



FR. AGNEL

ASHRAM NEWS

May 2025

MOTHER, YOU ARE EVERYTHING!



**HAPPY
MOTHER'S
DAY**

NOTHING CAN SUBSTITUTE THE LOVE AND CARE OF A MOTHER!

MAY 2025

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MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL SUPERIOR



We are all deeply saddened by the passing away of the ever-smiling Pope Francis, the Pope of the People.

Pope Francis was known for his people connect. He interacted with people across the world. He would make frequent calls to the Holy Family Catholic Parish in Gaza, the only Catholic church in the Gaza Strip, especially during times of conflict, sharing his prayers and concern for the people sheltering there. As Shepherd, in this Silver Jubilee Year, he was the ray of hope to his flock.

Showing his humanitarian side, though in frail health, Pope Francis even appeared on the balcony of St. Peter's Square and blessed the crowd of over 35,000 people on Easter Sunday, the day before he died. In his Urbi et Orbi [To the city (of Rome) and to the world] message for 2025, Pope Francis emphasized the resurrection of Jesus as a source of hope and renewed life, urging the faithful to actively seek the risen Christ in their daily lives.

Late Pope Francis showed his mercy and compassion towards the poor, championed the cause of the marginalized, particularly migrants and refugees, calling for their safe and dignified treatment. What's more, he promoted interfaith dialogue, besides peace between Israel and Palestine.

He had the care and well-being of Mother Earth close to his heart. His encyclical "Laudato Si" (2015) addressed environmental degradation, climate change, and the moral duty of humanity to protect the Earth.

With his earthly journey coming to an end on 21st April 2025, going against tradition of being buried in the crypt of St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, Pope Francis was buried in the Basilica of St. Mary Major in the heart of Rome. In this church, he would pray before an icon of the Virgin Mary before and after each of his international trips. It is an inspiration for us to recite the Rosary and to seek the intercession of Mother Mary, in this month of May.

On 11th May, let us celebrate Mother's Day. It's the day to honour the love, dedication, and sacrifices made by mothers who have made us what we are today. Happy Mother's Day!

Furthermore, it's also time to celebrate the International Day of Families on 15th May. Families are the very fabric of communities and the foundation of society. During the summer holidays, let us spend quality time with our families! Families should pray together to stay together.

- Fr. Bento Rodrigues

BE BUILDERS OF HOPE - PART I NEGOTIATING THE TORTUOUS PATH TO PEACE

- Archbishop Emeritus Thomas Menampampil

In the emerging world, wars like that in Ukraine have made us realize **we have become** more and more **dependent on each other**. When the **supply chain is disrupted**, world economy goes chaotic. Unfortunately, the fighter is considered a hero today, not the peacemaker. So, **unemployed youths** are easily drawn into violence by any passing ideology. And yet **violence has not solved any problems**: neither the **American War against Terrorism**, nor **Majoritarian violence** against minorities and neighbours.

While the two World Wars have taught Europe to be cautious about exaggerated forms of nationalism, newly emerging **nations in Asia** are busy with a narrow nationalistic agenda: **boundary disputes, weapons accumulation**, claims of a great past and warnings to the neighbours. **China** is forgetting about their **sinking population** despite amazing economic growth, people are sceptical about Xi's "Wolf Warrior" foreign policies. **Indian leaders** are blind to our unsteady economy and **internal discontentment**; tensions are at the borders and between communities.

Well-informed **intellectuals** can point a **realistic way forward**, taking into consideration diverse interests and possibilities, recognising regional and **community differences**. **Religious leaders** can **sustain hope** even amidst failures in the cause for peace, while bringing **workable proposals to the masses**. They ought to **build hopes in faint hearts**, promote creative thinking among activists, and inspire even opponents to cooperation. Then, "Stand erect, hold your head high, for your salvation is near" (Lk 21:28).

Very briefly, this article is on how **social unfairness**, gross inequality, religious bias lead to tensions and **violence**, and how the exaggerated **national ambitions of majoritarians** do the same. Well-informed **Intellectuals** can elicit thought and **search for solutions** with other perceptive people in society, and **religious leaders** and **social activists** can inspire the masses towards **realistic efforts for peace**.

Violence Affects Everyone

A person of good acts and good, agreeable, and sweet speech, has no equal (Mahabharata, Shanti Parva, 84,10).

With the Russian army deep in Ukraine territory, over 70,000 Ukrainians dead and 10 million having fled their homes, the entire world is longing for the end to the three-year war. **Twenty-thousand Indian medical students** were compelled to leave their studies. We little realized how dependent India had become even on a small country like Ukraine, let alone America, China or Russia.

Yes. In the emerging world, we have become more and more **dependent on each other**: Germany on Russian oil, and America on Chinese consumer goods; India on Russian weapons, French fighter jets, Chinese medical ingredients, and on oil from Iraq, Syria and UAE; and all of us on everyone else's contribution. With the **supply chain disrupted**, world economy goes chaotic. Recognition of our interdependence is the first step towards peace. We fervently long for peace.

Once violence breaks out, it is not easy to bring it to a conclusion. Today's society knows only one way to stop violence: stronger violence. Governments speak of "fighting terrorism," and not of working for peace. **George Bush's War on Terrorism** stirred up terrorists all over the world. Volunteers came from Chechnya (Russia), Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria and Western Europe to confront the American army. The natural urge to violence in ambitious young men was given a new stimulus and motivation. Not enough people have the

imagination or the creativity to break the spiral of violence (Hallman 41). HOPE alone gives birth to creativity.

We are told that **Palestinian Christians held on to "HOPE"** during the Gaza conflict (L'Osservatore Romano, January 6). It was truly a hope against hope. But it has been fulfilled. Ceasefire has been declared. The cause of peace has made some headway. Fresh hopes have been aroused. We need **agents of peace** today, **builders of hope**: in Palestine, Ukraine, Myanmar, Manipur, and scores of other places. More and more people feel that **intellectuals should play a greater role**.

Christian intellectuals have a sturdy message inspired by God's Word. **Religious leaders** have chosen this mission as their vocation by their very profession.

The Fighter Is the Hero Today, Our Dialogue



Skills have Weakened

Happy are those who work for peace; God will call them his children (Mt 5:9)

Let me begin with a general statement valid in any part of the world today. We have been fed for over a century on **philosophies of struggle** (of Darwin, Marx, Nietzsche, propagators of the Fascist, Nazi and Communist ideologies and their milder versions, and various forms of nationalisms, ethnic loyalties, religious fanaticisms) and are so inspired by the ideals of fighting and struggling for justice and rights, that **our combating spirit has grown**, and our reconciling skills have sagged.

No wonder, then, that the **fighter is the hero today**. The Peacemaker may be given a minimum space grudgingly in our consciousness, no more. His/her activities do not get the headlines in the press or attract attention. What **makes news is confrontation**, collision, and mutual destruction. What is expected of a committed activist is to condemn, denounce, expose, humiliate. When he/she does that, he is at his best. He emerges a hero. And yet remember, the French Revolution, while proclaiming equality, liberty and **fraternity** took away **a quarter of million lives** (Armstrong 254).

We are beginning to forget that there are certain basic **skills traditional in all cultures** like paying respectful attention to the other person's (tribe's, community's, nation's) point of view, trying to understand them, showing sympathy for the opponent's goal or at least some aspect of it, dialoguing, explaining, **arguing amicably**, avoiding aggressive language, making a special effort to convince; yielding, conceding, forgiving, coaxing, eliciting compliance, drawing people into accepting one's own point of view, evoking collaboration, **insisting on gentler solutions**, and inviting compromise.

Ambitious Youth Take Risks, May not Avoid Violence

May my life, each breath of life, the eyes, the ears, the speech, the mind, the soul and all other acts and deeds, be put to the service of humankind (Yajur Veda 18,29).

Experience shows that a society with a **high proportion of young people**, as in Africa and the Middle East, is likely to have youthful energies that collide if they are not guided in a positive direction. State machinery or opposition parties, having aggressive designs, find it easy to mobilize supporters in a climate of **exploding youth-energy**, especially when young people are aggrieved with problems related to land scarcity, **joblessness**, depressed wages, market monopolies, and/or political marginalization.

As a consequence, there emerge a **youth-dense**

street culture, gang formation, mob violence. In UP, Yogi has drawn them for acting as 'moral police'. Youth can easily be misled, tend to be idealistic, easily satisfied with peer approval, **ready for risk-taking** and naively accepting ideological explanations. They take to the streets, positively demanding rights, participation and inclusion; or negatively taking to what is known as **terrorism**.

The Rise of Majoritarianism

Never in this world will hatred cease by hatred...hatred is ceased by love (The Buddha).

Majoritarians make their fellow citizens feel that they can show loyalty to their nation only by expressing their hatred for a neighbouring country and fidelity to their religion/ideology only by **condemning others' religions/ideologies**. Majoritarianism in one country encourages majoritarianism in another. They project the vision 'might is right', which has engendered immense inequality, injustice and **acts of violence** against weaker communities, since "resources end up in the hands of the first comer or the most powerful: **the winner takes all**" (Laudato Si 82).

Elections today stand for **malpractices on a massive scale**: money, saris, jobs, phones, food, liquor, freebies (Crabtree 136). The police have intercepted crores worth on various items. Raghuram Rajan laments that the "tradition of debate and an open **spirit of enquiry**" have **suffered** (Crabtree 288). Shashi Tharoor has done the same. It is little wonder that the 2014 elections threw up one-fifth of MPs who had serious **criminal records** (Crabtree 142); later reports are even more alarming. In fact, **criminals** in helpless situations are eager to **join the ruling party** to escape prosecution.

