thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for answering my prayers. My daughter-in-law has undergone a successful eye operation. I have immense faith in the Venerable and Lord Jesus Christ.

- A Devotee

THANKSGIVING FOR PRAYERS ANSWERED

CANADA: I prayed to Ven. Fr. Agnel for his kind intercession in helping me in life. My prayers have been answered and I have obtained Permanent Residency abroad.

- Manan Shah

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

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

- Sunita Javeri

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL FOR SUCCESS IN BUSINESS

SION: Our business has been blessed through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel. We are doing well through the grace of God.

- Trinity Trans Logistics

IN GRATITUDE TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

MUMBAI: 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.

- Captain Edward Rebello & Family

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

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

- Agnel Varghese

THANKSGIVING FOR SUCCESSFUL SURGERY

VASAI: Through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have undergone a successful surgery. I am now in good health.

- Shaldan Rodrigues

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.

-Senthil & Family

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

VASAI: Through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I continue to be blessed with good health and prosperity. I am indeed thankful to the Venerable.

- William Fargos

OUT OF THEIR BOUNTY

Praveen Srivastava	Mumbai	46500	Sharon D'Souza	Mumbai	2500	Abey E. Thomas	Kerala	1000
Gaurang Mehta	Mumbai	30000	Suzanne D'Souza	Mumbai	2500	Ramila K. Hathi	Mumbai	1000
Stacy Carvalho	Mumbai	30000	Rohit Noronha	Mumbai	2000	Agnelo Pereira	Thane	1000
Parag Ved	Mumbai	21000	Marian D'Souza	Mumbai	2000	Amar Pawar	Mumbai	1000
Nunes Anthony	Mumbai	20000	Cindy Gonsalves	Vasai	2000	Rebecca Zaman	Bengal	1000
Diana Bastin	Kerala	15000	Maxina Misquitta	Vasai	2000	Rajesh Gohil	Gujarat	1000
Kunal Kadam	Mumbai	15000	Joslin Cherian	Mumbai	2000	Pareesh Thakkar	Thane	1000
Susanne Irani	Mumbai	15000	Shahaz Shetty	Mumbai	2000	Preet Thakkar	Thane	1000
Dinaz Singh	Telangana	12000	Peter Fernandes	Mumbai	2000	Sylvina Hetya	Vasai	1000
Hugh & Colleen Gantzer	Uttarakhand	10000	A. R. Elavia	Mumbai	2000	Marian D'Souza	Mumbai	1000
Shane Fernandes	Mumbai	10000	Vilma Fernandes	USA	2000	Amit Ghagare	Mumbai	1000
Sanjay Ravatia	Mumbai	10000	Rija Anna Francis	Kerala	2000	Kalpna Shah	Mumbai	1000
Zubin Bharucha	Vasai	10000	Isabel Hendricks	Tamil Nadu	2000	Aadit Sheth	Kenya	1000
Thomas Correia	Virar	10000	Jenifer Aloysius	Pune	2000	Moshmi Prasad	Mumbai	1000
Sajeevu Mathew	Kerala	10000	Aloysius & Fly	Pune	2000	Harsh Rajendra S.	Mumbai	1000
Valsamma Nair	Mumbai	10000	Vilas Wilanker	Mumbai	2000	Hiren Abhilasha G.	Mumbai	1000
Gaurang B. Popat	Mumbai	5100	Hardik Jasani	Mumbai	2000	Maryantony	Kerala	1000
Subramaniam R.	Mumbai	5100	Devanshi Jasani	Mumbai	2000	M.D. Mathai	Kerala	1000
Daniel Benaka	Vasai	5000	Adler Fernandes	Vasai	2000	Monica D'Souza	Pune	1000
Vincent Miranda	Mumbai	5000	Rudra Jadhav	Mumbai	2000	Rockhenry Chettiar	Mumbai	1000
Jacob Puthur	Kerala	5000	Rebecca Karanjia	Kerala	2000	Selina K. K.	Kerala	1000
Abner Enterprises	Thane	5000	Rosily Joseph	Kerala	2000	K. A. Joseph	Kerala	1000
Vivian Fernandes	Mumbai	5000	Rubina Dabre	Vasai	2000	Anil Khera	Andheri	1000
Souvik Majumdar	Thane	5000	Saili Dabre	Vasai	2000	Shaun Mathew	Mumbai	1000
Abin Mathew	Kerala	5000	Pritesh Gaurea	Thane	2000	Shivshakti Store	Mumbai	1000
Pragna Pai	Mumbai	5000	E.V. Sebastian	Kerala	2000	Anthony Thomson	Kerala	1000
Rajendra Parikh	Mumbai	5000	Gavin Fonseca	Mumbai	1500	Aruna Fernando	Tamil Nadu	1000
George Yohannan	Kerala	5000	Suraj Pai	Singapore	1500	Luiza Coelho	Mumbai	1000
Jose T. K.	Kerala	5000	Dean Mascarenhas	Andhra Pradesh	1500	Arulgnana Stephen	Tamil Nadu	1000
Geeta Naik	Mumbai	5000	Jan Thomas	Mumbai	1500	Olivia D'Souza	Mumbai	1000
Anthony Crasto	Thane	5000	Agnel Fernando	Mumbai	1500	Parmar Alois	Anand	1000
Suketu Jhaveri	Mumbai	5000	John Thomas	Kerala	1500	Kimaya S.	Mumbai	1000
Shrishti Jhaveri	Mumbai	5000	Naguindas M.	Africa	1500	Gunavanthbhai D.	Gujarat	1000
Maryamma A.	Kerala	5000	Fransquinha F.	Mumbai	1250	Alice Sebastian	Kerala	500
Alfred Lobo	Pune	5000	Nikhil Atram	Mumbai	1250	John Baptist	Tamil Nadu	500
Lester Rao	Hyderabad	5000	K.G. Rao	Mumbai	1200	Meena D'Costa	Mumbai	500
Minesh Patel	Gujarat	4000	Nayana Rathod	Mumbai	1100	Vijay Arahna	Karnataka	500
Allwin D'Souza	Mumbai	4000	Dicky Alphonso	Mumbai	1000	Aryam Attara	Mumbai	500
Ved Bansod	Karnataka	4000	Jinal Patel	Mumbai	1000	Manish Gada	Mumbai	500
Falguni Solanki	Mumbai	3700	Sangita G. Patel	Mumbai	1000	Jimmy Gonsalves	Mumbai	500
Mahavash Sohrab	Dhanu	3000	Ghanshyam Patel	Mumbai	1000	Valerian D'Souza	Mumbai	500
Techno Products	Chennai	3000	Ankit G. Patel	Mumbai	1000	Mahrugh Mistry	Mumbai	500
Roger Rebello	Vasai	3000	Fittech Industries	Mumbai	1000	Sheshikant Parmar	Gujarat	500
Brian Dlima	Mumbai	3000	Soosai Jude	Bangalore	1000	Mariamamma Jose	Kerala	500
Sohan C. Mehta	Mumbai	3000	Sheetal Dias	Vasai	1000	Tribhovandas K. P.	Gujarat	500
Shilpa Gonsalves	Vasai	3000	Sharad Gandhi	UK	1000	R. Victor	Tamil Nadu	500
Gaurang B. Popat	Mumbai	2500	Pranjali Senjit	Pune	1000	Mini Baby	Kerala	500
Kainaz Engineer	Mumbai	2500	Agnel Selvan	Mumbai	1000	Komal Paranjpe	Mumbai	500
Shahnaz Engineer	Mumbai	2500	Alice Joseph	Kerala	1000	J. Sebastian	Mumbai	500
Alice D'Souza	Mumbai	2500						

