

# JIVAN

News and Views of Jesuits in India

January 2016



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*Year of Mercy*

**Called into the deep**

Hector D'Souza, SJ

**Socii Meet**

in Rome

**Christian Ashrams?**

Ama Samy, SJ

# His Unfailing Presence

*Another year I enter  
Its history unknown;  
Oh, how my feet would tremble  
To tread its paths alone!  
But I have heard a whisper,  
I know I shall be blest;  
"My presence shall go with thee,  
And I will give thee rest."*

*What will the New Year bring me?  
I may not, must not know;  
Will it be love and rapture,  
Or loneliness and woe?  
Hush! Hush! I hear His whisper;  
I surely shall be blest;  
"My presence shall go with thee,  
And I will give thee rest."*

*- Anon*

*Courtesy: <http://christianity.about.com>*

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As the world is getting ready to say goodbye to 2015, my mind is filled with memories I want to hold on to and images that simply won't go away.

The most vibrant memories are naturally the latest. They belong to my trip to the U.S. and Europe in November: meeting friends after many long years, the moments spent in the beautiful chapel at the Loyola University, Chicago, the drive from Chicago to Milwaukee in the company of a wise, wonderful friend of many years, the eagerness to see the Jesuit residence where I stayed while studying at Marquette, and the disappointment of seeing the old building with fond memories abandoned and ready to be pulled down, the warmth, kindness and hospitality at Arrupe House and the Provincial's office in Milwaukee, seeing a copy of *Jivan* there at the office and hearing the warm, generous words of friends there about it, visit to the local Cristo Rey School, one of many founded by a Chicago Jesuit whose bright, bold idea ties education for poor children to companies that want to help...

Visiting a nephew in Munich who works hard to cater to the pastoral needs of the German people in a small parish, seeing the beautiful campus of the Jesuitenkolleg in Innsbruck, Austria, guarded by the majestic Alps, in the company of a dynamic Jesuit friend, praying before the humble crypt that houses the remains of the great Karl Rahner, meeting and getting to know fellow-Socii of the Assistency at the Curia in Rome (*See p. 13*), listening to some of our best men - our capable, hard-working brothers who run the worldwide Society, the joyous surprise of meeting our simple, unassuming, humorous and caring General, Fr Adolfo Nicolás, the thrill of seeing at our Archives the manuscripts that retain the actual writings of Sts Ignatius and Xavier, visits to La Storta and the Jesu and the Mass at the room where Ignatius lived and died...

Being wonder-struck once again by the marvel that St Peter's Basilica is, the ageless melancholic beauty of Pieta, praying at the tomb of St John XXIII...

What are your memories of 2015? What would you like to cherish? What would you like to discard?

Our brothers and sisters in other

parts of the world will find it extremely hard to forget media images of about a million refugees from the war-torn Syria and Africa desperate to reach Europe that is still struggling to emerge from a deep economic recession.

In 2015 the world discovered the dangers posed by the terrorist outfit ISIS to not merely Christians in its home territory (*See p. 21,22*) but innocent people everywhere. Three teams of ISIS terrorists struck at four places in Paris, killing 130 people. Its suicide bombers struck twice in Turkey, killed 33 people in Suruc, and 102 people at a peace rally in Ankara. On 31 Oct a bomb brought down a Russian passenger airliner over the Sinai, killing all 224 people on board. On 02 Dec a husband and wife who had pledged allegiance to ISIS killed 14 people in a mass shooting in San Bernardino, California.

The attacks have given a new life to nationalist and anti-immigrant parties in Europe and have made men like Donald Trump mouth things that once would have made the world wince. They have also raised ominous questions about what 2016 might bring.

In the last two months of 2015, this city of Chennai, capital of the southern State of Tamil Nadu, and neighbouring districts were ravaged by heavy rains and floods. Unprecedented downpours combined with the arrogant indifference of corrupt politicians and lack of sensible urban planning, killing hundreds and making thousands homeless. The images of desperate, helpless people in a city that seemed to sink all of a sudden have been widely shared in social media and now are finding their way to Christmas decorations and nativity scenes.

But as a recent WhatsApp message from a Salesian friend said, 'Boarding for Flight 2016 has been announced. Make sure your luggage contains only the best souvenirs from 2015. The bad and sad moments should be left behind. The duration of the flight will be 12 months. The Captain wants to assure you that we will be serving you delicious meals and drinks. Hope you will enjoy them. Tighten your seat belts. Wish you a pleasant trip!'

- M.A.J.A.



# Why this Year of Mercy?

*In this interview given to the Catholic weekly, Credere, Pope Francis speaks about the Jubilee Year of Mercy that began on 08 Dec '15 and would conclude on 26 Nov '16:*

**Holy Father, now that we are about to begin the Jubilee, can you explain what movement of the heart drove you to highlight precisely the subject of mercy? What urgency do you perceive in this regard, in the present situation of the world and of the Church?**

The theme of mercy has been strongly emphasized in the life of the Church, since Pope Paul VI. John Paul II stressed it strongly with *Dives in Misericordia*, the canonization of St Faustina and the institution of the Feast of Divine Mercy on the Octave of Easter. In line with this, I felt that it is somewhat a desire of the Lord to show His mercy to humanity. Therefore, it is not something totally new that came to my mind, but rather a relatively recent renewal of a tradition that has always existed.

My first *Angelus* as Pope was on God's mercy and, on that occasion, I also spoke of a book on mercy which was given to me by Cardinal Walter Kasper during the conclave; also, in my first homily as Pope, on Sunday, 17 March, I spoke of mercy in the parish of St Anne. It wasn't a strategy; it came to me from within: the Holy Spirit wills something. It's obvious that today's world is in need of mercy, it is in need of compassion. We are used to bad news, to cruel news and to the greatest atrocities that offend the name and life of God. The world is in

need of discovering that God is Father, that there is mercy, that cruelty isn't the way, that condemnation isn't the way, because the Church herself sometimes follows a hard line, she falls into the temptation of following a hard line, into the temptation of stressing only the moral rules, and many people are excluded.

There came to my mind that image of the Church as a field hospital after a battle; it's true, how many people are wounded and destroyed! The wounded are taken care of, helped and healed, not subjected to analyses for cholesterol. I believe this is the moment of mercy. We are all sinners, we all bear interior burdens. I felt that Jesus wishes to open the door of His heart, that the Father wishes to show his deepest mercy, and therefore sends us the Spirit: to move us and to deter us. It is the year of forgiveness, the year of reconciliation. On one hand we see the arms trade, the massive production and sale of arms that kill, the murder of innocents in the most cruel possible way, the exploitation of persons, minors, children: a *sacrilege* – permit me the term – is being carried out against humanity, because man is sacred, he is the image of the living God. See, the Father says: "stop and come to me." This is how I see it.

**You have said that, as all believers, you feel yourself a sinner, needy of God's mercy. In your journey as priest and bishop, what importance has divine mercy had? Do you remember, in particular, a moment in which you felt in a transparent way, the merciful look of the Lord on your life?**

I am a sinner, I feel myself a sinner, I'm sure of being so. I am a sinner upon whom the Lord has looked with mercy. I am, as I said to prisoners in Bolivia, a forgiven man. I am a forgiven man. God has looked upon me with mercy and He has forgiven me. Even now I commit errors and sins, and I go to Confession every fifteen to twenty days. And if I go to Confession, it's because I am in need of feeling that God's mercy is again upon me.

I remember – I have already said this many times – when the Lord looked upon me with mercy. I've always had the sensation that He took care of me in a special way, but the most significant moment came on 21 September 1953, when I was 17. It was the day of the celebration of Spring and of the Student in Argentina, and I would have spent it with the other students. I was a practicing Catholic, I went to Mass on Sundays, but no more ... I was in Catholic Action but I didn't do anything; I was only a practicing Catholic. Along the way to the train station of Flores, I passed close to the parish church I frequented and I felt compelled to enter. I went in and I saw a priest coming down one side, whom I didn't know. I don't know what happened to me at that moment, but I realized my need to go to Confession, in the first Confessional on the left – many people went to pray there. And I don't know what happened, but I came out different, changed. I returned home with the certainty of having to consecrate myself to the Lord and this priest accompanied me for almost a year. He was a

priest from Corrientes, Fr Carlos Benito Duarte Ibarra, who lived in the Clergy's House in Flores. He had leukemia and was being taken care of in the hospital. He died the following year. After the funeral I wept bitterly, I felt totally lost, as if God had abandoned me.

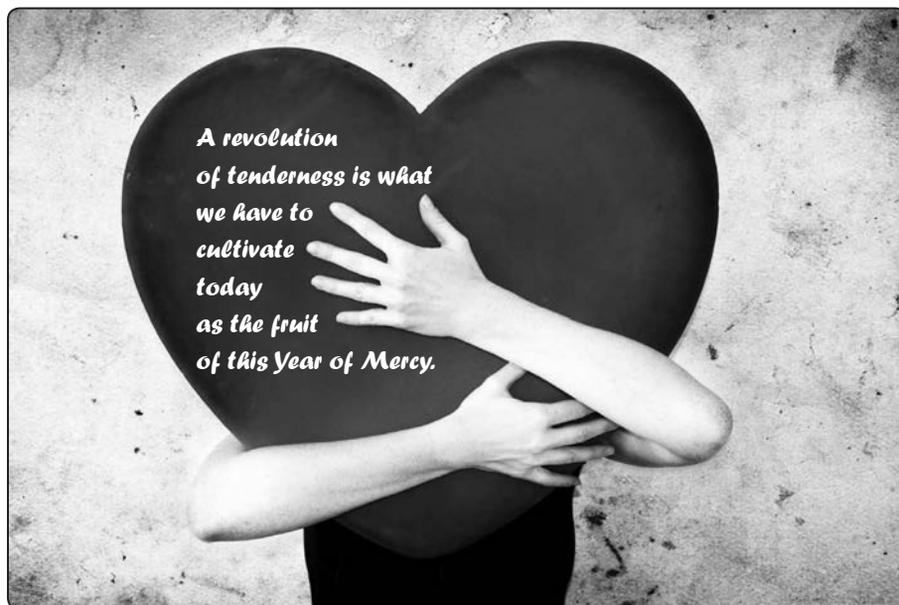
This was the moment I met with God's mercy and it is very connected to my episcopal motto: 21 September

**God, which are moved to the point of forgiving sin. Can the Jubilee of Mercy be an occasion to rediscover God's "maternity"? Is there also a more "feminine" aspect of the Church we need to appreciate?**

Yes, He himself affirms it when He says in Isaiah that perhaps a mother can forget her child, even a mother can forget her child ... "I, instead, will never forget

and love – then very elderly, said that it wasn't appropriate to use this term. They were reasonable explanations from an intelligent man, but I continue to say that today the revolution is that of tenderness, because justice stems from here as does all the rest.

Let me give an example for a situation where there is no tenderness. If a businessman who hires an employee from September to July, tells him to go on a vacation in July, and then join for work again, but with a new contract from September to July, the worker has no right to identity, or to a pension, or to social security. He has no right to anything. The businessman doesn't show tenderness, but treats the employee as an object. If he puts himself in the shoes of the employee, instead of thinking how to save a bit more money, then things change. The revolution of tenderness is what we have to cultivate today as the fruit of this Year of Mercy: God's tenderness towards each one of us. Each one of us must say: "I am an unfortunate man, but God loves me thus, so I must also love others in the same way."



is the feast day of St Matthew and, speaking of Matthew's conversion, Bede the Venerable says that Jesus looked at Matthew *miserando atque eligendo*. It's an expression that can't be translated, because in Italian one of the two verbs has no gerund, not even in Spanish. The literal translation would be "having mercy and choosing," almost as craftwork. The literal translation would be "had mercy on him".

When years later, while reciting the Latin Breviary, I discovered this reading, I realized that the Lord had crafted me with His mercy. Every time I came to Rome, because I lodged in via della Scrofa, I went to the Church of St Louis of the French to pray before Caravaggio's painting, titled '*the Calling (Vocation) of St Matthew*.'

**According to the Bible, the place where God's mercy dwells is the womb, the maternal insides of**

you." Here God's maternal dimension is seen. Not everyone understands when you talk of "God's maternity." It's not a popular term. It seems somewhat contrived. Therefore, I prefer to use the word *tenderness*, proper to a mother, the tenderness of God, tenderness born from the paternal insides. God is Father and Mother.

**In the Bible mercy makes us know a more "emotive" God than that which we sometimes imagine. Can the discovery of a God who is moved and has compassion for man also change our attitude towards our fellow humans?**

Discovering it will lead us to have a more tolerant, more patient, more tender attitude. In 1994, during the Synod, in a meeting of groups, it was said that a revolution of tenderness should be established, and a Synodal Father - a good man, whom I respect

**John XXIII's "address to the moon" is famous when, one evening, he greeted the faithful saying: "Hug your children." That image became an icon of the Church of tenderness. In what way will the subject of mercy be able to help our Christian communities be converted and renewed?**

When I see the sick, the elderly, a hug, a caress comes spontaneously to me. A hug is a gesture that can be interpreted ambiguously, but the first gesture that a mother or father does with the newborn child, is this gesture that says, "I wish you well," "I love you," "I want you to get ahead."

**Can you reveal to us a gesture you intend to make during the Jubilee to witness to God's mercy?**

So many gestures will be made, but every month on a Friday I will make a different gesture. - Zenit

BY HECTOR D'SOUZA, SJ

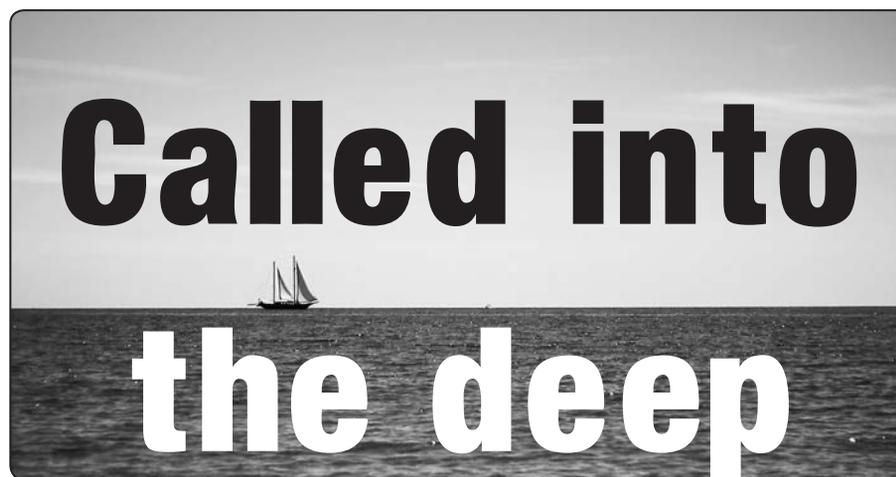
### After Vatican II:

Vatican Council II brought in an *aggiornamento*, unleashing the Spirit of newness and change. It called the Religious Orders and Congregations to relive the spirit of their founders and go back to the 'roots' and the spirit of their Congregations. The Society of Jesus called General Congregation 31 both to elect a new General and to churn the newness in the light of Vatican II. It was a great General Congregation that worked in two sessions in two years and which gave us 56 Decrees, touching on every aspect of the life and mission of the Society. It was a new spring.