Meantime the number of **billionaires** have increased. **India's share is 140**, number steadily rising. *Credit Suisse* has discovered, further, that India has **178,000 dollar millionaires** (Crabtree 67). Thomas Piketty says that **Indian inequality is the highest** today since 1922. It is *difficult to reverse* the trend if it stabilizes, as Brazil has found. The benefit of capitalism itself will be undermined **without education and health**, insists Piketty (Crabtree 71-72).



Archbishop Emeritus Thomas Menamparampil was Bishop of Dibrugarh and Archbishop of Guwahati. He has brought a large number of schools and hospitals into existence in Assam. He has been involved in several initiatives for peace in Northeast India.

THE CALL AND GIFT OF SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD

Every woman can attain Spiritual Motherhood!

- Leon Bent

May is the Month of the Rosary, the Motherhood of Mary's Masterpiece! The word "motherhood" is formed from the words "mother" and "-hood". "Mother" itself is a common term across many languages, often derived from a Proto-Indo-European root, and "-hood" is a suffix that indicates state or quality.

Spiritual motherhood, is a womanly calling to serve the Church by nurturing and guiding others spiritually, particularly in the context of faith and discipleship. It's a ministry of influence, characterized by prayer, faithfulness to Church teachings, and a willingness to reach out to those seeking God.

Spiritual motherhood is understood as a vocation to serve the Church's mission of evangelization, working alongside bishops, priests, deacons and lay people to carry out the Great Commission.

The Blessed Virgin Mary is the primary role model for spiritual motherhood, her actions from Pentecost onwards serving as an inspiration.

Spiritual motherhood is exercised through the power of the Holy Spirit, present in all baptized Christians, and is a ministry of influence, encouraging others in their faith journey. It's a response to a divine call, characterized by a strong life of prayer and adherence to Church teachings.

Spiritual motherhood can be seen in various contexts, including nurturing young children, caring for the elderly or sick, or mentoring individuals on their path of faith. This can also refer to a broader concept of spiritual parenting, where a parent guides their children towards a strong faith and a life of service to God.

By spiritual parents, I mean people who care for the young, as well as the helpless and the needy of any age or station of life. The gift of spiritual motherhood is one of God's greatest gifts to women. Discover how you can enter more deeply into this charism which supports and strengthens the hearts of countless priests, religious men and women and lay faithful.

The Virgin Mary is the Icon of Spiritual Motherhood, and the entire Church receives the first fruits of her divine maternity.



A spiritual mother desires to be formed by the Holy Spirit in the mould of Mary, who is the model of feminine virtue. As **Archbishop Luis M. Martínez** wrote: **"Two artisans — the Holy Spirit and the most holy Virgin Mary — must concur in the work that is at once God's masterpiece and humanity's supreme product. Both the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary are necessary to souls, for they are the only ones who can reproduce Christ."** Spiritual motherhood is a gift of the Holy Spirit and characterized by nine Marian virtues: faith, hope, love, humility, courage, praise, gratitude, magnanimity and wisdom.



It is through the sacramental rivers of grace that a woman, as a daughter of the Church, receives her spiritual life. In turn, she, as a spiritual mother, becomes a vessel of life-giving grace. A spiritual mother encounters the Eternal High Priest in the Eucharist and then, like Mary, carries Christ to others, offering prayers and sacrifices along the way. To priests, she mirrors Mary.

The Lord calls all women to imitate Mary as spiritual mothers of souls. **Spiritual motherhood includes birth pangs, but the offering of suffering in union with Jesus brings forth new life for priests, families, and the entire world.**

Consecration to Jesus through Mary, is a powerful way for a woman to be formed into a spiritual mother.

Marian consecration is a covenant of love, formed by the power of the Holy Spirit, that results in a powerful union of one's heart with Mary's heart. Various saints and the tradition the Church tell us that this is a sure pathway to Jesus. Our new unity with Mary draws us into her mission on earth. What is Mary's mission? To continually birth Jesus on earth in priests and in all souls by the power of the Holy Spirit. Marian Consecration is a path for ordinary women of faith to become spiritual mothers of priests. The Church invites all women to the spiritual fruitfulness of authentic femininity: The spiritual motherhood of souls.

For this reason, when sending the Holy Spirit to my Apostles, I did not exclude Mary — even when she was full of grace, filled with my Spirit — and it was with the purpose that the Church have her for a Queen, that priests consider her indispensable, that the warmth and protection of a mother not be lacking to the former and to the faithful that she be the channel whereby all grace of the Divine Spirit would flow to souls.

In the Holy Father's homily on December 8, 2015, the start of the Extraordinary Jubilee, Pope Francis, of revered memory, emphasized, “the simple, yet highly symbolic act of opening the Holy Door, which highlights the primacy of grace; the same grace that made Mary worthy of becoming the mother of Christ.” The Pope continued, **“The fullness of grace can transform the human heart and enable it to do something so great as to change the course of human history.** The feast of the Immaculate Conception serves as a reminder of the grandeur of God's love in allowing Mary to avert the original sin present in every man and woman who comes into the world.”

“Conchita” was a wife and mother with children. Over the course of many years, Jesus prepared her to live a life of spiritual motherhood for priests. In the future, she will be of great importance for the universal Church.

Jesus once explained to Conchita, “There are souls, who through ordination receive a priestly anointing. However, there are ... also priestly souls who do not have the dignity or the ordination of a priest, yet have a priestly mission. They offer themselves united to me... these souls help the Church in a very powerful spiritual way. ... **You will be the mother of a great number of spiritual children, yet, they will cost your heart the death of a thousand martyrs.**

“Bring yourself as an offering for the priests. Unite your offering with my offering, to obtain graces for them.” ... “I want to come again into this world. ... in my priests. I want to renew the world by revealing myself through the priests. **I want to give my Church a powerful impulse in which I will pour out the Holy Spirit over my priests like a new Pentecost.**

“The Church and the world need a new Pentecost, a priestly Pentecost, an interior Pentecost.”

As a young girl, Conchita once prayed before the Blessed Sacrament, **“Lord, I feel so incapable of loving you; therefore, I want to marry. Give me many children, so that, they can love you more than I.”** She had a very happy marriage, and gave birth to nine children — two girls and seven boys, each of whom she consecrated to Our Lady. She endured the death of four of her children, each dying a holy death.

Naturally, Conchita's spiritual motherhood was very apparent in one of her sons who became a priest. She wrote about him, “Manuel was born in the same hour that Fr. José Camacho died. Upon hearing the news, I prayed to God that my son could replace him at the altar. ... When little Manuel began to talk, we prayed together for the great grace of a vocation to the priesthood. ... On the day of his First Holy

Communion and on all the major solemnities, he renewed this prayer. ... At the age of 17, he joined the Society of Jesus.”

Her third child, Maneul was born in 1889. While living in Spain, he wrote to his mother about his decision to become a priest. She wrote back to him, “Give yourself to the Lord with all your heart, and do not hold anything back! Forget about creatures and forget especially about yourself! **I cannot imagine someone consecrated to God who is not a saint. One cannot give only half of oneself to God. Be generous with him!**”

In 1914, she met Manuel in Spain for the last time, because he never returned to Mexico. He wrote in a letter to her, **“My dear little mother, you have shown me the way. Fortunately, I have heard from your lips since my earliest years the challenging and saving teaching of the Cross. Now I want to put it into practice.”** His mother felt the pain of separation, “I took your letter to the tabernacle and told the Lord that, I accept this sacrifice with my whole soul. The next day I was carrying your letter close to my heart when I received Holy Communion and, in this way, renewed my total offering to the Lord.”

In the Gospel of Matthew, Christ tells us that “whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother” (12:50). In explaining this passage, **St. John Paul II noted that our Lord wanted us to understand that motherhood “is always related to the Covenant which God established with the human race through the motherhood of the Mother of God.”**

Then, with specific reference to motherhood, the Holy Father stated, **“The motherhood of every woman, understood in the light of the Gospel, is similarly not only 'of flesh and blood': it expresses a profound 'listening to the word of the living God' and a readiness to 'safeguard' this Word, which is 'the word of eternal life' (cf. Jn 6:68).”** A spiritual mother, like Mary, is always ready at any cost to safeguard the 'Word of God.' In this way, she becomes a personification of Mary, the Mother of God.

A spiritual mother, through her own sacrifices, prayers, and works of charity for the sanctification of others, acts 'in persona Matris.' A spiritual mother must have not only a profound union with Christ, but also a deeply personal relationship with his beloved Mother.



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.

A PERSONAL RENEWAL OF THE "HAIL MARY"?

- Fr. Fio Mascarenhas, SJ

The Rosary is the main Catholic way of venerating Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and our own (spiritual) mother. It is particularly used by groups and individuals every day in the month of May, culminating in the crowning on 31 May of her statue as May Queen. It is also especially used in the month of September when her "traditional birthday" is widely celebrated.

But I wonder if we would not do better to change or "renew" the *second half* of the "Hail Mary" prayer? The Second Vatican Council has changed or "renewed" so much of the Catholic mindset and practices (in the fields of theology, scripture, inter-religious respect and dialogue, family life, liturgy, ecology, etc., etc.). Even in Mariology, we have come to understand better Mary's ongoing role in the Mystery of our Salvation. So perhaps we could consider a small (yet significant) change in the current formula of the "Holy Mary?"

The first part, "Hail Mary," is entirely biblical and should never be changed, since all the verses are literally taken from the Gospel. In the first centuries of Christianity, it was the only prayer made to Mary (a prayer of praise)! It consisted of a combination of the Angelic Salutation (*Greetings, O Mary, God's favoured one, the Lord is with you!*) and Elizabeth's Evangelical Salutation (*Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!*). The two Salutations were put together in the 6th century and recited 150 times by monks and the faithful as a chaplet, also using beads (beads were already being used to pray the Our Father 150 times).

