

FR. AGNEL

ASHRAM NEWS

January 2026



New Year 2026: Let's make it amazing!

JANUARY 2026**CONTENTS**

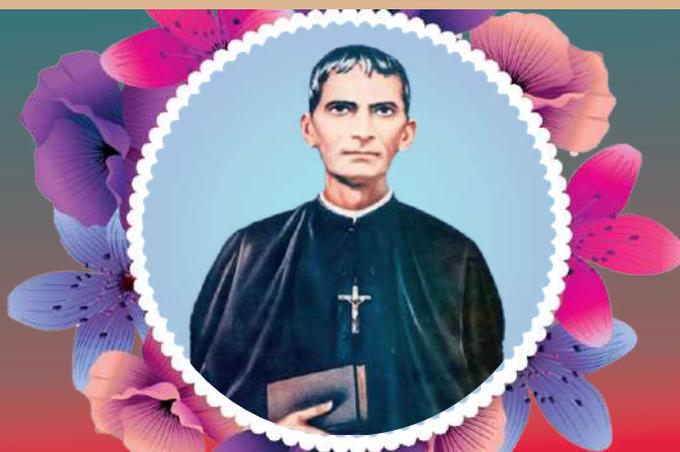
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VEN. FR. AGNELO'S 157TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

Wednesday, 21st January 2026

PROGRAMME**SPECIAL NOVENA SERVICES | 12TH TO 20TH JANUARY 2026****Every day****Morning** : 7.00 a.m. & 9.30 a.m.: Holy Mass and Novena Prayer in English.**Evening** : 6.00 p.m. : Holy Mass and Novena Prayer in English.**N.B.**

On Sunday, 18th January, all Masses and Novena Services will be held as on normal Sundays.

On Sunday, 18th January, Novena Services will be in Gujarati at 3.00 p.m.

21ST JANUARY (WEDNESDAY) : 157TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF VEN. FR. AGNELO**Morning** : Mass followed by Novena Prayers at 7.00 a.m. & 9.30 a.m. (English)**Evening** : A Solemn Concelebrated Mass will be held at 6.00 p.m. (English) in the Ashram Compound, followed by Novena Prayers.

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



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



Rev. Fr. Superior

FR. AGNEL ASHRAM

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

Tel.: 022 - 67114000 | Mobile: 091 - 7738009137**Website : www.agnelashram.org****Bus No. 211 : Special Bus Service to Ply from Bandra Railway Station to Fr. Agnel Ashram Gate.**

MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL SUPERIOR



It's the New Year and time to start anew. All new beginnings commence with a blessing. So let us implore divine blessings from Psalms 67, "O God, be gracious and bless us. And let your face shed its light upon us. So will your ways be known on earth. And all nations learn your saving help."

After Christmas, we celebrate the Feast of the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God on 1st January. It is the most important of all Marian feasts.

Mary is the first and most perfect disciple of Jesus, a model of faith, obedience, and service. After accepting God's call at the Annunciation, she nurtured Jesus from birth, stayed with Him through His ministry right until His crucifixion. She was present with the early Church at Pentecost. Her total commitment from the beginning to the birth of the Church is exemplary.

Meanwhile, the harvest festival season begins with Lohri on 13th January, Makar Sakranti and Pongal on 14th January, among others.

Inspired by his simple living and high thinking values, we celebrate the 157th Birth Anniversary of Ven. Fr. Agnelo D'Souza, one of the founding members of the Society of Pilar, Goa, on 21st January, 2026. Our mission is to continue his legacy of service and care for the marginalised sections of society.

Education forms the foundation of a great career and we celebrate the International Day of Education on 24th January. Our institutions across the Agnel Region touch the hearts and minds of our students, guiding them along the right career path.

India is making rapid development in all spheres of activities such as technology and infrastructural development. Our rich cultural diversity during our Republic Day parade on 26th January in New Delhi is a sight to behold.

On behalf of the Superior General, the General Council and the Pilar Fathers, I wish each one of you and your family A NEW YEAR filled with blessings, peace, happiness, prosperity and good health.

- Fr. Jose Alarico Carvalho
Regional Superior

Mary, the Holy Mother of God

- Fr. Anthony Charanghat

On 1st January 2026, as we begin the New Year, the Church invites us to contemplate Mary under her greatest and most profound title: Mary, the Holy Mother of God. She is not honoured merely as the “Mother of Jesus,” but as Theotokos - the God-bearer. This title, solemnly affirmed by the Church, safeguards a central truth of our faith: the child born of Mary is truly God.

Mary gave birth to a real human child - Jesus of Nazareth. Yet this child is also the eternal Word of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Jesus is one divine Person with two natures, human and divine. Mary is therefore the Mother, not of a nature, but of a Person - and that Person is God. We are not asked to dissect this mystery, but to receive it with reverence and faith. Like the shepherds at Bethlehem, we are invited to trust rather than to master the mystery.

Because of this unique role, Mary is honoured above every other human being. As the poet William Wordsworth beautifully wrote, she is “our tainted nature’s solitary boast.” Yet Mary’s greatness is not measured by human standards of perfection, privilege, or achievement. The Gospel itself tells us where her true greatness lies.

On one occasion, a woman in the crowd cried out to Jesus: “Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!” It was a heartfelt tribute - not only to Jesus, but also to his mother. Jesus’ response is striking:

“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it.”

With these words, Jesus reveals the deepest truth about Mary - and about all holiness. Mary is blessed not primarily because she gave birth to Jesus, but because she heard the word of God and obeyed it. From her courageous “Yes” at the Annunciation, to her silent fidelity at the foot of the Cross, Mary lived in total surrender to God’s will.

She is called “full of grace” not only because she was chosen to be the Mother of God, but because her whole life was open to being filled by God’s love. Grace was not passive in her; it was active, lived, and fruitful. And here Mary becomes our model.

We too are people of grace. Through baptism, God’s life dwells within us. But being “full of grace” is not simply a title we receive; it is a vocation we live. Like Mary, we are called to respond freely and generously to God’s word as it unfolds in the concrete circumstances of our lives. This response takes shape in loving service - often hidden, often demanding, but

always life-giving. Christianity, as we know, is not for the faint-hearted; it asks everything, and in return it gives joy beyond measure.

Mary’s relationship with God is unique: she is daughter of the Father, mother of the Son, and spouse of the Holy Spirit. This intimacy with God overflows in her song of praise, the Magnificat. There she rejoices, not only in what God has done for her, but in what God is doing for the world: scattering the proud, lifting up the lowly, filling the hungry with good things.

Through her humble “Yes,” God chose to involve Mary intimately in the work of salvation. She became a true partner in God’s saving plan - not by power or prestige, but by faith and obedience. That is why all generations call her blessed: because the Almighty has done great things for her, and because she allowed those great things to be done through her.

Today, we thank Mary for her total cooperation with God’s love - for nurturing Jesus, God’s Son and our Saviour, and for continuing to lead us to him. We also recognise ourselves in her song. We are among the hungry who long to be filled by God, and we are also called to feed others - spiritually, emotionally, and materially - according to their need.

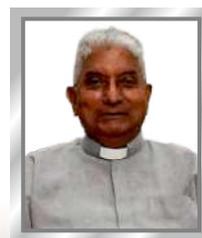
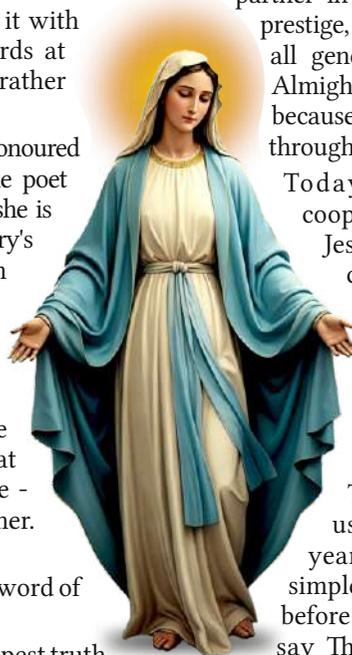
This feast, full of joy for Mary and for us, stands at the threshold of a new year. As we leave the old year behind, two simple but profound invitations are placed before us: to look back with gratitude, and say Thank You; and to look forward with trust, and say Yes.

And so, as we step into the year ahead, may the ancient blessing spoken over God’s people be fulfilled in each one of us:

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord let his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace.



Fr. Anthony Charanghat was associated with *The Examiner* for nearly 50 years, of which 30 years were as the Editor from 1994 to 2024. He is the recipient of the prestigious Louis Careno Award for his outstanding contribution to Catholic journalism.

GOLD, FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH

- Odette Gonsalves

The Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, also known as Three Kings Day, was celebrated on Sunday, January 4, 2026.

The Three Wise Men

They were called Wise Men. They were probably Astrologers from the East. The Gospel of Matthew only mentions them as "Magi" from the East who brought gifts (Matt 2:1-2).

The Names of the Three Wise Men

According to Christian tradition their names were Melchior, Caspar and Balthasar. The Gospel of Matthew describes the Magi as coming from the East and guided by a star to honour the new born king "Jesus the king of the Jews." They brought him gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh.

Two thousand years ago, Wise Men from the East followed a star across deserts and danger, not knowing every step of the way, but trusting that God was leading them.

When they finally came to the child Jesus, the Bible says they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh. These were not random gifts. They were heaven's sermon preached in action rather than words, declaring who this child truly was.

Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh - what does it symbolize

Gold was the gift fit for a King. From the beginning of history, Gold has symbolized authority, power and royalty. When one of the wise men laid gold at the feet of Jesus, they proclaimed a truth, the world would struggle to accept. This child is King. Not just King of the Jews, but King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Yet this King did not wear a crown of jewels. He would wear a crown of thorns. He did not rule from a palace, but from a cross. Still today, the question remains the same. Is Jesus, King of your life? Not just admired, not just respected but obeyed.

Melchior's gift to Jesus was Gold. This gift symbolizes the Kingship and royalty of the newborn King Jesus. It is a precious metal fit for Kings and monarchs. Gold honours Jesus as King of Kings.

Frankincense was the gift for a Priest. It was used in worship, rising like a sweet aroma toward heaven. This gift declared that Jesus was more than a teacher or Prophet. He was God with us, fully divine, worthy of worship. The child in the Manger would one day

become the mediator between a Holy God and a sinful world. Through Christ, God has come near, inviting every heart to worship in Spirit and in truth.

Caspar, the younger king, was supposed to be from India. He offered frankincense, a symbol of worship, as incense is used by Priests and burned in temples and churches.

Myrrh: A strange and troubling gift to give a child. Myrrh was used for burial. A resin or spice. It symbolized suffering, sacrifice and death. Even at His birth, the shadow of the cross fell across the cradle. Jesus was born to die. Not as a tragic accident, but as God's perfect plan. He would take our sin, our shame and guilt and carry it to the cross. Three days later, he would rise again defeating death forever. Gold tells us He is King. Frankincense tells us He is God to be worshipped. Myrrh tells us He is our Saviour.

The dark skinned King named Balthasar came from Arabia or Ethiopia. His gift of Myrrh, a spice or a resin used for embalming and anointing foreshadowing the suffering, death and burial of Jesus.

Isaiah 60 prophesies nations and kings bringing Gold, Frankincense to Zion which Christians believe is fulfilled in the Magi's gifts to Jesus. Isaiah 60:3 states, "Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising." Verse 6 adds, "They shall bring Gold and Frankincense and shall bring good news, the praises of the Lord."

The wise men did more than give gifts. They bowed down and worshipped. That is the only proper response to Jesus Christ. One day, every knee will bow and tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. The question is whether we will bow willingly now in faith, or later in regret. Today, Christ is calling not to religion but to relationship with him. Not to fear but to forgiveness. Not to despair but to hope. The same Jesus who lay in a manger now stands at the door of your heart. If you open it, He will come in and He will change you forever.



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

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY!

- Fr. Fio Mascarenhas, SJ, DMin

Let us make a New Year Resolution to make time for Personal Prayer daily.

Most ordinary lay women/men are unfamiliar with deep and regular personal prayer. It is the widespread opinion of many Christians whom I have met that “ordinary(!)” lay people in the world are not expected to devote prime time to personal prayer, and that daily and deep prayer is something reserved mainly to “holy” priests and religious. This maybe one reason why, although India is a land known for its religious spirit and traditions, yet by and large, Christianity has not made a very profound impact on its vast population.

As the late Cardinal Suenens of Brussels used to say, “Most Catholics have been *sacramentalised*, but not yet *evangelized*.” So a large number of the baptized seem to be just “Sunday Christians” (and since the recent pandemic times, even only “online Christians”), and whenever they do pray, it is mainly to ask for various favours from God in time of need.

This was true also of my early life at home and in our neighbourhood, hence most of my “non-Christian” friends and colleagues could not have known *through me* that Christians are a praying people, in fact, “*a priestly people, a holy nation*.” That we went to church to “hear” Sunday Mass, dressed up in our best, was perhaps our main “witness” that we were Catholics!

Over the years, I have met and worked with thousands of other lay people similarly touched by “*the breath of the Holy Spirit*,” as St. Pope John Paul II termed it when writing about the *modern, universal phenomenon* of people committed to and enjoying prayer:

“*The breath of the divine life*, the Holy Spirit, in its simplest and most common manner, expresses itself and makes itself felt *in prayer*. It is a beautiful and salutary thought that, wherever people are praying in the world, there the Holy Spirit is the living breath of prayer. It is a beautiful and salutary thought to recognize that, if prayer is offered throughout the world, in the past, in the present and in the future, equally widespread is the presence and action of the Holy Spirit, who ‘breathes’ prayer in the heart of human

beings in all the endless range of the most varied situations and conditions, sometimes favourable and sometimes unfavourable to the spiritual and religious life. Many times, through the influence of the Spirit, prayer rises from the human heart in spite of prohibitions and persecutions...” (Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivificantem*, On the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and the World, 1986, n.65).

The renewal of prayer, seen already in today's Church, is only a small sign of what still needs to become common among the lay faithful, since during the Covid pandemic most of our liturgical prayer was done online for more than two years, and our participation in other online prayer sessions continues to be for the most part passive and mechanical. So our hope is that the books we (my co-author and I) write will help *more laity* come into a new awareness of the urgent and great importance of having a deep and personal prayer-life, one which opens itself to the Holy Spirit, “the living Breath of prayer,” and encourages joy and eagerness for prayer in personal, family and liturgical celebrations.

WHAT IS PRAYER? Prayer is a most ancient practice of humanity. Since women and men first saw the light of day and began to experience various human needs like the need for food, water, air and companionship, they felt also the need to communicate with their Creator. Hence, the story of prayer is intimately linked from the very beginning with the human story. Prayer is the basic process of recognizing one's incompleteness or helplessness in the face of awesome and mysterious realities, and then crying out in awe, love or in need to a Being greater than oneself (with primitive groaning, rites, and sacrifices, or with beautiful well-developed lyrics and songs and solemn rites) has been always an important part of normal human behaviour.

“PERSONAL” PRAYER: It is Jesus himself who tells his disciples about “personal” prayer! In the Sermon on the Mount, which focused on the need for interiority rather than mere external show, he said, “*Whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who*



is in secret, and your Father who is in secret will reward you" (Mt 6:6).

Moreover, it is Jesus himself who advised his disciples to practise "personal" prayer: "**When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases like the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him**" (Mt 6:7,8). He then taught them how to pray! "**Pray then in this way: Our Father...**" (Mt 6:9-13).

It is unfortunate, then, that despite this clear and important teaching of Jesus, the majority of people are given more to formal prayers, composed by other pious and learned leaders or saints, and they just repeat these formula prayers over and over again (and often at speed), rather than learn to spend time in "personal" prayer. Christianity seems to have become more a matter of external rules and rituals than a religion which teaches people to pray "**in spirit and in truth**" (Jn 4:24).

"CHRISTIAN" PRAYER: When the disciples of Jesus asked him to teach them how to pray, he taught them the *Our Father*. This has become the most frequently and widely used prayer among all Christians. To pray this prayer in a more personal way (and not rattle it off without application of mind!), we must realise that it is made up of a series of ardent filial responses and petitions, put together in two parts. While both are addressed to the Father, the expressions of the first part focus on "the things of God," while the petitions in the second part deal with "the needs of humanity."

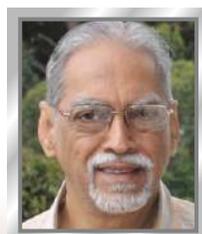
"*Our Father in heaven,*" "*holy be your Name,*" "*your Kingdom come,*" and "*your will be done*" express the sentiments of a child filled with awe, wonder and love because of the greatness and magnificence of its Father. These prayer-phrases insert the Christian anew into the relationship that was created in baptism (by the free gift of God, through Jesus Christ God's Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit). Hence, the words of the first part of the Lord's Prayer are like an act of commitment, by which the Christian re-confirms his/her unworthy yet privileged relationship with the Father, and expresses his/her complete loyalty to the values of the Kingdom.

"*Daily bread,*" "*forgiveness of sins against God and neighbour,*" and "*deliverance from evil*" then express the basic human needs which are beyond the power of finite men and women to provide adequately for themselves, and the obtaining of which provides for the disciples what Jesus promised for those who seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matt 6:33).

Therefore, when Jesus taught his disciples the Lord's prayer, he was not teaching them some magic formula or asking them to just "say" a nice prayer. Jesus' emphasis was always to foster a personal relationship of trust, love and commitment between his disciples and his Father. Jesus said, "*No one knows the Father except the Son, and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him*" (Lk 10:22). The words of the Lord's Prayer, therefore, presuppose an attitude created by the "**spirit of sonship**" (Rom 8:15) first given in baptism and later strengthened by other sacraments and by daily Christian living. *The Lord's Prayer is intended to express a growing relationship between a loving child and its good Father.*

The Pharisees were "professional pray-ers", but Jesus thought poorly of them because they were like "whitewashed sepulchers" – they praised God very well with their lips, but their hearts were far from God (Lk 6:46). They differentiated expertly between the love of God and love of neighbour. Such distinctions would never do for Jesus, who always insisted both on a genuine interiority in spiritual life as well as on a lived solidarity with fellowmen. Otherwise, Jesus taught, prayer would not be acceptable to God: "*When you pray, believe that you have received, and you will receive. But first, forgive your brother/sister*" (Mk 11:24-25).