The spirit that was unleashed by Vatican II set the whole Society on fire. There were great challenges, turbulences, new theologies and 'another way of living.' Experimentation and new ministries were taken up, new challenges of the wars and the 'hippie movements'; the youth awakening and rebellion added to these challenges. New nations emerged and new boundaries of space and life, of language and culture were drawn.

At the same time the exodus of Jesuits from religious life needed an answer and Fr General, Pedro Arrupe, called for GC 32 in 1974 which was a watershed Congregation that crystalized for us our mission: "The service of Faith and the promotion of Justice" and the sense of the poor and the marginalized. The Pope followed it with keen interest and at times called Fr Arrupe to meet him as the Fathers were deliberating on the issues. Decree 2 defined us and Decree 4 set the Society on a forward mode. Nothing remained the same.

The events that took place after GC 32 were memorable, painful and grace-filled. The new direction disturbed lots of us: some thought we have embarked



upon the communist manifesto, others complained that we are going away from the Spirit of Ignatius and the Church, a few protested that we are not doing enough, others said, 'This is not my cup of tea' and left the Society. There was rebellion within the Society, there was misunderstanding between the Church and the Society, and the relationship between the Pope and the General was at its low ebb. Fr Arrupe wanted to call another General Congregation but the Pope decided not to and gave us Fr Paola Dezza as his Delegate. The rest is history!

The life and struggles, the magnanimity and the surrender of ailing Fr Pedro Arrupe could together be called GC 32 b. It had only one unwritten Decree. "Surrender to the will of God". The Pope's Delegate called for GC 33 to elect a new General, and "to treat of those matters which are to be reviewed in accord with the will of the Holy See" (*Cf. Cardinal Villot's letter of 02 May 1975*). This Congregation elected Fr Peter Hans Kolvenbach the General and gave us only one Decree, "Companions of Jesus Sent into Today's World" and other five on the governance of the Society. It had a task to accomplish - bringing back to the Society to its normal functioning. It did achieve this.

GC 34 was to stabilize the Society. Usual themes that pertain to the life and mission of the Society were taken up and above all it redefined in a

delectable Decree 26, "Characteristics of our way of proceeding". Somehow somewhere these decrees of the Congregation got buried and GC 34, Decree 26 was forgotten. It is a sad plight that we remember with so much love and nostalgia GC 32 but forgot the essentials of GC 34. Because of the unprecedented and painful papal intervention did we become afraid to be innovative and creative and took the safer middle path? History will tell us the truth as we mull the events that gone by.

Fr Kolvenbach's desire to resign and pave the way for a new leader necessitated GC 35. This General Congregation dealt again with those issues that needed attention - Obedience and the 4<sup>th</sup> Vow, Lay Collaboration and 'Personal Spiritual Bond' and Governance. It set a spark with Decree 2, "A Fire that Kindles Other Fires" and took notice of the challenges of our mission.

### What's now?

Fr Adolfo Nicholas, the present General, has faithfully implemented whatever GC 35 directed him to do and now, he has expressed his desire to resign when he reaches 80 and have a successor installed. So GC 36 will elect a new General. But what else?

There is sense all over the world, in the Church, in the Society, that we have enough documents, enough decrees, enough laws, and enough directions. The Vatican Council II Decrees are

yet to be put into practice and some feel that we have yet to set free the spirit of the Council that Pope John XXIII wished to create. The Decrees of last five General Congregations are in a similar state of affairs. The laws have been made, promulgated, and practiced somewhat, but the 'spirit' behind these have not become our own. The litmus test is to ask, "Have we changed for the better?" "Have we imbued a little more of the Ignatian charism in our life?" "Has the Society become more relevant for our times? Do we walk with today's poor?"

Are we tired of decrees because we have not put the ones we already have into practice? Will there be anything new that will help us to practice the Ignatian paradigms? I am not a pessimist yet the words from the poem, *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*" by Thomas Gray come to my mind:

*Full many a gem of purest ray serene,*

*The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:*

*Full many a flow'r is born to blush unseen,*

*And waste its sweetness on the desert air."*

And I would add:

*Full many a blessing with grace bestowed,*

*Lost in the pages unread and buried:*

*Full many a decree of prayer discerned,*

*Dumped as relics on shelf unadorned.*

I am not being sarcastic. With so many beautiful things prayed on, discerned in togetherness, and planned with a 'desire of a desire', much was somehow lost in the 'desert air' and some has become fossilized in our libraries and, much more seriously, in our hearts. We know them, some we quote so often like GC 32 Decree 4, but do we practice? Lethargy has set in and enthusiasm is gone. Do we look for

some "spark" elsewhere while we have lost the 'flint edge' of the daily living of the Ignatian charism in Jesuit life?

### The 'Smell and the 'Scent'

So what do we expect to happen in GC 36? I think both Pope Francis and Fr Adolfo Nicholas have given a direction to us. In March 2013, Pope Francis called us to 'have the smell of the sheep' and with that he summarized the life a priest, a religious and a Jesuit. We are a priestly order, yet one whose mission our brothers and scholastics share intimately. That is, perhaps, one clue.

A second clue: in Indian languages, there are two concepts, *purohit* and *sanyasi*. As we were discussing the document of 'Consecrated Life' someone brought this distinction to our notice. The *purohit* is the one who administers the rituals, tends to the sacramental life and could be associated loosely with a diocesan priest; the *sanyasi* is one who has given up the things of the world and could be termed as a 'religious'. However a Jesuit is 'contemplative in action' and hence has both the aspects of being with and for the people yet also set apart from the people. He is in a sense both *purohit* and *sanyasi*. We have to distinguish our roles. Have we tilted so much to be *purohitis* that we have lost the *sanyasa*?

The call of the Pope is so well corroborated by Fr General when he shared his thoughts with the West African Province at Cameroon last year. He talked about three scents, "scent of the *sheep*, the scent of the *library*, and the scent of the *future*." He also called for *depth* (both in studies and spirituality), *creativity* (learning new techniques that help us in accompanying men and women in their search for truth), and *life in the Spirit* (without which we have no depth). (*Digital News Service, SJ*). He does not mince words, and we know this encouragement comes straight from the heart of a wise and caring

man who is concerned for all of us.

We need to ask often, 'Do we have the smell (scent) of the sheep?' 'With all the Decrees of the last five Congregations, have I come closer to people or have I built more walls around me?' 'Does my apostolate takes me away from the people or brings me closer to people?' 'Is my life style similar to that of the people from whom I have come and live for, or is it of the 10% financial well-to-do in my country?'

If what we expect from the General Congregation does not happen in us, then all the meetings, all the Congregations and well written decrees will remain hollow and meaningless.

Similarly, the library is the symbol of intellectual life. In his recent letter, 2015/14, September 2015, Fr General reminded the Major Superiors of an earlier letter on the intellectual formation of our brothers and scholastics. He has asked them to 'review and evaluate the current programmes for the intellectual formation of Jesuits in initial formation for whom you are responsible.' It is unfortunate that to promote many, the standard of judging one's capabilities has been brought down to 'the lowest common factor'. It happens too in the philosophates and theologates. Because we cater to so many from different backgrounds in the philosophates and theologates, we tend to come down to the bare minimum rather than raise the standard. Are we afraid to fail those who do not come up to a certain intellectual standard? The professional institutions do not bring down their standards, but we in our formation 'promote from one stage to another' with very few demands. We keep saying, "Hiring and firing is not our policy", "They have taken their vows, how can we send them away now?" "We need parish priests." What an excuse for a shabby work! Rather than pulling them up and training

them to rise up, we formators go down to their level to promote them to the next stage.

To keep on upgrading our skills for the future is a task of every Jesuit. Just to cite an example, the Society calls each one of us to be men for the universal society. Though in the South Asian Assistency we often learn the local languages, how many of us are prepared to learn international languages? The opportunity given to the scholastics in the formation houses to learn one more international language is taken so lightly and some do not even bother. If we demand for ordination the study of another international language as a must, our young men will learn. But do we demand? What future skills are we talking about, if basics are not taken care of?

Will GC 36 take up these issues and bring it as part of 'our way of proceeding?' At times we are afraid to leave the shore and get into deep waters. It is comfortable to stay at the shore. Deep waters are challenging: they have energy and power to challenge us but we do not want to be troubled. Having the smell of the sheep in our identification with the poor, scent of the library in our academic rigour, and the whiff of the future in rigorous preparation: all these call for our immersion in the lives of the people. Are we ready to leave our 'secure' places?

What is the smell that we emanate today? A Jesuit walking into room full of students, youth or intellectuals; or among the religious or ordinary folks, say among the farmers or house wives should be able to project, by his very being, that he is a 'man of God', and by his words that he is a 'man of depth' and by his sharing that he is 'with poor of God'. It will not be like the scent that we see in the advertisements for which women fall and drool, but rather about whom people who will say, 'Here are persons whom we can

trust, follow, listen to and depend on, ones who walk with us, share our life and are one with us. Because they are *ours*."

#### **Walking with the poor**

We are among the top 10% of the population of our land, amongst those who can afford a safe concrete house, own a vehicle for the community, and have food in the store and the fridge, a bank account with some security for a rainy day, and a surety/insurance when we fall sick. Our communities have all of these.

But the mind of Ignatius was entirely different. He asked his first companions to stay in the hospices or in poor dwellings and work for their food. Even in the formula of vows he has made us to promise that we will teach catechism (faith) to the children. When did we last communicate our faith by teaching and sharing about Christ? This may sound hard for us: "evangelical poverty in the Society is apostolic, and the unequivocal condition of our credibility. It should be adapted to our times by becoming genuine, hardworking, and generous. ..." (General Principles, *Statues of Religious Poverty in the Society of Jesus*, page 1). This sounds difficult to practice.

Following Ignatius, we have vowed to God that if we are to change anything with regard to poverty we must make it stricter. It is also said that if our religious poverty be genuinely and radically renewed then it has to be 'simple in its personal and community expression..., happy to share everything with each other..., apostolic in its active indifference..., inspiring our selection of ministries..., and spiritually and apostolically proclaiming Jesus Christ...' (*Ibid*, pg. 7 & 8). Touch this nerve 'of living poverty' at this GC 36, and we will have touched the whole of our life. We will see the difference.

#### **Call of the Eternal King**

When Fr General convoked

the General Congregation he had asked all the Province and Regional Congregations to respond to the following questions: "Meditating on the call of the Eternal King, what do we discern to be the three most important calls that the Lord makes to the whole Society today?" It is so wonderful to see that the whole Society has responded in one voice and Fr General puts it, "If there is a single word that perhaps summarises... from these responses and which it seeks to express in this document, it is *"integration"*." He continues, "On the one hand, there is a call for the integration of our response to the great apostolic challenges in our world today: the care for our common home, solidarity with the migrants and other vulnerable peoples, and the construction of a new culture of dialogue and reconciliation. On the other hand, there is also a call to deepen the integration of our spiritual experience, our community life as friends in the Lord, and our apostolic service." (Letter 2015/15). In meditation, "The Call of our Eternal King" the methodology says it all. "Our response to such calls requires conversion. Let us abandon self love and self-interest, let us leave routine and safe refuge and strike into the deep; let us encounter God, the world, others, ourselves in depth - in affective depth... in intellectual depth... in effective depth... and in collaborative depth..."

So we sing with hope, "Deep calls to deep and my soul finds no resting place but Him" and again "Deep within my heart I feel, voices whispering to me... So I will leave my boats behind, leave them on familiar shores, set my heart upon the deep..." The Spirit whispers in our hearts for a conversion and with that hope we await 'finding our way forward' in GC 36. ■

*A former Provincial of South Asia, Fr Hector D'Souza SJ (KHM) is now the Superior of Mater Dei Parish, Dawagre, Meghalaya. He can be contacted at: hectorsouza@gmail.com*

## 60 splendid years of JDV in Pune

2015 marked the Diamond Jubilee of the transfer of the Papal Athenaeum from Kandy, Sri Lanka to Pune. It was founded in 1893. The name was formally changed to Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth (JDV) in 1972.

The jubilee was celebrated with an international conference on 24 - 28 Nov on the theme 'Befriending the Other.' There were renowned speakers from India as well as from Africa, Korea and Sri Lanka. Archbishop Salvatore Pennacchio, the Apostolic Nuncio to India and Nepal inaugurated the diamond jubilee celebrations on 24 Nov '15. The Nuncio emphasised the need for befriending the other through dialogue, inculturation and living a life of caring and sharing. The inaugural function was graced also by Oswald Cardinal Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay and several other bishops.



The following day, 25 Nov, the Nuncio presided over the inaugural Mass and conveyed the prayers and blessings of Pope Francis. He presented JDV with a chalice from the Holy Father. We had Eucharistic celebrations in 3 different rites (Latin, Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara) which marked the beginning of each day.

At the PG block of JDV every day there was a plenary session followed by parallel sessions in four different halls from which the participants could choose. At each parallel session a JDV student made a response to the speaker. There were a total of 8 plenary sessions and 37 parallel sessions. The first plenary session was given by Oswald Cardinal Gracias followed by Fr. George Pattery, the Vice-Chancellor of JDV. Dignitaries such as bishops, scholars and social workers, presented papers. The topics ranged from the neurons to the cosmos, psychology to spirituality and technology to nature, indeed making the task of choosing a difficult one.

The jubilee celebrations culminated with a fabulous cultural fiesta on 28 Nov put up by the JDV students. The Chief guest was Bishop Valerian D'Souza. Over 1500 people attended the program. The celebrations ended with a grand buffet cooked by the cooks of Papal Seminary, PG and DNC. The entire programme was well-organized by Fr Kuruvilla SJ and Fr. Paul Raj in co-ordination with the JDV Administration headed by Fr. Vincent Crasta, the Students Council and the JDV Women's Forum. It ended on a very positive note with staff and students befriending one another to make this programme an accomplishment.

- Ivan D'Souza, SJ

## JIGSA Meet on 'Restructuring'

Thirteen coordinators of the Ignatian Spirituality Commission of Jesuit Provinces of South Asia gathered for the annual meeting on 09 Oct '15 at Navjivan Renewal Centre, Delhi. After a prayer Fr Devadhas Muthiah (MDU), Fr George Mlakuzhyil, Director, Navjivan Renewal Centre welcomed us.

"Restructuring Process in South Asia" was the theme for the JIGSA meet 2015. Fr. R.C. Chacko SJ, the resource person, through his powerful and inspiring power point presentation challenged us and invited each coordinator to start the spiritual process of restructuring in their respective provinces. Vision and goal of restructuring, recapturing the founding spirit of the Society of Jesus of being placed with Jesus, need of doing the "restructuring within" as individuals, universal body for universal mission, courage to let go of our comfort zones, formation program in view of restructuring, new models of governance, availability for mission and inner freedom were his main points. After reflection, the participants had a free and frank sharing. Fr Edwin Rodrigues, Vidyajyoti, in the afternoon session, invited us to look at the world through the eyes of Holy Trinity. The questions posed to Adam and Cain respectively by God "Where are you?" and "Where is your brother?" invite us to take responsibility for our fellow human beings today. The year of the family and the Family Synod ask us to instill new life in families. We need to keep our gaze fixed on



Christ and look at the families with tenderness and compassion. Referring to the year of consecrated life, he said it is meant to celebrate celibacy, identity, community and mission. Consecrated men and women are called to be enthusiastic prophets today who would speak for the poor. The inspiring presentation ended with the song "Don't let the flame go out". On the second day, after the sharing from some JIGSA coordinators about their mission of disseminating Ignatian spirituality in their respective provinces, Fr George Pattery, POSA addressed us. He invited the coordinators to help the provinces to think beyond the province boundaries through rethinking, revisioning and restructuring formation and apostolic programs. Spirituality commission can start the spiritual process in restructuring of Provinces and the Assistancy. He said JIGSA should prepare Ignatian spirituality data bank in South Asia, modules for inter-religious retreats, retreats on collaboration.