The second, begging half of the prayer ("Holy Mary...") came to be composed comparatively recently, only in the Middle Ages – in the 13th century in the context of the Albigensian heresy

which was drawing thousands away from Catholic doctrine and practice, and when in the 1400s, the Black Plague was decimating three quarters of the population of Europe. In their desperation and acute widespread atmosphere of fear (people all around were dying like flies!) some holy pastors composed and added the "Holy Mary..." as a prayer of intercession for those times of calamity. This prayer helped greatly to quell the heresy, and later, the Plague. It has remained "unchanged" till today.

While the prayer may still be relevant today, nevertheless it is dated.



So to personally renew our Marian devotion, perhaps we could use a better second half of the Hail Mary, one which is more biblical, more in the spirit of the *aggiornamento* attempted by the Second Vatican Council, and also much more Christ-centred! What about, for example, "*Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us your children, that we might be made worthy of the promises of Christ!*" We will thereby also remember fruitfully that, at his Ascension, Jesus' last command to his disciples was to "*wait (in prayer) for the coming of the Holy Spirit of power*" (Acts 1:5,8), and also that in Jn 14:16, Jesus explicitly called the Holy Spirit "*another Paraclete*" (the word in Greek really means Encourager, rather than Advocate). So, asking Mary here to intercede for us to become worthy to receive the promise of the Holy Spirit is to ask her to join with Jesus' own prayer of Jn 14:16. Moreover, we are already familiar with this (suggested) new ending from the popular prayer, "*Hail Holy Queen.*"

A final thought regarding the cry, "*pray for us sinners.*" Put yourselves in Mary's shoes and ask which mother would be pleased to be told 50 or 500 times again and again every day that the main definition of her children is that they are "sinners?" Instead, would she not be more pleased to hear us

call ourselves “her children?” (Isn't this more in keeping with Jesus' last will and testament spoken from the Cross?) Isn't this the main result of baptism? Is it not as children of the Father of Jesus that we receive Jesus in the Eucharist? So, it is as Jesus' beloved “*brothers and sisters, and co-heirs*” (Romans 8:14-17) that we should be asking for our Mother Mary's frequent intercession that we her children become more Christ-like! Moreover, should good Catholics not be more confident of God's mercy (which they acknowledge receiving daily) and be unafraid of the hour of their death? We have already become, by God's mercy, a “***new creation in Christ***” (2 Cor 5:17)! Must not we Catholics develop a more habitually “Christian” mindset?

So, to personally ***renew*** our Marian devotion, let us happily keep the biblical praise-verses of the “Hail Mary,” and substitute the “Holy Mary” part about “praying for us *sinner*s,” with the same biblical prayer-ending of the lovely hymn, “Hail Holy Queen,” namely, “PRAY FOR US YOUR CHILDREN, THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE WORTHY OF THE

PROMISES OF CHRIST” (and especially of Christ's promise of the Gift of the Spirit)!

Please notice that I stress the words, “to *personally* renew.” Many reforms of the Second Vatican Council are *still* to be implemented even after 65 years, so to wait for this suggested change to become “official” in the Church's liturgy is to wait for Vatican III! For example, it is very sad that whereas Pope Francis, already in 2017, recommended that we correct the wrongly translated words of the Our Father about “not leading us into temptation,” and while the Roman Missal, and the French and Italian Bishop's Conferences, did so immediately, the world's English-speaking Bishops are still thinking about it!!!

So would you agree? (Don't “react” and go by first impressions! Instead, “respond” after praying about it!)



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



There is no Joy Greater than the Joy of GIVING

Sybal Rodrigues, Borivali

I have donated an amount of 35,000 via NEFT towards education, food, stationery and essentials for the children at Fr. Agnel Ashram.

P.T. Joseph, Kerala

I have donated an amount of Rs. 3000 via cheque for the welfare of Balbhavan boys. They are receiving the best education and training. It's good to see them eager to do well in life.

Neil & Ajitya Pasawalia, USA

We would like to donate an amount of Rs. 15000, as a full sponsorship for a child at Balbhavan. We are happy to encourage them on the right path.

Nikhil Atram, Khar

I am donating an amount of Rs. 1250 via UPI as a monthly sponsorship for a Balbhavan boy. We feel privileged to support a worthy cause.

Kenneth Remedios, Bandra

I am wholeheartedly donating an amount of Rs 1,00,000 for fulfilling the daily needs and welfare of Balbhavan boys.

Cynthia Mathias, Malad

I am happy to offer Rs. 3000 as an Easter Gift for Balbhavan boys. It is a delight to share our joy with others.

Henry Felix Pereira, Palghar

We are happy to provide a donation of Rs.1000 through cash for the Balbhavan boys. They need our support at all times.

Dipali Pandya, Borivali

Please accept my small cash donation of Rs.500 for the Balbhavan children. May they continue to succeed in studies, sports, music and other areas of development.

SUPERRRR SE BHI UPAR!

CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL
MOTHER'S DAY ON 11TH MAY, 2025.

- Ninette D'Souza

- Don Quixote mistook windmills for them. You guessed right. It's giants I'm talking about though not the fe, fi, fo fum kind. They are not giants in linear measure but rather in the measure of their love and service.
- Some stand at barely 4' while others are a regular 5.5' and still others a regal 6'.
- Whether boasting an education or illiterate, they will leave no stone unturned to see that their kids avail the best in the field.
- Trust me, you don't want to see the lioness in them shine forth if their children are in any way attacked, in word or action.
- Some stay home while others are out there making ends meet, but both nurture with tenderness.

It's MOTHERS, MOMS, MUMMAS, MUMS, MUMMYS I'm referring to.

Mothers are super people already because they somehow make it all work. They have every hip pocket skill (a term popularized by Indra Nooyi) that there is to know. Even though their response to money requests usually is an emphatic NO, they are the go-to person in the home. Dad is usually the ATM. Mothers bring a natural empathy to every relationship. They can be powerful and yet feminine and soft at the same time.

Courageous and Confident. These two adjectives form the two sides of the coin called 'Mother'. No matter how meagre her resources, how difficult the people she has to contend with, she will mobilise her troops and achieve what she has set out to do. Being a mother is never an easy task whether staying at home or working. It's a constant juggle. What matters at the end of the day is that you are content because you have given off your best, while playing your role for the day, to perfection, no matter what it cost you.

Most mothers go through a healthy dose of constant

accusations, but like superwoman with inner resilience and fortitude, they power through it. When asked, most mothers will try and paint a rosy picture to the world that it's a piece of cake being a mother. Let me tell you they are lying through their teeth. As a working mother (a school teacher) who left home at 7 a.m., returned at 2 p.m., slept a while then got busy with tuitions during which they played, then sat with their homework and other requirements, helped them get ready for school the next day, dinner and bedtime meant that I would be free only after 9.30 p.m. everyday.

Then I would prepare myself for school after which I would sit with their school projects, models and assignments till around 12 a.m. or later depending on how complex the item was. Up at 5 a.m. and the gamut of routine would begin all over.



Sunday was not of much consolation. It went by in a flash as I used the hours to prime the home for the week ahead. Making of Christmas sweets was another ball game altogether. I would wake up at 3 a.m. prepare one sweet a day and hide the container where the kids and their dad would not be able to find them. Oh! Those were the good days.

Women are programmed in a special way, more so 'Mothers' whose DNA I think has a special strand of mom guilt. We want to be the perfect mom, perfect spouse, perfect colleague, perfect PTA representative, perfect community resident.... We are wired to aim for perfection – yet with only 24 hours in a day it's impossible to do it all. If you take out just six hours for sleep, we are left with 18 hours to fulfil all roles and these have to be done simultaneously most of the time. It's high impossible.

Mom guilt is a real thing and it is very normal to experience it. If you don't there is something wrong with you. Some say there should be a kind of balance but balance really does not exist. At best

you can juggle all your priorities.

I remember how I would leave home with a heavy heart if one of my kids was running a high temperature, simply because there was an exam at school and I could not afford to be absent. Sometimes it would be because I would miss so many classes and catching up with the portion would be another hassle. We didn't have mobile phones then. So I would be on tenterhooks till the break when I would call home to find out how my child was doing. It helped that my husband was running his own Civil Work business so he was around. I also had my maternal aunt who lives with me and I would leave the running of my home in her hands.

An encouraging ecosystem of supportive spouses and children at home, and understanding bosses along with considerate co-workers, is a mighty blessing needed, to reduce mom guilt. Being a great mother and a thriving professional should not be a solo journey. For working women the only way, I see to lessen mom guilt is to have great help at home and family around which would be the icing on the cake.

Whether they're at home or working, mothers are present when the need arises. Another common experience of most mothers is the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde attitude of children. When they're in a good mood, 'You are the awesomest Mom in the world'. When they decide they want to use mom as a punching bag they will go all out highlighting the minutest faults and irrelevant issues.

Often, I have called myself '*Municipality ki kachra peti*' at home because I would be blamed for everything that went wrong...the TV playing up or the AC not cooling enough to the pet doggie deciding to go on a fast. Phew!!!

But these very rascals would go out of their way to make 'Mother's Day' a memorable event for me. They did so for Father's Day and Parent's Day as well. Cards and little chocolates bought from money saved from the paltry Rs. 5 they would get

per week as pocket money. They would entertain us with songs, dance and games too. As they grew older the performances stopped but the cards and gifts continued. Once they began earning the gifts became bigger and more expensive, lunches and outings became the norm. Another thing my boys would do once the forearm muscles showed up, was to just come to me, lift me up and twirl me around or carry me from one end to the other of our one room kitchen home. Although the older boy is no longer with us, my younger son although now married, still does this off and on. Celebrate your mom with love, cherish her presence in your life. Let everyday be 'Mother's Day.'