BOB'S BANTER

by Robert Clements

Tapping and Nudging..!

Something that happens during our wet monsoons is the stubborn defiance of jammed doors, unyielding windows, and cupboard drawers with an attitude that could put the most obstinate of politicians to shame.

We pull, push, heave, haul, and hoist, only to be met with rigid resistance, quite akin to an unperturbed opposition and a bullying government response.

One morning, I found myself an amused spectator to such a battle of wills. My wife, with determination written all over her face, was attempting to push a small dressing seat back into the cupboard niche I thought I had so thoughtfully designed many years ago.

But, like a spoiled, strong-willed schoolboy, the wooden piece refused to budge. It stood its ground, unmoved by my wife's efforts. Much like an immovable, uncooperative government clerk staring blankly at a file that requires urgent processing.

and - without a single murmur - it slipped back into its niche, settling in as if it had never resisted in the first place.

There it sat, smug and innocent, betraying no hint of the battle it had waged earlier. As I looked at its now cooperative nature, a thought struck me - how often do we encounter a similar resistance in life?

The truth is, almost every day, we face situations that mirror this struggle, particularly in human interactions. People, much like my dressing seat, have their own rigid mindsets. They resist change, dig in their heels, and refuse to yield.

And yet, brute force - whether in the form of sheer physical effort or aggressive persuasion rarely works.

Consider what is happening in Delhi: The ruling party with a sizeable majority feels they can pass any bill, and change anything without bothering to think what the people have to say.




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I hadn't quite realized my wife possessed such muscle, but there she was, a female Dara Singh, wrestling with an equally determined Laila Ali of the wooden variety. Forgive my comparisons, but as I watched the unfolding drama, I couldn't help but feel like I was witnessing an epic battle, one for the history books. The dressing stool, though appearing meek and harmless, had clearly made up its mind - it was not going in.

Predictably, the dressing stool won.

My wife, in a huff and with an air of deep frustration, turned to me. "Stupid seat! And stop grinning! You designed it, let's see you put it back!"

I wasn't about to risk a burnt breakfast, so I wisely decided to postpone my engineering skills until she left for work. Once she was gone, I approached the seat with the patience of a saint. I slowly slotted it in place, nudged it to the left, gently tapped it on top,

But the only thing that happens is that either there's a ruckus in Parliament or the bill gets struck down later by the Supreme Court.

This can also be seen in how Trump is handling the rest of the world, and will soon learn a bitter lesson with his bludgeoning attitude.

We need to learn how to tap and nudge.

You'll be surprised at how even the most obstinate obstacles eventually yield to wisdom and gentleness.

Just ask my very pleased wife...!

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

Fr. Agnel Balbhavan Annual Day 2024-25 celebrated in Bandra

Fr. Agnel Balbhavan, Bandra, celebrated their **Annual Day** on **15th February, 2025** with a delightful performance of music, song and dance, at **Fr. Agnel Technical High School Hall, Bandra**. A skit with the message of **Honesty is the Best Policy**, staged by the **Little Agnelites**, received a loud applause.

Actor **Rahul Patil** was the **Chief Guest** while actress **Ruchi Tiwari** was the **Guest of Honour**.

Late Fr. Conceicao Rodrigues, a prominent member of the **Society of the Missionaries of St. Francis Xavier (SFX)**, founded Balbhavan in Mannat, Bandra Bandstand, before moving to the present premises.



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“As we journey together in hope, Lent is a time to confront both personal and collective struggles with faith and compassion. Let us live out the central message of the Jubilee Year: Hope does not disappoint.”

- His Holiness Pope Francis



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