In the afternoon we went out to visit the Akshardham temple. The sharing by the coordinators continued on the third day. Fr Jossie D'Mello SJ, assistancy coordinator, presented the outline of the MTh / Diploma in Ignatian Spirituality to be offered at JDV from June 2016. The coordinators were asked to request their respective provincials to send men to this course. After the evaluation, the meeting concluded with a hymn.

- R. Antony Raj, SJ

BY GEORGE NIKHIL, SJ

In the novel, *God's pauper*, by Nikos Kazantzakis, St Francis, coming to Rome for the first time, tells his companion Leo, "Leo, there is deeper meaning for everything you see here. Have you seen some ladies traveling on black horses and some on white? Likewise good and evil walk hand in hand here."

Leo is shocked, "What! Evil in the house of St. Peter?"

"Leo, you are a simpleton. Very naïve and green. But I love you so much. If not here where should one search for devils? Here he faces threats to existence, so he has his whole legion encamped here."

And amidst all these a pious pilgrim on his way back to Rome is struck by a vision from God; after being placed with his Son, he is told 'I shall be propitious to you in Rome'. St Ignatius is aghast. Today Rome has outgrown its boundaries. The whole world could be called Rome. This city too has the good and the evil walking cross handed. Founder's vision is also the vision of his followers. Then we should be thinking of our La Storta visions too or making the vision our own. The La Storta vision should be incorporated into the life of every Jesuit.

Being placed with Christ carrying the cross is an experience. A very rare one. With this placement the cross of Christ becomes our emblem and his mission becomes our mission. If we are blessed with this experience in our own lives, I guess, we would feel like the apostles after witnessing the resurrection, full of life, courage, and fire that we become totally restless. This restlessness resulted in the Society of Jesus in the case of St. Ignatius. No wonder, Ignatius remained calm even when all the church authorities were up in arms against the Order Ignatius founded. Because he felt the hand of God with him in the worst of blockades and tribulations. If a Jesuit wishes to be a follower of Ignatius he has to remain calm when the world shouts and yells at him, he has to run, sail, and keep himself awake when the world is fast asleep, he has to sing aloud so that the listeners sing along, he has to preach louder and louder but silently through his actions. All these become personal graces only when we feel that vision as your own. Therefore, like Ignatius, we need to pray, 'Mother, place me with your son'.

In her blog on WordPress titled, 'Why I do not go to church' D.L Mayfield says that the Church is not free from the 'us and them' feelings. She is, of course, speaking of the denomination she belongs to. But even in the Catholic



## To be placed with her Son

Church the dissensions and factions are conspicuous. When Christ grieved and prayed that night for keeping his flock together he must have foreseen this most dangerous enemy that was going to tear apart his Church.

Can we claim that within the Church we are free from gender discriminations? Why do our women still have to hide their faces under the veils of insecurity? Have they no sermons to preach? Don't they have visions and dreams to share? How many women religious are happy about the way they are treated?

You must have read the interview with Sr Elizabeth Johnson in *Jivan* where she narrates how the esteemed patriarchy of the church, including top officials, made unkind interrogations before acknowledging her talent. When International Monetary Fund chief Christine Lagarde visited India lately, she remarked how different the world economies would have been if more women were included into every level, every aspect of the workforce and management. According to Pope Paul VI a Jesuit is expected to mend brokenness using his creative fidelity. Let us desire to be placed with her son, and ask for the inner freedom to fully collaborate with women and the laity, for the humility to listen to the wonderful works of Christ in his women disciples of today, and to imitate the Christ poor found everywhere.

We have people who have lost meaning in their lives because they never found that true meaning; we have people who have lost their God-consciousness because they were never taught to seek God; we have those who have apparently lost their battles because they are battered by fears, anxieties, ailments, poverty, depression, etc. It is in this world God is going to be favourable to us. For that, as GC 35 says, we need to get into the heart of the world with the heart of Christ. This is why we need the grace to be placed with her son so that we are agents of reconciliation, hope, and sanctity.

But graces are never acquired gratis. So it is time that we yearn for that grace, and ask to be placed with her son, so that La Storta experience become ours too. Being placed with him will give us his heart - a heart full of mercy and compassion. ■

Sch George Nikhil, SJ (KER), is a third year student at St. Joseph's College, Bangalore.

## Formators discuss Human Resource Management

Twenty PCFs, three Rectors and a Superior of Common houses, Fr. George Pattery, POSA, and Fr. Raj Irudaya, ADF, met for the annual meeting of the Assistancy Commission for Formation, held at XLRI, Jamshedpur on 30 Sep - 04 Oct '15. Fr George Joseph and Prof. Jomon led the group to understand the 'Effective Use of Human Resource Management Tools for Jesuit Formation in the Context of the Challenges to Jesuit Life today'. Prof. Jomon interacted with the group to highlight the challenges faced in formation by formators and how to respond to the expectations of the young Jesuits information in this fast changing world. The interaction and discussion on the tools touched upon the aspects from the screening of the candidates, accompaniment, tapping the skills and follow-up process.

Fr. Raj Irudaya, the ADF, presented the action taken report highlighting the one year Pre-novitiate structure, Methodology of teaching English language, Common syllabus for the Pre-novitiate, Novitiate, Juniorate, organizing programme to train young Jesuits for the integral formation, Forum for Meeting of Superiors of college study houses of various provinces to address the needs of the Scholastics in this stage. He briefed us about the development of the Re-orienting of the Formation in the context of the Restructuring of the Assistancy.



Fr George Pattery, POSA, highlighted the three calls of Spiritual renewal, Community life and our Identity and mission. He urged the formators to tap the potentials of the formees and accompany them in Ignatian Spirituality and Intellectual mission, and to train them in transformative leadership in the present time. PCFs shared how each province is moving ahead with the review of the formation structure.

We took up some of the points emphasized by Fr ADF and Fr POSA for discussion in small groups. The meeting was fruitful and enriching for all the PCFs and delegates for formation in deepening our fellowship and commitment in our mission. We expressed our gratitude to the Jamshedpur province, in particular to XLRI's Director and Jesuit community for doing everything in order to provide us with a conducive ambience for our meeting. Fr K.M. Joseph, PCF of Jamshedpur Province, did a wonderful job of planning everything and organizing visits to the communities of Loyola school, XITE, and XLRI. The participants felt enriched, inspired and strengthened in their ministry of formation.

- Alpesh Macwan, SJ

## Pastors meet in Ranchi

The JEPASA (Jesuits Engaged in Pastoral Activities in South Assistancy) Coordinators' Meet was held on 23 - 26 Oct '15 at Manresa House, Ranchi. Fr Joseph MarianusKujur S.J. Provincial of Ranchi, celebrating the Inaugural Mass, in the presence of the 16 Coordinators, emphasized effective pastoral thrust to communicate Christ to others. At the opening session he welcomed the participants with a shawl each and spoke of the history of the Chotonagpur Mission and described how the missionaries, through different phases, spread the Word of God, walking along with the tribal people with their different tribal cultures. If pastors should have the 'smell of the sheep' we need to ensure these are not lost.

Fr Francis Minj, a theologian, spoke on " Re-reading the Mission Methods in Chotonagpur for Effective Pastoral Ministry". He highlighted how the pastoral work of the mission in the Central Zone was nurtured by missionaries like Lievens, Stockman and Hoffman.



After the coffee-break and photographs, Fr. Vincent Toppo a veteran pastor in Ranchi for many years, spoke positively on the 'Pastoral Care for Families.' He asserted, 'When a crisis of faith becomes visible, this will affect the ethos of the families and lead to breakdown of families. He spoke also about the strong need to interact especially with the "new generation". As pastors are community builders, good pasturing can lead families to God and holiness. He insisted that Love is the 'core hub' of all spirituality.

Bishop Telesphore Bilung, SVD, the auxiliary Bishop of Ranchi, explained why Jesuits can never ignore pastoral ministry. He reminded us that the Jesuits who initiated the mission in the Chotonagpur area were basically missionaries and their motivation, commitment and effective missionary work led to the Golden Era of Chotonagpur and Gungpur. Though at present Jesuits are constructively engaged in different ministries, which are useful and necessary, the Bishop felt that contact with the faithful as their pastors was very important.

We visited different pastoral centres and parishes on 23 and 25 Oct. '15. Each place had something unique to offer and it was a learning- experience for the 16 pastors. 24 Oct was set aside for the business session when we shared the ' lights and shadows' of pastoral ministry in our provinces and chalked out action plans. Fr Lalit Tigga, Ranchi's coordinator and his team, had meticulously planned and worked for the meeting. Fr Gerard Rodricks, Assiatancy JEPASA Coordinator, quietly prepared for months to ensure the success of the meet. We did carry back the spirit of the missionaries and creative plans for effective pastoral ministry from the land of 'Lievens' Kingdom'.

- Dipak Gomes, SJ

## Socii from South Asia meet in Eternal City

Inviting them to Rome was a great idea. The Socii of the South Asian Assistancy have come together thrice so far to share, discuss and learn - but they met somewhere here in India. Two or three officials from the Roman Curia came here to interact with them. For the first time in history they were invited to the Curia for a meeting (19-24 Nov '15) that turned out to be an enlightening, enriching and heart-warming experience.

On 19 Nov the meeting began with words of welcome by Fr Agnelo Mascarenhas (GOA), Under Secretary General, who welcomed the 14 Socii - 12 from India, one each from Nepal and Sri Lanka. Six from India could not make it. Fr Lisbert D'Souza (BOM), Regional Assistant, explained the objectives of the meeting. Fr Peter Raj (AND), Regional Secretary and the main organizer, spoke of the time-table and other things to be kept in mind. The Socii introduced themselves, mentioning the works they were engaged in before they accepted this responsibility and for how long they have been doing the important but difficult work of the Socius. Fr Joe Sebastian, a former provincial of Andhra and now a spiritual guide in Urbanum spoke on the spirituality of the Socius, holding up Biblical characters like Aaron, John the Baptist, John the beloved disciple and Mary as shining examples for the mission of the Socius.

In the afternoon in smaller groups the participants shared their experiences in the job - both consolations and desolations. In the evening Fr Lisbert explained why the job of the Socius is crucial and difficult at the same time.

On 20 Nov Fr Ignacio Echarte (ESP), the energetic Secretary of the Society, described how the various sections in the Curia work to govern the worldwide Society. He spoke of the updated version of the manual, termed the Socius's Bible, *Practica Quaedam*. Fr

Agnelo, his deputy, enlightened us on how to use our website and the database and how to enter the relevant data in the Socius page.

In the evening we went to the marvellous treasure house called the Archives and listened to the lively talk by Fr Robert Danieluk (PMA), Assistant Director of the Archives. After he explained to us what the Archives is



and does, he took us to places where only a privileged few have access to and showed us precious collections like the Constitutions, handwritten by St Ignatius with corrections by his capable Socius, Polanco and letters written by St Francis Xavier and the wax mould of Ignatius's face, made soon after his death.

On 21 Nov Fr Malvaux Benoit (BML), Procurator General, explained the canonical and juridical matters his office takes care of. Frs Peter Raj and Agnelo spoke of things the Socii need to bear in mind regarding documents and letters to be sent to the Curia.

On 22 Nov, which happened to be a Sunday, and so a free day, Agnelo gave us a guided tour of the breathtaking St Peter's Basilica. In the forenoon we walked up to St Peter's Square again and stood with thousands of eager and enthusiastic Catholics from all parts of the world, who cheered the moment they saw Pope Francis on the third floor window and listened keenly to his

Angelus message.

Early in the morning of 22 Nov, braving a persistent drizzle, we went in two batches to celebrate the Eucharist in an underground chapel at St Peter's. Later that day Frs Thomas McClain (CDT), Treasurer General, and Charles Lasrado (KAR), Assistant Treasurer General, spoke on financial administration. Arturo Sosa, (VEN) Delegate for Common Houses and his Socius, Ambrose Vedam (GUJ), made us understand the stellar contribution the Society makes to the universal Church through these houses. Fr Marc Lindeijer (NER), Assistant Postulator General, explained how their office works for the cause of Jesuits who have led holy, heroic lives.

On 24 Nov Fr Keith Abranches, Socius to the POSA, shared how he perceives and performs his task. We had time for questions to and clarifications by Fr Lisbert. Fr Jose Magadia (PHI), General Counsellor for Formation, talked of his concerns regarding formation in South Asia. Fr Ken Gavin (UNE) Assistant Director, JRS International, with the help of a powerpoint programme, described the yeoman service rendered for refugees by this Arrupe-inspired organization. In the evening we walked to the Jesu and gathered in the room of St Ignatius for an inspiring Eucharist presided by Fr Lisbert.

When asked to evaluate the meeting all expressed appreciation and gratitude for the unique experience. It was made possible by the hard work of the three organizers - Frs Lisbert, Peter Raj and Agnelo. The daily Eucharists, the social hour and the chance to sit at Fr General's table for lunch made the atmosphere cordial and homely.

Will the South Asian Socii meet again in Rome? The suggestion was that they meet in India every two years and in Rome every six years. **- M.A.J.A.**

## Kerala Jesuits launch magazine for “thinking hearts”

Loyola Institute of Peace and International Relations (LIPI), the latest initiative of the Kerala Jesuits, has come out with a new magazine *Ezhuthu - Chinthikunna Hridayangalkku* (Writing for Thinking Hearts).

*Ezhuthu Magazine*, The first project of LIPI, was formally released on 01 Nov '15. On the auspicious day of the birth of the State of Kerala, a long-awaited dream of Kerala Jesuits came to be realized. The Town Hall of Ernakulum, recently renovated, and packed to its full capacity with friends, well-wishers and more than 60 Jesuits witnessed the birth of the new magazine of the Peace Institute. An array of dignitaries like Justice Kurien Joseph, Smt. Dhayabhai, the well-known activist, Provincial, Fr M.K. George, the Chief Editor, Prof. V. G. Thampy, Prof. M.K. Sanu, Fr Adapur, and Prof. M. Thomas Mathew adorned the dais.

The function began at 3.00 p.m. with a melodious and devotional invocation by the teachers and students of the Department of Music, Sri Sankara University, Kalady. Fr Binoy, the Director of the Institute, welcomed the gathering. Prof. V.G. Thampy gave an orientation of the magazine and placed it in the current context of Kerala and the unique role it will play in the



literary and cultural scene. Fr M.K. George, in his presidential address, stressed the fact that this magazine keeps up the great legacy of the Jesuit tradition in terms of literary and cultural contributions. Justice Kurien Joseph in his inaugural Address wished that a magazine of this sort guided by Jesuits should play a counter-cultural role in promoting peace and justice. This is all the more significant at a time when the current magazines tend to be biased and serve vested interests.