The final chapter of my first book '*Lamplighter*,' had short epitaphs from family, friends, colleagues and ex-students. I present here what my son the late Aurelius D'Souza had to say. "I've always thought of a mother as someone who would shield you from the terrors of human nature or someone who would buffer you from the evil in the world. Never once did it occur to me that I've been blessed to have a mother like mine. The realization dawned only when I moved away from home for work. She's been a 'Rock' for me, my Cornerstone! My mother has been my inspiration. She taught me that hard work doesn't kill. If you don't have something you want, work for it. If you are going to do something, no matter how small, do it right. Be nice to people she said and treat them well. In short, my mother taught me what it meant to be a good human being and insisted I strive to be one, always."



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.

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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Visit us at www.agnelashram.org

AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Greater Noida

MILAN 2025: A CELEBRATION OF UNITY, CULTURE AND JOY

Milan 2025 was more than just a gathering — it was a heartfelt celebration of unity, diversity, and the vibrant spirit of the Fr. Agnel Balbhawan family. Held from 8th to 12th April at Fr. Agnel Balbhawan, Greater Noida, this cherished event brought together 75 participants, from the Fr. Agnel Balbhawan homes of Vashi (Navi Mumbai), Bandra, Pune, Verna, Greater Noida, and the Delhi Province.

The five-day celebration began on a high note with an exciting trip to Agra, where the awe-inspiring Taj Mahal became a symbol of wonder and shared joy.

Each day unfolded with thoughtfully curated activities designed to strengthen bonds, showcase talents, and create lasting memories.

Day Two, the Sports Day, was a burst of energy and laughter, featuring games like Bucket Ball — a delightful first-time experience for many — and the ever-thrilling Tug of War. More than just play, these games taught teamwork, healthy competition, and friendship.

That afternoon, students from different Balbhawans came together for an experience-sharing session. It was a powerful reminder that though we come from different corners, we are all part of the same mission. The group then visited the Junior Section of Fr. Agnel Balbhawan, Greater Noida, where the vibrant smiles of little ones left a deep impression. The evening brought one of the most enriching moments, a heartfelt session with Fr. Alarico Carvalho. His reflections on diversity and togetherness left everyone inspired. His message encouraged children to look beyond differences, embrace new cultures, and celebrate unity as a strength.

On Day Three, excitement filled the air as the group set off for Delhi Darshan. From historic

monuments to national memorials, the children explored the capital's rich heritage with fascination. Along the way, they visited the Fr. Agnel Schools in Delhi, Vaishali, and Noida, where they were warmly received with meals and affection, further strengthening the bonds across branches.

12th April marked a dual celebration with the closing ceremony of the 25th Anniversary of Balbhawan, Greater Noida. The morning began with a solemn and spirited Mass, celebrated by Archbishops and 20 Priests, filling the hearts of all with gratitude and grace. A vibrant cultural program followed, showcasing incredible talent and the deep-rooted values of Balbhawan.

In the evening, the energy reached its peak with a dazzling dance competition and the closing ceremony of Milan 2025. The highlight was a live performance by the Super Senior Boy Band of Fr. Agnel Balbhawan, Greater Noida, whose powerful beats and soulful melodies had everyone on their feet dancing, cheering, and celebrating a journey well-lived.

The event was a success thanks to the untiring efforts of Fr. Bento Rodrigues, Fr. J. A. Carvalho, Fr. Roy D'Sa and Fr. Jovito Vaz for their constant guidance, encouragement and presence. A special appreciation goes to the super seniors from Fr. Agnel Balbhawan, Greater Noida who took charge and handled responsibility with enthusiasm, grace and maturity.

Milan 2025 wasn't just five days of fun — it was a celebration of everything the Fr. Agnel family stands for: unity in diversity, learning through experience, and the joy of coming together. The memories made, the friendships formed, and the lessons learned will continue to echo in our hearts.



Balbhawan children from across India, on a learning excursion with their mentors.



The Balbhawan family from Bandra, Vashi (Navi Mumbai), Pune, Verna, Greater Noida, and the Delhi Province, make a happy picture.



The Mass on the successful conclusion of Milan 2025, celebrated by Archbishops and 20 priests.



A cultural performance at Milan 2025.



Soulful melodies from the Super Senior Boy Band of Fr. Agnel Balbhawan, Greater Noida.



ADIEU, POPE FRANCIS, OUR BELOVED SHEPHERD!

- Fr. M.K. George, SJ

Something stirred deep within my heart when I heard the news on April 21, 2025, around 10 a.m., that **Papa Francesco had passed away**. Memories came flooding back, especially of my second meeting with him.

It was at the Jesuit Curia in Rome. He had come for the feast of St. Ignatius in 2020 to spend time with his Jesuit brothers. We had lunch together, accompanied by Argentinian wine he brought with him. After a sumptuous meal, he joined us in the recreation room. We stood in a circle, and he was one among us - simple, joyful, present. One by one, each person stepped forward to greet him. When my turn came, he looked directly into my eyes.

"I'm from Kerala," I said. "Oh, Kerala," he smiled, and listened intently.

In that moment, it felt as though the world had paused - just him and me, fully present, full of warmth and deep affection. I felt truly blessed. He was, indeed, **a shepherd who smelt like his sheep**.

Tributes to a Global Pastor

Since the news broke, messages from around the world have poured in:

"His death pains us deeply, because a great man and a great pastor leaves us." *"From Buenos Aires to Rome, Pope Francis wanted the Church to bring joy and hope to the poorest."*

"Pope Francis stands as a profound moral force in today's world. His deep concern for the marginalized and his strong advocacy on climate change and social justice are both timely and impactful. He inspired compassion, solidarity, and a commitment to building a more just and equitable society."

The Moral Force Must Remain

In a world increasingly devoid of moral clarity, the voice of **Pope Francis must remain alive**.

Look around us. The global stage is becoming a battleground for warmongers and profiteers — those who elevate themselves at the expense of others, who silence the poor and marginalize the vulnerable. Everything Pope Francis stood for is being eroded. From Gaza to Ukraine, Sudan to Myanmar - the list is heartbreakingly long.

The relevance of a man of God like Pope Francis is glaring. *The Guardian*, in an editorial dated March 17, 2025, endorsed this: *"The Pope's enforced absence from the world stage has served as a reminder of his importance, as universal values are repudiated and cast aside in the name of narrow*

and aggressive national self-interest."

Now, **it is our turn to become his voice**.

What He Stood For and His Final *Urbi et Orbi*

J. Horowitz and J. Yardley wrote (*New York Times* 22 April 2025) 'Francis reached out to migrants, the poor and the destitute, to victims of sexual abuse by Catholic clergy members, and to alienated gay Catholics. He travelled to often-forgotten and far-flung countries and sought to improve relations with antagonistic Chinese government, Muslim clerics and leaders from across the fragmented Christian world...'

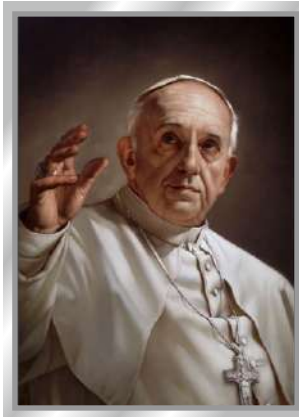
His final Easter message, the *Urbi et Orbi*, reflects his heart's deepest concerns. He began with hope: *"Christ, my hope, has risen."* He contrasted Easter's promise of life with the grim realities of our world: *"How much violence we see, even within families, directed at women and children! How much contempt is stirred up against the vulnerable, the marginalized, and migrants!"* He prayed for peace in **Palestine and Israel**, appealed for **ceasefire**, and called for **aid to the starving**. He remembered Syria, Yemen, Ukraine, the South Caucasus, Sudan, South Sudan, and Myanmar.

Again and again, he urged world leaders: *"Do not yield to the logic of fear... but rather use the resources available to help the needy, to fight hunger, and to encourage initiatives that promote development."* He reminded us of the foundation for true peace: *"There can be no peace without freedom of religion, freedom of thought, freedom of expression, and respect for the views of others."*

Becoming His Megaphones

Now that Pope Francis is no longer with us, **we must be his megaphones**. Can our pulpits, our prayer meetings, our conversations, and our actions reflect what he held most dear: **peace, justice, dignity, compassion, and humanity**.

And if we do - if we live what he preached - **Pope Francis will be proud of us**.



Fr. M.K. George, formerly Principal of Loyola College of Social Sciences, Trivandrum, is currently General Counsellor to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus in Rome. He can be contacted at gmutholil@gmail.com

MARY! A WOMAN OF GREAT FAITH

- Fr. Peter Fernandes, SFX

During the month of May, the Christ faithful honour Mary, the mother of Jesus, in a special way. Why should the Christ faithful honour Mary? Most Protestant churches abhor such an honour to Mary? Is such a bitter attitude towards Mary, the mother of Jesus, founded or unfounded in scripture? At the outset, it is good to know that God honoured Mary and invites all God's people to do the same. Mary is God's living letter, and a reading of this letter will give us insight into God's style. She is the living example of God's way of acting in the history of salvation. The greatness of Mary is in her faith. Elizabeth welcomed Mary with great joy and exclaimed, "Blessed is she who believed there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

Faith is a gift of God. Letter to the Hebrews tells us, "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Heb 11/6). Mary's response to God in faith, its entire value lies in grace: "Woman, full of grace." Before Christ's decisive yes, everything that stands for human consent in the work of redemption is expressed in Mary's fiat. "In an instant that will exist for all time and remain for all eternity, Mary's word was the word of humankind, and her yes was the Amen of all creation to God's yes" (K. Rahner). It's as if God were once again challenging created freedom through her, offering it a chance of redemption. Subsequently, that which Eve had bound through her unbelief, Mary loosened through her faith.