The Christian practice of prayer must always be an imitation of the Master. Both the lifestyle and the teaching of Jesus Christ showed that prayer is to be a necessary priority in the disciple's daily life. The Gospels often describe Jesus at prayer (cf. Lk 3:21, 5:16, 9:29, 10:21, 22:32; Mt 14:23; Hb 5:7; Mk 1:35-38). Prayer was the constant background of the Lord's life. The Evangelist John (ch 17) shows this continuous prayer of Jesus as flowing from his special relationship to the Father. Jesus' teaching about prayer was a teaching which he was already living. Hence, Christian tradition has developed a rich variety of prayer forms over the centuries: liturgical prayer, with the solemn celebrations of the Eucharist or other sacraments, and also the Divine Office; para-liturgical services and prayer meetings; and various devotions, public and private.



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

RING OUT THE OLD, RING IN THE NEW!

- Jubel D'Cruz

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

As 31st December approaches, we gear up for grand celebrations to welcome the New Year. From dazzling fireworks to packed streets, every landmark and society seems to have its own way of celebrating the festival. But amidst all the noise and chaos, one has to wonder: Are we losing sight of what truly matters?

Celebrating the New Year doesn't have to mean hours spent stuck in traffic jams, loud honking, playing loud music and packed roads where people seem to care more about making noise rather than making memories.

On New Year's Eve, the streets become chaotic, filled with sounds of blaring horns, and sadly, even celebratory gunfire late into the night. Fireworks, while visually stunning, are another issue. They not only create noise pollution but also release harmful smoke into the air, impacting our already fragile environment.

It's ironic that we begin the new year by harming the very planet we live in. And then there's the question of children - tiny babies, barely a few months old, being brought out in the biting cold just to witness these events. Is this really the way to celebrate the New Year?

It's not just in India - these grand New Year celebrations are a global phenomenon. But many countries around the world are starting to find more innovative, eco-friendly ways to celebrate the festival, such as drone shows, which are quieter and more sustainable. Why can't we too, shift toward celebrations that bring people together in meaningful ways without causing harm or inconvenience?

New Year wasn't always celebrated on 01 January. The earliest New Year celebrations dates back to about 4,000 years ago. At that time, the people of ancient Babylon began their New Year in March. They would have an 11-day festival to celebrate the beginning of spring and the fact that crops were being planted for the coming year.

The calendar that we use today, which is known as the Gregorian calendar, was introduced 444 years ago by Pope Gregory XIII in the year, 1582. He declared once and for all that 01 January should be celebrated as New Year's Day. And since that time, people have been celebrating New Year's Day on 01 January.

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

It is believed that the ancient Babylonians were the first ones to make New Year's resolutions. They made promises to begin the year in the right way and to earn the approval of their gods.

On New Year's Eve, in some places, an effigy resembling an old man is made. The effigy signifies all that should be dispensed with, such as evil thoughts, bad behaviour, and so on. The effigy is made to stand on a road or in bylanes and passersby often drop coins into the box that is kept beside it.

The effigy is then set on fire at the stroke of midnight. The burning of the effigy signifies the end of the old year and the beginning of the new year. The money collected is used for partying by the people who have made the effigy.

Most of us have forgotten that the New Year is not only a time for revelry but also for reflection.

I too celebrate the New Year with all the blast that I can. Two days before the New Year could begin, we start preparing ourselves. We clean our houses, get things in order, and buy crackers to burst them at the stroke of midnight.

On New Year's Eve, we enjoy ourselves to the maximum by playing practical jokes on one another. So much of fun is involved that we totally forget the passing of time.

New Year is also the time for people to leave their sad and bad experiences behind and wish for

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happiness, good health and good fortune in the coming year.

To me, New Year is a day when one needs to wake up early in the morning and see the sun rise. It is a day to pray and congratulate Mother Earth for completing one revolution. It is also a day to ask Mother Earth for her blessings.

Nearly all of us make resolutions for the coming year. We promise ourselves that we will do something differently or better after 01 January, whether it's quitting a bad habit or getting better grades in school or college. But where did we get this idea of making resolutions for the New Year?

New Year is all about new beginnings, reflection, and celebration, symbolizing a fresh start to a new calendar year. It's a time for people to reflect on the past year, make resolutions for self-improvement, and look forward to the future with hope and optimism. Celebrations are widespread and culturally diverse, often including fireworks, parties, family gatherings, and special rituals intended to bring good fortune.

New Beginnings: The day is a universal symbol of starting fresh, providing a chance to leave the past behind and embrace new opportunities.

Reflection and Resolutions: It's a time to look back on the previous year and set personal goals for the year ahead, such as improving health or career.

Celebration: People celebrate with a variety of traditions, such as fireworks, parties, special meals, and spending time with loved ones.

Hope and Optimism: The day is filled with hope for what the new year will bring, symbolizing a chance to strive for a better future.

Cultural Significance: While January 01 is the most common New Year's Day, many cultures celebrate it on different dates and with their own unique customs and traditions.

Here are some New Year celebrations on different dates of the year:

- The **Gregorian New Year** is celebrated globally on 01 January.
- The **Chinese New Year**, based on the lunar calendar, typically falls between January/February.
- **Nowruz**, the Persian New Year, is celebrated on or around 20th March. In Indonesia, **Nyepi** (or the Day of Silence) is observed on 25th March.
- Thailand's New Year, known as **Songkran**, is celebrated from 13th-15th April with a large water festival.

- Several regional new years fall around this time, including **Puthandu** (Tamil New Year) and **Baisakhi** (Punjabi New Year) on 14th April.
- The New Year in Kerala, known as **Vishu**, is celebrated on 14th/15th April.
- The Bengali New Year, known as **Pohela Boishakh**, is celebrated on 14th/15th April.
- The **Islamic New Year** occurs in June with its date shifting annually.
- The Ethiopian New Year known as **Enkutatash** is celebrated on 11th/12th September.
- The Jewish New Year known as **Rosh Hashanah** falls between 6th September and 5th October.
- While not always on the same day, the Hindu New Year known as **Deepavali** is often celebrated in October or November.

We hope that this coming year will bring success, joy and happiness to everyone of us.

The Story of the Leap Year:

Have you ever wondered why February gets an extra day every four years? This concept originated with astronomers of the Gregorian calendar. They calculated that a solar year lasts 365 days, 5 hours, and 46 minutes. To adjust for this extra time, an additional day was added every four years, giving us the leap year.

Welcoming the New Year:

As we welcome the New Year 2026, it's the perfect time to send heartfelt wishes to those who've made the past year special. Whether you're celebrating it with your loved ones or reaching out from afar, a thoughtful New Year's message can spread joy and set the tone for the year ahead. From warm wishes for health and happiness to inspiring words for a fresh start, these messages are perfect for personalizing your New Year's cards. Share your hopes for 2026 with family, friends, and co-workers, and let your words ring in the New Year with positivity and love.



Jubel D'Cruz is a freelance writer and the author of several books for children. He also writes letters to the editor for newspapers and magazines all across India on various social, national and environmental issues. He lives in Dombivili, Mumbai.

His name shall be called Emmanuel

- Fr. Peter Fernandes, SFX

Emmanuel is a name of Hebrew origin meaning "God with us." Is it too difficult to accept that God is with us? Except for Christianity (personal God), all others hold on to a metaphysical God – one who exists in an unapproachable light. Holding that view, Islamic apologists try to discredit the Bible and the divinity of Jesus, by stating that, there is no one unequivocal and unambiguous verse where Jesus himself says, I am God, worship me.

To demand such assertion "I am God, worship me" is diabolic – Satanic Verses. Humans have the need to prove themselves to others. God is eternal, and he does not have to prove to anyone that he is God because he is God. Only false prophets and dishonest teachers would seek such a proof from God. If God has a need to prove himself as God then he is subject to limitations, which is a contradiction to his nature. It would imply that the being to whom God has to prove would be the one greater than God. It is like begging a question, a logical fallacy.

St. Thomas Aquinas while explaining the first efficient cause that is not itself caused by anything else. He says, this being necessarily exists by its own nature and does not require external proof in the typical causal sense, as it is the explanatory ground for all other contingent things. Rene Descartes and Immanuel Kant concur with Thomas Aquinas that the idea that an ultimate cause is self-evident suggest that understanding its nature is sufficient to know it must exist, without needing further evidence or proof derived from the external world.

In the gospel of Mathew chapter 4/ 1-11, the final temptation was, "The devil offered Jesus all the kingdoms and glory of the world if he would bow down and worship him." Jesus who is fully God and fully man overcame the temptation of a need he never felt with the power of the Holy Spirit to assert his divinity as well as his humanity. Demanding God to prove that he is God is diabolic.

A voice of the devil that resounded in the desert tempting Jesus has never left the world for a moment. Adam and Eve first heard it in the garden of Eden, which filled them with a desire to be like God. Many leaders throughout history have

projected themselves as deities or held titles implying divine status, often to legitimize their authority, secure obedience, and consolidate power. This practice has appeared across various cultures and time periods.

Ancient Egyptian pharaohs were considered to have divine properties, often equated with gods like Horus in life and Osiris in death. Alexander the great, to legitimize his rule in Egypt, consulted the oracle of Amun-Ra at the Siwa Oasis, where he was pronounced the son of the deity Amun, a traditional title for pharaohs.