The magazine was released by the much acclaimed activist, Dhaayabai who handed over the first copy to Sri Vaikom Murali, a prominent literary critic. The choice of Dhayabai to release the magazine emphasized the fact that *Ezhuthu* will resonate the voice of the voiceless. Felicitations were offered by Prof M.K. Sanu, Abraham Adapur, and Thomas Mathew. The melodious choral rendition by the students of Loyola, Mukundrara, led by Fr Syriac Panjikaran captivated the audience. Fr Roy Thottam proposed a vote of thanks.

There is an overwhelming support for this venture from various quarters. However, the sustainability of such a competitive venture in a commercialized world needs vigorous net-working and creative ways of promotion. Kerala Jesuits hope God and people of good will will support their initiative. **- Binoy Jacob, SJ**

## Kandhamal gets its first Jesuit priest



Deacon Narendra Singh is all set to become the first Jesuit priest from Kandhamal district in Odisha, the scene of the worst anti-Christian violence in modern India.

Bishop Sarat Chandra Nayak of Berhampur ordained the 35-year-old seminarian for Calcutta Jesuit Province on 30 Dec '15, at St. Teresa Child Jesus' Church, Kotama.

Jesuits entered Kandhamal in 1993, at least 12 years before the tribal-dominated district witnessed months-long attacks against Christians by Hindu extreme right-wing groups that killed at least 90 people and rendered more than 50,000 homeless.

Currently, Odisha, the eastern India state has ten Jesuit priests. Seven of them are from Sundergarh district under Rourkela diocese, two are from Sambalpur diocese and one from Gajapati district in Berhampur diocese.

Deacon Singh, also known as Punim, is the first one from Kandhamal, which is under Cuttack-Bhubaneswar archdiocese. He hails from Our Lady of Lourdes Parish of Alanguri village near Bamunigam town. The news of the ordination in the Year of Mercy has cheered Catholics in Kandhamal.

"There is incredible happiness in all of us priests, nuns and people in our village and the Archdiocese of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar," Father Augustine Singh, president of diocesan priests' association of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar archdiocese, told Matters India.

Others noted that the Jesuit priest's ordination is taking place at a time when the Church in Odisha is marking the birth anniversary of the first Catholic priest from the eastern Indian state. Late Father Pascal Singh, a diocesan priest, also hailed from Alanguri parish.

"I have no words to express how happy I feel that my brother is going to be a Jesuit priest. It is all by the blessings of God and the hard work of my brother," said William Singh, the deacon's eldest brother.

"I wish he becomes a priest for others, especially for the needy. Let his life reflect the dedicated life of late Fathers Pascal and other priests from our village. May he keep up the good name of our village," he added.

Narendra is the fourth of five children in the family. His parents - Laxman Singh and Petronila Singh - are no more. He traced his vocation story to his primary education. "Whenever the teachers used to ask me, 'What would you like to be in the future?' my spontaneous answer was, 'I would like to be a priest.'"

He owes his Jesuit vocation to late Anil Singh from his village, who had joined the Jamshedpur Jesuit province. "I feel extremely glad and satisfied to have joined the Jesuits. When I am asked to speak of the best decision of my life, I always speak of my decision to join the Jesuits. I had deep faith in God's grace, guidance and providence. I believe that nothing is impossible when we trust in God."

In Odisha Jesuits now manage six parishes, 14 schools, one University and three non-formal education centers. The first Jesuit priest to work in Kandhamal was Fr Jerry Kujur in Tumudibandha in May 1993. The first Jesuit house to come up in the area was Loyola Bhavan, Bhubaneswar in July 1985.

- <http://mattersindia.com>

# Future of Christian Ashrams?

BY AMA SAMY, SJ

The national Christian ashram satsangh was held here at Bodhi Zendo in October '15 and it made me reflect a bit on the ashram movement. The movement seems to be in low ebb presently. Maybe a new paradigm shift is needed.

It is sad that the institutional Church does not seem to understand the value of this movement, and so does not have much interest in this precious, life-saving movement, while it is struggling to survive in the onslaught of the fundamental Hindu fanatical surge. Will it survive the Hindu juggernaut, we do not know.

In the first millennium, the Church in Asia had a flourishing and glorious momentum and yet it has left almost no

and join in the festivals. It will be vital to cooperate with Hindus and Muslims and work together for common social causes. Yet politics are very divisive and further the fundamentalist movements are becoming strident. The books of Western scholars on Hinduism are burnt if they do not flatter Hinduism; Churches and mosques are desecrated. Beef-eating is not only forbidden in some areas, people are even lynched. They forget that beef was common food with Vedic rishis and Hindus in ancient India. One Australian with a tattoo of a Hindu goddess was almost lynched, of all places in Bangalore (*Hindu* editorial, Oct. 20). The Sangh Parivar organizations are running amok in the country and the leaders of the Government are silent.

A well-known Hindu guru, who even participates in Hindu-Christian dialogues, told me that the use of Hindu symbols, names and chants should be forbidden



and Advaitic knowledge. The Vedic schools in ashrams like Ramanashram, Gnananandashram and such others are exclusively for Brahmin boys.

The Christian ashramites have been till now donning Hindu sannyasa garbs, reciting Gayatri mantra and other Hindu mantras and rituals; it is all done in the name of inculturation and going back to the original Indian roots. I am afraid it is all mistaken and misunderstanding. The danger is also of provoking a fundamentalist Hindu backlash. It is important to be open to and respectful of Hinduism and its practices, to cooperate with good-willed Hindus in social projects; and even to hold dialogues with Hindus, though the audience will be mostly Christians. The ordinary Hindus do not frequent Christian ashrams, they will rather go to the Hindu gurus and centres. It is perhaps some intellectual Hindus who may have some interest in Christian ashrams, but with the ingrained prejudice of the superiority of Hinduism.

I think Hinduism is not a proper partner for dialogue in ashrams. For a proper dialogue, the partners must be like and unlike. If they are only similar or alike, the dialogue will go nowhere. If they are too unlike, it will not do either. Only with some dissimilarity, the dialogue will be enriching and fruitful. They must stand apart and yet interact; one must not be collapsed into the other. The otherness of the other must be respected. In dissimilarity, the partners will be challenged and their hearts and minds can be enlarged.

**The proper dialogue partner for the ashramites will be Buddhism.**



trace in the face of the onslaught of Islam ( See Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity: the thousand-year golden age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa and Asia—and how it died*). Will the same fate overtake the Church in India? If the Church leaders can be wise, prudent and foresightful, Providence can spare us. Will they be? They seem to be caught in internecine, self-inflicted battles.

In India Christians live in a Hindu milieu and are almost indistinguishable in their customs, celebrations and devotions, at least in the South. The Hindus, even Muslims, frequent Catholic holy shrines

to Christians: when Christians use them they are transgressing and desecrating the Hindu religion. In the internet forums, there are violent attacks on even Hindus like Rambachan, the advaitic scholar, by the so-called 'Hinduism defenders', because he is associated with Western Christian scholars and is involved in Hindu-Christian dialogues (see *America's Vedanta Wars*, Seminar, July 2015). The defenders insist "on the indispensability of a *guruparampara* (intellectual lineage) to a proper understanding of how a 'knowledge-system' works". It boils down to Brahminical control of power and knowledge, particularly for Vedic

It is particularly so with religious concepts and ideas. When two concepts are dissimilar, one will realize that one's dogma is not so absolute and fixed. For example, whatever Meister Eckhart or John of the Cross might proclaim, man is not God pure and simple. When Advaita proclaims *tatvamasi*, that you are Atman/Brahman, it goes against the Christian teaching.

Hindu Bhakti, Karma and Hatha Yoga are not alien to Christianity, Christianity has all of these. The so-called Gnanamarga is a different matter. However, what it means is a disputed question. Taking the Upanishadic four great mahavakyas, all three great acharyas, Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva, each gives different interpretations. One is non-dualistic, one is qualified non-dualism (Vishistadvaita), and the third complete dualism. Even Sankara's non-dualism is disputed (Sr. Sarah Grant's thesis, *Sankara's Concept of Relation*). Of course all three have many variations.

Apart from the four mahavakyas, the Upanishads are voluminous and have differing teachings and they are historical-socially rooted (See Brian Black, *The Character of Self in Ancient India: priests, kings, and women in the early Upanishads*). The Upanishads have to be located in the overall Vedas. Some Christians pick the Gita as the quintessential Hindu teaching. It is not. The Gita also has to be located in the overall Hinduism, and also in its social, historical, political background. Further, the Gita justifies the caste system and is not simply a teaching of ahimsa.

Christians are fond of advaita, without a proper understanding. They are taken up with Ramana Maharishi's teaching, which is vague and confusing. Ramana teaches now this and now that. His awakening is rather a sort of Near-Death-Experience, an NDE. He calls himself bhagavan, in the third person, as if he is a superior being. He is idealized and deified by his devotees.

Coming to advaita, there is a great dispute whether it is in terms of *shruti* or *anubhava*. *Shruti* is scriptural teaching. For Sankara, the Vedas are the guarantee of advaitic knowledge, it is *shruti*. *Anubhava*, experience, is a borrowed term and its use is late, coming from the

West. If advaiticgnana is guaranteed by the Vedas, it is like the Christian dogma, Revelation. And this has to be understood in the whole canon of Vedic knowledge. If it is *anubhava*, what does it mean to say you are Atman/Brahman? You have to know first what the Atman or Brahman is. And further what sort of identity is it? It is all murky and confused. They talk about *guruparampara*, which means that only a Brahmin guru is authorized to transmit this upanishadicgnana. Christians often quote John's Gospel saying that 'I and the Father are one', 'You are in me, I am in you,' and the like. It is not a proper nondualism. The Christian vision is centred on love and it is ultimately dualistic. It does not mean it is wrong, but one has to see that it is not advaita proper. According to Hindus, Christians cannot have true advaiticgnana.

With all these problems, Hinduism is not the proper dialogue partner, particularly with the fundamentalistic Hindu puritanism. The proper dialogue partner for the ashramites will be Buddhism—Buddhist vision and dharma as well as Buddhist meditation methods. Of course, Buddhism in Sri Lanka and in Myanmar has descended into barbarism, but in India it is native-born and has its primordial non-violence. Buddhism is ideally casteless and friendly to women. This is why Dr Ambedkar and his Dalit followers embraced Buddhism. Buddhism is oriented to liberation in this life and the next one. It is similar to Christianity in many aspects and it is also at variance, even diametrically opposed in some areas. Thus it will be healing and freeing for Christians.

For Buddhists too Christianity, particularly the ashram spirituality, will offer much.

There are different kinds of Buddhism. Most of them hold to no creator God, Emptiness and no-self, impermanence and interdependence, karma and rebirth, and to a strong ethics as well as compassion. Above all, the meditation methods offered by Buddhism will be most helpful to Christians. Buddhist mindfulness practice is widespread in the West; I would choose Vipassana and Zen as the most important ones for Christians. For the ashramites, vipassana and mindfulness practice will

offer very much; nay, they must be central practice in ashrams. Along with these, nama-japa, bhajans and music should be the staple of the ashrams.

For most of the Christians, the Buddhist meditation methods can be adapted as forms of Christian practice. But for those who can go deeper, Buddhist meditation has to be simply Buddhist. In my articles I talk about this form as passing-over and coming-back. Pass over into the Buddhist vision and practice, and come back to the Christian vision and practice. It is a standing-in-between both the traditions and this will be creative and life-giving, dynamic and liberative. Such a spirituality will be rooted necessarily in some intellectual understanding and wisdom. Further a Buddhist-Christian approach will be concerned also for the environment and for the poor people in and around the ashrams.

Christian ashrams will be and foremost Christian. They will serve the Christians primarily. But they will not be part and parcel of the institutional Church. Ashrams will offer a different face of Christianity. As mentioned earlier, Ashrams will offer open spaces for Christians and for non-Christians, or whoever comes to the ashrams. The heart of the ashramites will have to be wide open heart and mind, nourished and nourishing the guest and the host. It has to be the home of hospitality and generosity to the friend and the stranger, to the seeker and the pilgrim. It is Buddhism as a partner that can help create such an open space that can lead to a liberated heart and mind.

One has to struggle with the truth of one's own religion and way. As Karl Rahner has repeatedly said, one has to live in the incomprehensible mystery. One's way of life or world-view is right and also the other's way and world-view is right. Thus one's mind and heart have to be broken wide open. It is as the zen koan challenges one, 'Standing nowhere, let your heart-mind come forth.' The ashram is the place one can live with all these contradictions and dissimilarities in peace and in the sense of mystery. ■

*Fr Ama Samy, SJ (MDU) is Director of Bodhi Zendo, the Zen Meditation Centre in Perumalmalai, Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu.*

## Let us pray for this grace *Every day in 2016*

BY FIO MASCARENHAS, SJ

**P**ope Francis has explained why he has called for a Jubilee Year of Mercy: "... the Church, in this time of great historical change, is called to offer more evident signs of God's presence and closeness. The Holy Year must keep alive the desire to welcome the numerous signs of the tenderness which God offers to the whole world and, above all, to those who suffer, who are alone and abandoned, without hope of being pardoned or feeling the Father's love. A Holy Year to experience strongly within ourselves the joy of having been found by Jesus, the Good Shepherd who has come in search of us because we were lost, and to receive the warmth of his love when he bears us upon his shoulders and brings us back to the Father's house. A year in which to be touched by the Lord Jesus and to be transformed by his mercy, so that we may become witnesses to mercy!"

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the face of the Father's mercy, has brought to billions of people the fullness of God the Father's "love" or "mercy" (the two words are interchangeable), through the powerful yet gentle action of their Holy Spirit. The biblical meaning of "mercy" is not the same as "pity," or just "compassion or forgiveness shown towards someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm" (Oxford Dictionary). The word "merciful" describes both a quality of God and one that God requires of his people.

The chief OT Hebrew term for mercy is *hesed*, which means "loving kindness," and the chief NT (Greek) term is most often *eleos* (in Latin *miser cordia*). Because God is the initiator, the mercy he gives is gracious, unmerited, undeserved. In the New Testament, the theme of God's mercy is

understood in the light of Christ, who is the supreme expression of love, mercy, and grace.

In human beings, *eleos* comes very near *agape*. It is chiefly manifested in the readiness to do good and to forgive. The NT *eleos* between men is transformed by the NT conception of love. Christians are to be channels of God's mercy in the church and in the world. God's mercy is displayed in the *ministry* of Christ. Mercy was manifested in practical help, not simply in a consoling message that God was sympathetic with their plight. Pope Francis, in *Misericordiae Vultus*, writes: "*Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy*. These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life."

God always relates with every redeemed human being as *a son/daughter first*, a sinner second! Certainly, it is true that sin has marred our personal and collective histories. But it is equally true that in God's loving eyes, those identified with his beloved Son Jesus are transformed into "*sons/daughters of God, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ*" (Rom 8:15).