The letter to the Hebrews gives us a list of those who had faith: "By faith Abel ...by faith Abraham ... by faith Moses" (Heb 11/4). Jesus is not included! Jesus is called the founder and perfecter of faith" (Heb 12/2). Faith is so important because it alone maintains the gratuity of grace. Mary's act of faith was very personal and unique and can never be repeated. It was trust in God and the total entrusting of herself to God, the God of her fathers – the God of salvation history. Abraham actually foreshadows Mary, not Christ, because he is a father through his faith, and he represents faith, something that the New Testament never attributes to Jesus, whereas it does attribute it to Mary when it proclaims her blessed because of her belief (Lk 1/45.) Much more was asked of Mary than of Abraham. With Abraham, God stopped at the last moment and saved his son's life; He didn't do this with Mary but went beyond the point of no return, death.

God said to Abraham, "By you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves" (Gen 12/3). Abraham will not only be an example and patron but a source of blessing. In contrast, Mary is not merely an example of blessing and salvation, but somehow – depending entirely on grace and God's will – she is also the cause

of salvation: her maternal role in the Church is not just one of honour or idiom. "Just as Eve, being disobedient, became the cause of death for herself and for the whole human race, so Mary ... being obedient became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race." Therefore, the scripture text justifies, "All generations shall call me blessed" (Lk 1/48). These words were not inserted by the Catholic Church but by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, should these words not also be taken as a command given by God to history, like the words uttered to Abraham?

Mary's faith was therefore an act of love and docility; it was free even if it was prompted by God and was as mysterious as the ever-mysterious meeting point between grace and freedom. The woman in the crowd called Mary blessed because she bore Jesus; instead, Elizabeth called her blessed because she believed. The woman called the bearing of Jesus in the womb blessed; Jesus called the bearing of himself in the heart blessed: 'Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.' In this way Jesus helps the woman and all of us to understand where the true greatness of his mother lies. Who, in fact, "kept" God's words better than Mary, of whom scripture twice says, "She kept all these things in her heart"? (Lk 2/19; 51). The power of God's servant is in proportion to the strength of his faith. The disciples came to Jesus in private and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" And Jesus said to them, 'Because of your little faith'" (Mt 17/9-10).

Mary, a woman of great faith, deserves our honour and respect. It was never heard before or ever since that an angel bowed in honour and respect to any other creature other than Mary. The angel Gabriel's greeting to Mary, "Hail, full of grace," is an expression of reverence and recognition of her special status. The salutation "The Lord is with you" is understood as the angel acknowledging that Mary is closer to God than he is. If the angel of God showed so much love and respect to Mary, how much more should we sinful humans give? In his sermon at a Christmas Mass, Martin Luther stated: "This is the consolation and overflowing goodness of God, that man, insofar as he believes, can glory in the precious fact that Mary is his true mother, Christ his brother and God his Father ... If you believe this, then you really sit in the Virgin's lap as her dear child."



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

**PAPA FRANCISCUS IS NO MORE –
HE LEFT THIS WORLD TO BE WITH HIS CREATOR IN HEAVEN
A BRIEF LIFE SKETCH OF JORGE MARIO BERGOGLIO – POPE FRANCIS**
-Maria Imelda de Sousa

The son of Mario José Bergoglio, an Italian immigrant railway worker and of Regina Maria Sivori, a housewife of Italian origin, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the eldest of five children was born in Flores, Buenos, Aires, Argentina, on 17th December 1936. When young, his grandmother Rosa taught him how to pray.

He studied in Wilfrid Baron de los Angeles, a Don Bosco Salesian School in Ramos Mejia in Greater Buenos Aires. Then he attended the Technical Secondary School “Escuela Nacional de Educacion Técnica” and graduated with a Chemical Technician's Diploma. Thereafter, he worked for a few years in that capacity in the food section at Hickethier Bachmann Laboratory.

Later at the age of 21, having suffered from pneumonia and having a part of one of his lungs removed, he was healed.

Then Bergoglio having discovered his priestly vocation sometime earlier at the age of 17, after having met Fr. Duarte Ibarra and having gone for confession to him, he joined the Archdiocesan Seminary Immaculada Concepcion in Villa Devoto and after three years he joined the Society of Jesus on 11.03.1958. Having completed his Theological Studies, he was ordained priest on 13.12.1969. Fr. Bergoglio then served as Master of Novices for the Province and as Professor of Theology.

On 31.07.1973, Fr. Bergoglio was appointed Provincial Superior of the Society of Jesus in Argentina. In 1980, Fr. Bergoglio was appointed Rector of the Philosophical and of the Theological Faculty of San Miguel and served till 1989. Fr. Bergoglio spent several months at the Saint Georgen Graduate School of Philosophy and of Theology in Frankfurt, Germany. After his return to Argentina, he served as the Confessor and Spiritual Director to the Jesuit Community in

Cordoba. On 27.06.1992, Fr. Bergoglio was consecrated a Bishop as a Titular Bishop of Auca. On 3.6.1997, Bishop Bergoglio was appointed Coadjutor – Archbishop, his episcopal motto being “Miserando atque eligendo.” On 28.02.1998, Archbishop Bergoglio became Metropolitan Archbishop of Buenos Aires.



At the Consistory of 21.02.2001 Archbishop Bergoglio was consecrated a Cardinal by Pope John Paul II, with the title of Cardinal - Priest of San Roberto Bellarmino.

Cardinal Bergoglio became known for his personal humility, doctrinal conservation and a commitment for social justice. As a Cardinal, he lived in a small apartment in the suburbs of Olivos, he used to travel by public transport, he did not own a car. He cooked his own meals.

On 13th March, 2013, the College of Cardinals elected Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio to serve as the 265th successor of St.

Peter. He took the name Francis. He chose the name Francis in honour of St. Francis of Assisi and he did so with a deep understanding of two more lasting legacies of the “Poverello” – a love for the poor and a commitment to reform. Pope Francis was an avid soccer fan and a promoter of sports in general. He was a card-carrying member of the Buenos Aires soccer Club San Lorenzo with ID No. 88235.

He died on Monday, 21st April, 2025 at the age of 88 years. **May his soul rest in peace.**



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

THE PAPAL'S LEGACY

-Jubel D'Cruz

Born as Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Pope Francis made history as the first Jesuit and the first Latin American citizen to become the Pope. He was elected as the Pope on March 13, 2013 at the age of 76 after Pope Benedict XVI resigned. He became known for focusing on humility and helping those in need, and fairness.

He earned the nickname "the Pope of the slums" for his deep commitment to the poor and the marginalised. Throughout his ministry, he regularly visited impoverished communities, advocating for social justice and the Church's role as a refuge for the overlooked and the oppressed.

During his tenure, he made various changes within the Vatican to improve financial transparency and address clerical abuse issues.

He inherited a Church that was under attack over a child sex abuse scandal and torn by infighting in the Vatican bureaucracy, and was elected with a clear mandate to restore order.

He is best known for his humility, his strong emphasis on God's mercy, his global visibility, and his commitment to social justice and interreligious dialogue. He is also recognized for his advocacy for the poor, his openness, and his simplified approach to the papacy, choosing to live in a guesthouse rather than at the papal residence.

He chose the name 'Francis' in honour of St. Francis of Assisi, a figure known for his love of the poor and of nature.

His death on April 21 marks a somber moment not only for the Catholic world but for all humanity.

In his 12 years of papacy, he suffered various ailments, and underwent respiratory therapy many a time.

He also changed the Catholic Church's teachings in areas such as the death penalty and nuclear weapons, upheld it in others such as abortion, and

made inroads with Muslims and believers who long felt marginalized.

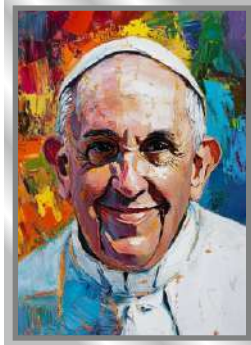
His death is a profound loss but his legacy will endure forever -- as a great pope, yes, but more importantly, as a great human being who reminded the world that love, mercy, and courage are the truest expressions of faith.

He is a global figure who is admired and respected by people of all faiths and backgrounds. He has a significant influence on the world stage, particularly in diplomatic and cultural matters. His leadership has fostered a renewed sense of purpose and service within the Catholic Church, especially among the younger generation.

He will always be remembered as a beacon of compassion, humility and spiritual courage by billions of people across the world. From a very young age, he devoted himself towards realising the ideals of Lord Jesus Christ. He diligently

served the poor and the downtrodden. For those who were suffering, he ignited a spirit of hope.

He will also be remembered for his powerful stance against the genocide in Gaza. He condemned the daily atrocities in clear, moral terms, unflinching in his criticism of not only Israel but also the Western leaders complicit in the suffering. His most remarkable gesture during this time was deeply personal and profoundly symbolic. Almost every day, he made a telephone call to the same church in Gaza, simply to ask how the congregation was doing. The spiritual leader of over a billion Catholics made it his daily duty to check in on a small, besieged group in one of the world's most dangerous conflict zones.



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

THE OPEN DOOR

- Norma Kamath

Late Pope Francis inaugurated the Jubilee Year of Hope on 24th December, 2024, with the opening of the 'Holy Door' at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. The significance of the 'Opening of the Holy Door,' is the path to New and Eternal Life opened to humanity by Jesus Christ.

Concluding with Mass, he addressed the faithful,
Dear Sister, Dear Brother,

'On this night the Holy Door of God's Heart lies open before us.'

He emphasized that Holiness means following Jesus and living the Beatitudes (Mt.5:1-12).

The Holy Door will be closed on 26th January, 2026, the feast of The Epiphany, the final conclusion of the Jubilee Year.

"And lo, in Heaven, an Open Door. John saw this and the angel invited him to enter" (Rev.4:6).