Following the posthumous deification of Julius Caesar, many Roman emperors were worshiped as gods, either during their lifetime or after death. Caligula and Domitian were notable for demanding to be worshipped as living gods. Until the end of the World War II, the emperor of Japan was considered a living god, a direct descendant of the sun goddess

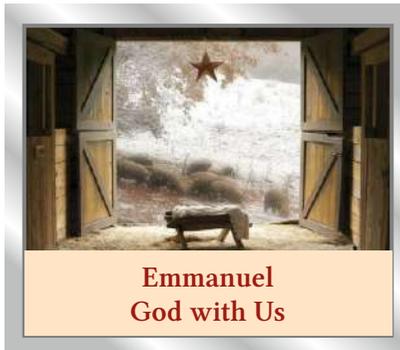
Amaterasu. Emperor Hirohito was required to formally repudiate his divinity as a condition of surrender in 1945.

The voice continues to resonate in the contemporary society, and the world leaders think that they are divinely ordained with uncompromising authority to rule. Take for example the Supreme Leader of China Xi Jinping and North Korea,

Kim Jong Un, who hold absolute power over their people, and demand absolute respect and honour.

Rahul Gandhi reminded the MPs in the parliament of India about the divine nature of Narendra Modi, the prime minister. The non-biological origin was discussed by none other than Prime Minister himself, saying, "When my mother was alive, I used to believe that I was born biologically. After she passed away, upon reflecting on all my experiences, I was convinced that God has sent me. This energy could not be from my biological body, but was bestowed upon me by God." Besides, since 2014, the Godi-Media has not shied away from deifying him.

Last month, the whole world, recalled, remembered and rejoiced at the birth of Jesus Christ, who was born among the animals in a manger. The manger had no sign of nobility from the human point of view for Jesus to make a claim for his kingship and



divinity. Yet, kings from the east came to worship the new born child, and adored him with gifts signifying his divinity. All this came about as the fulfilment of the prophecies of old, a proof that Jesus is truly God and truly man.

Unlike the humans and the devil who have the undue desire for name and fame, power and authority, Jesus relinquishes the same so that in his emptiness all may freely recognize that He is the way, the truth and the life. Often, Jesus rebuked the evil spirits for making him known, "We know who you are, you the Son of the Living God." Yet the same time, Jesus never denied his divine nature nor the worship due to him. In the Gospel of John, Jesus says, "I and the Father are one. No one knows the Father except the Son and no one knows the Son except the Father and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

To know God the Father as Father, it is only possible for an uncreated eternal being, who coexisted with God the Father from all eternity. For a created being to know God the Father as the Father is not only metaphysically impossible, but also otherwise. While Prophet Muhammad accredits the Torah and the Gospels in the Quran as the divine revealed word of God and then deny the divinity of Jesus is a self-contradiction and betrayal of truth.

Today, ironically, many scholars like to cite the Gospel of John to give Prophet Muhammad the biblical authority as a final prophet in the line of Prophets in the Torah and to legitimize the claims of their sacred text, while denying the mystery of Incarnation. Muslim scholars like to cite a passage from the Gospel of John chapter 14/16 "And I will pray to the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever."

Another comforter according to these scholars is the final prophet, and it cannot be the Holy Spirit as per their understanding, for the Holy Spirit was already in the world, as Mary bore a child with the power of the Holy Spirit. Yes indeed, the Holy Spirit was with Jesus, but Jesus wants to impart this Holy Spirit to all his disciples. Therefore, his departure is essential for that to happen – the spirit of truth to

guide them to all truth. Pentecost was the realization of that assurance. Paradoxically, the same John the apostle also warns about the voice of the devil, in his letter, 2 Jn 1/7, which these scholars tend to ignore, "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, refusing to confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Any such person is the deceiver and the Antichrist."

A voice that resounded in the desert tempting Jesus, has never left the world. The voice is louder today than ever before ...prove if you are God. The child that was born for us on Christmas day, came not to prove but to reveal the nature of God, which is beyond human comprehension. In the child Jesus, the defenselessness of God is apparent.

God comes without weapons, because he does not wish to conquer from outside but desires to win and transform us from within. Those who heard Jesus preach and teach and witnessed his powerful miracles, acclaimed saying a great prophet has arisen in our midst and God has come to visit his people. And through his passion, death and resurrection, Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies of old to reconcile the world to God, which confirms that the New Testament is contained in the Old Testament and the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament.

The God of the Testaments is a God of relationship – three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, subsists in one substance - God. Therefore, go to the ends of the earth and proclaim the gospel and baptize people of every nation in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. His name shall be called Emmanuel - God with us. And so we say, **Happy New Year, full of hope, joy and peace!**



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

READER'S FEEDBACK

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

This magazine is available online.

Visit us at www.agnelashram.org

Inter Agnel Sports Meet 2025, a resounding success!

The Inter Agnel Sports Meet 2025, hosted by Fr. Agnel School, Greater Noida, brought together all four Agnel institutions – Delhi, Noida, Vaishali, and Greater Noida – in a grand celebration of teamwork, unity, and sportsmanship.

The event commenced with a warm welcome to the dignitaries, principals, teachers, and participants. The Guest of Honour was Mr. Harpal Singh, former Indian Hockey Player and Olympian, while the Chief Guest was the District Magistrate of Gautam Buddha Nagar.

A splendid March Past by the NCC cadets and students of all Agnel schools set the tone for the day, followed by the Oath-taking Ceremony led by the Head Boy of Fr. Agnel School, Greater Noida. The symbolic Lighting of the Agnel Sports Torch, performed by representatives of all four schools, ignited the spirit of the meet.

Rev. Fr. Alarico Carvalho, Regional Superior and Director of Agnel Schools, addressed the gathering, appreciating the unity among the Agnel institutions. The Chief Guest declared the meet open, releasing white pigeons as a symbol of peace and harmony.

The day witnessed thrilling track events, spectacular drill displays, and exciting Tug of War and Relay Races, keeping the audience captivated.

The highlight of the event was the Prize Distribution Ceremony, where:

- Best Drill went to Fr. Agnel School, Delhi.
- Best March Past was won by Fr. Agnel School, Greater Noida.
- Tug of War (Boys & Girls) trophies went to Fr. Agnel School, Delhi.
- The coveted Overall Championship Trophy was lifted by Fr. Agnel School, Greater Noida

The Inter Agnel Sports Meet 2025 truly embodied the Agnelite spirit of unity, excellence, and fair play.



Overall Champions of the Inter Agnel Sports Meet - Fr. Agnel School, Greater Noida.



*Best March Past - Fr. Agnel School,
Greater Noida.*



*Best Drill Winner - Fr. Agnel School,
Delhi.*



Tug of War Winner (Girls & Boys) - Fr. Agnel School, Delhi.



Dignitaries of Inter Agnel Sports Meet.

AGNEL HAPPENINGS

Ambernath

Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School and Jr. College, Ambernath, lift prestigious Agnel Inter-School Sports Fiesta 2025 Championship Trophy

Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School and Jr. College, Ambernath, proudly hosted the Agnel Inter-School Sports Fiesta 2025 from 17th to 29th November 2025, welcoming over 30 schools and more than 800 athletes from across Badlapur, Mumbra, Vikhroli and neighbouring regions. The campus buzzed with excitement as young sportspersons competed across six thrilling disciplines, showcasing talent, grit, and true sportsmanship.

The closing ceremony on 29th November 2025 commenced with a warm welcome to the esteemed Chief Guest, Dr. Pradeep Mohite, Senior Police Inspector, Maharashtra Police Master Trainer, QRT Commando Officer and decorated national sportsman. He was joined by the Guest of Honour, Mr. Wasim Mulla, distinguished Indian athlete and silver medallist at the Malaysia Open Athletics Championship 2018. Their presence elevated the spirit of the celebration, inspiring every participant and spectator.

The programme was graced by the presence of the School Administrator Rev. Fr. Trevor Pereira, who addressed the gathering with an encouraging speech, appreciating the hard work of the athletes, and the unifying power of sports. Also present on the occasion was Principal Mrs. Sonal Palaka and Vice Principal Mrs. Juhi Lalwani.



Dignitaries and officials with the winners of the Agnel Inter-School Sports Fiesta 2025.



*The debut performance of the Brass Band
of Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School
and Jr. College, Ambernath.*

The event also marked the debut of the school's Brass Band, whose impressive musical performances added grandeur to the celebration. The cultural segment continued with a vibrant Musical Dance Drill, where students showcased seamless coordination, colourful formations and the values of benevolence, integrity, wisdom, kindness, and fortitude.

A significant part of the evening was the **felicitation of coaches** - both from participating schools and the home team. Their tireless dedication and contribution to nurturing young sportspersons was recognised with heartfelt gratitude.



Coaches were felicitated at the Agnel Inter-School Sports Fiesta 2025.



Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School and Jr. College, Ambernath, emerged the Champion at the Agnel Inter-School Sports Fiesta 2025.

At the Prize Distribution Ceremony, the moment of pride arrived when Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School and Jr. College was declared the overall Champion, securing an impressive tally of 24 Gold, 14 Silver and 19 Bronze medals.



The Under-16 Boys Champions of the Inter-School Football Tournament from Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School and Jr. College, Ambernath.



The Under-17 Boys Runners-Up of the Inter-School Basketball Tournament from Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School and Jr. College, Ambernath.



The Under-17 Boys Runners-Up of the Inter-School Volleyball Tournament, from Fr. Agnel Multipurpose School and Jr. College, Ambernath.