Scripture *translations* (not the original Greek) unfortunately make us God's "adopted" sons/daughters; but "adoption" is in fact legalized fiction, it creates relationships and bestows rights *by law* rather than *by grace*! As



a consequence, like the Jews, we too are reluctant to seek a real and warm intimacy with God *as Father*, instead we look upon him as a far-away Master, and upon Jesus too as a utopian Model (not a *real* brother/co-heir). Paul says that the Spirit bears witness that "we are sons/daughters of God, and if sons/daughters then

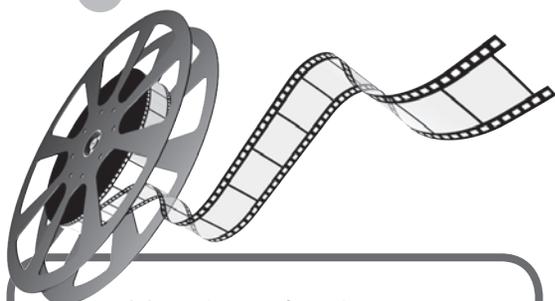
heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ..." (Rom.8:15-17). And again, "(God) destined us in love to be his sons/daughters through Jesus Christ, (Eph.1:5-7).

This truth is the whole point of Jesus' parable of the prodigal son (Lk.15:11-24). He is always a son *first*, a sinner second!

This is the most important grace of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, to recognize anew our graced, gratuitous sonship/daughterhood, and to relish it anew in a personal and intimate relationship with God as our Abba, Father! The Jubilee Year, then, calls me (and all of us) to spend time in personally interiorizing the life-giving mysteries of Jesus' Birth, Death and Resurrection, for they are the source of all human fulfillment.

This entering deeper into the mystery of Christ will happen only through *Lectio Divina*, a prayerful meditation on the word of God. Pope Francis has inaugurated a Jubilee Year of Mercy precisely to encourage us all in receiving afresh a God-given personal, intimate and life-transforming *Abba-experience*, every day in the year 2016. ■

*Fr Fio Mascarenhas, SJ (BOM) is the Chairman of Catholic Bible Institute, Mumbai.*

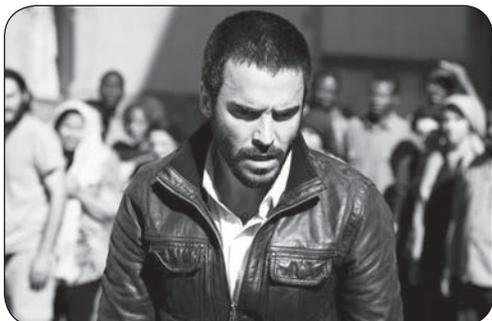


## No place for them

'Rising Voices' ('Le Chant des Hommes')

A film by Benedicte Lienard, Mary Jimenez

Starring Maryam Zaree, Assaad Bouab, Ahmet Rifat...



A claustrophobic drama that couldn't possibly be more timely, Mary Jimenez and Benedicte Lienard's *Rising Voices* puts viewers inside a hunger strike mounted by refugees seeking papers that will allow them to stay in Brussels and seek legitimate jobs. Focusing on the minutiae of making such a protest work with a band of immigrants from all over the world, it feels more like an ensemble theatrical piece than an agenda-driven film, and the screenplay pushes slogans aside in favor of intimate personal concerns. The artful film stands out among the new films. Kader (Assaad Bouab), a Moroccan, and an Iranian woman named Esma (Maryam Zaree) are the organizers of the strike, gathering money to buy supplies for strikers who speak a half-dozen languages and aren't all versed in the ways of protest movements. But the two leaders aren't on the same page. Esma is earnest, seeing strikers' self-denial as payment for freedom to come; Kader is secretly taking money from desperate people who aren't part of the hunger strike, promising to sneak their names onto the group's list when officials agree to issue them all papers. The film succeeds in showing the drain those long weeks put on people who have little in common but the fact that they can't go home and can't bargain with anything but their lives. Stuck here on the cots with them, we share dreams about what they'll do once they have papers; hear stories about the terrible things they've experienced.

## She is only 10 years old!



Welcome to the  
CalamityRelief App!

What is your role?

Individual: Someone wanting to donate material

Collector: A social worker who collects material to be mobilized

Distributor: A social worker at the calamity area who distributes material to the needy

Select a role

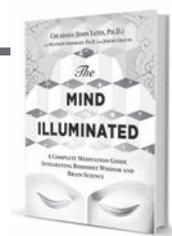
Chinmayi Ramasubramanian, a 10-year-old girl, has developed an app to help people in flood-affected areas of Tamil Nadu, and to assist those who want to donate flood relief material. Launched in the first week of December, the app is called CalamityRelief. It is meant to streamline the process of giving and receiving relief materials. The recent rains, followed by devastating floods, hit several parts of Tamil Nadu, bringing life to a standstill. Many residents lost their houses and belongings. But now is the time to help the state revive itself, and that's something that many people across the country are trying to do by sending in donations in the form of money, relief materials, food, water, medicines, and more. But the extent of damage and the need for assistance are so huge that the entire process has to be well-organized to be effective. Chinmayi is trying to do exactly this with her app. It provides the list of collection centres and helps you to choose the nearest one to go to and donate. There is also the option of going through lists of things that people should or should not donate.

Chinmayi does not want CalamityRelief to be restricted for use in Tamil Nadu alone. Though she got the idea from the recent floods, the app is meant to help in any place that has been hit by a natural disaster.

Courtesy: [www.thebetterindia.com](http://www.thebetterindia.com)

## Meditation Guide

Providing step-by-step guidance for every stage of the meditation path, this uniquely comprehensive guide combines the wisdom from the teachings of the Buddha with the latest research in cognitive psychology and neuroscience. Clear and friendly, this in-depth practice manual builds on the nine-stage model of meditation originally articulated by the ancient Indian sage Asanga, crystallizing the entire meditative journey into 10 clearly-defined stages. The book also introduces a new and fascinating model of how the mind works, and uses illustrations and charts to help the reader work through each stage.



**The Mind Illuminated::**  
*A Complete Meditation Guide Integrating Buddhist Wisdom and Brain Science*  
By Culadassa, Matthew Immergut, Jeremy Graves  
Published by Dharma Treasure Press  
Pages: 504

# A truly outstanding road map for creating gender equality in the Indian Church

- interview with Dr Astrid Lobo Gajiwala

BY SR CHRISTINE SCHENK

Five years ago the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) came up with a creative gender policy. This 2010 document has the ambitious goal of integrating gender justice into societal structures at every level of the Indian church, from the parish to the bishops' conference itself. An important objective is "to stimulate reflection in the Church on its mission to form a discipleship of equals," with "the ultimate goal (being) to achieve gender equality."

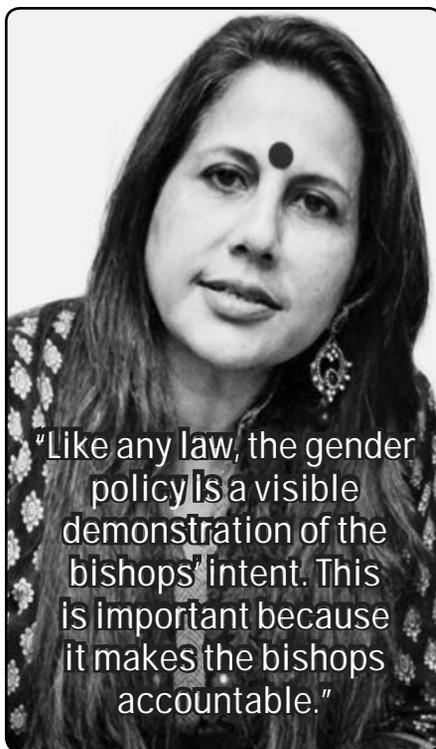
Nowhere in evidence is the gender-apartheid-evoking complementarity language so frequently found in recent church documents. Instead, the bishops cite Genesis 1:27 ("In the image of God, male and female God created them"); Galatians 3:28 ("There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus"); and *Gaudium et Spes* ("Every type of discrimination ... is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent").

I recently interviewed one of the architects of the gender policy statement, **Dr. Astrid Lobo Gajiwala**, who is an Indian scientist, theologian, writer and mother of three. She has been living her Christian commitment in an interfaith family for the past 25 years:

## How did you become involved in developing the gender policy?

I became involved after Bishop Bosco Penha of Mumbai was asked

to present a paper on the situation of women at the 1992 CBCI plenary assembly. He decided a woman would be better suited to the task and invited me to speak in his place. I accepted and broke the silence on violence against women. As a result, the bishops



instituted a women's desk chaired by its first ever woman secretary, Sr Cleopatra, who was also chair of the women's section of the Conference of Religious of India. I was nominated as a consultant and have remained one for the past 23 years. In 1996, thanks to the efforts of Bishop Bosco, the desk became a full-fledged Commission for Women.

The 2008 plenary assembly of the Indian bishops once again focused on women, but this time on their empowerment. I was one of the keynote

speakers. I was also in the organizing committee under the leadership of Sr Lilly Francis, then secretary of the Women's Commission. We held meetings at the grass roots for a year prior to the meeting, asking women to identify their main concerns and what they would like to see on the bishops' agenda. We also conducted a survey. Thanks to Sr Lilly, there were 40 women invited to this meeting, a first in the "his-tory" of the CBCI. One of the recommendations was to bring out a gender policy within a year. The Women's Commission was entrusted with the task of drafting the policy. Sr Lilly was given full freedom to put together a drafting committee. She invited me to be on it. We spent more than a year researching, meeting, emailing, consulting regional secretaries, writing, rewriting and strategizing on how to walk the tight rope between being true to the women we represented and at the same time being acceptable to the bishops. This was, after all, their document. The bishops reviewed our draft and revised it. The need for inclusive language and the articulation of women's spirituality was replaced with "articulate and express the Feminine Genius." "Equal" representation in parishes, diocesan councils and commissions was changed to "adequate" representation. But for the most part, the bishops respected the women's draft. Most importantly, the vision, mission, objectives and guiding principles went unchanged. To me, these are the crux of the policy, open to creative interpretation. It is not a perfect document, but it is a good beginning.

**Have you seen any signs that the gender policy has made a difference?**

The first thing I'd like to say is that like any law, the gender policy is a visible demonstration of the bishops' intent. This is important because it makes the bishops accountable. At the same time, it provides the faithful with a blueprint for change.

I come from the archdiocese of Mumbai, and I can say very definitely that the gender policy has made a difference. One of the important principles articulated was that gender equality is a cross-cutting issue and not merely the concern of women. It is a human rights issue and a Gospel imperative and so must engage all women and men, commissions and communities, institutions and organizations. Bishop John Thakur, who was the chair of the commission, at the time, emphasizes this in his introduction.

In 2012, after the horrific Delhi rape, the entire Mumbai church came together to address the issue. The archdiocesan Women's Commission under the leadership of Marcia D'Cunha spearheaded the campaign. I suggested it be called the 37 million *diyas* (lamps) campaign to draw attention to India's missing women. All the commissions worked together. The resources of the diocese were made available for this, particularly for all the promotional material. The Board of Education collaborated with a nongovernmental organization, Avehi Abacus, to introduce a gender sensitivity program for middle school students.

For the past two years, the archdiocese has been celebrating International Women's Day collectively with the other commissions, which are usually headed by priests. Men, too, are part of the celebrations, not just as spectators but as participants. The message of gender equality is spreading wider and wider.

The gender policy also advocates education in gender sensitivity to change mind-sets. The archdiocese is supporting this in many ways. Two years ago, the archdiocese started a gender sensitivity program for seminarians coordinated by the Women's Commission. I am a part of this effort, doing one session on how church structures and policies make it necessary for women to "negotiate" partnership in the church and another on gender relations in the church, which focuses on educating to prevent clergy sexual abuse. We are a mixed team of women and priests. The response has been good. This year, we will conduct the course again. Of course, we will only know the fruit when these seminarians begin functioning as pastors in their parishes. In other seminaries, there are female theology professors. I know some of them personally, and I am quite sure that they offer a feminist perspective. I understand also that feminist theology is being taught.

The Mumbai Women's Commission also has special certificate courses for women offered in collaboration with Sophia College, a well-regarded local Catholic women's college. The topics range from examining gender stereotypes to reading the Bible with a woman's eyes. More recently, a group of women and men, including priests, at the national level, concerned about the stories of sexual abuse that hit the Western press but also those that we hear about in India behind closed doors, put together a policy for prevention, protection and redress of sexual abuse of women in the Church. Since the gender policy advocates zero tolerance of violence against women in society and the Church and recommends the setting up of institutional structures to implement this, we offered this draft policy to the CBCI standing committee in 2013. We were hoping that it would make it to

the agenda of the bishops' plenary assembly in 2014. Unfortunately, that didn't happen. We are still awaiting the bishops' decision. At the Voices of Faith event, I got the opportunity to speak to Archbishop Anil Coutto, who is on the CBCI standing committee, and he has promised to look into it.

In the meantime, Cardinal Oswald Gracias, during a meeting of the Mumbai CRI last month, promised to put such a policy in place at least in Mumbai.

So yes, the gender policy is coming alive. But much depends on the willingness and ability of people to hold the bishops accountable to it.

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Gajiwala, Sr. Lilly Frances, Marcia D'Cunha, the Women's Commission of the CBCI, and the Indian bishops are to be congratulated for developing a truly outstanding road map for creating gender equality in our church and in society.

Now we must challenge the universal Church, including the Vatican and the world's bishops' conferences, to do the same. Women must write the initial draft and have significant voice in shaping all final documents.

In the meantime, educating seminarians, deacons and pastoral ministers in gender sensitization strikes me as both essential and immediately doable. Our seminaries and pastoral ministry programs should require credits in feminist biblical and theological studies. This would significantly enhance appreciation of the inclusive practice of the early church and our "God Beyond all Names."

Maybe then we truly will become that "discipleship of equals" first envisioned by Jesus.

*(A Sister of St. Joseph, Sr. Christine Schenk co-founded FutureChurch, where she served for 23 years.)*

Courtesy: [www.ncronline.org](http://www.ncronline.org)

**Bishop Antoine Audo, SJ**, bishop of Chaldean Christians of Syria (with his seat in Aleppo) shares the struggles and hopes of Christians in Syria in his conversation with **Victor Edwin, SJ** for Jivan. Msgr. Audo is the president of Caritas, Syria, a Member of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, a Member of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and a Member of the Council for Migrants.