THE DOOR OF OUR HEARTS: "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (Rev.3:20).

Jesus desires to be in close relationship with us. Through Baptism we are in an espousal relationship with Jesus, through the Holy Spirit. "For your Maker is your Husband, the Lord of Hosts is His Name" (Is.54:5). "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you" (Is.62:5). "He will renew you in His Love, and exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival" (Zeph.3:16-18).

The bride complains she cannot hear his voice or his gentle knock. "I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the square. I will seek Him

whom my soul loves. I sought Him but found Him not" (Song 3:2).

Cardinal Cantalamessa, counsellor to the Popes, since John Paul II, explains, that in the sacrament of Baptism at birth, the parent gives the consent. For a sacrament to be fully effective, the person needs to give his full consent. Successive Popes have been exhorting the priests and the faithful to open their lives to a close encounter with Jesus through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, a renewal of the same Baptism at birth. Through deep repentance, the

recipient receives a powerful anointing of the Holy Spirit, which manifests the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit, enabling him to answer God's call to mission (Is.61:1-2).

LISTENING TO GOD'S VOICE

The Spirit works in diverse ways in different persons. Some hear God's voice, through prayer, God's Word, the Holy Spirit, gifts of the Spirit, an enlightened conscience, personal prayer, adoration, the sacraments, mass, and the lives of the saints.

The WORD Of GOD - must be read daily, memorizing 1

or 2 verses which strike one.

- a) Protects from sin (Ps 119:11).
- b) Food for the soul (Jn 6:63).
- c) Strengthens faith (Rom10:17).
- d) Accomplishes God's plan for our lives (Is 54:10-11).
- e) Enables us to become God's instruments (Is50:4).

PERSONAL PRAYER - is a priority to grow in relationship with the Trinity. We need both, to talk and to listen to God.



METHOD: a) Choose a suitable time, preferably early morning, same place and same time daily. Sit in an upright position. Start with half an hour and extend to a full hour (Mt 20:40-45).

b) Call the Holy Spirit to guide you.

c) Start with Praise and Thanksgiving.

d) Repent for sin (Ps139:23-24; Ps:51).

e) You feel lighter after repentance. Praise and thank God.

f) Surrender your life to God (Rom 12:1-2).

g) Keep a time of quiet listening. "Morning by morning he wakens my ear, to hear as him that is taught (Is50:4). I pray in tongues, saying, speak Lord I am listening (1Sam 3:1-10).

It may come as a word, bible verse, tune, hymn, thought, feeling, a vision etc.

I note it down and act on it. Thank. For clarity I may ask for a confirmation. The Holy Spirit will send it in His way.

h) Intercede for others (Is.53:12).

DISCERNMENT: It is through the Holy Spirit, obedience to God's Word, perseverance in personal prayer, the sacraments that we grow in holiness, and are able to discern whether it is our own voice, God's voice, the world or the devil.

THE SACRAMENTS: Baptism is a gateway to all the sacraments which give grace to perfect the soul. It is through the Eucharist that we sup with Jesus and he with us.

"With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house and his banner over me was love." (Song 3:2-3) Jesus is the Bread of Life. At the Eucharistic hymn during the adoration, we sing, "You have given us bread from heaven having in itself all delight," and we experience deeply Jesus' presence, his love, joy and peace.

By partaking in the Holy Communion, a Catholic receives the real Person of Jesus, not just his heart, but the Resurrected Body of Christ. "Truly, truly I say to you; unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood you have no life in you. My flesh is food indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in me and I in Him (Jn 6 :53, 55).

The Eucharist delivers us from venial sins, and mortal sins if confessed in the Sacrament of Penance. We are filled with Heavenly Blessings and Graces, and it comes with the promise of Eternal Life (Jn 6:54). "I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord" (Hosea 2:19).

And John said, "I saw the New Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her Husband, and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, "Behold the dwelling of God is with men."

"And He who sat upon the throne said, "Behold I make all things new" (Rev2: 2-3).

The Eucharistic Sacrifice is a preshadow of the Passover Meal, an unblemished Lamb, which God commanded Moses to get the Israelite family to sacrifice in his home, which brought them deliverance from the sin and slavery of Egypt in the Exodus. They had an encounter with God at Mt. Sinai and a desert experience to the Promised Land, Jerusalem.

In the New Exodus, Jesus leads his followers from Jerusalem, to His Father in Heaven, and it ends with the Marriage Feast of the Lamb, where the bride and the Bridegroom are united in eternal bliss.

"Blessed are those who are invited to the Marriage Feast of The Lamb" (Rev19:9; Rev 19:6-8).



Norma Kamath lives in Bangalore. She experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in 1983 and was called to serve in the intercessory, counselling and healing ministry.

POPE FRANCIS: AN AUTHENTIC DISCIPLE

- Severina Peres

Pope Francis (1936-2025) lived a life attuned to the heartbeat and reasoning of God.

The last five pontiffs who touched my life during their respective tenures have enriched my faith.

I was a child when Paul VI was Pope. I remember his visit to my city, Mumbai, in western India, for the Eucharistic Congress in 1964. That was also the year I received my First Holy Communion, and Jesus became real to me.

The life of St. John Paul II impressed me as a youth and strengthened my faith. His Holiness visited Mumbai in 1984. Around that time, I had lost my father. Seeing Pope John Paul II on my home ground consoled me and gave me a new life. For the next twenty-five years, I found in St. John Paul II, a fatherly figure and a spiritual guide. God then gave His Church Pope Benedict XVI, a gentle, amiable, and deeply faith-filled shepherd — a man of prayer and contemplation. In hindsight, his resignation in 2013 seems directed by the Holy Spirit. Pope Benedict XVI obeyed, even at the cost of becoming nothing, making it possible for the Church to receive its next shepherd.

In 2013, God had already prepared this successor: Pope Francis! God is faithful to His Church. His unseen hand fulfils His promise: "Upon this Rock, I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Hearing the announcement of the new pope's name—"Francis," a name never before taken by a pontiff — stirred me deeply. Once again, God revealed His love to me: "I will never leave nor forsake you."

Francis' pontificate over the past twelve years, one month, and eight days has been a fresh stirring of the Holy Spirit for the Church and the world. As bishop of Rome, he undertook his role with determination and wisdom, marked by humility. His impact on world leaders and his outreach to foster unity with the heads of other religions have surely left their mark. His continuous plea was, "Let there be an end to bloodshed." Yet what touched me most was Pope Francis' authentic discipleship — lived with perseverance and courage — reawakening in everyone who met or followed him a call to live out that discipleship personally.

Francis' regular visits to prison inmates and his gesture of washing their feet gave many the freedom from guilt to realize that God is indeed forgiving. As the Holy Father said, "It's horrific for me to go to jail because what you see there is very hard. But I go anyway because God wants me to be face-to-face with the one most in need." Jesus said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17).

The Pope also showed profound compassion toward people living with disabilities. Echoing Jesus' outreach to the maimed, blind, and crippled, Pope Francis reached out to the unborn, the infirm, the differently abled, and the elderly. He invited all of us to eliminate physical barriers and foster genuine inclusiveness.

God is sovereign. Amid a troubled world facing the fear, death, and uncertainty of COVID-19, Pope

Francis stood strong as a beacon of faith, praying for the world and begging for God's mercy. He was there, praying for us: "And they went and woke him, saying, 'Master, Master, we are perishing!' And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm" (Luke 8:24).

Francis did not hesitate to emphasize "the feminine dimension of the Church," calling everyone to rethink and foster the Marian or mystical principle of the Church. He had logged into the heartbeat and reasoning of his Master, sensing the needs and cries of the Marthas and Marys, the Magdalenes, and the Samaritan women in our world.

"Laudato Si," Pope Francis' wake-up call to treasure and preserve the environment, reawakened our dulled consciences to value God's gift of nature. Just as Jesus preached in the open ranges of Galilee, attentive to the treasures of creation, Pope Francis challenged us to care for our common home and to get out of our comfort zones.

Becoming poor to reach out to the poor was Pope Francis' life motto. His lifestyle revealed his stance; his outreach proclaimed what he believed. Like Jesus, who became poor for our sake, Pope Francis lived the call, "If you were perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Matthew 19:21).

Pope Francis spoke forcefully about setting aside human success, fame, and popularity and seeking instead God's glory — which for him meant loving to the point of laying down one's life. He lived his faith through continual silence in the face of insult, perseverance through loneliness and opposition, and personal suffering up to the end of his earthly pilgrimage. He became the living embodiment of the Suffering Servant imagery in Isaiah: "He (Jesus) was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised..." (Isaiah 53:3).

Pope Francis' discipleship reflects the face of the Master. He has now gone to his father's home. The Church and the world will continue to bear abundant fruit by learning from and living this unique discipleship. These days, the Universal Church — and even those who do not share our faith—experiences a strange sense of unity and affection toward one another.

May God heal our world!

Reprinted from Radio Veritas Asia.



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

This month is an exciting month for many because it gives us all a chance to go on a vacation and enjoy summer in a new place. May is also a month of Our Lady and everywhere in our city we see the King of fruits - the delicious mango that no one can really resist. So on that happy note, let's begin...

Inspirational Story It is never too late



A retired man named Richard had plenty of time on his hands and decided he would plant a mango tree, in his garden. He had moved on a farm after retirement to spend his retired life in peaceful surroundings. His

dream was to sit on his back porch of his home and eat a freshly grown mango from his own tree.

All his friends and family told him he was crazy and it made more sense to buy mangoes for a mango tree takes a long time to grow. However, Richard ignored all the well-meaning advice and decided to go ahead with his plan.

His kids told him, "You are too old to get fruit from that tree." Ever since he had retired this statement, "You are too old" was often enough repeated.