'COME AND SEE'

- Norma Kamath

'Come and See,' is a powerful invitation to each of us, to personally encounter Jesus. We come across this phrase repeatedly in the Holy Bible. Jesus wants us to be not merely onlookers or Sunday mass goers, but as children of our Father in Heaven, he wants to reveal Himself to us, his Father and the Holy Spirit.

CALLED TO SHARE THE GOOD NEWS

An angel appeared to the shepherds watching over their flock by night, and gave them the good news, that would come to all the people, the birth of the Saviour, Christ the Lord, born in the city of David. He gave them a sign that they would find the babe in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Suddenly, they witnessed the angel hosts praising God.

And they said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem, 'to see the thing,' that has happened." They went in haste, and saw Mary and Joseph, and the babe, lying in a manger, and they returned glorifying and praising God for all they had 'seen' and heard, and everybody who heard about their encounter was greatly amazed.

'Come and See,' is a model for all of us to share the 'good news,' in a world weary of fake news. An invitation, to listen to a testimony, to attend a prayer meeting, to share God's word, to experience adoration, attend mass, visit and pray over the sick can open the door for others to experience God's presence, hear his voice and experience his touch.

THE MAGI - THE THREE KINGS

These three wise men from the east, saw a star in the sky, and took it to be a sign that the King of the Jews was born. They followed it, through a desert experience, in their quest for the new born King to worship and adore him. They may have listened to God's word, and received the truth through the Old Testament prophecies, in Is 7:14, Is 9:6, Mic 5:2, Hos11:1, Dan 9:24-27 or even Balaam, a diviner, a pagan prophet who foretold that a 'star would come out of Jacob' in Num 24:17.

When they arrived in Bethlehem they rejoiced exceedingly, and going into the house, they 'saw' the child with his mother, and fell down and

worshipped him, presenting their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. On Sunday, January 4, we celebrate the Three Kings Day or the Feast of Epiphany.

STUDY OF SCRIPTURE

Lectio Divina - or The Divine Reading of the Word is recommended by the second Vatican Council.

We need to read a passage of scripture slowly. It is a four part process, 1) reading 2) meditation 3) prayer 4) contemplation. It enables us to commune with God, and brings about transformation (2Tim 3:16-17).

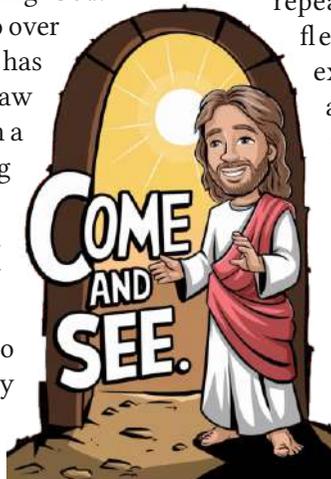
When reading God's word, a few lines may catch our attention. This is called 'Rhema,' God speaking directly to us through his word. As we repeat those words daily, it becomes flesh in our lives, and we will experience transformation in that area (2Cor 3:17-18).

Simeon, a devout man, to whom the Holy Spirit revealed that he would not see death, before he had seen the Lord. Trusting in God's word, and led by the Spirit, he came to the temple at the same time, Mary and Joseph brought baby Jesus. He took the child in his arms and blessed God saying, 'My eyes have 'seen' Thy Salvation, which Thou has prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for

revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Thy people, Israel,' and he blessed them and prophesied about Mary, the Mother of God.

MY EXPERIENCE AT A HEALING CONVENTION

Seated on the step of the stage for lack of a seat, I was called to intercede before the Blessed Sacrament. I readily agreed. The priest, Fr. Naikamperambil, V.C. would come close and put his hand in front of the Eucharist, and with his anointed hands raised, would go before the people calling out the names of the people healed, through God's word of knowledge. Each time he did it, I could feel the heat, like flames coming out of the sacrament. I went out of the shamiana to check the weather. It was December and bitterly cold. I 'saw' that day Jesus' power to heal. My faith in this holy sacrament of the Eucharist increased. All glory to God.



ENCOUNTERSWITH GOD

In the Old Testament, Moses encountered God in the burning bush when he said, "I will turn aside and 'see' this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." And God called out to him, and revealed himself, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exod 3: 4-6). In Exod 3: 14, he revealed his name, "I AM WHO I AM."

In the New Testament, two of the disciples of John the Baptist heard him say, "Behold the Lamb of God," and they left John, and followed Jesus, and asked, "Rabbi (teacher) where are you staying?" Jesus answered, "Come and 'see'." They came and 'saw' and stayed with him that day (John1:35-40). Andrew the apostle, stayed with Jesus for the rest of his life.

Nathaniel was sceptical of Jesus being the Messiah, because of his Galilean origin. Many Christians today have doubts, and are sceptical, cold and indifferent about their faith. Philip called Nathaniel, "Come and see." Nathaniel 'saw' and was

amazed how much Jesus knew about him. He exclaimed, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel" (Jn1:45-51).

As the Jubilee Year, which began on 24th December 2024, ends on 6th January 2026, let us spend time on contemplating God's word, in praise and adoration, and thanksgiving. Let this New Year be a season of refreshing, worshipping, the Triune God, Jesus, the Father and the Holy Spirit together with the angels, before the throne, saying, "Amen ! Blessing and Glory, and Wisdom and Thanksgiving, and Honour and Power and Might be to our God for ever and ever, Amen" (Rev 7:11-12).



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.



There is no Joy Greater than the Joy of GIVING

Sambasivan Srinath, Singapore

I have made a thanksgiving offering of Rs.7000 via EDC for the daily requirements of the Balbhavan boys in Fr. Agnel Ashram. They are doing well not just in studies but are imbibing skills in music, sports and other extra-curricular activities.

Jacob Almeida, Mangalore

I am donating an amount of Rs. 600 via UPI as a thanksgiving to Ven. Fr. Agnel for several favours received.

Josephine M. Machado, Bandra, Mumbai

Kindly accept my humble donation of Rs.10,000 via cheque as a Christmas gift for the Balbhavan boys. Jesus is the reason for our season of sharing.

Benedicta D'Costa, Thane

I have contributed an amount of Rs. 5000 via cheque for the welfare of the Balbhavan boys. The Pilar Fathers are doing yeoman service in giving young children the best education, food and accommodation.

Joyline D'Souza, Kurla, Mumbai

I am herewith contributing an amount of Rs. 1,000 via cheque as a token of thanksgiving to Ven. Fr. Agnel.

M. D. George, Pathanamthitta, Kerala

I am happy to contribute an amount of Rs. 1000 via NEFT for the charity works of Fr Agnel Ashram.

Irene Anthony Dominic, Hyderabad

On the occasion of Christmas and the New Year, please accept my small gift of Rs.500 via NEFT for the Balbhavan children.

Nirav Vajani, Kandivali, Mumbai

I have made a contribution of Rs.50000 through UPI towards the charitable activities of Fr. Agnel Ashram and for the maintenance and education of the Balbhavan boys.

Youth are now World Chess Champions!

- Sunil D'Cruz

Celebrating National Youth Day on 12th January 2026, we look at three young chess stalwarts - World Champion Gukesh Dommaraju, Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa and Arjun Erigaisi. After performing well in the Global Chess League in Mumbai held from 14th to 23rd December 2025, at the Royal Opera House, they participated in the FIDE World Rapid and Blitz Championships held in Doha, Qatar, from 26th to 30th December 2025 where Arjun won a bronze medal in each category.



Reigning classical World Chess Champion Gukesh Dommaraju (left) playing against five-time classical World Chess Champion Vishwanathan Anand (right) in the Global Chess League in Mumbai recently.

Gukesh Dommaraju from Chennai became the youngest world chess champion, at 18 years, beating Ding Liren for the crown in December 2024 in Singapore, shattering the previous record of 22 years which was set by GM Garry Kasparov in 1985.

A chess prodigy, Gukesh earned the Grandmaster title at 12 years, becoming the second youngest to do so. Gukesh became the challenger to the world championship in April 2024 by winning the 2024 FIDE Candidates Tournament with a score of 9/14 which also made him the youngest-ever Candidates Tournament winner.

“Going into the FIDE World Rapid and Blitz Championships in Doha, Qatar, I had some good practice from the Global Chess League in Mumbai recently; played a few rapid games against some very strong opponents. My strategy would be to just play fast and try to focus on each game and make the most of it,” said the 19-year-old, who had defeated Magnus Carlsen in the Norway Chess tournament earlier in 2025.



Pragg (left) seen in action at the Global Chess League in Mumbai recently.

Twenty-year-old prodigious Indian chess **Grandmaster Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa** (often called R. Pragganandhaa or Pragg), clinched the Global Chess League 2025 title, beating defending Champions Triveni Continental Kings in the finals.

The young chess star from Chennai is famous for defeating Magnus Carlsen multiple times in rapid/online formats, including early wins as a child. He has secured a Candidates spot for 2026 by being the top FIDE Circuit player.

Known for his aggressive style, he became the second Indian ever to cross the 2700 rating mark. He says, "I'm ambitious. I want to win tournaments when I'm playing, after all the hard work that I've been putting in for years."



Arjun Erigaisi (left) strategising his next move.

22-year-old **Arjun Erigaisi**, from Warangal, Telangana, kept the Indian flag flying high in Doha during the 2025 World Rapid and Blitz Championships, where he won a bronze in both categories. Congratulating him on his wins, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted, "His skills, patience and passion are exemplary."