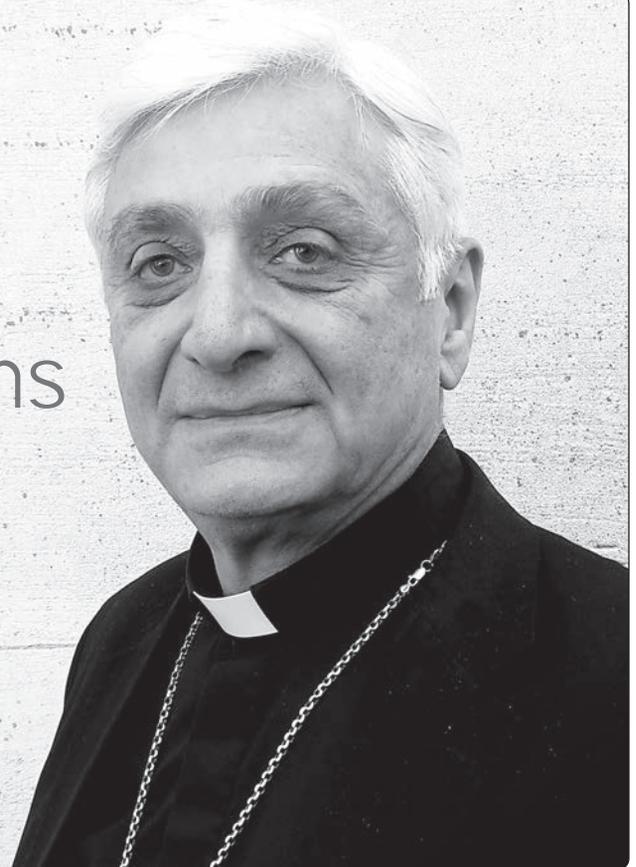
Sunnis are militarily and financially supported by Sunni regional powers like Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar while the Shiite Iran and their ally in Lebanon, Hezbollah are solidly behind Shiites. ISIS and al-Nusra front want to show that they are a dominant power in the Arab world and their brand of Islam is powerful. The way they chose to display their power is to strike fear and terror among Christians and other minorities.

as our economy is crumbling due to the ongoing war. Five years ago one American dollar equaled 50 Syrian pounds. Today even 350 Syrian pounds cannot fetch one American dollar! Such high inflation pushes a large number of Syrians into poverty.

Thirdly, unemployment is another serious consequence of the war. Without work, living under the burden of inflation, in a very insecure neighborhood is a nightmare for

## "Christians in Syria are helpless victims of violence"

Interview with  
**Bishop Antoine Audo, SJ**  
of Chaldean Christians of Syria



### What is the present situation of Christians in the war-torn Syria?

It is important to emphasize at the outset that the raging war in Syria is not between Christians and Muslims, but rather part of the Sunni – Shiite conflict within Islam going on throughout the Middle East. The Sunni majority is trying to seize power from the Assad family who has held a firm grip on Syria for 40 years. The Assads are from a minority sect, the Alawites, a sub-group of Shiites. The

First and foremost, Christians face insecurity. We are insecure as Sunni fighters unleash unending violence upon us. Many bishops, priests and lay people have been kidnapped and killed. They are our martyrs. Our Christians are hounded out of their homes and villages, Christian properties and businesses ruined and our churches are destroyed. We are defenseless as we refuse to form any militia to defend ourselves.

Secondly, inflation is very high

our people. Christians, along with thousands of Muslims who are also badly afflicted, have fled.

Because of the war ten million Syrians are displaced internally. Five million Syrians have found refuge in the neighboring states of Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, and Iraq. About one million Syrians are seeking asylum in Europe. Two million children are without school. These numbers are staggering.

**What is the solution to this**

**grave problem? Is peace possible in Syria?**

Pope Francis has said military solutions in Syria are futile. Such attempts will only lead to more suffering. We need to seek a political solution to the problem. First, any effort towards peace should include Bashar al-Assad, the president of Syria. He should be part of the solution. Trying to push him out of any peace initiative in Syria will only prolong the impasse. A delicate balance between different religious and ethnic groups should be brought about with the help

of the caliphate. However, after a lot of consultation they themselves concluded that it was no longer possible to have a caliphate and changed course. It is impossible to think of a caliphate without borders in today's world. ISIS is simply spreading fear and instability in the region. ISIS will dissipate once the arms and finances stop.

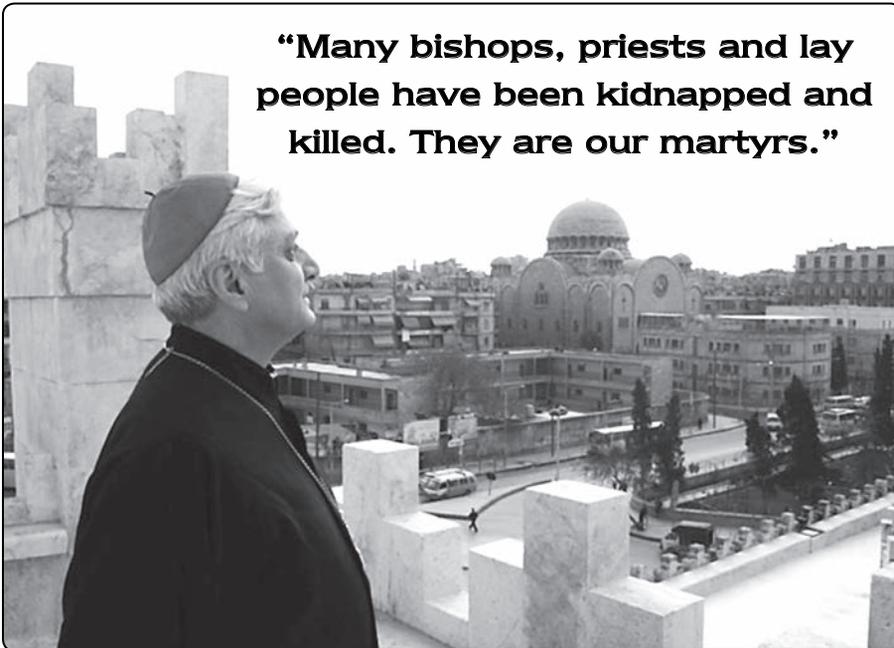
**How do the Church leaders respond to this situation?**

We do all that we can do to stay in Syria. Because we have a deep conviction that it is our nation, a nation

to recognize and respect pluralism, freedom of conscience, and freedom of religion. The real danger is that many Muslims consider these modern ideas

**“Islam is unable to engage with modernity. It finds it difficult to recognize and respect pluralism, freedom of conscience, and freedom of religion.”**

**“Many bishops, priests and lay people have been kidnapped and killed. They are our martyrs.”**



of United Nations. Secondly, the flow of funds and flow of arms into the hands of ISIS extremists should be stopped completely and unconditionally. As long as these extremists are being funded and armed, all efforts for peace will be in vain. One cannot rock the cradle as well as pinch the child.

**What about ISIS?**

ISIS is simply a terror group. Their objective is ‘reclaiming Islamic power’ and to strike terror and fear. The Arab world is aware that with the abolition of the Islamic caliphate on 03 March 1924, scholars like Hassan al-Banna established the “Muslim Brotherhood” with the precise purpose of restoring

that goes back to biblical times. We Christians are called to give testimony to our faith among Muslims. We know that we have the capacity to live with Muslims, even if there are problems that crop up now and then. Our Holy Father Pope Francis has time and again expressed his solidarity with the suffering Syrians. The various Catholic charities do a lot of for all Syrians without any distinction. We offer food, medicine, and trauma counselling for all who are affected.

**Is there a crisis in Islam that may lead to all such conflicts?**

Islam is unable to engage with modernity. It finds it difficult to

be western, and anything western to be anti-Islam. They consider any western effort to encourage these values among Muslims as an attempt to destroy Islam.

In my opinion, the deeper problem is that Islam is unable to engage with time itself. Islam recognises time as universal: ‘beginning to eternity’. In Islam, ‘origin’ appeals to the ‘end’. ‘Creation’ and ‘judgement’ are two poles. ‘Here and now’ is not considered for engagement. The ‘present’ loses its value vis-à-vis ‘eternity’. This is the reason that Islam has problems in accepting differences. Islam finds it difficult to accept differences without domination.

**How could Christianity be at the service of Islam?**

First, it should be said that we do not have problem with Muslims. We do not fear Muslims. We love Muslims and engage with them. Christians follow Christ and try to live in deep communion with Christ. Living in deep communion with Christ is living in truth. Living in truth is giving witness to Christ. The Christian way of living in word and deed in the present world is a great service to all, especially to Muslims in the Arab world. Secondly, we are called to give ‘testimony of prayer’. Common and public testimony of prayer by Christians among Muslims is also at the service of Islam.

# The rich get richer and the poor get prison

BY STAN SWAMY, SJ

An independent research has found that out of the 102 undertrials charged as naxals, two and only two had any contact with any naxal outfit. The rest are all false cases lodged on the poorest of the poor

How and why was the study undertaken? Over the past few years local newspapers have been reporting almost on a daily basis one or two or more 'suspected naxals' or 'sympathisers' of naxals being arrested. Often their photos - mostly with faces covered - together with pistols, some ammunition, 'maoist-literature' are shown as taken from them. The local print-media just publish what the police say without verifying them on their own.

In February 2012 to everyone's shock a prominent English daily reported, "There are now about 6000 Adivasis in jail." The charge against the majority of them is that "Maoist literature" was found in their possession and that they are "helpers of Maoists". We realized that even if that was true, they cannot be arrested as per the Supreme Court verdicts: One says, "Mere membership of a banned organisation will not make a person a criminal ..." On 03 Feb 2011 the Supreme Court said "Mere possession of Maoist literature does not make a person a Maoist." (*Criminal appeal No 889 of 2007*). It said the same thing while granting bail to Dr. Binayak Sen

on 15 April 2011.

The members of Bagaicha, a centre for training and research, thought it necessary to find out the veracity of police claims. A scientific study was worked out and we sought permission from jail authorities to visit the different jails in Jharkhand and interview the undertrial prisoners. Our request was flatly refused. The next best thing was to send an RTI petition to the superintendents of the 26 jails in Jharkhand seeking specific information

members as well as some village folk.

## Findings:

1) 98% of those arrested as naxals had nothing to do with naxalism: Only two out of 102 (about 2%) undertrials accused and arrested as naxals accepted they had any contact with any of naxal-groups. The rest say they have been falsely accused and arrested for daring to speak assertively against violation of their constitutional and human rights, such as right to possess and protect their land and livelihood



as per an enclosed questionnaire. Only 12 of them responded mostly with inadequate information. Then we felt it necessary to visit as many undertrials presently out on bail in their own villages. Under the guidance of a well-qualified and competent researcher we formed three teams and visited 18 of the 24 districts of Jharkhand over a period of three months. Our teams met with 102 undertrials in their own village homes and their family

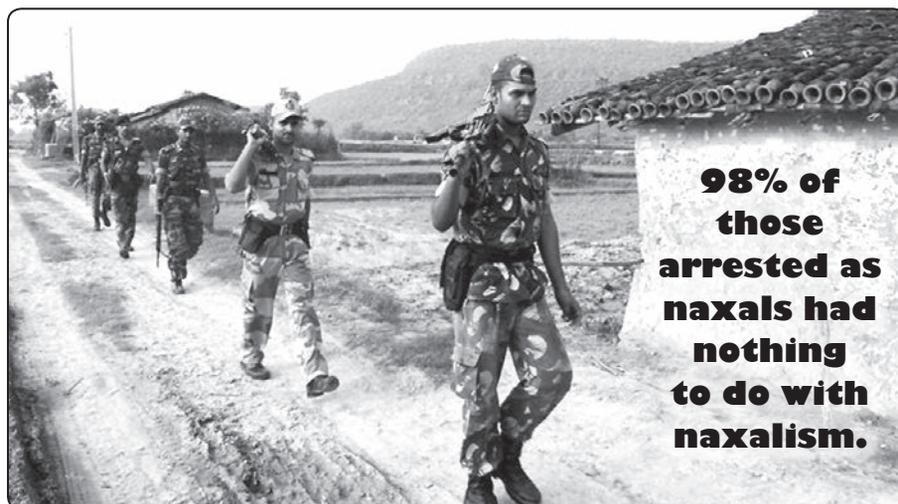
resources. This is indeed a very serious situation where the constitutional right to dissent is being treated as an offence despite the SC judgments on the matter. A grave injustice is being committed against the poorest of the poor Adivasi people.

2) Adult life ruined, families reduced to destitution: Of the undertrials we met 68% are young and middle-age group and 78% of them are married. Income to the family, whether

through agriculture (63%) or casual labour (17%), comes by their labour. This is also the period when their children are small and of school-going age and need the care and affection of their father. But, alas, their sole bread-winner, though innocent, is forced to be in jail or to be attending the trial court hearings. When these men have to keep travelling in order to attend the never-ending trials in court,

insecure socio-economic condition has made them vulnerable at every level to become easy prey to exploitation and state repression. So false cases can be conveniently lodged on them, they can be arrested and subjected to prolonged legal procedures, destroying their personal, family and communitarian life.

4) The rich get richer and the poor get prison: It is crucial to note



sometimes out of their district, the only way they can save their families from hunger is to sell the little assets they have such as cattle and even their land or borrow money from local money-lenders at very high rates of interest. All this for no fault of theirs but because the police have made them 'naxals'. A sad human tragedy indeed.

3) Why this cruelty on the weakest sections of society - Dalits and Tribals? These two groups make 69% of the undertrials in our sample study. With low literacy rates and high poverty rates, these groups in Jharkhand are economically weak and socially on the margins of society. Their life runs on a day-to-day basis. All the government development plans have not done anything to change their situation. Even the funds allotted specifically for these groups have been diverted to general infrastructural projects. Their

that 97% undertrial-families have an income less than Rs. 5000 per month, and so they are BPL (Below Poverty Line). Most of them are not yet the beneficiaries of the Right to Food Act the implementation of which the State Govt has been dilly-dallying for over a year. Their old ration cards have been declared invalid, but new cards have not been given to most. A visit to interior tribal villages in Jharkhand reveals the heart-rending situation of people who live without their basic needs met and who are completely ignored by the local administration. But when it comes to getting at so-called naxals the police and para-military forces are at their most efficient, breaking into houses, destroying vessels, molesting women, throwing out food grains etc. Any and every male member, regardless of their age, becomes a suspect and are

thrashed mercilessly and marched to the police station, where they are herded like cattle for long periods without food or water. Finally some are released and others remain in jail. All this is done in the name of containing naxalism.

5) Were these naxal-suspects caught after a hot pursuit by the police? That is the impression given by the media. The fact is a total of 87% were arrested in normal circumstances, 57% were arrested from their homes when they were resting or having their meal or spending time with their family, and 30% from nearby towns or on travel. Certainly they were not running away from the police.

It is clear that the government's real intention is not ending naxalism but open up the mineral-rich Adivasi land to mining companies. The so-called 'Red Corridor' is also the Mineral Corridor. More young men are arrested in these corridors compared to other areas where mineral storage is less. State/police repression is more intense in the villages which are like open jails with people's right to freedom of assembly, speech, movement is restricted. A lot of young men are migrating to far off States like Kerala as casual labour and send some money home. Migration of Adivasi girls to metropolitan cities as domestic help is going on unabated.

However people are struggling to keep their *jal, jangal, jamin* through local as well as broader people's resistance movements. Consequently few corporate houses are able to make inroads in Jharkhand. To the extent corporate pressure on the government is increasing, State repression on the poorest of the poor Adivasi People is also on the rise in the guise of containing naxalism. ■

Fr Stan Swamy, SJ (JAM) is the Assistant Director of Bagaicha, Ranchi, Jharkhand.