He, however, despite doubts took great care of the tree. At night, he hung torches on it to control the bats. The mango tree that was planted soon grew tall and sturdy and began to yield beautiful ripe mangoes. Today this tree serves as a source of amazement to all especially those who pronounced it a bad idea.

Today, Richard picks around 150 mangoes from his tree. He had grown the tree at the age of 79 and today at 85, he gets wonderful fresh fruit. He enjoys sitting on his back porch and eating mangoes.

His still takes on projects dear to his heart and his advice is, "Ignore the voice of negative people."

What do we learn?

We learn age is all in the mind. If we feel young and active, life will continue to thrill us and we will keep busy rather than stagnating.

Quiz

Hill Stations

A hill station is a town or resort located at a higher elevation than the surroundings by plains or valleys and is often used as a vacation place to escape the heat.

1. Name the largest and best known hill station in

India that lies in Himachal Pradesh.

2. Name the hill station in West Bengal known as the "Queen of the Hills."



3. Name the hill station nestled in the majestic Himalayas.

4. Which hill station in Karnataka is referred to as "The Scotland of India"?

5. Which popular hill station in West India is famous for its toy train?

Smile Please



1. Sherlock Holmes and his friend Watson go on a camping trip. After a nice fire and a few drinks, they decide to go to sleep in their tent.

A few hours later, Holmes wakes up and nudges his friend Watson, "Do me a favour,

Watson and look up. Tell me what do you see?"

Watson rubs his eyes, looks up and says, "I see a lot of stars and the moon."

Sherlock replies, "Yes of course but what does that tell you?"

Watson says, "It tells me that Saturn is in Leo and it is also quarter past three in the morning. You could say that the sky is also a representation of an infinitely powerful God. Especially considering our small stature. What are we compared to the Universe? What does it tell you, Holmes?"

Holmes lays and stares, silent for a long moment, "No Watson. You clot! Someone stole our tent."

2. Boy - What do you think about our love?

Girl - Try to count the stars in the sky.

Boy - Awww... so it's infinite?

Girl - No, it's just a waste of time.

3. A young boy enters a barber shop. The barber tells the customer, "That kid is a dumb kid. Just watch."

He puts a dollar in one hand and two quarters in the other, "Now choose."

The kid chooses the two quarters and walks away.

The barber says with a smug smile, "See, I told you, a dumb kid!"

The customer then meets the boy coming out of an ice-cream store licking a chocolate cone, "Why did you choose the quarters?"

The boy smiles, "I chose the quarters because the

day I choose the dollar, well, the game is over. No more ice-cream!"

Riddles



1. What do cakes and cricket teams have in common?
2. What insect is the sneakiest?
3. Why are trees so unreliable?

4. How does NASA organize a party?

Inspirational Quotes - Vacation Fever



1. "Happiness consists of living each day as it were the first day of your honeymoon and the last day of your vacation." - **Leo Tolstoy**
2. "There should be sympathy cards for having to go back to work after a vacation." -

Anonymous

3. "Take vacations and go to as many places as you can. You can always make money but you can't always make memories." - **Anonymous**
4. "We travel not to escape life but for life not to escape us." - **Anonymous**

Pope Francis Quotes



Pope Francis born on 17th December 1936, died on April 21st 2025, this year. He died of a stroke and irreversible heart failure. Here are a few of his wise gems of advice that reminds us what a great Pope he was.

1. "If you are friends with Jesus, He will make you feel his presence in your life and you will never feel alone or abandoned."
2. "Since many of you do not belong to the Catholic Church and others are non-believers, from the bottom of my heart, I give this silent blessing to each and every one of you, respecting the conscience of each one of you, but knowing that each one of you is a child of God."
3. "A person who thinks only of building walls, wherever they may be and not building bridges is not Christian. This is not the gospel."

Brain Teasers



1. What has one head, one foot and four legs?
2. If there are 30 apples in a basket and Maryann takes twelve of them and eats three, gives two of

them to her sister, two to her mother. Two apples are rotten. How many apples does Maryann have?

3. Which number when multiplied with any number gives the same answer?

4. One grandmother, two mothers and two daughters went to the zoo and bought one ticket each. How many mothers are there?

5. Which single digit appears most frequently between and including numbers 1 to 1000?

What's the Good Word?

Spices



1. Which is the largest producer of pepper in India?
2. Which spice is known as bishop's weed?
3. Name the anti-oxidant that the spice turmeric contains?
4. Which spice is used as a

natural mouth freshener?

5. What is the Hindi name for dry mango powder?

Naturopathy - Natural Cures



1. If you like to swim but often experience cramps in the water, a very effective remedy is to consume one or two bananas fifteen minutes before you swim. This can help prevent cramps to a great degree.

2. If you have an eye infection, turmeric can provide relief. Just dip a cloth or cotton into some turmeric mixed with warm water and dab gently on your eyes. Do not rub. This can help soothe your eyes.

3. Honey is a natural moisturiser and when mixed with milk and applied on your face it can moisturise effectively. Leave it on for twenty minutes then rinse.

The Value of Nuts



Nuts are very nutritious in our diet. Experts in nutrition do recommend incorporating nuts into one's diet. There are many types of nuts like peanuts, cashew-nuts, almonds, pistachios that are available easily in the market.

Rich in vitamins, nuts are a nutritious and natural food. They can help the brain function and help in heart health. But one word of caution, many people are allergic to nuts and one must be careful never to consume nuts in excess. Although no research directly links nuts to high blood pressure, yet consuming excess of nuts can cause headaches and for some people a sudden rise in blood pressure.

Nuts are calorie dense, containing fat and can lead to weight gain, digestive issues and allergies. It is said salted nuts in excess can lead to problems like high blood pressure because of the excess sodium they contain. So although very beneficial, one must consume nuts in moderation.

True story of the Power of the Rosary



Standing in pairs, Sister Porferia Ocariza and 16 other nuns led the rosary prayers as soldiers in rolling military tanks came with their turrets aimed on the nuns and priests, as well as many unarmed civilians praying the rosary. Their only defence against the armed soldiers was their faith.

The nuns were inwardly frightened and Sister Ocariza said it was the scariest experience of her life. She said, "Lord forgive me for my sins and even the offences of our Filipino people. If really the tanks would crush us, then let them kill us not the people because we do not want bloodshed in our country."

Marcos the dictator had ordered his military to disperse angry crowds that claimed he stole a snap election from Corazon Aquino.

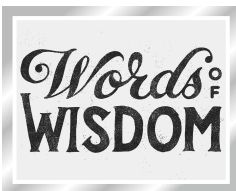
But miraculously the tanks halted, and the soldiers joined these nuns who were protesters and began reciting the rosary with them. God saved them from the hands of a dictator and saved their country from what would have provoked a violent reaction.

This Rosary Miracle in the Philippines is a testament to the strength of faith and the Filipinos deep devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is honoured as the queen and the Mother of the Philippines.

Ultimately democracy was restored and it led to the end of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

Wisdom Message of the Month

Choosing a life partner wisely



When I was schooling, there was a religion class held once a week for the tenth grade. A priest from the nearby parish used to come to give us religious education.

I remember him well, he was a tall man with an attractive personality and all of us young girls enjoyed listening to him. What stood out most in my mind like many young girls was his talk about finding a suitable life partner. Needless to say we all listened intently.

He said, "When you choose a young man to marry,

remember to observe his behaviour not just to you but to his family. Do not get impressed if he is very good to his mother. Instead be impressed if he is very kind and caring towards his sister, if he has any. That will reveal his true character and show you how he will behave towards you. Of course, needless to say a young man must have other favourable qualities like good employment and be steady and reliable."

This made an indelible impression on us. I realised too many young men both nice and not so nice men are generally very good to their doting mothers. But not many are very good to their sisters. This character flaw is a very common one amongst young men who know where their bread and butter lies. It's easy to be good to a doting mother for varied reasons, not just for the mother's love and affection but the inheritance that comes with it too. I understood what this good and clever priest was trying to say.

So the moral is that the best judge of character of a man is not just how loving he is to his mother but the kindness and affection and goodwill he demonstrates to his sister. This will later reflect on his fairness and kindness in the latter years towards both his sister and towards his wife when the parents are deceased. Such a man builds bridges of love and kindness not walls of separation.

Till next time then, have a great summer vacation and take care!

Answers

Quiz

1. Shimla 2. Darjeeling. 3. Manali. 4. Coorg. 5. Matheran.

Riddles

1. They both need a good batter. 2. Spy-ders- (Spiders) 3. They are so shady. 4. They planet.

Brain Teasers

1. A bed. 2. Five. She did not throw the rotten apples out. 3. Zero. 4. Three 5. 1

What's The Good Word?

1. Kerala. 2. Carom seeds. 3. Curcumin. 4. Fennel seeds. 5. Amchoor.



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 ON 27TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

BANDRA: Ven. Fr. Agnel has blessed me immensely during our 27 years of marriage. We are thankful to the Venerable.

- Raghu & Maria Pujari

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

VASAI: I often pray to Ven. Fr. Agnel and have been blessed immensely. We will continue to pray to the Venerable for his blessings.

- Lance Gonsalves

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

JUHU: We often pray to Ven. Fr. Agnel and have been blessed immensely in many ways. We will continue to pray to the Venerable for his blessings.

- Savio Misquitta

THANKSGIVING FOR GOOD JOB

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

- Muriel D'Mello

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

MANGALORE: 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.

- Rita Rodrigues & Family

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

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

- George Cardoz & Family

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

CHEMBUR: As a devotee of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have have been blessed immensely, through his intercession. I always place my trust in Lord Jesus and the Venerable.

- Reyan Fernandes

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

CHEMBUR: Through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, my family has been blessed immensely. Thank you Venerable for being with us always.