Sunil D'Cruz is on the Editorial team of Fr. Agnel Ashram News. He has contributed articles to various local, national and international publications.



MOTHER MARY - FULL OF GRACE

- Ninette D'Souza

On 1st January, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of Mary - the Mother of God, a universal and highest form of the Eucharist. The feasts of Jesus are usually followed by a feast of Mary, either a day or maximum a week later. So, Mary has a special place in the church.

Little is written of the mother of any great man, because each one was considered the best, by him. Solomon, an illustrious king in biblical history, honoured his mother Bathsheba, by providing a throne for her at his right (1 Kings 2:19). How much more must Jesus honour Mary as his own? How much more exalted must be the woman, who bore the Son of God? Just as Solomon eagerly granted his mother's requests, Jesus responds to Mary's intercessions. Mary's exalted role among the saints presents her as a great exemplar of faith and discipleship.

In Rev 12: 1-5 we read of St. John's vision of heaven. Is it any wonder then, that in such a vivid portrayal, Catholics see Mary as, Queen of Heaven? The Assumption of Mary according to an ancient account of the life of St. Theodosius, was already being celebrated in Palestine in the 400s, indicating that by the 5th Century, the Assumption was a well-established conviction, among Christ's followers, in the land where He and His mother lived. The Assumption is consistent with Mary's role as Theotokos (God bearer), a grace granted to bear God Himself, in her body.

Mary's holiness comes from two Hebrew words: Hodesh + Kadesh or in Greek - Haggios. Involving holiness, they have the nuance of being consecrated, of being set apart for God, because God is holy.

Christians see in Isaiah's prophecy (Is 9:5) an affirmation of Jesus' divine identity. From the beginning, the Church has declared of Christ what St. Thomas did, "My Lord and my God." The reality of the incarnation is at the heart of our faith. When early Christians read biblical passages about the Incarnation, they wondered, how exactly is Christ human and divine? Was He God only appearing to be human? Was He a human to whom God attached Himself in a special way? Was He partly human and partly divine?

The ecumenical council of Ephesus, in AD 431, resolved this issue. This council was provoked by a controversy over the question of, can we call Mary, the 'Mother of God?' An archbishop Nestorius rejected this title. According to him, Mary was the mother of the human person in Christ, not the mother of the divine person, because Christ Himself was two persons, he claimed. The Church rejected his teaching. Instead, it declared - Christ is one divine person - The Second Person of the Trinity. He possesses two natures - divine and human, but they don't constitute two different persons. These two natures though not to be confused, cannot be separated. Coldness towards Mary is a consequence of indifference to Christ. The

consecrated term 'Theotokos' has since been the touch stone of the Catholic faith.

In the light of these teachings, the Church concluded that not only is it correct, but important too, that we call Mary, Mother of the one Person Jesus Christ, who is the son of God, in the flesh. If we deny this fact, then we deny the truth, that Christ Himself is God, come down from Heaven (Gal 4:4). St. Paul declared on behalf of all Christians, "God sent His Son, born of a woman." If Mary was only the mother of another man, then she could not also be our mother, because the ties of the flesh are exclusive. But the Holy Spirit allows Mary, as the Mother of God, to also be the mother, of all those whom Christ redeemed.

In the gospel of Luke 1:28, Mary is referred to as Kecharitomene (Greek) meaning 'highly graced' or 'full of grace'. This respectful term of address, used by angel Gabriel, has not been used in Scripture, of any other human being - an indication of the unparalleled grace given by God, to our Lady. Not only was she conceived without original sin (dogma of Immaculate Conception), throughout her life God preserved her from committing any actual sin. Why would God have granted Mary such a gift? When the Eternal Word took flesh (John 1:14), through her, God wanted His sinless Son to receive His human nature from a sinless mother, one who would rear Him until the time came for Him to reveal His Divinity.

Mary is inseparable from Jesus. "The less we think of Mary, the less we think of Jesus. The more we adore His divinity, the more we venerate her motherhood. As our love does not start with Mary, so neither does it stop with Mary. Mary is a window through which our humanity catches a glimpse of Divinity on earth. Or perhaps she is more like a magnifying glass; she intensifies our love of her Son and makes our prayers more bright and burning" - Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen from his book- 'The World's First Love: Mary, Mother of God' which presents a moving portrayal of the Blessed Virgin Mary, combining deep spirituality, philosophy and theology.

According to authoritative tradition, the Basilica Della Santa Casa in Loreto, Italy, houses three walls of the home of Nazareth, where the Blessed Virgin Mary was born, lived and received, her **Annunciation**. Devout tradition has it that the holy house was transported by angels from Nazareth to Loreto. Probably what prompted Saint Pope John Paul II to say, "Loreto is the first Church on which shone the light of the maternity of the Mother of God."



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.

JUST FOR FUN

- Christine D'Sylva

Happy New Year!

We are in the New Year 2026 and it is always a blessed opportunity for another year, a year to make some of our dreams come true and to emerge as better people learning from our past mistakes.

With that enlightening thought, let's begin ...

Funny New Year Anecdotes



1. On New Year's Eve, Maria stood up in the local pub and announced that the clock would strike midnight in a minute. Then she wanted her husband Tom to stand next to the person who made his life worth living.

She smiled expectantly but Tom rushed towards the bartender when the clock struck and happily put his arm around him.

2. On New Year's Eve, Dan was a bit drunk so sensibly he left his car on the street and walked home. On his way home, he met a policeman, "What are you doing out here at four o'clock in the morning?"

Dan replied, "I am going for a lecture."

"And who on earth in their right mind will give a lecture at this time of the morning?" The policeman was sarcastic.

Dan slurred grimly, "My wife."

3. Jean was taking an afternoon nap on New Year's Eve. When she awoke she confided in her husband, "I just dreamt you gave me a beautiful diamond ring. What do you think it means?"

Max, her husband, smiled broadly, "Well dear, you will know tonight."

Jean waited impatiently and squealed with joy when Max handed her a small package.

She opened it quickly. In her hand was a pocket sized book entitled, *'The meaning of dreams.'*

4. A senator was once asked about his attitude towards alcohol.

He said, "Oh, you mean the demon that poisons the mind, pollutes the body, desecrates family life and inflames sinners, then I am against it. But if you are talking about the elixir of the NEW Year toast, the shield against winter chill, the taxable poison that puts funds into public coffers, then I am all for it. This is my position and I will never compromise."

Quiz



1. The city where the first New Year celebrations were held.

2. The Roman emperor who established January 1st as New Year's Day.

3. The year when the Gregorian calendar established that January 1st was New Year's Day in the western world.

4. The time when the ancient Egyptians celebrated New Year's Day.

5. The time the Chinese marked New Year's Day.

Lucky Foods for the New Year

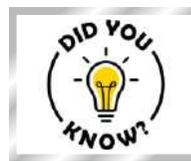


1. During the Jewish New Year or Rosh Hashanah, it is traditional to eat honey to wish for a sweet new year.

2. In places like Greece, Mexico and the Netherlands, people eat ring-shaped pastries or cakes to symbolise that the year is like a ring with no beginning or end.

3. In places like Ireland, Germany and parts of the United States, eating leafy greens is a tradition that symbolises financial fortune for the coming year. The Dutch like to eat doughnuts for good luck and the people in the south of U.S.A. cook black eyed peas.

Did You Know?



The confetti in Times Square, U.S.A., has thousands of people's wishes written on them. Wishfetti became part of the tradition in 2015. People write their wishes for the New Year and submit them to

the Wish Wall in Times Square or online. Those wishes are turned into the confetti that falls over the crowd at midnight.

Baby New Year is actually very old. It has been a symbol of the holiday since around 600 B.C., starting in ancient Greece when an infant was passed around in a basket in the celebration of Dionysus, a god of fertility and wine. The baby represented a rebirth that occurs at the start of each year.

Smile Please



1. Barbara Walters, an interviewer did a story on gender roles in Kabul, Afghanistan, several years before the Afghan conflict. She noted that women customarily walked five paces behind their husbands.

She returned recently to Kabul and observed that this customary behaviour still existed. Despite the overthrow of the Taliban regime, women now seemed to walk even further behind their husbands and were happy to maintain the old custom.

She approached one of the Afghan women and queried, "Why do you now seem so happy with the old custom that you once desperately wanted to change?"

The woman looked at Barbara straight in the eye and without hesitation said, "Land Mines."

2. A thief broke into John's house and stole his television and started running.

John also ran after him. The faster the thief ran, the faster John ran. Finally the thief got tired and stopped. John also stopped.

Panting he told the thief, "Take the remote of the television. You forgot it."

3. A man visiting a graveyard saw a tombstone that read: Here lies John Smith, a lawyer and an honest man."

The man exclaimed, "How about that! They have got three people buried in that grave."

Life is Just Like This



1. A British gentleman was walking with his dog along the swimming pool cemented edge. He heard a scream for help. He ignored it.

Another British gentleman was walking along the same path. He too heard the cry for help. He too ignored the cry for help. But he acted swiftly throwing the life belt when the boy said, "Excuse me, sir. I am terribly sorry to bother you but I was wondering if you would mind helping me as long as it is no trouble of course."

2. Father to son - Okay you are 10 years old, you have a laptop, an iPod, a blackberry and now a tablet. Dude, when I was ten I only had one thing to play with. It was called "OUTSIDE."