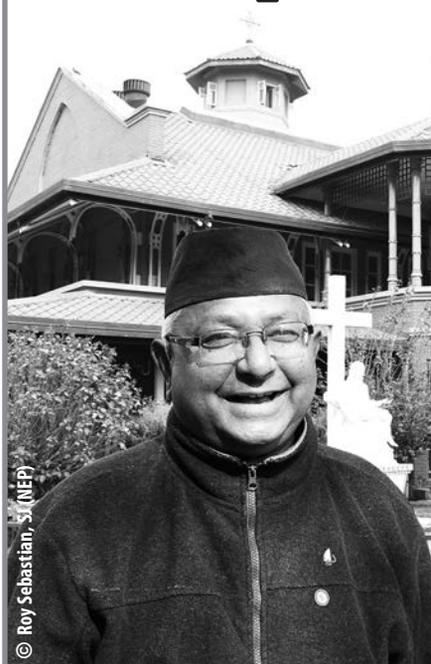
In the winter of 1983-84 I enjoyed a chance to visit my favorite Jesuit community in India, St. Joseph's, Darjeeling. I had enjoyed vacations there when taking breaks from work in Bhutan. This time, however, my mission was more challenging. The king of Nepal had established diplomatic relations with the Vatican, and it was time for the Church to become autonomous. The Jesuits were looking for a man to be the first superior of the *Missio Sui Iuris* of Nepal. Darjeeling's Fr. Anthony Sharma was our first choice. He was a man of Nepal, where his parents were born. I was looking forward to meeting him, but I did not expect a joyous response to my request!

I reported the Darjeeling Jesuits' response, while wondering who would rise to the challenge of building up Nepal's Catholic Church. I was thrilled when Anthony Sharma was appointed to the post. On 8 Dec 1984, Bishop Benedict Osta, with help from Bishop J.B. Thakur and Bishop Joseph Rodricks, installed him as Nepal's first Ecclesiastical Superior.

Anthony, or Antu as I called him, was born on 12 Dec 1937 into a poor family in Darjeeling District, and grew up in Kurseong. Fr Wery helped to support Anthony, his older sister and mother. His father passed away shortly after Anthony's birth. Anthony studied at Kurseong under the Jesuits. Math was a challenge, but Fr. Bill Mackey made sure Antu passed the final exams. These Jesuits left their mark on Antu. Despite family opposition, he joined the Bombay novitiate in 1956. He got back home to study theology. Bishop Eric Benjamin Mukhia ordained him in 1968. Fr. Maurice Dullard was his tertianship instructor in 1976 at Sitagarha.

After ordination, Antu studied pastoral work in the Philippines and then started his education ministry.

## He built up the Church in Nepal



**Bishop Anthony Sharma, SJ**  
1937 - 2015

He was the Rector at St. Joseph's before moving to Nepal. He first lived in our Jawalakhel community but soon moved to his own quarters where he supported several people and welcomed visitors.

He saw Nepal's need for good school teachers and administrators, so contacted religious across South Asia. Religious and priests now serve in over 30 schools across the country. Catholic communities are growing around these centers. Now there are parishes across Nepal. He also worked to recruit young men to become priests in Nepal. There is now a strong group of priests, from both India and Nepal. Our Kathmandu church in front of St Xavier's was soon too small for our growing Catholic community. Antu was able to buy land

and build a cathedral. Cardinal Tomko dedicated the cathedral in 1995. In 2007 Antu was ordained a bishop as Nepal's first Apostolic Vicar.

Nepal is not an easy place to build Christian communities. As early as the mid-1950's various missionary groups came to make the Nepalese aware of Jesus' message of love. Some paid for this through deportation. Others served jail sentences. Yet the Christian Church grew. It is difficult for local people to understand how a Nepali Brahmin can be a Christian leader. So Antu suffered rejection, sometimes rudeness, and once arrest, but he did not back down. He had many chances to "turn the other cheek," and did so humbly and gracefully.

Antu was a quiet person who liked to be alone, but he never ran from challenges which he met with determination and always with a smile. He never let others' anger lead him to a harsh response. He would always patiently wait for the other to accept God's offer of merciful forgiveness. He was a catalyst for many Nepali people to accept Jesus.

On his retirement at the end of June 2014, when Bishop Paul Simick from Darjeeling became Nepal's second bishop, Anthony moved back into Jesuit community life, devoting his time to translating texts and prayers into Nepali, to giving retreats and spiritual direction, and to keeping our community life happy.

In early November he complained of reading problems. He finally received help from his own neurosurgeon cousin, Dr Upendra Devkota. Upendra found an inoperable brain tumor and sent Antu back to the community to await the end. That could have taken months, but Antu was not one to cause trouble. After two days when he was busy happily receiving visitors, he quietly went off to heaven.

- Bill Robins, SJ

## Former street paper vendor goes to interview the Pope

*Street paper vendor Marc, 51, had sold Straatnieuws magazine for two years in his hometown Utrecht, Netherlands. Formerly homeless, he's getting back on his feet and working two days a week at the Straatnieuws office. He got the chance to interview Pope Francis – but he wasn't told until two days before he left for Rome whom he'd be interviewing.*



### How did you feel when you found out you'd be interviewing the Pope?

I was really quite nervous the day before but on the day itself it went just fine, it seemed so normal to be talking to him. That was really strange. That also made it an unforgettable experience.

### What was it like meeting him?

It was so brilliant that he made the time for me and he thanked me for making such a long journey. He thought about my questions so calmly. He took me seriously, that was really great. He is such a kind, wise but also humorous man. We had a really good laugh!

### Why did he do this?

Because he is very committed to poor people. His name says it all: Francis is the patron saint of the poor and less fortunate. That's why he understands what a street paper does and why. He is our friend – and you help friends.

### Why couldn't he go and eat pizza with you? He thought it was a good idea...

Absolutely. But he excused himself. He can't set foot outside the Vatican because the people in St Peter's Square would go crazy. He is kind of a prisoner of the Vatican. But he also sees that as a blessing from God, he gets to be the Pope. He has kept his feet on the ground and prefers a simple life. That's why he doesn't live in the papal palace but in a Vatican hotel. In the mornings he can have breakfast there with the staff if he wants to.

### After this experience, what message would you send out to other street paper vendors?

Keep doing what you're doing and spend your hard-earned money on the good things in life. I hope that this interview will help you all to sell more papers, and hope you now know there are very powerful world leaders out there who actively support you. The interview for the street papers is not just a present – he is giving himself to you. He gave me a rosary but actually it is for all of you. Be proud of your paper!

*Courtesy: INSP News Service*

## US to deport former Salvadoran defense minister linked to Romero's murder

A former Salvadoran Defense Minister linked to the 1980 slayings of Archbishop Oscar Romero and four U.S. churchwomen has lost a years-long battle to remain in the United States.

In a Dec. 15 decision that has not yet been made public, the U.S. Board of Immigration Appeals upheld and finalized a deportation order for former Salvadoran Gen. José Guillermo García, according to Patty Blum, the legal advisor for the San Francisco-based Center for Justice and Accountability. Blum and the CJA legal team have tried to bring García to justice since 1999 when they began representing Salvadoran torture victims. Blum called García "the most powerful man in El Salvador during a reign of state terror in which tens of thousands of innocent Salvadorans were slaughtered." By its ruling, the board affirmed the findings of Immigration Judge Michael Horn that García participated in some of the country's most shocking crimes while serving as Minister of Defense from October 1979 to April 1983, Blum said.

Horn found that the Department of Homeland Security had established that García protected death squads and "assisted or otherwise participated in" 14 assassinations, six massacres, and the torture of three individuals in addition to the killings of countless civilians by forces under his command, including: The 1980 assassination of Archbishop Romero, The 1980 Rio Sumpul massacre of about 600 civilians – including the slashing to death of children with machetes - The 1980 murders of Maryknoll Srs. Ita Ford and Maura Clarke, Ursuline Sr. Dorothy Kazel, and lay missionary Jean Donovan, who were raped and shot at close range and whose deaths García made no serious effort to investigate; The 1981 El Mozote massacre in which the army systematically executed 1,000 villagers, including more than 250 children. While García awaits deportation to El Salvador, a federal magistrate is weighing a decision to extradite another member of the Salvadoran high command -- former Col. Inocente Orlando Montano – to Spain for trial in the 1989 Jesuit massacre.

*Courtesy: www.ncronline.org*

## ALEXIUS MINJ, SJ

(DAR) 1956 - 2015



Fr Alexius Minj was born on 12 March 1956 at Kappa in the district of Raigarh, Madhya Pradesh. He entered the Novitiate on 28 Dec 1977 at Dhyana Ashram, Calcutta, was ordained a Jesuit Priest on 16 May 1992 and he professed his Final Vows on 31 March 2008.

Fr Alex was the School Prefect of St Joseph's School, North Point, from 1992-1996; co-pastor in St Paul's Parish, Kurseong from 1996-1999. He did commendable work as a pastor in Tendrabong, especially helping the poor and the needy in that parish from 1999 to 2001. He generously and efficiently served the student- community as Headmaster of St Peter's, Gayaganga, from 2001 to 2013 and of St Alphonsus School, Kurseong from April 2013 onwards. He combined simplicity and availability for ministry with hard-work, assuming responsibilities and being committed to duties. He lived and worked in the present and did not worry about what people would say of him.

Alex possessed a number of good qualities. He was a faithful and honest priest who discharged his priestly works readily, lovingly and joyfully. He was a versatile Jesuit – a good football player in his young age, a green-fingered gardener after school hours, an expert in school administration, a man who had a special gift to deal with government officials to get the work done, always approachable, he was a straight forward person.

His end came as a rude shock to all of us. After the meeting of all the Coordinators of Jesuit Secondary education at the all India level held in Darjeeling, he was down in Siliguri taking some of the coordinators to Gayaganga and other places. On the 16 after seeing them off, Fr Minj drove to Kurseong in the afternoon. Who could guess that his end would come on reaching his community? After getting down from the vehicle, he told the driver that he was feeling thirsty and that he was feeling very suffocated. He was given a glass of water to drink, but he collapsed suffering a massive heart attack. He was rushed to the hospital but in vain. The doctor declared him dead at 4.10 pm.

Like the flame of a candle just going out without even a flicker! No struggle, no pain, no agony! May his soul rest in peace!

- Wilfred Lobo, SJ

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## ROBERT CUTINHA, SJ

(KAR) 1929 - 2015



Fr Robert Cutinha's whole life was given to the service of the poor. Even before joining the Society at the age of 35, he had spent several years caring for the visually challenged at the Divine School for the Blind in White Field, Bangalore where later he would be a full time Director. Even after he became a Jesuit, his passion for and commitment to the blind stayed with him so much so that whatever the assignment or the position he held, he would unflinchingly find his way to White Field. This attachment even led to his losing the membership of the Society. He accepted the penalty with good grace and without any trace of bitterness. Robert had the honesty and humility to write to the Provincial saying: "If I were in your position I too would have taken the same action". That was Robert – honest and magnanimous. With equal humility and grace he requested for re-admission after a few years, and Fr Peter-Hans Kolvenbach who had earlier dismissed him, now recognized Robert's change of heart and gladly admitted him.

Robert's second love was the refugees. The Sri Lankan refugees in South India and the refugees from Bhutan in Nepal. For several years he criss-crossed South India in the service of these displaced people, many times sleeping out in the open, in bus shelters and railway stations and a couple of times even entering clandestinely into Northern Sri Lanka at the very real risk of being captured by the Army. Then there were the Siddis in Mundgod Mission, where he literally identified himself with the people, freely mingling with them, appreciating their culture. He brought a Konkani music group from Mangalore to collect their folk songs, stories and dances in a bid to preserve them. Robert lived a simple life. He has hardly left behind any earthly possessions. He always travelled light and roughed it out. The enthusiasm with which he opted to go to Nepal to serve the refugees there when he was already 75 speaks volumes of his apostolic zeal and love for the oppressed.

Born in 1929 in a Coffee Estate in Chikkamagaluru, Robert had his primary education in Hirebail and went to St Aloysius College, Mangalore for his High School studies. He graduated from Punjab University and spent a few years in the Defence Forces. Then as a young man he offered his services to the Divine School for the Blind, White Field. It was there that he heard the call to be a Jesuit and joined the Novitiate at Mount St Joseph in 1964. He was sent for his Theology to Innsbruck, and was ordained in Frankfurt, Germany in 1971. On his return to India he was first appointed Rector of St Joseph's Indian High School, Bangalore, and then Rector of De Nobili College, Pune. later Vice Rector of Mount St Joseph, Bangalore. He has also served in our Missions of Anekal, Bijapur and Mundgod and for a time he was in charge of the Centre for non-formal and continuing education, Ashirvad, Bangalore. Later in life he did pastoral and spiritual ministry. Wherever he has been Robert was known for his simplicity, authenticity and love for the poor. Robert was more an idealist than a realist. Sometimes he would push through his idealistic projects without counting the costs nor reckoning the consequences. The same idealism led him to make a radical decision to donate his body to the hospital. May he rest in peace.

- Frederick D'Silva, SJ

## VALERIAN DEEPAK D'MELLO, SJ

(PAT) 1954 - 2015



Born: 12.09.1954/ Entered the SJ: 02.01.1975/ Ordained: 26.04.1986/ Final Vows: 23.04.1995

Apostolic Assignments: 1987-89: Hostel Superintendent, KR High School, Bettiah/ 1989-91: Vice-Principal, St. Xavier's, Patna./ 1992-1994: Superior, Clives Hostel, St. Joseph's College, Trichy./ 1994-98: Parish Priest & Headmaster, Chuhari./ 1998-2000:

Treasurer, Bettiah Diocese./ 2000-06: Headmaster, Mission Middle School, Bettiah. / 2006-09: Superior & Headmaster, Raj Rajeshwar High School, Barbigha. / 2010: Staff, Juniorate, XTTI. / 2010-: Parish Priest, Phulwari Shariff. / 2000-02; 2012-: Province Coordinator for Youth Ministry.

Fr. Deepak was an affectionate person, an endearing companion, dedicated priest and a joyful Jesuit. He was zealous for the good of others. He was outgoing and sociable. He was generous in his personal and apostolic life; was never attached to material things or personal comfort. All these and many other positive human qualities flowed from his deep faith in God, his love for the Church and the Society of Jesus. That Deepak had a personal love relationship with the Lord Jesus was evident to anyone who met with Deepak. It would be no exaggeration to say that it was this love for Jesus that defined and nourished Deepak in his personal and apostolic life.

Fr. Deepak was a multifaceted person: He was an educator, pastor, youth animator and vocation promoter; but, he was always available for any work that the superiors asked of him. He had a special talent for dealing with the youth – he loved them, cared for them and was always striving to build their lives on strong faith and sound economic foundations. He was a great promoter of vocations; one of the last organized activities in which Deepak played an important role was the 'mission tour' of Bihar of a group of 14 Altar Boys of his home-parish (St. Joseph's Church, Mira Road, Mumbai) accompanied by 2 parishioners in early October 2015. Deepak took them around many institutions in Patna, many parishes and other apostolic centres, etc. so that they would be attracted and enthused to serve the Lord in His people.