- Telma Fernandes

THANKSGIVING FOR FAVOURS RECEIVED

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

- Bernadette D'Souza

THANKSGIVING FOR PRAYERS ANSWERED

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

- Dicky Alphonso

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

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

- Prajakta Martin Peter

IN GRATITUDE TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

BANDRA: 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.

- Kajal Dalvi

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

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

- Anil Solanki

THANKSGIVING FOR SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE

VASAI: Through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have been blessed in several ways.

- Vishal Vakode

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

VASAI: 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.

- Natalie D'Britto

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

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

- Fermina D'Souza

OUT OF THEIR BOUNTY

Kenneth Remedios	Mumbai	100000	Shweta Bichkar	Mumbai	2500	Anita	Mumbai	1000
Nitin Parmar	Gujarat	100000	Merlyn Royer	Mumbai	2500	Agnel Selvan	Mumbai	1000
Praveen Srivastava	Mumbai	48000	Kainaz Engineer	Mumbai	2500	Sunita Salve	Pune	1000
Mallika Kaul Gomes	Mumbai	48000	Shahnaz Engineer	Mumbai	2500	Nanda Kantharia	Thane	1000
Marilyn D'Cruz	Mumbai	27000	Gaurang Popat	Mumbai	2000	Priya Vora	Mumbai	1000
His Kingdom Trust	Mumbai	25000	Ponamma Kuriakoe	Kerala	2000	Palak Manek	Mumbai	1000
Severine Saldanha	Karnataka	25000	Conci Wendt	Mumbai	2000	Abhijeet Rane	Mumbai	1000
Agnel Robin	Mumbai	20000	Armaity Kelawalla	Mumbai	2000	Naina Chandran	Mumbai	1000
Vivian Pereira	Mumbai	20000	Francis Fernando	Mumbai	2000	Hiren Gaikwad	Mumbai	1000
Sameer Ganapathy	Mumbai	20000	Mohan Nanda	Mumbai	2000	M. D. Mathai	Kerala	1000
Neil Pasawalia	USA	15000	Lourenca Fernandes	Mumbai	2000	Rockhenry Chettiar	Thane	1000
Ravi D'Souza	Mumbai	15000	Bernice	Mumbai	2000	Jeya Geetha	Tamil Nadu	1000
Sukesh D'Souza	Tamil Nadu	15000	Annie Lobo	Mumbai	2000	Pareesh Thakkar	Thane	1000
Thelma D'Souza	Mumbai	10000	Austin	Mumbai	2000	Preet Thakkar	Thane	1000
Leroy Almeida	Mumbai	10000	Praveen Raja	Tamil Nadu	2000	D. S. Patel	Mumbai	1000
Hugh & Colleen Gantzer	Uttarakhand	10000	Rija Anna Francis	Kerala	2000	Harsh Shukla	Mumbai	1000
Remy Gomes	Mumbai	10000	Alban Pereira	Mumbai	2000	A. Santhappan	Tamil Nadu	1000
Melini Souza	Mumbai	10000	Leena John Abreo	Mumbai	2000	Steffi Fargose	Mumbai	1000
Mathew	Mumbai	10000	Xavier D'Mello	Mumbai	2000	A.R. Elavia	Mumbai	1000
Joshua Sheikh	Mumbai	8000	Rosily Joseph	Kerala	2000	Gayatri Sardhara	Mumbai	1000
Edward Rebello	Mumbai	8000	Climus Rumao	Virar	2000	Pradnya Kubal	Mumbai	1000
Subramaniam R.	Mumbai	5100	Caroline Rumao	Virar	2000	Antony Chacko	Kerala	1000
Nisha Mehta	Mumbai	5000	Anthony Rumao	Virar	2000	Monica D'Souza	Pune	1000
Rajendra Parikh	Mumbai	5000	Estrella Rumao	Virar	2000	Shabana Khan	Thane	1000
Johnson Jeyaraj	Mumbai	5000	Snowia Almeida	Virar	2000	Maxi D'Cruz	Kerala	1000
Thomas Thaikadavil	Mumbai	5000	A. Fernandes	Mumbai	2000	Alfred D'Costa	Mumbai	1000
Catherine Fobler	Canada	5000	Somi K. Sebastian	Mumbai	2000	Ashok Jani	Mumbai	1000
Vincent Daniel	Gujarat	5000	Gavin Fonseca	Mumbai	1500	Gev Kelawalla	Mumbai	1000
Jimmy Fly	Mumbai	5000	Akshay Sonawane	Thane	1500	Dharmesh Thakkar	Mumbai	500
Philomena Pinto	Karnataka	5000	Alice D'Souza	Mumbai	1250	Dona Varghese	Kerala	500
Niket Shastri	Gujarat	5000	Suzanne D'Souza	Mumbai	1250	Jefferson Saldanha	Mumbai	500
S.V.S. Rama Rao	Mumbai	5000	Sharon D'Souza	Bandra	1250	Dipali Pandya	Mumbai	500
Russel George	Vasai	5000	Khurshed Karanjia	Mumbai	1000	Dhruvi Parikh	Mumbai	500
Shalaka Coutinho	Palghar	5000	M.D. Mathai	Kerala	1000	Meena Parkhe	Mumbai	500
Vamsha D'Souza	Mumbai	5000	Paul Britto	Mumbai	1000	Rishal D'Mello	Virar	500
George Varghese	Kerala	5000	Yvonne Wilson	Mumbai	1000	Ciana Sequeira	Mumbai	500
Sohrab Kothari	Mumbai	5000	M.P. John	Kerala	1000	Leelamma George	Mumbai	500
Sachin Ghosal	Vasai	5000	Arulgnana Stephen	Tamil Nadu	1000	Samir Panchal	Kerala	500
Reginald D'Souza	Mumbai	5000	Ceasor Gonsalves	Mumbai	1000	Amit Mehta	USA	500
Cranetech Equipments	Mumbai	5000	Margaret D'Souza	Vasai	1000	Mohan Nanda	Vasai	500
Shivkumar V.	Mumbai	5000	Andrew S Faroz	Mumbai	1000	Jabin	Vasai	500
Techno Products	Tamil Nadu	3000	Gwyneth Brian	Mumbai	1000	Preeti Rebello	Mumbai	500
P. T. Joseph	Kerala	3000	Iona D'Souza	Karnataka	1000	Venu	Kerala	500
Niket Shastri	Gujarat	3000						

BOB'S BANTER

by Robert Clements

The WhatsApp War..!

Every morning, as the sun peeps over our confused democracy, a silent war begins. Not at our borders, not in Parliament, but in the palm of your hand — yes, that unassuming rectangle known as your smartphone. While I sip my coffee and reach for my newspapers, elsewhere, warriors have already launched their first attack of the day.

Welcome, dear reader, to the battlefield of the WhatsApp War.

Here, generals don't wear stars on their shoulders but have profile pictures of lions, hands, lotuses, or some spiritual guru with a suspiciously smug expression. They don't march in formation, but they do march forward — or rather, they forward, with relentless zeal. Their fingers, calloused not from farming or factory work but from years of swiping, type faster than a mosquito fleeing a swatter.

Armed with borrowed outrage and recycled

it to you with a “Beta, be careful!”

They source their ammunition from motormouth TV anchors whose decibel levels can raise the dead, and from politicians who have turned hate speech into a fine art.

These armchair warriors believe they're saving the nation, one inflammatory message at a time, while real soldiers guard borders in minus 30 degrees, probably wishing these heroes would come and show such bravery on ground.

I imagine these WhatsApp warriors in an actual warzone — trudging through mud, dodging bullets, and looking for the “Forward” button on a grenade. Most would faint at the sight of a real gun, or worse, complain there's no WiFi in the trench.

So, how do we deal with these keyboard commandos? Engage in debate? Try to reason? Ah, my friend, that is like trying to convince a parrot



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nationalism, these digital crusaders load their virtual guns with bullets labelled “Breaking News,” “Must Read,” or the classic “Forwarded as received” — that phrase which absolves them of all fact-checking, responsibility, and basic decency. With the grace of a bar brawler and the sensitivity of a sledgehammer, they shoot out messages that would give even a seasoned diplomat a migraine.

Their armour? A stubborn refusal to read beyond headlines.

Their strategy? Caps and Exclamation Marks.

Their motto? “If it fits my belief, it must be true!”

And like obedient foot soldiers, the forwarders — ah yes, the unsung infantry of this war — pass along these messages to alumni school groups, housing society chats, and unfortunately, to your unsuspecting mother who then solemnly forwards

that it's not a pigeon. The best strategy is silence. Ignore them. For trolls, silence is salt to the wound.

Remember paper bullets don't hurt, and neither do WhatsApp ones — unless you let them.

And so, as the nation continues to WhatsApp its way to imaginary glory, I say to you: Stay sane, sip your coffee, and for heaven's sake — verify before you forward. Or better yet, hit delete.

And now these forwards come with their own emojis...!

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

THE GOLDEN GIRL OF FR. AGNEL'S VIDYANKUR SCHOOL, PUNE



Shreya Bhosure

Fr. Agnel's Vidyankur School, Pune, is on the peak of enthusiasm and glory for their **Golden Girl, Shreya Bhosure.**

The school champion Shreya Bhosure participated in the State level **Thai Boxing tournament** held at Sanskruti Mangal Karyalay Nimgaon, Korahle, Shirdi Ahilyanagar from 28th to 30th April, 2025. She took part in the under 17 age group, 56 to 60 kg category and has secured **the first place, winning a Gold Medal.** She has qualified for the National Level.

She has also participated in the **Kick Boxing competitions** and has secured the second place at the State level. She is a great inspiration to young minds.

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**Fr. Agnel Ashram Community and Balbhavan Children
pray for the soul of His Holiness Pope Francis.**



**Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him.
May his soul rest in peace. Amen.**



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