3. Do you remember the time when people had diaries and wrote private things in them? They got mad if anyone dared read it. Today they post their life story online and get mad if nobody reads it.

Brain Teasers



1. You are driving a bus. It is raining outside and a woman gets in, then she gets off at the next stop.

Then a man and old lady get in. What is the colour of the driver's eyes?

2. Find a word that associates with this list of words.

Cake, Swiss, cottage. Knife, fly, cup.

3. A clerk in a chicken shop is six feet tall and wears size 10 shoes. What does he weigh?

4. One night, a king and a queen went into a castle. There was nobody inside and no one came out of the castle. Yet in the morning three came out. Who were they?

5. What goes up but never comes down?

6. If $x = 40$, y is three times x multiplied by z . Then what is the value of y if z is divided by $x = 10$.

Naturopathy - The Science of Healing by Nature



1. Citrus fruits like lemons, oranges, sweet limes, grape-fruit are excellent sources of Vitamin C. They support wound healing and tissue repair. Vitamin C can help ward off coughs and colds too. So

include these fruits in your daily diet.

2. Blueberries are one of the most anti-oxidant rich fruits. They have been shown to support heart health, brain function and even reduce inflammation.

3. The French like to have a piece of cheese after dinner or a meal instead of dessert. This is because cheese is lower in calories and is a satisfying choice instead of reaching for ice-cream or heavy calorie laden desserts. The benefits of cheese are many. Due to their high calcium content and protein content too, it improves bone and dental health, supports muscle growth, heart health and enhanced gut health from probiotics in fermented varieties. Cheese being rich in calcium and protein, also helps in hair growth.

4. As one ages, the facial skin gets lax. To firm it up, use an egg white mask on your face once a week to tighten skin. It is quite effective.

The British Breakfast



Today many restaurants serve the typical British breakfast that is so hearty that one can skip lunch.

It is a satisfying combination of sausages, bacon, eggs, two small vegetable patties, baked beans and

toast with either tea or coffee according to one's preference. Also jam and butter are offered. The roots of this English breakfast stretches back to the early Middle Ages when the Anglo-Saxons regarded the breakfast as an essential meal symbolising hospitality and generosity.

Breakfast was not an individual meal but a shared experience served to guests to show kindness and welcome.

The Industrial Revolution brought long work days and the workers' need for substantial fuel to get through the morning. The more affluent members of society enjoyed a big breakfast of meat, eggs and bread. This elaborate breakfast culture trickled down to the working classes and it led to the establishment of the Full English breakfast that remains popular even today.

One of the nice places to sample this English breakfast is *Gaylor* at Churchgate. It is worth trying this English breakfast at least once.

World News



As the year 2025 ends, people are curious to know what 2026 has in store for the world. Baba Vanga is a blind Bulgarian mystic who is referred to as the "Nostradamus of the Balkans."

She garnered attention because of her predictions about Princess Diana's death and also of the former Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi. She has predicted for the year 2026, many natural disasters such as mega earthquakes, colossal volcanic eruptions and severe weather to impact at least eight percent of the Earth. Basically she claims the year 2026 is a year of intense environmental disruptions.

She has also claimed there will be increasing political tensions between global powers.

Now whether these prophecies come true or not remains to be seen or taken with a pinch of salt.

Wisdom Message of the Month



"Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself." - George Bernard Shaw.

New Year's resolutions are very popular. People make all kinds of resolutions such as losing weight, cutting down on vices like cigarettes and alcohol and promising to become better people. The origin of these New Year's resolutions can be traced to the ancient Babylonians who made promises to their gods 4,000 years ago during the Akitu festival.

This only demonstrates that man is aware of the need for betterment of himself and his life. There is a deeply rooted seed planted in man that urges him to become a better version of himself and transform his life into a happier and more successful one.

We hear of stories of people visiting ashrams, joining cults in order to feel a sense of belonging as well as finding themselves. They want to discover who they really are.

Yet in the above quote by Shaw, we see that it is not that important to discover not who we are. All we can discover is we are imperfect beings despite all the positive traits we may possess.

Therefore it makes more sense that rather than finding ourselves, we take trouble to try to transform ourselves into a better version of ourselves.

Men or woman who feel there is no need for change in their lives or personality are static. Human beings who do not really grow. They have reached a stage of complacency where they think they are too perfect to grow. But our lives from birth to death are of a short duration. We are called to not find ourselves and be perfectly and smugly satisfied, rather we are called to

create a better version of ourselves so that our lives can be better. A simple analogy can be cited. If you plant a seed but fail to water it regularly or apply manure, it may grow with time but it will soon wither away for without adequate nourishment, it cannot blossom into best version of itself. It may remain stunted and not flower or not sprout enough leaves.

Similarly despite a man's age, he must never become complacent. He must be willing to evolve, learn life's lessons and grow into a better version or rather the best version of himself. A man is never too old to take up a new hobby or learn something new. This makes life interesting and worth living.

What do we learn?

We learn that there is an importance of making New Year's resolutions and attempting to keep them.

If we make a resolution, we must stand firm in our commitment to this resolution. This enables us to grow stronger, more determined and renders a satisfaction of having self-control and determination to realise our dreams.

So this New Year make a resolution. It may be hard. Suppose it is giving up a vice like gambling, backbiting others, complaining about life or the vice of overeating and not exercising, be bold and be brave. It may be hard but nothing good comes easy. Promise yourself to take small steps and achieve your goal. It is something you do for you, not for others. Do it because it is just for you, to make yourself happier and improve the quality of your life. This makes you feel a capable determined person. In short, a man or woman of substance.

Happy New Year! Till next month....

Answers

Quiz

1. Babylon. 2. Julius Caesar. 3. 1952. 4. When the river Nile floods. 5. They marked it at the start of the spring planting season.

Brain Teasers

1. The colour of your eyes since you are the driver. 2. Cheese, butter. 3. He weighs chickens. 4. A (K)night, a queen and a king. 5. Your age. 6. Z=4, y=480.



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



FR. AGNEL'S BLESSINGS

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

GUJARAT: My prayers have been answered through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel. Whenever I am in Mumbai, I make it a point to visit Fr. Agnel Ashram in Bandstand, Bandra.

-Prakash Nirmal

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

MUMBAI: Our company would like to offer two Thanksgiving Masses for all the blessings received and for the profitable business returns, through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel.

- SK Logistics

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

VASAI: I thank Ven. Fr. Agnel for various favours received. I have strong faith in the intercession of the Venerable, a miracle worker.

- Jennifer Lopez

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSINGS RECEIVED

UTTAN: Our fishing business is doing exceedingly well, thanks to the blessings received through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, on our three boats, Virangao, Navad and Nianwad.

-Janet Garya

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

TUTICORIN, TAMIL NADU: I always seek the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel and many favours have been granted.

- Jackson Judy & Family

THANKSGIVING FOR GOOD HEALTH

DOMBIVALI: I am thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for blessing me with good health.

- Flossy Kittan

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL

VIRAR: I would like to give thanks to Ven. Fr. Agnel for his kind intercession and for all the blessings received.

-Blessina Lopes

THANKSGIVING ON RECEIVING A 2BHK FLAT

VIKHROLI: Through the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel, I have taken possession of a 2BHK flat. My dream home has come true.

-Sunil Qadros

THANKSGIVING FOR SON SETTLING DOWN IN LIFE

USA: I thank Ven. Fr. Agnel for his kind intercession in helping my son Arav settle down in life. I have visited Fr. Agnel Ashram in Bandra, Mumbai, during my recent visit to India.

-Jennifer Parmar

THANKSGIVING FOR GOOD HEALTH

SANTACRUZ, MUMBAI: I have deep faith in the intercession of Ven. Fr. Agnel. I find immense peace and joy, whenever I visit Fr. Agnel Ashram in Bandra, Mumbai and can feel a divine power there.

- Leo & Blossom Ferrao

THANKSGIVING FOR SAFE TRAVEL FROM UK

VASAI: I would like to thank Ven. Fr. Agnel for helping bring Alston safely from the UK.

- Ursala Alex Fargose

THANKSGIVING TO VEN. FR. AGNEL FOR GOOD HEALTH

MUMBAI: As staunch devotees of Ven. Fr. Agnel, we would like to thank him for his intercessions and answering our prayers.

- Maria Pontis

THANKSGIVING FOR BLESSING OUR FAMILY

GUJARAT: We thank Ven. Fr. Agnel for blessing us in the image and likeness of the Holy Family. We experience the power of Almighty God whenever we visit Fr. Agnel Ashram in Bandra, Mumbai.

- Jimmy Pateliya

THANKSGIVING ON WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

VASAI: We are thankful to Ven. Fr. Agnel for blessing us on our Wedding Anniversary on 3rd January 2026.