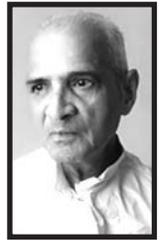
On 26 Oct '15 Fr. Deepak suffered a heart attack, was rushed to Kurji Holy Family Hospital, Patna from where he was taken to Ruben Memorial Hospital, Patliputra. An emergency angioplasty was done immediately to clear one block. The second angioplasty, which was scheduled for 1 Dec was postponed for a more favourable health condition. On 9 Dec he was taken to Fortis Escorts Heart Institute & Research Centre, Delhi; After tests on 11-12 Dec he was scheduled to meet the doctor at on 14 Dec. On 13 Dec after supper when he retired to his room, he felt uneasy and was rushed to Paramananda Hospital (closest to St. Xavier's) and in the Emergency section of Paramananda Hospital, in spite of the best efforts of the doctors, Deepak passed away.

Deepak's unexpected demise at the prime of his apostolic life is a great loss. May Jesus whom Deepak served with so much love all his life welcome him into Eternal Glory. Thank you Deepak. We will miss you much.

- Susai Raj, SJ

## WALTER DE SOUZA, SJ

(PUN) 1925 - 2015



Born: 20.09.1925 / Entered: 18.03.1951 / Ordination: 03.05.1960/ 1961-1962:

Tertiaship, Salamanca, Spain./ 1962-1964: M.A., M.Ed., Boston College./ 1965-1967: Teacher, St. Paul's, Belgaum./ 1967-1973: Rector & Principal, St. Paul's, Belgaum./ 1973-1987: Principal, St. Vincent's College./ 1987-1991: Research, Priest-in-Charge, Loyola High School./ 1991-2013: Research/Writing, Snehasadan, Pune./ 2014: Praying for Society and Church, St. Vincent's Residence. Born in a very religious family on 20 Sep 1925, Fr. Walter followed his brothers Edward and Vincent in joining the Society of Jesus (then Goa Mission), while three of his sisters became members of other religious congregations.

After graduating in Arts and being a lecturer at Lingaraj College, Belgaum, for a few years, he entered the Jesuit Novitiate on 18 March 1951 at Vinayalaya, Andheri. After his Jesuit formation, he was ordained a priest for the Pune-Belgaum Mission on 03 May 1960 and completed his tertiaship at Salamanca, Spain.

Marked out for his academic performances, he completed two Master's Degrees in Arts and Education at Boston University, U.S.A. Then he began his academic services in various Jesuit institutions. As teacher and Principal of St. Paul's he is remembered for his strict enforcement of discipline and promotion of excellence in learning, summed up in his memorable phrase, 'I expect teachers to teach and students to learn'. This was backed up by his example of personal commitment to all his school responsibilities. Here he also took care of the spiritual animation of college students in AICUF.

As founder of St. Vincent Night College of Commerce, Pune, his zealous efforts to educate the Catholic youth 'to earn and to learn' through value education classes, First Friday Mass, annual retreats and personal visits to the families of the students have borne fruit in vocations to the Society. He is appreciated by the poor people to whom he reached out through on-going education in the only Catholic Night College of the Pune University. He has borne with great fortitude the difficulties of administering such an institution. He also obtained Post-Graduate recognition for this college. During this period, he completed his doctoral studies related to 'Planning Economic Development for Education' with a sense of determination, optimism and faith in the Lord. He also ventured on Post-doctoral studies on 'The Economic Miracle of South Korea', which was published in 1995. His publications are a testimony of his hard work and commitment.

He has been faithful to the mission of the Society in various responsibilities entrusted to him. So also, his brothers, Fathers Vincent and Edward, who have gone to their reward, have done yeoman service in the Goa and Pune Provinces.

He is remembered for his pioneering spirit in the educational field, as a professor and research scholar. On 07 November 2015 when he returned to his heavenly abode. He was 90 years of age having spent 64 years in the Society. May he continue to inspire us, his brothers and companions in mission, to cross boundaries and reach out for new frontiers in our intellectual apostolate!

- Francis D'Souza, SJ

## Stimulates me

I like *Jivan* because it stimulates me to reflect. What triggered my wanderings this time was the comment of Vatican Spokesperson, Federico Lombardi, that the Pope did not pray/meditate during his visit to a Buddhist temple in Colombo but just listened respectfully to the monks chanting their prayers. So what did he do, blank his mind? Close his heart? It seemed to me, a good take off point for a discussion on what constitutes prayer.

As a corollary to this was William Macwan's letter that proclaimed his widened "horizon of God's darshan" as he worshipped with his Hindu and Muslim friends. Catholics in inter-faith marriages are living this realization daily through their love for their spouses, and an openness to the Spirit who blows where She wills.

It is time the Church freed them from the guilt and fear of treading a path not defined by clerics. Time too, for a new language that is not weighed down by the burden of "syncretism". For those who worship "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23, 24) this word is meaningless.

Sebastian Painadath's cover feature was refreshing. I'm glad he drew attention to the pejorative implications of the label "laity". I was made aware of it some years ago when a Mumbai based, married theologian objected to being introduced as a "lay theologian" (surely an oxymoron?). Reform groups no longer use this label.

I also like the challenge Painadath throws at the Jesuits to create "Jesuit families" that are open to spiritual pilgrims who can share their resources and mission. I only hope that these will not be patriarchal families. As for power sharing, one wonders if it is possible if there is no "juridical bonding".

- Dr Astrid Lobo Gajiwala  
Mumbai - 400 012

## Respect for other religions

I found Fr William Macwan's letter in *Jivan* (Nov-Dec '15) challenging and inspiring. What he was doing is quite in keeping with Ignatius Loyola's "finding God in all things and all things in God." It is time we Christians accept with humility, courage and above all with faith, the fact that God is present in other faiths also. Let us acknowledge that *pooja* (Hindu) has produced great men like Gandhiji; *namaj* (Muslim) has produced great persons like Abdul Kalam as Christian prayer and the Eucharist have produced the saintly Mother Teresa. It will be beneficial if instead of praying daily only in the form of Eucharistic celebration, a regular custom of praying daily also in the forms used by brothers and sisters of other religions. This can be introduced in the seminaries and all religious formation houses, so that respect for different forms of prayer (of other religions) is developed among the priests and religious which will also easily and gradually percolate in the Christian communities. Let us not forget what Pope Francis and other peace-makers are saying: it is only respect for all religions that will create religious harmony and which is a must to end all

violence in our universe. The Spirit blows where it wills! (not where we want it to blow).

- Sr Anju Macwan  
Tapi, Gujarat - 394 650

## New model of religious life

The Society of Jesus is busy preparing for the GC-36 and updating itself so that it can be relevant in the changed circumstances of our modern world. With the number of vocations dwindling, there is a general belief among many that the present model of religious life has no future and we should think of another model of religious life and experiment it even in the present structure of the Society of Jesus.

Here is, in my humble opinion, where Gandhiji can assist us.

First: The purpose of our life: Gandhi said that the one and the only purpose of human life is to attain the Divine i.e. sakshatkar of God. This is the same for all Religious. We all it perfection, salvation, union with God..etc.

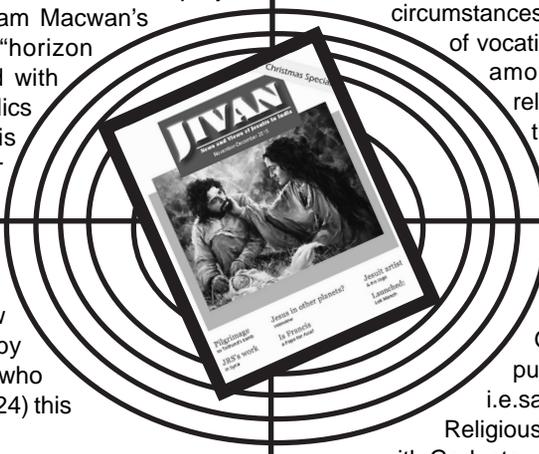
Second: The mission: Each Religious Order or Congregation has some specific objective viz a particular service the Founder saw was urgently needed and therefore decided to render that to the community around e.g. education of the youth, caring for those who are abandoned etc. The Founder thought that this service can be effectively rendered to the community by creating a group of men/women motivated and committed and well-trained for the task they will have to carry out later on.

Gandhiji also saw that India needed villages which are self-sufficient for whatever they need and will not have to go out and depend on the cities to meet their needs. He called such India 'India of my dream.' He also saw the need of, especially the youth, who will be motivated and committed and trained for this important task. Therefore he founded 'Gujarat Vidyapeeth' in Ahmedabad to form youth who would go and live - settle down in the villages all over the country - and work to make India as he had conceived. Here is the motto at the entrance of 'Gujarat Vidyapeeth' he founded. "I have accomplished the most important task (mission) in my life establishing this institution. Now India will have educated, well-formed/trained; dedicated/ committed men and women: farmers, engineers, doctors, teachers, peoples' representatives in the local government bodies in all its villages who will make the villages ideal i.e. prosperous and self reliant.

And all admit that 'Gujarat Vidyapeeth' accomplished this task. It did produce such personalities - Gandhians who were stalwarts: Manubhai Pancholi, Navalbhai Shah to name a few are the ones who settled down in different villages of Gujarat and did marvels there.

GC 36, in the first place, will have clarify what exactly the Jesuits' 'mission' in this modern world is. Then it can think of the kind of work-force it will need and how to create such a work-force. This will certainly demand a new model of 'Religious Life' and the formation of its members, compared to the present-one.

- William Macwan, SJ  
Vadodara, Gujarat - 390 002



# Lessons for Life

## *I've learned from Spain*

BY ANTONY INIGO, SJ

**Respect others:** The first thing that captured my attention was smokeless traffic and absence of horns. Here, in Spain, in December, unleaded petrol costs 1.2 euros per liter. People respect one another in the traffic and seldom blow the horn. I could count the number of times I have heard the sound of a horn and seen vehicles that emit very dark smoke in the past 17 months of my stay. The traffic is very fast with an average speed of 100 to 120 km per hour and still less noisy.

**Walk your way to health:** Most of the roads have a separate lane for pedestrians and cyclists. Every municipality has a natural forest or gardens where people go for walks. Children, pets, men and women, young and old go for walking, jogging and cycling. On weekends and feast days they spend time as a family in these activities. Gardens are irrigated by recycled waste water from apartments and other buildings.

**Create space for people:** In the city there are certain 'pedestrians only' areas and common places known as *plazas*. Here people spend time in a relaxed manner watching artists performing magic, music or dances of various types. This is also the place for demonstrations of groups demanding their rights.

**Small is beautiful:** Street markets called *Rastro* are a weekly affair. It is traditional market which moves to a different municipal area on different days of the week. One can get anything from a small pin to a big cot here. Things are cheap too. This preserves the age-old tradition of selling and buying goods in a small scale for retail price. It is a counter culture to e-business and big malls that have devastated many small industries and producers.

**Be punctual:** Government offices have a deadline to finish their work such as renewal of residential permits. Public and private transport like fast trains and flights are expected to reach the destination at the fixed time. They keep informing the clients through websites, email, cellphones and posts regarding the process. They accomplish their duties in time. In the case of transport, if there is a delay of more than fifteen minutes in landing or reaching their destination, the fare is refunded to the passengers.



*Antony Inigo (MDU) studies Licentiate in Spiritual Theology at Universidad Pontificia Comillas, Madrid, Spain.*



**Lead simply:** I attended the feast day celebration of Our Lady of Paloma, patron of firefighters. There was rosary and litany, followed by a procession with the statue of Our Lady. I was surprised to see Archbishop Carlos Osoro of Madrid leading the rosary. And he led the litany by heart! I was moved by his conviction and commitment to leading prayers which in India will be considered the task of a lay catechist.

**Serve:** In my Jesuit community we volunteer to serve at table for supper. I learnt generosity and humility from Jesuits who hold important responsibilities in the university as well as senior Jesuits in their seventies and eighties who have authored voluminous books and numerous articles. Most of them take turns to serve at table, help in heating the food, washing dishes and to lay the table.

**Accept criticism:** At table during dinner or in classes we often discuss different issues in our conversation, some being controversial. Each has his own point of view. But in my limited experience, people are ready to hear and consider opinions that criticize the economic and political policies of European countries. They are aware that weapons used in terrorist attacks are neither manufactured nor sold by Asian or African countries.

**Seek, search:** Two other Indian Jesuits and I went on a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela (popularly known as Camino de Santiago) last summer. We came to know many pilgrims of varied age from 5 to 84. It was a long journey and on an average

one needs to cover 20 to 25 kms per day. Anyone who completes more than 100 kilometers is entitled to an official certificate of the Shrine. In the thirteen day *camino*, as we covered 300 kms, I was taken up by the enthusiasm of the youth and the persistence of the old. Every pilgrim has a reason to make it: sports, adventure, thanksgiving and special intentions for prayer. It turns out to be a time of an inner search.

**Call me by my name:** Though I have heard that in the west people respect individuality and equality, they call each one by name. I am accustomed to being addressed on the basis of my relationship, office or status - rarely by my name. Moreover, to identify a person I often use all possible descriptions except the name of the person. To my surprise even a person who has met me only once calls me by name. Even senior Jesuits and co-workers like to be called by their names. ■

# Green Cover



## Adivasi Girl enlightens the world

"We pay the price of your electricity with our lives", her uncle told Shweta Marandi at their Adivasi village in Jharkand. At Tarumitra, Patna, she learnt the connection between electricity and the plight of her community. Coal mines in their land had become a curse to them. Pollution, land grab, forced migration, premature death... - all to provide electricity to others, but not their village. Shweta was all of 12, studying at Mount Carmel, Patna, when she plunged into a campaign to reduce electricity consumption -with imagination, creativity and grit. Shweta formed a group of students - Low Carbon Team. She first persuaded her parents to replace tube lights consuming 53w with CFL lamps consuming 10w; she persuaded her housing colony Secretary to use CFL street lights. With her Principal's support, she spoke to 1,600 girls of the school, and received great support.

Shweta got the Press to highlight her campaign. To her surprise, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) put her on their website as the Hero of the Month in 2008. She spoke to the Bihar Government Engineers, "As your younger sister, may I request you to join us in this campaign for low carbon footprint"? The engineers did. She tackled the lavish use of electric lights at festivals. She campaigned for a Diwali with Diyas (oil lamps) instead of electric lights. Christmas came next. She invited the Patna Archbishop William D'Souza, SJ to join the Campaign. He wrote to the whole Archdiocese, "Illumination of the church is not an act of worship; it is desecration of God's universe!" The Newspapers picked up the call.

Shweta had a great, achievable goal. She asked students to get their families to save 100 watts a day by using CFL/LED lights. If 10,000 did it, one megawatt could be saved a day. She explained: one megawatt saved would be equivalent to planting 14 full grown trees a day, some 5000 full-grown trees a year! Over 15,000 people have promised her to save 100 watts per day!

In 2012 Shweta took her Campaign to save electricity to the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Large numbers, including many UN officials, appreciated the challenge thrown to the world by an Adivasi girl from Jharkand. Our own Pedro Walpole and Jaime interviewed her, and put her up in the Eco-Jesuit webpage.

- **Rappai Poothokaren, SJ**

# MOMENTS



*"Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year."*

*- Ralph Waldo Emerson*