-Brayen & Anita D'Silva

OUT OF THEIR BOUNTY

Sagaya Anita Nadar	Mumbai	72000	Elroy Mario Fernandez	Telangana	2500	Sharmila Cerejo	Canada	1000
Praveen Srivastava	Mumbai	47000	Patrick Fernandes	Mumbai	2000	A.Santhappan	Tamil Nadu	1000
Joanita Nelson Sequeria	Mumbai	27000	Sharon Amelia Dabreo	Mumbai	2000	Nikitha Antony	Mumbai	1000
L. Mary Magdalene	Tamil Nadu	20000	Christine Pereira	Mumbai	2000	Aruna Fernando	Tamil Nadu	1000
S. Sahaya Dasan Nadar	Mumbai	20000	Beena Cherian	Mumbai	2000	Jithin M. Jose	Tamil Nadu	1000
Yunus Zoeb Jhaveri	Mumbai	18000	Burk D'Couto	Kerala	2000	T. K. Muraleedhara Das	Mumbai	1000
Ashok K. Rathod	Mumbai	15000	Patricia Soares	Mumbai	2000	Agnel U.	Tamil Nadu	1000
John Kanjiraparambil	Kerala	15000	Noel Cusher	Palghar	2000	Jude Pereira	Mumbai	1000
Dhimahi Raval	Mumbai	15000	Agnel Rodrigues	Udupi	2000	Atul Ubale	Navi Mumbai	1000
Ayesha Pereira	Mumbai	15000	Isabel Hendricks	Tamil Nadu	2000	Sandra D'Souza	Mumbai	1000
Joseph Mathew	Kerala	10000	Rija Anna Francis	Kerala	2000	Remigius Tauro	Mumbai	1000
Jose K. V.	Kerala	10000	Shalini Sharma	Rajasthan	2000	Agnes Naidu	Mumbai	1000
Aparna Vinay	Mumbai	10000	Baptist Fernandes	Goregoan	2000	Maria Celia Cardozo	Navi Mumbai	1000
Margaret Cardoz	Mumbai	10000	Sharon Amelia Dabreo	Mumbai	2000	Sandeep J. Salunkhe	Maharashtra	1000
S. S. Darukhanwalla	Mumbai	10000	A.R. Elavia	Mumbai	2000	Shalvodor Elas	Kolhapur	1000
Mariaraj	Bangalore	10000	Bincy George	Kerala	2000	Michael Thandamma	Kerala	800
Pia Thomas Lopes	Palghar	10000	Jacob D'Souza	Mumbai	2000	Canute D'Souza	Tamil Nadu	600
Josephine Machado	Mumbai	10000	Ashok Balumal Dhingreja	Mumbai	2000	Marian Fabian D'Souza	Mumbai	520
Grace Varghese	Mumbai	10000	Agnel Fernandis	Mumbai	2000	Pravinchandra Patel	USA	501
Hazel Perpetual D'Souza	Mumbai	10000	V.T. Joseph Vedicattu	Kerala	2000	Ashwini Ubale Surve	New Panvel	501
Elton D'Costa	Mumbai	6500	Hiren Gala	Mumbai	1600	Benny Franco	Mumbai	500
Warren Fernandes	Mumbai	6000	Baptist Fernandes	Mumbai	1500	Princy Sunil Parmar	Gujarat	500
Subramaniam R.	Mumbai	5250	Jefferson A. Saldanha	Mumbai	1500	Hilda Ramchandani	Mumbai	500
Natwarlal B. Patel	Mumbai	5001	Mahesh & Mina Vora	USA	1500	Prabhu Pooja	Mumbai	500
Yatish S. Randeria	Mumbai	5001	Antony M. O.	Kerala	1500	Ramchandra D. Tendulkar	Mumbai	500
Dr. Niket Shastri	Gujarat	5000	Dr. James Paul	Kerala	1500	Mukesh M. Thakkar	Mumbai	500
Lynette Lillian D'Cruz	Mumbai	5000	M. Stephen Pichairaj	Tamil Nadu	1500	John D'Costa	Mumbai	500
Nisha Mehta	Mumbai	5000	Pooja Talwar	New Delhi	1500	Niranjan M. Amolik	Maharashtra	500
S.V.S. Rama Rao	Mumbai	5000	Melvyn J. D'Mello	Maharashtra	1250	Kochala K.I.	Kerala	500
Hansa Deepak Chugani	Bangalore	5000	Rabia J. Khan	Mumbai	1250	Anthony V. Xavier	Mumbai	500
Abiano Abranches	Maharashtra	5000	Monica D'Souza	Pune	1200	Amrith Raj	Chennai	500
Valerian Saldanha	Mumbai	5000	Gilbert D'Lima	Bandra (W)	1200	Rani Sebastian / Priya S.	Kerala	500
Dr. Niket Shastri	Gujrat	5000	Rita Johnson	Kerala	1200	Vibha Hemant Solanki	Gujarat	500
Jose K. Manjali	Kerala	5000	Dorothy A.P. Singh	Mysore	1200	K.C. John	Kerala	500
Balbina S. Colaco	Palghar	5000	Steve Marcellus	Mumbai	1200	Sunita Tuscano	Palghar	500
Ajit Francis Alos	Palghar	5000	Marian Fabian D'Souza	Mumbai	1040	Agnella Abraham	Mumbai	500
Sophia D'Cunha	Palghar	5000	Gautam Gunwantlal	Navsari	1001	Arun Jadhav	Kolhapur	500
Philomena Pinto	Chikmagalur	5000	Aryam Ishwar Attara	Mumbai	1000	Babita Gonsalves	Palghar	500
Falguni Solanki	Palghar	4000	Cecil Joseph Antao	Mumbai	1000	Lilly Kutty Philip	Kottayam	500
Daniel D'Souza	Karnataka	4000	Shazad M. Khajotia	Mumbai	1000	R. Victor	Tamil Nadu	500
Francis D. Fernando	Mumbai	4000	Roxy Simon Macwan	Gujarat	1000	Benedict Antony D'Cruz	Kerala	500
Fernandes John Robert	Mumbai	3000	Vijay B. Parmar	Gujarat	1000	Elizabeth Julie Chettiar	Palghar	500
Aruna Naveen	Chennai	3000	David Patrao	Mumbai	1000	Sunil Bahadur Singh	Mumbai	500
Marie D'Cruz	Pune	3000	Alex Mascarenhas	Mumbai	1000	Geet Pujara	Mumbai	500
Leena Sanjay Christian	Gujarat	3000	Sharol J. D'Costa	Mumbai	1000	Shashikant Mistry	Palghar	500
Vaibhav J. Salunkhe	Maharashtra	3000	Mathew Pinto	Mumbai	1000	Siju Thengil	Mumbai	500
Charushila J. Salunkhe	Maharashtra	3000	Rajan John	Kerala	1000	Veronica Lewis	Mumbai	500
Jose Paul Kallikadan	Kochi	2700	Mary Antony	Kerala	1000	Geet Pujara	Thane	500
E.V. Sebastian	Kerala	2500	Flemy Thekketh	Kerala	1000	Elangovan Samy	Mumbai	500
Fransquinha Fernandes	Mumbai	2500	Rockhenry A. Chettiar	Mumbai	1000	Cajetan Fernandes	Mumbai	500

BOB'S BANTER

by Robert Clements

As Indians, Live Your Faith This Year..!

Some of the most powerful sermons are never preached from pulpits, they are lived out in everyday moments, in taxis, queues, offices, and homes. This New Year, my sermon came from the front seat of an Uber in Chicago.

I had entered the wrong address, and so was taken to the wrong destination. The kind of mistake that usually invites irritation and a lecture on time and money. Instead, the driver smiled, reassured me not to worry, that he knew Chicago even without a GPS, and happily took me home, though it was a longer route for him.

No complaint. No calculation of loss. Just calm competence and kindness.

We spoke about faith on the drive, and we discussed something and those words have stayed in my mind, 'That our lives are the only Bible some people will ever read.'

And in his patience, he did not preach his religious

Does it teach tolerance? Then hatred and anger are a poor advertisement.

Does it teach mercy? Then cruelty becomes a public embarrassment for faith.

Let every believer be an ambassador this year. And remember that careless ambassadors damage the very cause they claim to represent.

The world is tired of arguments about whose God is right. It is hungry for evidence that belief makes people better. That evidence does not come from quoting scripture or imposing beliefs through the state, but from living values.

The Vedic scriptures speak of dharma and right living. The Koran speaks of mercy and justice. The Bible speaks of love that is patient and kind.

Does it work? It all depends on what people see in you.

My Uber driver here in Chicago, reminded me that faith is tested not in churches or temples but in



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belief to me. He lived it. And that, more than any sermon, made his faith credible.

We live in an age of loud belief. Faith is announced on social media, stickers, slogans, and angry storming of another's religious place of worship. Is that what your God or mine tells me to do? We want people to believe in our faith without the discipline of behaviour.

This year, why not reverse that?

Whatever faith we claim in our country, let us manifest it in how we live.

Not by defending God with violence, but by reflecting Him through love. Because the truth is simple and uncomfortable, that the reputation of a religion today rests largely on its followers. Does your religion teach peace? Then violence carried out in its name doesn't give it a good name.

attitude, not in prayers but in kindness, not in sermons but in gracious actions.

This year, let your life preach.

Be patient. Be kind. Be fair. Be tolerant.

Let people encounter your faith before they ever hear about it.

Live your faith and do not let your God down.

If you can do this, let me wish you a 'Happy New Year..!'

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

Christmas Celebrations at Fr. Agnel Ashram, Bandra, Mumbai



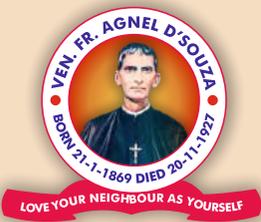
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**May God's presence lead you in the New Year 2026
and fill your life with abundant blessings!**



**Greetings from
Fr. Agnel Ashram Community and Balbhavan Children.**



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